Navajo Basket Weavers Footage - Disc 1 Transcription - Elsie Stone Holiday

-Started weaving around 1985; learned from her mother-in-law, Betty White Holiday
-Makes works to be sold at Twin Rocks and other places as well
-Uses commercial fabric dyes
-Started by experimenting with geometric (abstract) patterns before going to faces and figural designs.
-Some designs come from Steve, some from Damian Jim, some from photographs or magazines, some are Elsie's own. But Elsie does still weave traditional baskets.

General Thoughts

[0:25]

--Elsie gives her clan names.

[1:30]

"First, when I was in high school, I made a couple of Navajo rugs. When I married into the Holiday family, I didn't know anything about basket weaving…so I watched them weave and I got interested in it and I wanted to try it. And I tried it, and my first basket actually came out good. It was fun, so I decided to do it, and do it, and do it, and now I can't stop! … [My first basket was] a traditional wedding basket."

[2:30]

"When I was in high school I used to be an artist. I did a lot of drawing, and putting colors together. It was already in my mind, it was already in my head, and I wondered how it would look on a basket. So I tried it on a basket, and it really worked out good … That's how my father's side of the family is, they're really artistic. So its probably in my blood."

[11:20]

"I always want to try a difficult design on a basket, and see if it will work. And most of it does; its hard though! I don't draw out my designs like some of the basket weavers; they sketch it first. Its all up here, and I figure, 'this is going to go there,' its already drawing in my mind…I'm always looking for different designs. Always want to try something different, maybe a little bit harder. The barrel is really hard to do. It's hard, but for me it's easy. Sometimes it comes out not the way I wanted. When that happens I don't want to work on it. I just toss it away and start another one…But then my elderly family say, 'you can't just start out a basket and leave it lying around. You have to undo it.' So when I have free time I just undo it."

[14:00]

--Certain designs (ie. not making a "way out") will begin to cause Elsie problems like headaches, dizziness, and poor vision: "Every two years I'm supposed to have a beauty ceremony done on me, with the corn pellet, where they pray for me. Right now I'm like that, I need to get that ceremony done again…I used to pray to my basket; put a corn pellet on it and pray to it to not give me problems, but lately I haven't been doing that. So there is a lot of things that I'm not supposed to do on a basket, that I did…that's why I need to get that beauty ceremony done so they can clear it all off again, and start it

fresh…This one's ok; all the colors are out [outward]. They told me that [having a closed off color pathway?] shuts your mind, where you can't think. That's why I used a corn pellet and pray to my basket…"

[19:00]

--It is easier for Elsie to make larger baskets, rather than smaller ones. "On a bigger basket the pattern is easier. If you're doing it on a small one it's going to be really hard, you have to bunch the design together."

[58:00]

-- Flat vs. round/3-dimensional—designs for rugs are translated into rounded baskets. "It is different, the barrel and the bow designs have to come out different. On the flat one, see how it starts off small—actually it's easier to do on a barrel and a bow, because the flat one is harder when you have to start the design real small…[a bowl] just comes into shape by itself, I don't have to do anything."

Specific Baskets - Descriptions

[3:30] 'Changing Woman Basket' (set of 3)

"[This basket] is a story to our Navajo tradition; our elderlies told a story about a changing woman a way back, a long time ago when there were not many people. They were saying that animals and insects were people then; they were like gods. She was actually the first lady. Changing woman is a woman that can change to whatever she wants; if she wants to change into a rock, or water. That's what a changing woman is. She's the one that gave birth to those twins [Hero Twins] that visit the father sun. And the black side is the night and the white side is the day.

"To me the changing woman on the black side where the bun is, that's the lady side, and the other side, that's the man, with the hair is just hanging down. This one I did like, elderly and young. The white hair is the elderly."

-- The basket was inspired by a Helen Hardin image. It is characterized by dualities (night/day, male/female, young/old). Appropriately, Changing Woman gave birth to Hero Twins: "one of them was the sun's son, one of them was the water's son."

[21:50] 'Beauty/Medicine Turtle'

-- Elsie puts Damian Jim's patterns and designs into turtle images. "They call me turtle lady. I like doing turtle baskets." This basket incorporates the beauty ceremony into turtle imagery. Elsie tried to ask her father—Robert June Blackhorse, a medicine man—about any meaning behind turtles. "There's not really a story to the turtle, but the shell, they use it in [traditional Navajo] ceremony a lot."

[25:00] 'Elderly Tree'

"[This comes from] Steve again. I think he got it out of a magazine…This one is really hard. He's always telling me to do another one, and I don't really like doing it, maybe because there's no color in it. It's not really fun to me. I like to work with

colors…This tree, I call it my elderly tree, where there's roots and it grows where it gets old and dry, that's why I call it my elderly tree."

"That's one thing I'm not supposed to do, overstitch with the red. I kind of got in trouble for doing that. I don't really ask about it, I just do it, and one time my dad saw that I ended with the red overstitch: 'you're not supposed to do that! Only bad people, like witches, do their stuff with red around it, like the sun'…There's a lot of things that I'm not supposed to do it that I did and got in trouble for it."

[31:50] 'Concentric Set'

"[These are from] Damian. They're all the same [pattern] but I just change [the colors] around…"

Black is Elsie's favorite color to work with. "I don't really like white, it gets dirty. Red, it bleeds, it gets onto another color. And the rest of the colors I like: I like to use yellow and blue, but Steve and buyers, they don't like the colors blue and yellow…for the background [they want darker backgrounds]. And I found out when you are dying your laces, you put a cup of salt in there, that way the color doesn't bleed."

[36:00] 'Blue Hair Chief'

-- The *Dine'e* don't have chiefs, so this design is not from her own family/clan (tribal cross-pollination). Copied from a picture that came out of a magazine, there were a lot of colors that caught her eye. Apparently Elsie is one of the few weavers who do full facial designs. Oval shaped baskets work best for picturing faces. "Its really hard to start off an oval. I didn't know how to do that, the oval shape, it was my brother-in-law, he weaved a lot, Henry Holiday. He's the one that showed me how to start off an oval…Its hard to do. I struggle when I start an oval, but then the design really works on an oval basket for a face, or a butterfly."

[59:45] 'Spider Basket'

"This one basket I did actually it was in my dream…Actually it wasn't my dream, it was my husband Peter, he's the one that dreamed about it. He told me the next day, 'I dreamed a basket, you made it like this, and it sold for so much money! You should try it!' And actually I didn't know how he dreamed about it, so he drew it for me, and it came together, this is how its going to work, this will be the web…The first lid I did didn't have that [handle?], it was just flat, and I thought this would look nicer…

"I got bitten by a spider a long time [ago], when I was like 20 years old, and I got these rashes all over me, and I couldn't sleep. I had it for two days, I even went to a clinic and they gave me a shot, it didn't help. So I ended up going to my grandpa, he passed on, he was a medicine man, he made an herb for me for a spider [bite], and I drank it. [The rash] disappeared the next day. So I probably was blessed with spiders.

"Another thing, my mother in law, she passed on in October, she blessed me with a spider web. I guess that's why I'm really good at weaving. She put corn pellet on the spider web, prayed to it, and then she took it down and put it on my hands. They're saying that's one of the reasons my weaving is like this: she blessed me with spider web.

"Another thing my husband did: one time we were cutting willows, it was around this time, my husband was cutting the willows, and there was a big hole under the willow, and he saw one of those big spiders sitting there. He got a corn pellet and put it

on him and prayed that my basket would be good. And he could see the spider's mouth, or tongue, coming out and eating the corn pellet. So that's one thing we did, maybe that's why my weaving is really good…

"It took me a while to fit [the lid to the basket]. I had to undo it like twice before it fit."

[46:40] 'Optical Art/Mirage Basket'

--Damian Jim design. "To me, that seems like a mirage, where you look out there and you see the wavy air, and you can see something in it. To me, to our tradition, the mirage is almost a beauty ceremony, where you see [the mirage], you can take a medicine man over there and he can do a beauty prayer for you, or a blessing prayer or a protection prayer. That's what a mirage is to us in Navajo, in *Dene'e*…When you see it, that's where holy spirits are to the medicine man, so that's really a sacred place to do prayer, for protection, good way…"

[50:10] 'Dream Basket'

"Steve calls this a dreamcatcher, and it's his design. I don't really know the story to the dreamcatcher, that's more of a different tribe's story; that's not *Dene'e*…"

(This is evidence of more tribal cross-pollination, or perhaps more correctly, a catering to popular/white culture's stereotypical notions of Indian imagery for commercial reasons; to sell a basket. Side note: Dreamcatchers are probably of Lakota origin; the legend includes references to a spirit in the form of a spider, and the word in *Ojibwe* actually comes from the word for spider. I found this interesting considering Elsie's 'Spider Basket' came in a dream.)

[51:50] '*Ye'ii Bicheii* Maidens'

– Incorporates mask imagery from Helen Hardin paintings. "I put the headdress together myself, the colors and the design…The first one was the one with the blue trimming, that was the one in the painting. The others I just look at part of designs and put them together…There's a ceremony we do that's nine days of singing, and the last two days we do a dance, six or seven ladies and men. These are the ladies that dance with the men, they have to dress up like this…I used to dance in it." Having participated in the ceremony qualifies/allows Elsie able to represent it.

[55:30] 'Kicking Rock Echo Set'

Damian's design. "Most of them, they're my colors. He did them in different colors…he just did one, and I spread it…They are one-rod baskets."

[1:06:00] 'Lightning Basket'

"My dad does a lot of lightning ceremonies, a healing ceremony. So that's where that came from, the design. A lot of people come to them, I guess they were attracted by the lightning; hearing it, smelling the smoke, and they get sick from it. They come to my dad and he sings, prays, and puts some herbs in water and drinks it.

"My mother-in-law, there was one year where it was really raining, and it was loud and lightning, really loud *boom* sound. My mother-in-law kinda got sick with it, and went outside to talk to it, said, "Stop, don't do that no more!" And quickly it stopped,

went away. But then, she was a medicine lady with the crystal (?), that's what she was. So lightning to us is a very powerful thing…It still can hurt you, with your health too. And that's why my dad comes, helps people. He helps people every day. He's like a doctor."

[1:12:05] 'Sun/Three Necklaces'

"The way our elders tell the story of the sun; the sun wears jewelry…There's a traditional basket I do, I call it a sun tray…The sun, we pray to it. A dressed up sun, we pray to it for health, blessings...When we pray, we say, 'The earth is our mother, the sun is our father.'"

[1:14:00] 'The Sun's Tray'

"I guess that the two boys that went up there to visit their father—that's how the story goes, I'm not supposed to be telling that story now, in the summertime—one day went up there, and they saw this basket with jewelry, sitting in the sun's home. This is where the sun's tray came from…[The beads are] turquoise, whitestone, coral, I do all different colors, the four direct colors…I made this because my dad told me the story about it, and he blessed me for my weaving, so I decided to come and sell it to Steve, and I told him about it. I told him not to sell it, to keep it and it will bring you good luck selling baskets. And that's what it's been doing."

[1:16:10] 'The Sun/Eclipsed Sun'

"That too, my dad [performs] a ceremony for that too. People can get sick from looking at an eclipse. When an eclipse happens, you're not supposed to eat; do nothing. You're supposed to sit still until it's over, then you can do something. So I guess a lot of people do stuff when the eclipse happens—that's what is bothering me too, I need to go back to my dad and get the ceremony done. I guess I ate when the eclipse was on, and every time I ate I just throw it up. So I need to get that ceremony done. But this is what it's telling: a sun, with the eclipse happening.

"My mom passed on, [but] when I finished this basket I showed her. 'What's the meaning of this?' I asked her. She got upset with me about it. 'You're not supposed to be doing that!'… I did a couple of them, I guess I don't listen. I even did it with the moon too. But I pray to it, I bless it, I pray that I won't give me any problems, even though there is a story to this and you're not supposed to do this, I pray to it and bless it with corn pellet. So that helps."

Final Thoughts

[1:19:30]

"*Dene'e*, Navajo—I don't really like to say Navajo, I think we should be called Dene'e—we really believe in our ways, in our elderly ways. That's how I am, I believe in my elderly ways, and I like it that way. And so if you get one of my baskets…the way I think about my baskets is blessed, and healing, and good ways. That's how I think about my baskets…Most of my basket designs are related to our stories, old stories. And I do a lot of blessings on my baskets, so most of the baskets that go out there are blessed. So it should give you good feelings, good ways, make you feel good."

Navajo Basket Weavers Footage – Disc 2 - Barry Simpson, Kayla Black and Family

- Navajo words are attempted phonetically.
- Descriptions of specific baskets are scattered throughout the discussion

Part I – Barry Simpson

[2:00]

"We really didn't know about what was going on with the Smiths, or the earlier periods, all we really knew was that Mary Holiday Black and her family were creating some exceptional baskets, very creative, not just the standard ceremonial baskets, but the creative pieces, originally with the ye'ii's, mostly, and maybe the sun face. We started asking them to weave those baskets for us, when we saw them. This was in the late 70s. Then we started incorporating Pima designs, Apache designs, into these baskets. So we would actually get small examples of baskets from other tribes, and bring them to [the Blacks] and they would weave them, so we were getting some inter-tribal types of ideas. Then we started reading the Navajo culture—we read Bernard Hale, Eileen O'Brien, Gladys Reichard, any of the books we could on Navajo culture. Then we started asking for those [designs] because we thought 'Wow, what an incredible rich culture this is, that's what they should be doing, not other tribal pieces, but Navajo interpretive stories.' So that's what we did, and the more we got into that, the more we got back. We were exchanging stories."

[3:40]

"We would give them a story or an outline of a basket, maybe; at that time I had a set of weights in my back room, and I would take one of the those weights, and I would put it on a piece of butcher paper, and trace the circle, and try to sketch in a block manner different forms and figures, just to give them ideas, like creation stories, whatever we could find. Then they would interpret them into their baskets. It just grew from there. It even went to the point where I sketched out every stitch in a basket, thinking we could copy that and then fill in the stitches to help direct them. We quickly found out they didn't need that; they just started creating their own designs. We also found if we did that it limited their creativity, because they would do it exactly as the basket it laid out. If we didn't do it we found that they would be much ore expressive and creative in what they were doing. They seemed to be having a great deal of fun at it. It was a nice interaction, because they were learning, we were learning, and growing. Then every time there was something really creative, or there was a leap in creativity, we would set it back, because it was so much fun seeing the creative process, and being a part of it, and keeping it going. So a basket would come in, with this wonderful story woven in, and we would just say, 'Oh, we have to set that back, we have to keep it back, and save it." And I guess in the back of my mind I knew that in this type of business, you have to build your own social security, in a way. So that was a little bit a part of it, but I think mostly because it was just so exciting."

[6:00]

"We found out later on—we actually put together a timeline of the creativity. So you can see in those baskets, some of them are very basic, which was a slight move from

the ceremonial [baskets], right on up to some of those really incredible baskets, like 'Sacred Wind, Stars and Cyclones,' and 'Separation of Sexes'…there were so many that were just incredible. That was the whole movement encapsulated in that collection. It was a good way too of sharing; it was a show-and-tell type of situation where people would come in and we could show them, and help them become a little more excited about what was going on. Share that energy."

[7:15]

"What we were looking for with Damian is—we knew the Internet was going to be big part of the whole thing. Also we needed an artist, because I was doing stick figures basically, or club figures I call them, because they were very blocky. I wasn't much of an artist. So Damian came in one day—we had actually talked to the job service people, and he came in. Damian was a really interesting character. He showed us his portfolio and there were these death heads and scenes of carnage. It was crazy but he really had some talent, it was just incredible what he could do with a pencil and paper. I was a little bit frightened at first though, it was some scary stuff. But we decided to give him a try. We brought him in, and he was actually just living down here … on the reservation, in a shack. We got a computer, initially, and he could actually draw with that mouse. It was a disconnect for me because he was watching the screen and drawing with the mouse, not even watching his hand. He could draw these wonderful figures. At first he just started copying my block figures and I'd give him a story, we'd talk about it and he'd lay it out on the screen. Then we had him copy those images so that we had [files] of all these different images…so when the artists came in we could actually really quickly put together an idea. Then he started changing colors, and moving things around. We realized [the weavers] didn't need an exact idea. He started coming up with these really lifelike images. He would draw out a human being and it looked like it had the movement and the features. The more detail he put into those pieces, the more detail that the [weavers] came up with. They figured ways of interpreting that. It was just amazing. He added so much to the whole idea, and also he was going home and talking to his grandmother about these stories, and so she was elated that here is her grandson that was totally separate from her, didn't have any of the same thoughts or ideas, he was coming home and talking to her about these stories. So we had her input as well. We just had this really wonderful dynamic, we had the [weavers] coming in and telling us their thoughts and ideas, we had Damian's input, which was just really amazing and very artistic, his grandmother, and then our 'Anglo' ideas which were constantly being modified and we were becoming educated to the whole idea just through their ideas. So it was just this wonderful learning process."

[10:50]

"Eventually it got to the point where Damian was producing these designs like, we'd get thirty designs in a day. When [the weavers] would come in, they would sit down with him, and it was like a bomb going off. You've got all of these ideas, and it was too much to handle for awhile. I was throwing thoughts at him, and he said 'Wait a minute, we can't do all of this, we have to try to really focus and get this down to a point where we can manage it. Then on the side, he was building a [web] portal, which I had no idea what the heck a portal was, I was trying to run a business and spawn some creativity, and

he was going to send us off into cyberspace and blow things clear through the roof. It was amazing. He was talking things I had no idea of. But his artistic ability was such that he could create these ideas and images but it was way beyond mentally what you could do with a computer. It was a really fun time, and the explosion of ideas and creativity was just amazing."

[12:15]

--Barry is asked if Damian started in Blanding. "He did. We built this later on. When Steve came back from law school we built this one. Eventually we realized the artists were coming here because it was 26 miles closer. So Steve was getting the benefit of our creativity, you know, its all the same family but there's a little bit of competition there. And then, things changed in the trading post business, and we realized that this trading post had a lot more potential then that one up there. So we eventually closed that one down and brought it all down here, and I moved down here. Which was when Steve really started giving his input, and because of his experience it was a totally different thought process, because of his education and being away [it was] just different enough that he was throwing ideas in, and it just expanded the creativity. Different, totally. We had my ideas, Damian's ideas, Steve's, and then all of the artists coming in too; it was an amazing time."

[13:50]

"The second day after we advertised—told Barbara Tate at Job Service that we were interested in someone like that—Damian came in the next day and she sent him down, and we hired him right off. He was 18, 19. So he was hitchhiking from Bluff up to Blanding, living in a shack, no electricity, no water, anything, and coming to Blanding to work on the computers, and then hitchhike home at night. It was just crazy. And then eventually we helped him buy a computer, and he was taking that home. He had a solar battery hooked up at the house that would charge all day, and he would hook the computer to it at night and play his video games…[Now] he's in IT, he's a great guy. He was so creative, and still is obviously, but when he was with us it was just amazing, how much he added, the dimension he added to what we were doing. I think he's in Glendale; I get emails from him from time to time. He still throws ideas at us, these little subtle shots in emails: 'You should look at this, see this.' He's married now. I don't think they have kids yet, but he's doing really well. He knows computers backwards and forwards. When he left here, he went to the University of Phoenix, and earned a degree there."

[16:00] 'Cyclone, Wind, and Stars'

"That came from a story that I read about how the Navajo universe is maintained, and held up—we realized the ceremonial design is very much a part of the Navajo universe. When you really break it down into its basic elements, its emergence, its mountains, wind and stars, and the joining of blood, marriage, children, [and] family. But we also realized that it was a much broader universe than that, and it was held up by cyclone, wind and stars. So Damian and I talked, and we came up with that design idea and Jameson wove it. It was really an interesting basket. But if you look at it, it's still almost the basic elements of a ceremonial. They just turned them on end, and joined them together, so you have the cyclone stepping down in, and the winds circling up, and the

stars in there…I think that's when we started to realize that stars were part of the duality of Navajo culture. Everything is opposites, and it takes an opposite to make a whole. So that's why you see the stars on tops of mountains, because they're two deities. Or you see it in Spider Man/Spider Woman, for instance. They are duality symbols. But that Cyclone, Wind and Stars basket was something that really came together well. It was a beautiful design, very simple, based on the original elements [of the ceremonial basket], but just tweaked a little bit."

[18:15]

--Barry is asked if he has ever been approached by medicine men or women (especially the newer generations) concerning misuse of symbols or designs.

"We actually expected more of that than we received. What happened is they would talk to us, you know, the Navajo way is not initially aggressive; it is to start to question you. They realized that we knew what we were talking about, and that's what it got into, a discussion, a back and forth. Most of the time—there were a few times that people became angry about it—but I'd say at least 80% of the time we'd get into a discussion, and they'd leave rather grateful for it. It was a way of encapsulating the culture and preserving it for the future. Because most of them realize that it's dissipating quickly. Our society is such that dominates, incredible so. I mean you've seen it, young people often times don't even know the culture, and aren't interested in it because there's so much more out there that captures their imagination and moves them away from it. So that's what we ran into a lot. There were a few that became angry, because originally, they thought that is what caused the downfall [of Navajo culture], that's what brought them to the Bosque Redondo: duplication of the sacred ye'iis and holy people in their art. As you know the people up here weren't captured, weren't rounded up. They weren't as caught up in that as the rest. So we rarely had negative feedback. We actually got to the point where we would try to stimulate that, to help us understand a little better what was going on. If someone came in angry we would try to get out of them why they were angry, and what they felt was negative about the whole thing. [It was] pretty educational."

[21:00]

Voice off-screen: "Just so I'm clear; I see the ceremonial pattern there in the center, and then the cyclone, wind, and stars around that. That's representing these forces are supporting the universe, that's represented here by the ceremonial pattern in the center. (Barry: "Correct.") "Could you say any more about how the cyclone, wind and stars form this foundation?"

[21:30]

"It's the natural world. I think it's a representation of all those things that aren't easily understood that hold them up and support them. The natural world, in the past, was incredibly important to the Navajo people, and that was part of what they were. [Cyclone, Wind and Stars] were deities. They became these supernatural elements that support you in a background way. Not up front, not obvious, even as much as lightening and thunder and those types of natural elements. But just the wind itself, or these little dust devils, or whatever was going on around you which were subtle, were all a part of what support

you, what keeps the Navajo universe together, maintains it, helps it to grow, in a very subtle manner, as I understand it."

[22:45] 'Separation of Navajo and Hopi'

"We read about how the Navajo came in after the Hopi, and the Hopi were quite supportive of the Navajo to help them with planting and harvest, to help them become more agricultural than gatherers, necessarily gathering whatever they could to survive. The Hopi were much more advanced, agriculturally. So they did everything they could to help them. And actually the Navajo borrowed a lot of the culture of the Hopi and incorporated, assimilated it into their own society."

"There's a story of corn, which I think brings this all together. The whole idea was based around corn, which was the most sacred of the plants. They actually fought over an ear of corn, two young [people], a Navajo and a Hopi. They fought over it to the point where it became such a prickly subject that someone suggested they just break it in half and go their separate ways. So they did, and the Navajo got the top half of the corn, which is less of a piece than the bottom part. So the Hopi are actually better as an agricultural society, and the Navajo are less so. There's the ceremonial center, there, which again is the Navajo universe, and the corn growing from it, because corn is the most sacred of all the plants. It's really a metaphor for the Navajo people: you have the roots…the origination of the people, the stories, and the past, which is incredibly important to the people. You have the upward moving way, which is the stalk of the corn. There are the deities from the four sacred directions that brought life to the Navajo through corn—Navajo were created from corn; white corn is male, yellow is female. Then the tassel at the top, where the corn pollen comes from, that is pure sunlight as prayer, and life, and beginnings. It's really more of the sacred aspect of the Navajo culture. So that corn there is incredible representative of not only the people, but their philosophy on where they came from and life itself. Then you see the people facing each other and they have their hand up, because they've broken apart. Something has been destroyed, [from] something very good, something bad has turned out. So there are always opposites in all the Navajo cultural stories. You'll see there is positive, there is negative, and they accept both of those. So you can contemplate that which was gained, or that which was lost. The interesting thing about all this is that it goes on and on. It opens up this dialogue of understanding. The Navajo people were incredibly thoughtful. They didn't have a lot to work with—historically, they didn't have this long educational background. They derived their lessons from the natural world, from incidents that occurred, and came about, and they studied, they thought about them, they reflected on them continually so every story has this huge base of a gaining of knowledge and understanding, in a little more simple human way of understanding it."

[27:15]

"You see the blue [deity] is the south, you see how they have a color base to them? Black is male, to the north. White is east, then yellow is west." (Voice off-screen mentions that these deities correspond to the names of real mountains.) "It was part of the learning process. After a while you could only get so much in these baskets, and it was an introduction, really. Not only to the people who were buying the baskets—the collectors and the museums—but it was also a way for us to learn. It could go on and on. When you

look at these baskets you have the very basic, simple meaning, and then it just keeps going. You can go to the creation of the holy people, you can go to the creation of the people, you can go back to the creation of the Hopi, or how the Navajo came into this world. It's like throwing a rock into a pond, its just keeps rippling out. That's what was so incredible about these. They were an introduction."

[28:54]

"You see the Navajo people are dressed more traditionally, in the blues and the reds. The Hopi had more of the look of the woven textiles, the cotton textiles. And then you see coyote in there well. Coyote is the figure down at the bottom in the red and the yellow. He's the one who really instigated it, he's the one who broke the corn in half and held it behind his back and said 'Choose.' Coyote is all senses is chaos but he also initiates change, and it's not always easy, it's most often painful. But that's really his part—his or her, you can either be male or female as a coyote—but that's what they do."

[30:00] 'Sacred Wind/Creation of the Navajo Universe'

"Agnes modified this, if I remember right. There was a story about how wind—in the creation of the Navajo, first man and first woman brought the sacred buckskin, and laid them down and placed the two ears of corn in there, and the wind blew through it. If you have that in you, you have life. If the wind leaves you, you die. But it's not only in the human form; it's also in everything. That wind ye'ii just goes through everything, from the very basic [beings]—see the red and the black, there, are the ants, which are the original beings in the Navajo culture. Then it goes through corn, which represents plants. And then all the others represent the different animals, everything from the buffalo, down to the deer and the sheep. Wind is life to everything. So that was an interpretation that was modified, and then Agnes kind of added to it. I'm remembering that Damian did a design based on that, maybe Agnes modified the animals, if I recall.

"[The black points] are the insects, the initial beings. [The points beneath each buffalo] show the wind, how it moves around obstacles, and beings. It never comes from the same direction, or follows a path. It just whirls and blows around everything. It finds its own way.

"[The basket should be called] 'The Creation of the Navajo Universe'…How do you explain it. In the Navajo world, there's no real timeline. The creation of something can come after its already been established. We [white culture] look at timelines. We say, 'OK, the Hero Twins had to have been born of Changing Woman to follow this specific path that they did.' But there are actually stories of the Hero Twins before they were even born…Correct me if I'm wrong. Our world looks at things in specific order, and the Navajo really don't. It is all part of the cycle. It can occur before, during and after. [Linear time] is not the point. The point is more that it's going on, that it happened…It's a little bit hard for others to grasp. In our minds we are looking for a definitive layout, and it's not that way. It took me a long time to grasp that…When you are explaining these [baskets] you can be bouncing all over the place."

[34:00]

Barry is asked about different interpretations of the same stories; the lack of a definitive "canon" of Navajo stories.

"It's give and take. If Clarinda tells me an interesting story about Sacred Wind, then it's expected that I give another interpretation as I understand it, or as I heard it, that someone has gifted me. It's a gift, really, don't you think? It is something you share, that goes around and around. Often times, we all have a different thrust. I may be very interested in the medicinal aspect of it, the herbs or the ceremony itself. Someone else may be more interested in the animal theme, or how the animals interacted. So you can see there can be a huge variety of thought that can be interpreted through that story. You share that, and hopefully you gain a little more understanding, or it opens up a thought process that you had not considered before. It's a learning experience. Generally, the Navajo people had a lot of time and spent a great deal of time thinking about these things. When you're watching the sheep, you can spend the entire day [thinking]. *Son of Old Man Hat* is a really good interpretation of that. It's a good perspective. He would sit out there and watch the sheep and just think about all these avenues of expression that came to him, and think about what someone else had told him and try to see a new way around it. So it's a sharing type of culture. Personal growth and understanding is what you gain from it…That's what it's about: Opening the door to understanding, and trying to understand someone else's experiences."

[38:10] 'Navajo and Apache'

"This is a story that you can relate to several cultures. The Navajo and the Apache, as I understand it, are both Athabaskan-speaking peoples. They came from the same place, and they were actually different clans. At one point, they began to bicker, and fight. So they turned their surroundings into a hostile environment; things became prickly and thorny and ugly, in a way. It came to a particular point where a fire god decided it was just altogether too much. So he separated the people. He sent the Apache south, and the Navajo stayed here. Then he burned everything; he cleansed it with fire. That's why you see that red circular pattern all around it, that's the fire. In the middle is the fire god, with his fire that he has contained, and then he turns it loose—actually let's go back a little bit. You see the fire in the middle, which the fire god has contained because he's wrapped around it. Then those diamond shapes are part of the prickly nature of the world, how it became ugly and sticky and prickly and nasty. Then he turns the fire loose, which are those curled patterns. Then you see the cliffs there, which are like the cliffs that surround Bluff. That patina on the cliffs shows that it actually happened. That is a reminder of it. The culture is such that it ties everything together. There are reminders all around that show what has occurred. You see the cliffs that are black and are surrounded by a little red line—when you look at the cliffs out here, you see a red cliff, and then you have black patina, almost like they were singed by fire. And then you see the lightening bolt coming down between the four people, two on each side.

[40:50]

"Again it's a metaphorical story that shows what can happen when social groups…it can get very ugly, to the point where no one is listening, no one is paying attention. It's about us and no one else. So the supernaturals have to step in, and do a very powerful cleansing. So by seeing this basket and recalling those stories, seeing the patina on the cliffs, maybe that will allow you not to get so far advanced in an argument or

situation. Someone might say, 'Remember the Navajo and the Apache.' They think about that, and maybe it slows down an argument or situation."

[42:30] 'Separation of the Sexes'

"It is a topic that can be very sensitive…the male/female interaction is such that these all come into play. I have a niece right now that's going through the same situation; it's a human condition. Oftentimes men and woman fight, and there are very definitive subjects that come up, and it can cause a separation. Coyote is usually in there, stirring it up, and there are other monsters that come into it. The river is a line, a cleansing element, and also an absorbing type of element that will pull you in and drown you. All these little things are ways of expressing what might happen, the problems [between the sexes]…There are the hermaphrodites, these are the beings that are both sides; they don't have a sex, so that's another type of situation that helps explain—that is an introduction to something that is very sensitive to all cultures. But they can be very productive, and very helpful. [Pause in recording]

"I mentioned that early on we were introducing different cultural icons into the basket art, and you can see the center part has a very Hopi look to it…you have that type of design which they have altered and made into Changing Woman, and then the arrows around her are protective. She is surrounded by the ceremonial design, which oftentimes deities are protected and guarded by such things as rainbows and sacred mountains, or they travel on rainbows…so all of that ties in to this particular basket."

[45:40]

--Barry is asked about Coyote Woman.

"I think [Coyote Woman was something that Loraine came up with]. I know Damian did some designs—we knew that there is always a female side to everything. Generally Coyote is referred to as a male, because males are more disruptive and chaotic than females…I think it was probably a modification. I remember we were throwing out ideas like crazy. They [Damian, the weavers] were generating ideas, and there were times when we didn't know where they came from, whether they were part of what we had come up with or what they had come up with. It really didn't matter, because that is not what it was about, it was just about the creative process. I recall Loraine modified this one on her own, so there is a lot going on there. That was a very strong introduction to the fact that there is always an opposite to everything; the stronger side, for instance Coyote, usually had a very wide ranging and opposite alter-side, which in this case was a female, or Coyote Woman."

[47:40] 'Collage Basket' (Title?)

"Every artist tries to come up with their own niche—find a niche where they can portray imagery that is still part of the culture, has a very definitive tie to the culture, but is a way of representing their own style, their own technique. This is packed with all types of Navajo culture and innuendo. You see the First Man and Coyote placing the stars; to the top of that is the coming out of the Bosque Redondo, the Long Walk basketry. There are butterflies that represent the beauty and emergence of life, creating something from nothing, a beautiful type of existence. You see the doe and fawn, from the Navajo creation myths. There's an eagle, from the hail chant, there are small

animals…That is the lifestyle piece. You see the sheep and the people, the flag…Again, it's on a positive/negative format: you see the dark and the light, and the gray in the center. The gray is the balance, the darkness is the negative, and the light is the positive. What you are trying to achieve ultimately is ho'jo, which is the gray.

"Oftentimes with Peggy—her son was in the military—in the Navajo culture, oftentimes the young men went off to battle, and that was a definitive time, a time of personal growth and becoming a man. The flag often represents that, the transformation from a boy to a man, because that's when they joined the military and went off to battle. The birds and the ducks in there represent the story of Small Duck, and how he dove back down to the bottom of the flood and recovered First Man's j'ish, his personal bag. There's corn in there, which again represents the life and the connections to the past and the present and the future. There's the other side of the emergence, the coming out from the Bosque Redondo. The horse, which is a representation of mobility and freedom…the frog, from the hail chant, which deals with anything to do with the bones and joints…there's the separation of the sexes with the river running through it…more corn…and then in the center, that's a fire dance. You see the fire in the middle, and them dancing around it, and then the fire god wrapped around, representing the green circle of branches…"

[51:50]

Voice off-screen, referring to the image of the flag: "Maybe it could refer to the chief blanket—when the chief blanket was worn up and down with the stripes, it was a positive ceremony, a good way. But when the people wore their blankets with the stripes across, it is a symbol of war."

Barry: "Could be. A lot of these are personal interpretations. I'm sure there were subtleties in there that we weren't aware of. I recognize a lot of the imagery from baskets that were made…and she's made this wonderful collage. You talk about encapsulating a huge amount of culture and tradition. Again, it's an introduction. When you see these baskets you can talk about any of these particular designs and just go on and on. This was Peggy's niche. She came up with the collage basket. I remember the first one we saw, we were just blown away."

[53:45] 'Big Monster'

"*Yei'tso* is big monster. He was a child of the sun; he was one of the monsters. You see the arrowheads there, the lightening arrows, flint armor, which were provided by the sun. The yellow around [those images] show that they were provided by the sun. The sun actually helped the Hero Twins, who were also his children, bring down a very destructive individual. It's a little bit of a simplistic image but there's a lot of energy there, a lot of meaning behind where that all came from. Again, it opens a door. How did the sun come up with a child as destructive as big monster? It's part of his negative side. The Hero Twins are part of his positive side. He had to make a choice, eventually. 'What to I do? Which child do I help?' You can tie into everyday life, with that, the choices people make, and how they approach the decision-making process. There's this huge journey that the Hero Twins made to their father, to discover who they were. Eventually he helped them cleanse the earth, and that goes back to the separation of the sexes, where those monsters came from, and how they came into being."

[55:50]

Voice off-screen: "Eventually the twins killed the monster. I guess the monster lived on the side of a mountain (Barry: "Mt. Taylor"), and he would eat human people. Eventually they figured out how to kill him. They cut the limbs (?) on the mountain and he eventually fell off. He fell off and his head landed far away, over by Socorro [New Mexico], and around Grant, there's all that lava, that's his blood."

[56:50]

Barry: "The blood ran out from the mountain, and if it had connected with the head, he would have been revived. So with their lightening arrows, they drew a line. So all this geography ties into the cultural stories. They were very thoughtful and interpretive. Everything has meaning, every little thing, whether you're talking about a cactus, or a stinkbug, or a huge mountain. That's why this [image] is surrounded by mountains; that is a representation of Mount Taylor, that's where this all occurred. The blood of the monster—this is a creation myth so you have that very center portion, the emergence, coming into being, the blood, the monsters, the arrowheads. Again it goes on: the flint armor was eventually given to horned toad. That's why he is made up of arrowheads. He has that flint armor, and that's why he is such a benevolent being. He can offer you protection. It just goes on and on and on."

[58:05]

Voice off-screen: "The arrowhead, that one's a male arrowhead. A female arrowhead is shaped differently. So there is always two of everything."

Barry: "Just on a very simple basket like this, if you know the culture, you can actually go on all day…we're sharing what we know about it. And that's what it really is; it opens the door to discussion and understanding. Hidden in all these stories is a metaphor, a life-way." [Pause in recording]

[59:30] 'Tree of Life' – referred to by Elsie as 'Elderly Tree'

"…The roots of the tree are connected to the past; our elders, our ancestors, and all of the information they gleaned and are trying to pass on. Then you have the trunk of the tree, which represents the beauty way—the upward moving growth that comes from those stories; it's solidity, the Navajo culture, which is the strength of the people. The upper growth of the tree is the chant-ways—now they are starting to get more complicated, more in depth, and you are starting to understand the implications of all these stories. They spread out and grow. They overlap and protect the people. The tree offers them shade and protection, and also helps them to understand the meaning behind all these things.

"[It was very difficult to weave] because it is not balanced. If you look at the baskets, 90% of them have symmetry: they have opposites, they oppose, they come together, and they show a balance. This is out of balance, which is totally against Navajo philosophy. That's why it was unique. We knew that, and we knew we were pushing [Elsie] to do it, and we talked about it beforehand…We were throwing out ideas, and we didn't know what was going to stimulate the creativity, we had no idea. We didn't want to dictate, to give a design and say 'Weave that exactly.' That was too limiting. We wanted them to express themselves. Alicia (?) did this same design in four different

seasons, which was really wonderful…I just don't think you ever want to dictate to an artist what you want them to create. When Damian came in, the creativity blew up, it just went everywhere, and that's what we were looking for. 'Where is it going to go? What is going to become of this?'

[1:03:10]

"…Like you said there was always that negative. There were people that would come in and say, 'You're not supposed to dictate what these artists do.' And we were trying not to, we were doing everything we could not to. But there were those that saw it as directing, herding artists, and we didn't want that at all…The dynamic was such that everyone gained from it, and grew from it. I know I learned a lot about the culture. Not only the Navajo culture; but it opens up your mind to all these other cultures that are out there, and you start to see the parallels, just everywhere. I don't care which [culture] you're talking about, if you have an open mind, you can see [the parallels]. That's what its about, in my opinion, having an open mind and trying to understand what someone else is saying, and trying to communicate where its coming from. You're trying to understand their personal experience and grow from that, if you can. To not say, 'No, that's not the way, it has to be this way, or no way.' I really struggled with that."

[1:06:00]

"We can pick any topic, and each one of us is going to approach it differently. Sometimes, depending on our history, our past, our experience, we may be quite adamant about our opinion. I don't envy you having to deal with that every day [at the museum]. We weren't really inhibited by that as much. We were pretty free and open. We weren't dictated to go a particular direction. We just let it go, threw it out there…I think what happened was earlier on we had more negative input. But as time went on and they started to see the entire picture, they started to see the Separation of Sexes, the holy wind. That's the Navajo culture. There's this whole collage and gathering of all this culture. And it's a reintroduction. It's beautiful. How eloquent—you look at a piece like that and you [realize] that Elsie can't tell you exactly what that means but she can weave it. And you look at it and you can learn and grow from it because that's her expression. It's not always language that is the best way to express something. It's imagery…When you view that collection as a whole, there's a grand interpretation of the Navajo culture, in such a wonderful way that it should go on. It should help promote the culture, which I think is incredibly rich and vibrant. It's a people's interpretation of many, many of the same things that everyone else sees, or believes. It just comes from a different experience."

[1:10:00]

--Barry is asked if he ever considered organizing his basket collection to construct something like a thematic or temporal narrative.

"That's putting it in our perspective. That's our timeline. When I see these things—we've been talking about all these different meanings…it's very difficult for me to say 'Here's the first one, here's the second one, here's the third one.' It is just so overwhelming, because the information just bombards you. I really don't know how to express that by laying these baskets out. You can [arrange them by] the creativity, the process of creativity, easily I think. That could be done—an evolution of the weave, the

technique, the styles and the creativity. But where it all lays out in the scheme of things? I don't think you can."

Final Thoughts [1:11:50]

"I hope it expands their consciousness. I hope it opens up a whole new world of understanding that there are different cultures out there. They may be perceivably primitive, but there's a whole lot there that they didn't have any idea about."

Part II – Kayla Black

[0:53]

--Kayla gives her clan names. "My dad's from Douglas Mesa, my mom's from Train Rock, and I stay in Halchita with my grandma, in Mexican Hat, Utah."

[1:40]

"When I was small my grandma raised me, and I used to watch her because I had nothing to do at home. I would see my grandma doing something, and I would look at her like, 'What are you doing, Grandma?' and she said, 'I'm trying to make some money.' I'd be sitting there and she would be splitting them, and there would be materials on the ground. I picked them up and I split them, and then I'd be happy: 'Look Grandma, I did it!' She'd say, 'Good that's good.' Then I would keep doing it. At age four, I learned how to split [sumac], I used to take of the skin and everything for my grandma. She used to be happy and tell everybody, 'This is my granddaughter, she knew how to do all these things when she was four years old.' I started getting older and I turned seven and my grandma said, 'I think you are at that age when you can start weaving baskets.' So she started showing me how to start and weave [baskets]. I used to try to start it but it was hard. I would try to get the hang of it. I used to poke my finger with the needle, and I used to cut myself. She'd say, 'That's good, that's what you call hard working.' So I just kept going. I finally made a traditional basket. I just started doing traditional baskets all the time. At age ten I started doing design baskets, and that's all I kept doing. Then I got older, and started going to school, and I kind of forgot about it. That's all. I've been traveling with my grandma, like when they told us to come [do demonstrations?] and I'd help [translate]: when she talks Navajo, I'd be there to explain what she said. I'll always be there for her."

[5:00]

"I think it was five or six years ago [that I made the Friendship basket]…I didn't remember this basket but my grandma reminded me. It's a Round Dance basket. I don't really know the story about this basket. My grandma said, 'You should make this one,' and I thought it seemed so hard. But she said 'Just do it.' I started doing it and she was showing me where to put the colors. She'd just be sitting there looking at it, and I'd keep weaving weaving weaving…It was kind of hard for me at first, but then I got into it…I think that's the time when I learned how to overstitch.

[7:50]

"I want to be self-employed too because I just recently had a son, seven months ago. His name is Jayden. He's really happy every day. He can't stand being without me. Every time he sees me he's always crying. When I need money I'll try to make [a basket]. Or when I'm going to have a ceremony, and I make a traditional basket and I give it to the medicine man. That's the only time I weave. I'm going to start one tomorrow, so I'm excited. [The traditional baskets] are easy. Now I'm teaching my sister. I think it's fun teaching other people. I would go out there and I would help other people, they want to know more about the baskets, and they want to learn how to make them. When I go out there, I would have sumac with me and try to show them, and they really love it. I did [teach at the high school] once, just one time, for show and tell. Everybody thought it was cool. In elementary I did the same thing when I was in second grade, a show and tell about baskets."

[10:30]

"I just want them to know how hard it is, and how long it took me, and how much pain it takes to do the basket, from poking and cutting yourself, and how long you have to sit up with your back straight and weave. Your arms go up and down you get really tired and exhausted. Sometimes you get frustrated, because you want it the way you want it to look, but sometimes it turns out different, and you get frustrated. I want them to know how hard it is. But we still like making [the baskets].

"I feel [relief when I'm done with a basket]. I take a big breath, and it feels good to take a big breath. That's how it feels when you're done with a basket. All that stress and everything, you don't have it anymore. It makes me proud that I accomplished something."

Part III – Sally and Mary Black

[14:00]

--Mary is asked how she worked with Virginia Smith; whether Virginia asked for new designs or whether she showed Mary some of her own designs.

[15:20]

Sally, translating: "I guess she used to get orders from [Virginia]. Some customers that come around to that Trading Post, if they like certain designs, they ask Virginia if Mary can do this kind of design. When my mom goes over there, Virginia asks her if she can do these kinds of designs…

"A lot of tourists used to [come to Virginia's Trading Post]. She had an [airstrip] right there. So a lot of people used to come down…They probably got their ideas from the rug designs."

Navajo Basket Weavers Footage – Disc 3 Transcription – Georgiana Simpson

[Timecode. Tape Letter]

-Some quotes are preceded by short phrases indicating a topic brought up by the interviewers.

-G = Georgiana.

[2:40. A]

Four traditional uses a family's baskets (jewelry, medicine bundle, ceremonial, food): "Not so much now in the house. In fact what you see is a lot of times it all gets combined together. You'll find people that will have their jewelry and medicine items together in the basket. When they have ceremonies, they will take that out, and they'll even cover the basket so it doesn't get damaged if they end up making the yucca-sud shampoo in it, or using it for food. So more what I've seen as far as in peoples homes is [basket usage] is condensed because a lot of times you don't find people having as many baskets in their house any more. The way you're describing it is more the way that it is in ceremony; you see those very distinct delineations. A lot of times a medicine man would be saying, 'I need four baskets.' It is because [usage is separated]. That's where you see it a lot more now, not only in the literature, but in contemporary use."

[4:50. A]

Baskets as food containers: "A lot of the women I was talking to didn't have the memory going back quite that far, or even a question I didn't ask. Certainly in the research, I found that it was being used that way. When you really go back to the early history of the basket, that is what you find. It was a container, it was meant for that. It's all about abundance coming from that basket. You have your jewelry in there, that means you have more jewelry. You have your food in there, there's more food. [The basket] really was that place of—not just safekeeping, but making sure that there was prosperity…"

[7:30. B]

Baskets imported from Mexico, etc: "They tried not to use them for ceremony—there's actually a picture in the back of the book—you have them being made over in Pakistan or down in Mexico. The Pueblo people loved to get the deep wedding baskets to be able to use in their dances, and they especially liked the deep ones because they could put a lot of food, or bread, or whatever was in the harvest. That's where I've seen more replacing [of authentic] baskets with some of the foreign-made baskets. By and large, all of the Navajo people I see really try to get a Navajo ceremonial basket. You have some of the traders who only keep baskets to sell to Navajo people, to have available to Navajo people for ceremony. Especially when you're out of this region, they are so hard to come by. I think there have been instances where [an imported basket] is just all they could get. But I still see people trying so hard to have a traditional basket."

[9:30. B]

"I find that the dichotomy between a weaver being able to make some decent money going through all that effort, and then for the person coming in just needing that basket for themselves—generally in the economy things are creeping up, and it just gets harder and harder for the average person to afford a basket."

[9:50. B]

Traditional design (12 points) for a ceremonial basket: "June Blackhorse and John Holiday both talked about that, said that's the best. Having a clockwise basket, even

sometimes the number of coils—you could get really specific with it. But then, you have so many of the baskets that aren't woven quite like that. I think most of the people have to be able to take whatever they can get; clockwise baskets are really hard to come by, of course, because you're looking at either a left-handed weaver, or some weavers who can weave it both directions. But those are really hard to come by just because you don't have many weavers who can weave in that direction."

[11:00. C]

Baskets woven for specific ceremonies (ie. baskets woven in a single day, basket by left-handed weavers, etc): "Evelyn Cly can do that…there was probably a time Etta Rock could, but I know she's really not doing the ceremonial baskets now. But Evelyn I know definitely did that. I know there were a couple other weavers who I had talked to…in fact Sarah Stanley, who taught down at the Monument Valley High School seemed like she was also able to do it. That's that ceremony; turning the mind back right, so they want that clockwise basket to bring their mind back to the traditional way and back to the safe place of home."

[13:00. C]

Techniques/stories concerning the finishing of a basket: "There's two ways to look at it, that was really interesting to me, and I'll talk about it archaeologically first: that herringbone finish is one of the ways you can directly link it back to the Anasazi coil style of weaving. They did a two-rod, in a bundle style, which the Navajo's did before they moved to a three-rod, and five-rod [style]. You would see that herringbone finish when you find those old Pueblo baskets. That's where I see that very direct link coming—the people that were here at the same time, and the technology moving from one group to the other. Traditionally, what they talk about is the woman sitting there, and she's weaving the basket, but she doesn't know how to finish the basket. So Talking God comes to her, and picks a sprig from the juniper tree—if you've ever looked at the leaf on the juniper, it has that pattern—and said, 'This is the way you need to finish the basket, to be like this.' That is the way that I've heard of that particular finish was Talking God telling that weaver how to finish the basket."

[14:35. C]

Baskets never being completed in front of men: "I don't know, that's not something [Betty Rock] talked to me about. There were all kinds of taboos. To me it's almost a marvel that weavers could ever finish a basket. At one time it's that they couldn't be weaving during menses, they had very specific times that they had to wait if a ceremony had happened. Different phenomena that would happen they couldn't weave—it was constantly like 'If this happens, you can't weave.' After you line up all these taboos you sit there and say 'When does the poor woman get to finish the basket?'…It's remarkable that it has survived. I feel that that was part of the Ute and Paiute weavers contributing [to the art form] because there were all these different reasons that were constricting a Navajo woman from weaving…"

[16:40. D]

What a basket's center represents: "There's actually a couple of ways to look at it…The references that I heard most were the landscape references, the mountains and the clouds and the earth and the water and the sky. Then that was the place of emergence into this world, right there at the center. John Holiday talked too about it being like your thumbprint, or the whorl at the top of your head. It's that same thing. It's *your* beginning, too…You have the landscape but then all of the Navajo people represented coming up through the middle [of the basket] but then its also about *your* beginning, and about the beginning of *your* life, very specifically. It's so rich, to look at it. When I started really delving into the basket; something that was so familiar, and just realizing there's all these beautiful layers to it. When I look at the basket now, there is so much more that I see in it, for myself personally, and just everything that is in it…"

[19:40 D-E]

"I was at the Heritage Language conference here a couple weeks ago, and this man was showing [a drawing] – it ended up being like a ye'ii figure, it had each of the worlds coming up as a disc, getting larger and larger to the head of the ye'ii, and then the body was the male and female going out, and then at some point they crossed. It was talking about not only their emergence, but the migrations. It was a beautiful way to represent it…"

[21:10. E] 'Jewel Baskets'

"John Holiday, he laid that out beautifully. But also in the research when they talk about the story of the Visionary. You have this story of the basket being the directional colors; they represent the stones from that direction. It's that idea; when that younger brother was following the rams…there were the different baskets that were representing in each of these areas. It's one of those things I came to realize later: all those colors were in the basket. That's the thing he would even say about himself. He would say, 'I try to wear all the colors during the day because that is bringing me balance.' All of those baskets finally came into the one basket, but at one time they were representative of each of the directions. When you go back into the old stories, that's where you would see them all separated into these different baskets. Peggy, who did that particular set, I thought it was beautifully done. That idea that you have all of [the baskets], and then they all come together, and they are all represented in what you see now in the [single] ceremonial basket.

"There were a lot more baskets at one point, that were representing the ceremonial basket—you have that 'Fire Dance' basket, for example. You have this idea that there were other baskets, at one time. You had what used to be the 'Sacred Meal' basket, with the crosses on it. But there was a point sometime in the earlier 1900s, where [those baskets] are no longer *the* ceremonial basket…When I visualize it I think about all those baskets just flowing into the one ceremonial basket now."

[24:20. E-F]

Basket with crosses: "They would call [the crosses] 'Spider Woman Crosses.' There was debate as I was talking to different people about how many crosses should be on there. You would see in the older pictures, sometimes they would appear with three crosses. Mary Black said they should have four crosses. When you look into the old

imagery of the baskets being used in the ceremony, that was the basket that was holding the mush, the ceremonial mush, most often. That's the one that you would see pictured. So it was interesting to me—that question, which did not get answered: Why, at some point, was [that basket] no longer the one to [be used in that way]? Why did they all blend into that one basket that is the ceremonial basket? You would see the other ceremonial basket in the ceremonies; that was the one that would be holding the jewelry or the medicine, or whatever its function was. But there were other baskets. Of course the water basket…"

Interviewer: "So are you saying that the spider woman basket was used originally and then in the 1900s it went to the present ceremonial basket incorporating the four colors and directions?"

G.: "The different color baskets, they only existed in the oral history. It never was that they were making those separate colored baskets for ceremony; that was only something that was represented in the oral history and Peggy wanted to represent that very literally. That's what she did. So they never appeared that way, as far as being used separately like that. Even though when you go into the oral history, they talk about those baskets being made of jet, or mother of pearl. That's whey they're the jewel baskets, because they were being made of precious things. What I'm saying is that you had a time when what we look at as being a ceremonial basket was there in the ceremony along with this other basket with the crosses. They were working in tandem. The Fire Dance basket that I mentioned is a very specific and specialized basket that is specially woven for Fire Dance. Typically, if a medicine man knew how to weave it he would do it, or there would be somebody [else], but it's a very small, specialized basket that was made for very specifically for that ceremony. There's a picture of it in the book, but its not one that you have in collection. This one that I saw and photographed had been made about sixty years ago."

[28:00. F-G]

Interviewer: "So is one of the important aspects of the Navajo Basket Renaissance that the Spider Woman Cross pattern was revived and begun to be woven again?"

G: "Yeah, and you had different waves of it. For example, when you had Chin Smith, who was working with the weavers—she was reintroducing baskets to them from a very specific collection, baskets from the late 1800s. So you had this big variety of designs that were being done. Bill Beaver was reintroducing those designs [too]…as far as here, that was also happening, but then it blossomed into this idea—they were looking at these older baskets. They looked at Apache designs and brought them in. They looked at Odom designs and brought them in. But then they were finally looking at their own stories, and really focusing in on their own stories. And that is literally when Mary Black walked in with that Fire Dance basket… 'This is showing the Fire Dance.' That was something that was totally new and totally different as far as drawing directly from Navajo ceremony and stories."

Interviewer: "Do you know where that Fire Dance basket is?"

G: "It's actually in a private collection…Russell Griswald has it in his private collection. He would let you photograph it. It was something that a medicine man had brought into him years ago. When he showed it to me, I had read about it, and it had the explanation. It's a small basket. It's mostly dark, with a light rim. You have strands

coming off in the four directions, and then typically it has an eagle down feather that was tied to each of those ends. I didn't think I'd ever see one. He happened to pull it out and ask what it was, and I said 'Oh my goodness, this is a Fire Dance basket."

[32:00. G-H]

Interviewer: "Were the medicine men in favor of the ye'ii rugs and the sand paintings?" [ie. sacred images being woven into baskets, etc.]

G: "We didn't go into the other areas. One of the things that I did when I was trying to trace back into the history and the archaeology of the baskets is that I had pictures of the baskets that were woven in the late 1800s, and even older baskets that they have down at the Museum of Indian Art and Culture in Santa Fe. I was showing them pictures of these baskets, and there were some designs that they recognized and some that they didn't. Finally they said, 'None of these are the ceremonial baskets. Only this one is the ceremonial basket,' [referring to] the one that we think of now…I imagine if I had asked that question, they probably would have said, 'No, we don't think they should be woven.' You have the same thing really happening in the baskets as what happens in the ye'ii rug, but even more so. The sand paintings would almost be more of a direct correlation because you have very specific stories that are being told…Steve and I have both had people walk up to us saying 'Those baskets shouldn't be woven, we don't think that's right.' The artists here in the area, what they think is right, is bumping right up on the edge of what is considered appropriate. That's what I think is one of the most interesting things about this movement, with the story baskets. You have the artist expressing this idea, and in a certain sense, it hearkens back to what Hostin Claw was doing with the sand painting rugs. He knew that it was all going to get lost, because he was the one who knew all these ceremonies, and he was the last practitioner in a lot of cases. That's were he was weighing, and had to ask himself what was more important: carrying this forward, so that there's some record, or do you just let it go?"

[36:00. I-J]

"When I was sitting down with [June Blackhorse] two weeks before he passed away, he said, 'I need to sit down and talk to you now about the clans. I need to tell you this.' And I said 'OK, let's set this up,' and then he dies, and that's it. That's gone. John Holiday, it's the same thing. He felt like he needed to share all this information because he had seen all these medicine people that had passed on, and all of their wealth of knowledge is just gone. He believes strongly in carrying it forward. It's sort of an interesting thing. I know he has this feeling about the baskets, but at the same time, he also recognizes that need to be able to somehow transfer that ceremonial knowledge on to the next generation."

Interviewer: "Some of the weavers we've talked to actually go to medicine men and ask them about weaving particular things, or they get a blessing before or something…"

G: "They do [take precautions]. Mary Black, when she wanted to start moving forward with this, her husband had been a medicine man, so Mary had a lot of that knowledge. She's really the initial one who was giving that permission to move forward and do this. Again, I think she just felt strongly about being able to represent these stories somehow."

[42:20. J-K]

"…How do you bring your tradition forward? You have modern life and what happens to the tradition? How do we preserve it? Your art changes based on what technologies are available at the time, and in a way it's like the passing on of the oral history. It changes too, because of the technology that wasn't available 500 years ago…"

"One of the things I realized when I was doing the book was that I feel like it opens the conversation about [the baskets]. Other people are going to step forward, and just like you were doing with me, saying, 'This is the story I was told. This is what my grandmother was telling me.' Then you have all these other conversations that come in about it. We ran into the same thing with John Holiday. A lot of his Navajo is going back in ceremonial terms, which a lot of people don't ordinarily know, and where he was coming from, and his age…I had to be very careful who was there interpreting just because of his Navajo and the terms he would be using that a younger person wouldn't understand." [pause in recording]

[47:00. L]

G. speaking about a basket fragment found near Dinetah (pg. 18 in her book): "…the tools [in the basket] were smaller, so its unclear as to whether the people were smaller, or it was for a child or someone who was apprenticing and learning…"

[49:00. L]

Double ceremonial baskets: "That was an innovation of the renaissance. That was one of the issues that came up. Sally Black for example, is making the giant baskets, and then they were making the very tiny baskets. The medicine people are saying, 'Wait a minute, you're messing with the world, you're messing with people's lives.' If you make that little basket, it means you're shrinking your life. So it was just all part of that experimentation."

[50:00. L-M]

Creation of the jewel basket and the teaching of the ceremony going hand in hand: "Exactly. The idea of those jewel baskets—there are certain stories that talk about their creation, whether it's the Visionary, for example…This even happens with other stories…There is a story that actually comes around from a Ute story: It talks about how Monster Slayer had gone out in one direction, after killing Kicking Rock Monster, and he finds the first basket. Then he goes another direction and he finds the next basket, and another direction and he finds the next basket, and finally the fourth basket. When you see that reference, for example, of the baskets being made like that in a sequence, it is like a reference to the creation of the basket…and it's also that the basket was there, that it came from the gods, it was there. It was that gift that was brought for the people to use in ceremony, for their protection. That's why the basket is important, because it is about that place of protection, whether its representative of home or a sacred spot, a safe place to put things, or whether its representative of the different directions. It's one of those things that was there from the beginning, when the gods said, 'Here. This is part of what you need to have in order for you to be doing things properly in your life.'

Interviewer: “So from that comes the danger of changing that, or altering that, and adding things to it.”

G: “Yeah, and again it’s very difficult. The idea of the ceremonial basket, that one basket being the only basket, it’s a fairly recent idea. If you were to look at it in a more sociological way, you have the Dine’e crashing up against this other culture that is just pushing, and I imagine people saying, ‘If we’re going to keep ourselves safe, and protect our knowledge and traditions, we have to really define what [our culture] is. It is this basket, it is this ceremony.’ That’s from an outsider’s perspective, trying to look at why in the late 1800s you could see this spreading out of designs. Then it comes down to the ceremonial basket, and that travels along for 30-40 years, and all of a sudden you have the weavers again saying, ‘What if we do that?’ [These baskets] did not then travel back into ceremony, but it was a more artistic and secular type of representation.”

[55:30. M-N]

Interviewer: “Have you been wanting to do a book about ceremonial baskets for quite a while?”

G: “You know, the writing was totally backwards. It still feels backwards. It started with writing the book about collecting authentic Indian art. I’ve always had a passion for the education [about] the artwork. And as you pointed out, the love I have [for the artwork], and trying to convey that in the best way that I can. It really first started with this collecting book. When I was doing that book—Originally, I was coordinating it for the Indian Arts and Crafts Association, where at that time I was only going to be writing the introduction and the chapter on the baskets. I had brought together several authors, but then the author that was going to do fetishes dropped out, because of a publishing conflict, and the author that was going to write on the rugs dropped out. So I ended up writing half of this book…but then we just started talking about [this book] around here. We thought we’d write this little book about ceremonial baskets. Next thing I know, I start doing the research and I’m just going deeper and deeper…It just had it own life. A lot of it was starting out with my ideas of what a ceremonial basket was, then delving into it and finding so many layers to go into to tell the story.”

[59:00. N]

How Chin worked with the weavers: “She was definitely providing ideas because there were images of [specific baskets] being woven in the late 1800s and wanting to bring that back.

Interviewer: “So she was interested in reviving Navajo designs that had existed in the past and form there, Mary and Sally took the next steps towards experimentation with the size and the patterns.”

G: “Yeah. Mary and Sally were seeing some of these other baskets, like the Apache baskets, and thinking that it would be interesting as an artist to experiment with that. It really was that connecting point from weaving the more traditional [baskets] to everything out here [here and now] and being able to represent it.”

[1:01:16. N-O]

Ute and Paiute influences: “That was one of the most interesting things for me to trace. When I was looking at the technology of the weaving, looking at how [the baskets]

are made, and why they are made like this…You start going back and looking at how people are coming into this country right here, who was here and when. When you look at the type of weaving the Anasazi were doing, and then trace from that to what contemporary Pueblo people are weaving, you see this divergence between [the two]…

"As I was saying the other day when these folks who were interviewing me wanted to make this very direct link with the Hopi. You can only do that with the plaited baskets now. Hopi coil baskets; the technology came from the south. Hopi wickerwork came from the south…Up until about 1820 they still wove that two-rod and bundle coil, but then for some reason they stopped and it remained the bundle coil that they do now. So where did that two-rod and bundle style go? At the same time you are looking at these Navajo baskets that are coming out of the Palluche cache, down at the Museum of Indian Art and Culture. These are very distinctly Navajo baskets that were woven in the 1700s, they were used as a headdress, the Fingemouth would use this basket headdress and there's no question it is what it is: the holes cut out in the middle; it has the wooden attachments to it; it's painted on the inside. You look at the technology and the weaving of that basket, and it could just as easily have been woven by an ancestral Pueblo. That's what I mean: you're making this very direct link right there, seeing that style of basket being woven."

[1:10:05. O-P]

"In this book I'm specifically talking about the Navajo people. But if you look at a Paiute basket today, the Paiute weavers like Rosanne Whiskers, [their baskets] really look like what an Anasazi basket looked like. They are the real tiny coils. So you have these people that were here—you have the Paiuate that are ranging all the way down the western U.S., into northern Arizona, you have the Ute people that are here, you have the Navajo people that are coming here. These people are here at the same time that the Puebloan people were here before they abandoned this area. Of course, in talking to the medicine men you have the oral history of the basket coming over from the Ute people too. You have these different pathways: oral history, archeological records, stories from people that are here. Where is the basket coming from? For me, that was the hardest chapter for me to write, that one probably took me two years just trying to sort through all of that [information], but recognizing that you just had people that were here at the same time, and you had technology transfer that is happening, and a sharing of ideas back and forth. It emerges, going from ancestral Puebloan to Paiute, Ute and Navajo with the coil baskets…

"There was a great demand for the baskets, so it is interesting when you go to the Paiute weavers and they talk about the baskets they weave for the Navajo people. There's this huge demand, especially when a lot of the Navajo weavers had all these taboos and couldn't weave; yet there is a great demand for baskets for ceremony. You have this need from your neighbors to provide something for you. So the Paiutes have coil baskets that they weave for the Navajo people, but then they have their old-timey baskets, which is totally different basket that looks like Paiute baskets as you trace their baskets all the way up the west coast. So they had different motivations going on for weaving their baskets: what they needed traditionally, and then what they could provide for their neighbors. I think for the Ute people its different because they were weaving that [ceremonial-style] coil basket as much for themselves as for their neighbors. They had their own uses for the

basket. But they also had other types of baskets that were very specifically theirs. The Dene'e, they needed the help to have all the baskets that they needed, that's how their neighbors contributed."

[1:11:00. P]

"[Navajo basket weaving persisted here] because it had the opportunity to persist here, because there was a lot of support for it through here. A big part is the materials; what is there."

Navajo Basket Weavers Footage – Disc 5 – Betty Rock, Joann Johnson, Weaving Demonstration

[Time code. Tape letter]

Part I - Betty Rock – Joann Johnson (JJ) translating

[2:50. A]

JJ: "I'll interpret the story she told from the beginning. She was saying the way that basket weaving came into our family…My grandmother, Ida Bittman, she was the first weaver. She went out and collected some sumac, and she brought the sumac home and split the sumac, and took off the bark when it was all dried, and she started to work with the sumac, to make a basket. So the only thing that she could go on was the basket that they had at home. It was called *on'a tin'ee* (?); that means the basket that has sustained the family, that can be used over and over and over again. So that's the only thing that she had. But she didn't have the colors, she didn't have the knowledge, how to do the colors, so all she did was she made a plain white basket, since the only color that she had was white. She made two of them. That was the beginning of basket weaving in our family, how it started. Ida Bittman was my great great grandmother. So it was her grandmother, and in between us is Grace, my grandmother. So this weaving is generations back.

"I guess my great grandfather went out to cut some more sumac for her, since she made a basket already. So this time they wanted to do some colors. So they used … I don't know what it's called, to make a black…it's a dye, I think it's from a rock, a mineral, they have to crush it and I think they put ash in it, from what I understand, to make that black color. I think it's called black stone or something…and then the red, it's a plant root called *tet stah'zie* (?), and my grandfather used to make moccasins, and he used that color [on them] to get the reddish color, and I use it in my basket weaving too sometimes, I stole that from him…that's the red that they use. And it comes out a pinkish-reddish color. Then she used those colors, she made it into a basket. Now that she had her colors, she made it into this design for her next basket."

[7:30. B]

--Betty asked for an interpretation of the design of the wedding basket.

JJ: "This basket is made by my grandmother Grace…[Betty] weaves ceremonial baskets, and she'll put designs on some of the ceremonial baskets. She does some picture ones too. What she's saying is that this is our Mother Earth, right here on the bottom [center], and then these are the clouds, and the rainbow, and then the clouds again, and

the top-finish, the idea is from the juniper plant, you know if you take a piece of it, they go back and forth. That was the idea for the top part…My grandmother was left-handed, so this is woven in the correct direction, in Navajo terms…It has more value…"

[11:25. C]

JJ: "She said she learned how to weave when she was eight years old. She learned how to weave from her mother, Grace, and she learned how to weave pitch-pot too. And then she learned how to weave rug from her *na'lii*, that's Wanda Rock, when she was twelve years old. She still weaves rugs too. She learned how to weave [small rugs] first. And then she talked about her family. There is twelve kids in her family, and the first four were raised by Wanda Rock—there's Jackson, Jack, Mary, and her. Their clan, she said her mom, her name is Grace Rock, and then her dad is Ya'zie (?) Rock. She talked about when she learned, when she was eight years old. She talked about her other sister Peggy, she is a well-known weaver too, but she's up in Montana with her daughter."

[14:20. C]

[off camera] "She says she doesn't weave the *ye'ii* because her grandmother told her that its not supposed to be put on a basket, and only on rugs. It's a taboo to her, she doesn't do that."

JJ: "That's why I don't do that [as well]. With her standing there, I can't do ye'ii. She does it on the rugs, but she doesn't do it on a basket. That's one thing my grandmother always insist, that we can't do it on a basket."

[16:40. D]

[off camera] "Our cultural specialist told me that the traditional basket always has the seven clouds inside, and then usually twelve on the outside. A traditional ceremonial basket, that's what you look for when you're purchasing a basket. I was telling [Betty] that sometimes there's more, maybe there's five clouds inside, but she said that it just depends on the size of the basket, how it's woven. [Betty] said if you want you can always make the coil on the inside smaller or larger, just so the pattern comes out the same."

JJ: "I heard that before. You're supposed to have twelve on top. I heard six on the bottom, but I never heard seven. I don't know if its true…In Navajo culture everything is usually odd [numbered] anyway…"

[19:50. E]

--Betty is asked to talk about her 'variation basket'.

JJ: "The red and the turquoise and yellow and black are all commercial dyes…She said she just came up with that design, the colors, she said she just went and did it. She said she just did it for the picture. She's really good at those kinds of baskets. She'll just sit there and come up with some kind of design. She's really good at it. It comes from her head. Not like me, where I sketch it out. She just sits there and does it."

<u>Weaving demonstration</u> (21:40. E – end of Part I, including tape F, G, H)

JJ: "She says you have to clean off [the sumac] to get it the right size, in order for it to work. If you don't get it the right size [the baskets] get all crooked…She talks about how they made the oval [in the center] way before there was what [tools] she has. They just took a little bit of wet juniper; I guess you clean it all off and make it all brown, and nice and clean. Then they used nail, they put a sharpened nail down to make an oval. I didn't know that…

"She says she used to make baskets really fast. Now she doesn't, because her hands are tired or something. She used to make a basket maybe in two days, one would pop out this size. Now it takes her about a week. Before, I remember when I was growing up, she used to start a basket in the morning, the next day she'd be doing this part [the edge]. Now I think it takes her about four, or five days to get it all done."

Part II - Joann Johnson

--Joann says she prefers to weave pictorial, abstract and geometric baskets, but that she doesn't do baskets involving narratives.

[0:40. A]

"My clan is *azet'lana* and *ta'chinii*—I guess you're supposed to say my *che'e* and my *na'lii*---my *che'e* are *azet'lana* and my *na'lii* are *ta'chinii* (??). That's just the way you introduce yourself. So that's how I am, as a lady, as a Navajo woman, that's my clan. I'm from Monument Valley and I grew up there. I live there now. I learned how to weave when I was eight years old from my mother…I graduated [high school] in 1982 and then I went to college at CEU and then I went to Southern Utah University. I was away for a while, doing my educational thing. I studied business and history. Then I came back in 1992 and I picked basket weaving back up.

"When I came back I noticed that they were doing a lot of different things [from] in the past, with traditional stuff that you do, with the ceremonial basket, and the pattern was the basic pattern that you did. When I came back they were doing pictorial baskets. I thought, 'Wow, this is something new.' So I decided to do it. Since then, I started doing that. I got my own ideas and integrated them into the baskets. Occasionally I do [traditional baskets], but not a lot."

[3:30. A]

"With my weaving, what I do first is sketch it out. I have a sketchpad, and I use colored pencils. I go and sketch it out first, and from there I weave it into the basket. I know what the finished product is going to look like before I start doing it…I work out the colors…basically what I do is I go around and look at things, see the shadow and how [the colors] blend, and how its going to look good to me. It comes to me naturally, how its going to come out, and then I play with the colors, and I go from there."

[33:00. I]

"I don't do [baskets] with stories—that's the Blacks' department, I don't do those. Mostly I just do geometric, I work with colors and anything that will jump out at you. I do things that are abnormal, something that is a little bit different. That's just my weaving; I like to do those kinds of things."

[22:50. F]

"When I started weaving I used to weave a lot…I used to get up in the morning and do it, then I'd quit, then do it again. I'd do it in the morning until midday, sometimes I'd do other things, and I'd be weaving in between. We have sheep and horses and cows…sometimes I'd tend to those. Then at night, I'd do a lot a weaving. I'll be watching TV, and I'd be weaving and weaving. I stop about maybe ten and I go to sleep. Now, I do it less than I used to.

"I have some favorite colors that I use a lot. You'll see them in the Dawn to Dusk series, and you'll see them in the [Landscape Series], those are my main colors that I use a lot. I try to intertwine them. I'm well known for great colors… other than that I just use what I can find…It's just commercial fabric dye that I use. On the Dawn to Dusk series you'll see a beige color; that's a natural plant dye. It's the only natural plant dye in there. It's kind of like a cocky paige color. I use Mormon Tea, that's really good, and the sumac, the bark from the outside. I learned that from my mother. Elsie might be the only [other] one that does a lot of coloring…"

Specific Baskets – Descriptions

[4:20. A] 'Dawn to Dusk' series of 5 baskets

"That was the beginning of my career in basket making, I suppose. Steve and I try to come up with new ideas. One day I came in here and he said 'Why don't we get all this color mixed up in this thing, and see how it goes, maybe reflect the light form morning to dusk.' That was the idea…If you look around where I live, there's all these colors that you see are surrounding you. Most of the colors that you see are from around here, they're integrated into this basket. If you've ever been out to Monument Valley, you'll see these colors on the back of the mesa where I live…The purple you see at Granite Ridge, where the Mexican Hat is, [and also] the rock formations in Monument Valley. If its going to rain, the rock turns purple. You'll see all these colors out there…The peach and the reddish color, you see them all over in the canyons where I live."

[7:10. B]

"With the reflection of the light, [the series] had to go out to five…it starts with the first basket, its just really light. Then gradually, it gets really dark…a lot of people wanted one, so it got to the point where I just put them all into one big basket…I do them on special order, I guess we've been getting a lot of requests…I've done this twice, but they're not all alike. I try to not to copy exactly the way it is, I try to make it a little bit different. They're 3 rod [baskets] too; there's a difference between three rods and five rods with the weaving. With five, they get to be really big, and thick. With three, they are just really slender and delicate."

[9:45. B] 'Flag Set' ordered set of 4 baskets

"Right after Sept. 11…I went to Washington D.C. with Steven and his wife and his daughter, and I took one of my sisters with me out there. After I came back Steve showed me this design—its Damian Jim's design—Steve said 'Look at this, can you do

this?' and I said 'Sure.' So this was a thing that Steve and I wanted to get done…the design was already made…

"[The red swirls] are just part of the flag, just to give it a little bit of a different spin than normal stripes—they're kind of boring. When you're an artist, you have to make it a little bit more interesting with the swirls…When you look at a flag, you know how its flying in the wind. That's the idea, to give it a little more flair…

"Steve and I called [this series] the 'broken bones' flag—you know how after Sept. 11, Americans' hearts were all shattered. This [image] is in pieces. The next one is not completely done; you have part of the stars and part of the stripes…by the time you put all the pieces [together], you have the whole flag, the image in your heart…I just wove it. Damian did the whole design…I tried to get it really neat. I broke my needle on that one."

[15:20. D] 'American Flag'

"This flag is Damian Jim's design again. Steve took it to Washington D.C. to the [National Museum of the American Indian]. I was invited out there for a whole week, in 2010…This is the flag that they donated to the museum out there. I think it was auctioned off or something, and some lady bought it. After that there was a ton of requests for that. Occasionally I'll do some, but not all the time…it's a well-known basket, a lot of artists have done it, I'm not the only one."

[17:35. D] 'Ceremonial Flag'

"This is another design from after my trip to Washington D.C. A lot of people were requesting that I do more flags, so this is one of the ones that I came up with. It's just a ceremonial basket on the bottom, and I put the flags on there, and then finish up with the ceremonial basket on top…I had to leave an opening, can't close it up. If it's ceremonial, you have to do that."

[19:50. D] 'Mosaic/Rainbow'

"This basket is Damian Jim's design. This basket is called a rainbow. I changed the color a little bit, to my taste, from the original one that Damian had…its like a kaleidoscope, it changes color…Damian did a lot of designs on the early ones, and if I don't like the colors, I change it to the way I want it. I think it irritated him a little bit. I did that with this one. So you can see the reflection of the yellow and the red and the blue, and the black and the gray to work in the detail. There's a lot of outlining on this one; that takes a long time when you're weaving. The black outlines on those, it takes forever. If you really look at it you can see the outline.

"This is one of the designs that my grandmother [saw]; she came by when I was weaving. She said 'What are you doing?' She couldn't see very well, she had to hold it up to her face to look at it; she was going blind. She knew I was doing these things. She goes, 'You are crazy to make these huge baskets!' This was a huge basket. It took me a while to do it."

[25:50. G] 'Landscape' Series (II) – Delicate Arch, Ship Rock, Monument Valley

"This is the second series. Before this, the first series were the same but in plain color; instead of these colors it would just brown and maybe a little yellow. This is

Damian Jim's design. When I first got the design it was in plain colors…basic, solid colors. Steve said 'Why don't you add your own spin, make it a little more interesting. Jazz it up the way you do it.' So I went home and I got my sketchpad out and I started working on it with the colored pencils…I was sitting outside watching the land formations and trying to get an idea, and I saw the purple and the gray and the reflection of the light, and I came up with that, the Monument Valley [basket]. The beige color, you see it in there. The same thing with Ship Rock [and Delicate Arch]…The way I understand Damian's designs, I think he got them from some photographer…"

Final Thoughts

[35:00. I]

"Basket weaving, in my family, is passed down from generation to generation. The way I describe myself is that I learned to weave from my mother, and she learned from her mother—Ida Bittman, she's the first weaver. It is just something that I try to keep preserved, and the way I'm preserving is through my basket weaving. This can be seen for many years to come. The only thing I can say is that baskets are part of me, and if you like it, enjoy it."

Navajo Basket Weavers Footage – Disc 6 Transcription – Alicia Nelson

[Timecode. Tape Letter]

Specific Basket Descriptions

[3:33. E] 'Color Me' basket

"Steve and I were working on some designs, wondering about the next basket to make, and what design would stand out, and this was one of them that we worked on [together]… (Interviewer: "Was it inspired at all by the ceremonial pattern?") "Yes. We were working on some of the patterns out of several different baskets that we put together into one basket…We were thinking of a horse blanket; the interlocking border."

[5:40. F] 'The Four Seasons'

"There are a lot of stories to this basket. The tree of life, from the roots all the way to the tip. Also the four seasons, winter, spring, summer and fall, also the four sacred colors for north, south, east, and west. It was very, very challenging; it was very hard. I started it several times and had to start again to get this basket going. It was very hard. I did it one time and it didn't turn out the way we were planning, but I tried again, and it came out like this. This design is symmetrical; I try to make my baskets even.

"[I have made] about four, maybe five, but that's it. I haven't made any more after that…It is [hard on my hands]. The rod size is like a fourth of the regular size that people use. It's really, really fine and thin. They're deep inside the sumac bush, I have to crawl way deep inside to get these small, skinny rods. They're very fine. It is hard to make. When I started learning the skinny rods I poked my fingers thousands of times, and I finally got used to it. There is a lot of detail and a lot of rounds on a smaller size basket but you can see the design more clearly.

"I was using the regular big rods that other weavers use. I came across a basket made by some other tribes, [saw] how skinny their rounds were. I was thinking, 'What if I did a basket like that, using sumac?' So I tried it. The first one didn't come out too good, because I kept poking my fingers. I didn't know where the rods were. The second one I started getting better, and the third one turned out really nice, and I stuck with it.

[14:45. G] 'The Night Gaze'

"This design is coming from a sand painting design. I take sand painting pictures, sand painting designs, and I translate it into a basket. I try to put as many details as I can on each sand painting basket that I make, putting as much colors as I can, to brighten the basket. Particularly this one, with the dark black background, I try to put bright, bright colors so it can stand out. This is like the fire design, fire color design.

"[I always put an opening on my baskets]. Most of my sand painting design baskets, and some baskets with traditional basket designs, I'll put an opening. The rainbow I try to put into every sand painting basket that I make. [The plants] represent four sacred plants: tobacco, beans, corn, and squash…[The opening] is traditional, I guess. I don't think you're supposed to close a design that has something to do with ceremonies. There's two ye'iis on each side, and then two eagle ye'iis.

"When I got good at [weaving] I showed Mary my basket. She saw it and she said, 'It looks like beadwork.'…The rainbow doesn't have a particular color set, as long as there is a rainbow in there, it doesn't matter what color it is. I put yellow and orange in it because most of that yellow and orange is inside the basket. To bring out the color, I put it on the outside."

[19:40. H] 'Separation of the Sexes'

"This is a storytelling basket. I'm not particularly familiar with the story, by detail…The male and the female a long time ago got into an argument. The ladies said they can do everything a man can do. So the men went across the river and stayed on that side, and the ladies on [the other] side. They lived like that for quite some time. The ladies understood they couldn't live without a man, and the men learned that they couldn't live without women. [The blue is] the river. [The squiggly lines] came with the design, I think its just design. It might be the trials and tribulations that they went through.

"[I worked on the design with] Steve and Barry. Most of my baskets I work with them, when we're coming up with designs…That's the coyote, the monster, and the woman, at the bottom. On top are the medicine men, and the men.

"…This is also another fine weave one. It's not very big, but it has a lot of rounds, and it has a lot of detail…most of the baskets that I weave, the regular rods are like [a yard long]. But on my finer weaves the rods are only [6-8 inches], smaller baskets with a lot of rounds in them; a lot of details in smaller baskets. I don't have a favorite type; I just weave whatever designs come up…[I come up with designs by] talking it over with whoever wants a certain type of basket. Just driving somewhere, or I hear a story from somewhere, or looking through books—just about anywhere, I come up with designs, and I translate it onto a basket…I've heard some stories from other medicine men and women. Most of [the designs] come from there, or from stories from books that I've read about the past."

[50:00. O] ‘Obama Basket’

“That’s a huge basket. That was 34-36 inches. That design came from a lady named Willa Sissen (?) she’s from Santa Fe, NM. She wanted me to make a special basket for her, and I tried asking her what kind of design she likes, what kind of stories she wanted to me to put on a basket. We talked about it for months, and she couldn’t decide on what I should make…She emailed me, ‘What about an Obama theme?’ I said, ‘What’s an Obama theme, what do you want me to put on there?’ So I called her up on the phone and we were discussing it. She wanted maybe the White House, or the U.S. Capital, or both, or what he stands for, what his views are, maybe put him in there somehow. Those were her ideas. I took my own designs—I was talking it over with Jonathan. I did put the Capitol in there, I put Obama on the bottom, his face at the bottom. I put the world right in the middle, for his view of the world. And then I put friendship—people on the sides holding hands. They are supposed to be holding hands but I couldn’t get them close enough. I put the words ‘Peace, Love, Hope, Charity, Faith…’ I put the eagle going all the way around, hugging the whole thing.”

General Thoughts

[12:50. G]

“I learned [basket weaving] from several different people. Sally Black, she taught me how to take apart the material to get it ready for basket weaving. Mary Black showed me how to weave, taught me how to weave the basket. Loraine and Jonathan Black taught me how to put designs on baskets. But that was regular baskets. I didn’t know how to do regular baskets, and they taught me the order of the clouds on a regular, traditional basket. The designed ones, I came up with myself. I started working on that on my own, the designs, pictorials.

“Some baskets with designs I’m not supposed to do on a basket, I get a cleansing ceremony done for myself. There is a design you’re not supposed to do, I made it, I put it on a basket because it was ordered that way. Afterwards I got a ceremony done.”

[26:20. J]

“I [sell] through shops, museums, private collectors…trading posts. I’ve done some shows where I gave out some cards, and they contact me that way and ask for certain baskets…I’ve also worked with several individuals who go out and sell.”

[29:00. J] ‘Squaw Dance/Enemy Way/Nadaa’

“I went to Ship Rock Fair, and I was walking with my mom, and she said, ‘Let’s go visit the song and dance.’…So we walked over, it was way in the back, and I was watching them and that’s how I got my idea for this.

"Most of that dance is during a ceremony called Nadaa. That's what I used here, that's what the fire represents in the middle; it's at a Nadaa, a squaw dance. There are a lot of baskets that are used during that ceremony, so I put that border on top.

"Again here I used my finer rod again, this is another sort of small piece. I tried to put as much detail as I can about how they are dancing, and the movement of their legs, and their back…"

[31:00. K]

Interviewer suggests renaming the basket 'Enemy Way' (Nadaa) referring to the ceremony. (The word 'squaw' is seen by some as derogatory.) Alicia consents.

[35:20. L]

"I learned [basket weaving] in 1996 and 1997, in between those two years. I was 21 [at that time]. I'm still working on some. Most of the materials are a little bit scarce right now, so I haven't gone out to get more. But I do have some, and I have one basket that I'm working on right now…

"Most people [who sell rods at flea markets, etc.] don't know exactly at what time of the year, or what kind to get. They just cut anyhow, anywhere, anytime, and they sell them. But real weavers, the weavers like me, know where to gather them, and where to go to gather it, and what time of the year to gather those rods. That's mainly the reason we don't buy them from the people who are selling them…[I need the finer sumac rods] for my weaving. For the splitting that we do, I usually do that in the wintertime. I gather in the fall and winter. The spring and summer are not good to gather materials because they're very fragile; they're watery and barely growing again. When you weave with it they just break. There's a lot of traveling with gathering materials. It's like a three, four, five-hour drive from where we live. I can't be specific about where we go, but along rivers, streams, washes, canyons…

"There's a lot of mosquitoes, bugs, snakes, tarantulas, spiders—they're all there in the bushes. You just have to be really careful when you're gathering. The mosquitoes are the worst, its really bad."

[39:40. M] Ideas for next baskets

"I have several orders in line. I'm working on an arrowhead basket right now, a regular basket with arrowheads sewn in. I like to work on those ones, I like the way it comes out…

"I depend on [weaving], I try to keep it alive. I find new sources, I try to go out and find new people, to force my art out. [I'm making a living] off the baskets.

"I've learned rugs when I was 7 years old, from my mother. I was weaving them up until I met this family of basket weavers [the Blacks?]; then I put the rug away and I started with baskets."

[42:10. N] Asked if she's considered a website for her work.

"There's a guy in Flagstaff who ordered a basket, as soon as I gave it to him he ordered another piece, and then I finished that piece and gave it to him and he order another of that same basket. I don't know how many I made, maybe seven or eight of them. I got tired of making that same design. So a website, I don't think so…

"I work with a lot of different designs: pictorials, geometric, sand paintings, traditional, rug designs on baskets. I've done probably every design that I can think of. I only do one at a time. If I start several I end up working on one, and then I start another one, and then start another, and then I don't want to finish it—it ruins it for me. So I try to stick with only one.

"I have three [children]: a 14 year old daughter named Kaitlin. My son, Quentin, he's 11, going to be 12 next month, and Emery, he's 19 months old. I tried to teach my daughter how to weave a basket, she gave up, said, 'I'm sticking with school.'…My son, he's very attentive, he wants to learn something and then he changes his mind right after. It's hard to teach him anything. He likes to watch, but not to learn. My youngest always spills my water so I don't think he's going to learn."

[45:30. O] What does Alicia find most enjoyable about weaving?

"Starting a new project with a different design. I start a new project and I think about it, I think that this one is going to be nice, and I keep weaving and finish it, and then I think of another design, and I think this one is going to be nice, and I keep weaving. Different patterns, different designs. Doing the same basket, or the same design [I don't' like]."

[46:20. O] Asked if she sketches her designs out.

"It depends. If I can remember the design, I keep it in my head and start weaving. If it's really hard for me to keep the design in my head, I draw it out on paper so I won't forget how I saw the design. So I draw it out; I use graph paper."

[48:06. O]

"I worked with [Damian Jim's] designs on some of my baskets. I've never met him before. Some of his designs I did on my baskets using my own colors and adding some new designs onto it. So [my work] is mixed with some of his designs…I think 'Separation of the Sexes' is one of those…

"Some of my baskets I upload onto Facebook and I share my pictures that way."

Final Thoughts

[55:30. Q]

"How much work goes into making a basket, [visitors should] understand that. Most Navajos around, they think a regular traditional basket is like fast, easy and not hard work. When you give them a price they get angry, they want the price really low because that's how they see the basket as fast, and easy. It's not that important how I get it, when it comes to them ordering a traditional basket. When you tell them the process of how we get the materials, how long it takes to prepare the materials, and the dying process, starting a basket from bottom to the end, you try to explain it to them and they still get upset. It's not work, that's how they see it. And it is a lot of work. It's time-consuming, a lot of money goes into making a basket. Just looking at it, it seems that money doesn't go into it, it's all-natural, you don't need to buy anything. But there's a lot of money going into baskets. You have to travel to get the materials, and how far you're going, you have to buy lunch, sometimes you have to sleep over, and again the dyes, and water and

electric bills. Also there's the time away from your family. If it's a timed basket, I need it on this day, you lose that time with your family, and you're just constantly weaving."

Navajo Basket Weavers Footage – Disc 8 Transcription – Steven Simpson / Evelyn Cly

Part I -Steve Simpson

[1:44]

"I'll go back to what I believe is the very beginning of the contemporary movement, and then tell you what my personal involvement was. As I understand it from talking with many of the basket weavers—the Black family, primarily—in the early to mid-1979s, Virginia Smith began asking the simple question: 'Can you do something different?' I suspect that it was probably because she had seen a number of ceremonial baskets and so she was looking for something a little bit different that she could sell and get her customers interested in. I believe that stirred the Monument Valley weavers to start thinking about what else they could do. Again, as I understand it from talking to Mary and Maybel and other members of the family, they initially started making smaller baskets; the miniatures that we see in a lot of other tribes. The medicine men counseled them not to make the smaller baskets, because they felt that it would constrict [the weaver's] mind.

"So the next step seemed to have been these gigantic baskets. From there they began to experiment the way that the early rug weavers had begun to experiment with different patterns. It seems that they went to sand painting motifs, and eagle motifs originally—those are some of the earliest pieces that I've seen. There are a couple of baskets over at Hogback Trading Post from that early era: one was an eagle design and the other was just a large ceremonial. As far as I can tell, after that, the next significant thing that happened was that the weavers began to look at the *Arizona Highways* magazines, and other publications like that that came out about that time, in the mid to late 1970s. You have to understand that at that point copy machines were not readily available, and the reservation was still a relatively far away place, so there was not a great deal of access to art books and that sort of thing. So I think the *Arizona Highways* magazines that came out featuring basketry of the Southwest had a great deal of influence on the weavers."

[4:30]

"The next phase was were the contemporary Navajo basket weavers were reaching out to other tribes—tribes from the Great Basin, and tribes from Southern and Northern Arizona—and using Apache motifs, and Pima motifs, and combining them in a lot of cases. The weaving was really very interesting, and new and fresh for Navajo people, but the designs were historic designs from other tribes. About that time, Barry and Duke—Barry my brother, and Duke, my father—were running Blue Mountain Trading Post and they asking the same question that Chin [Virginia? See above] asked: 'What else can you do?' So there was a little bit of energy that was starting. Barry and

Duke were working mostly with the White Mesa Ute weavers. I think that the Blacks, in order to expand their market, began coming a little bit further north. I don't whether they overwhelmed Chin with their production, but Barry and Duke began to buy some of the Black family baskets. If you look back at the baskets being woven in that area, the designs were relatively simple."

[6:00]

"I left California in 1989 and at that point Twin Rocks was about half built. So I came to Bluff, helped finish up the Trading Post, and then became engaged in buying and selling the local arts and crafts. One of the first things that I did—seeing what Barry and Duke were doing in Blanding and what was happening with this early movement—was I just went and got all of the basketry of the Southwest books that we had, and since we had a Xerox machine, I Xeroxed all the interesting designs that I saw. I did ten or twelve sheaves of copies and handed them out to the weavers and said, 'These are some interesting designs from books that have been published in the past.' They looked at them and said, 'Some of these are neat and we can use them, we can do this…' So it was kind of the expanded cross-cultural idea that the Navajo weavers had already been working on. So we saw some additional energy starting, and the weavers were doing things that were a little different than what they had done in the past, and were really very interesting.

"At some point, Barry and I were in the trading post and Mary Black brought in this basket, that we call the 'Fire Dance' basket. We thought it was a beautiful basket, the colors were really interesting, there was this squiggly water motif, and then green things that looked like plants, and dancers interspersed with flames. I can't recall why—maybe because I had a friend that was an Apache and I knew a little bit about the Apache Crown Dance—but I mistook it for an Apache Crown Dance. So I thought that this was more of the cross-cultural motifs that we were seeing. Barry and I happened to be traveling down on the reservation the following day, and we had a book that one of our friends had given him. Mary had said something about the Mountain Chant, and we were looking through the book and said, 'Oh look at that, that's a Mountain Chant basket, or a Fire Dance basket.' So we realized that the leap that had just been made was that the Navajo people, instead of using imagery from other tribes [like] the Pueblos, were now using their own imagery, and representing symbols distinct to their culture. It was very exciting to us. We thought it was a very significant movement, so at that point we started asking the weavers a lot more of what [these designs] mean, and [whether they] can do more ceremonial designs, more *Navajo* designs, that are strictly Navajo, not from the Apaches, or the Pimas, or the O'odham people. That's how I saw this contemporary movement really take off, in terms of strict Navajo designs and meaning."

[10:10]

"…Neither Barry nor I have any artistic talent, but Barry had a compass and a few rulers, so he would sketch out some designs, because he was working at Blue Mountain Trading Post, and he a little more time op there to read, and he had developed a very good knowledge about some of the traditional Navajo stories. So he was sketching, for example, 'First Man and Coyote Placing the Stars,' and things such as that, and he'd show it to the weavers. His designs were somewhat geometric, and a little stilted, but it was kind of interesting, and the weavers were responding to it.

"Then he hired Damian Jim. Damian is a very talented artist, and he combined his talents with being a good graphic artist. So what Barry was doing with a compass and ruler, Damian began to do on the computer. So this is another really interesting link where the weavers were working with Damian, and Damian was creating designs, and there was a really great energy that began to flow...At that time, Damian—who I'm not sure had ever had a formal job—was living down by Comb Ridge, just outside of Bluff, at his grandmother's place. He was in essence living in a shack that I think was for the most part un-insulated, so it was cold and drafty. He would get up in the morning and hitchhike to Blanding, do his work, and he'd hitchhike back home, and he'd hook his computer up to a car battery, and he had a lamp of some type…so he was living in somewhat primitive conditions, but he was very sophisticated, and very modern, and very knowledgeable when it came to computers and graphic design."

[13:05]

"We eventually decided to combine Twin Rocks Trading Post and Blue Mountain Trading Post, and close Blue Mountain. So Damian and Barry came here, to Twin Rocks. It was closer to the weavers so they came in more often. They would sit at the computer and look at what Damian was creating and they [would collaborate], and Damian was creating designs on his own. For Barry and me, who have very little [artistic] talent, we would say things like, 'American flags are kind of interesting, what do you think about that?' So Damian would come up with a few designs and the weavers would say, 'Yeah that's pretty interesting, we think we can weave that.' Or, you know, 'Well, that looks interesting, but how about you change it this way.' So there was this great dynamic, the kind of chemistry that you look for in creative environments. There was no jealousy, no people being overly protective. Everybody was just free-associating, and the designs were popping out like popcorn, just popping out everywhere.

"What we saw was that Damian was creating, the weavers were creating, and we just never knew what was going to come in. It was a very exciting time, because the weavers would bring in things that were completely unexpected. It really worked well because everybody felt free to create, and nobody seemed to have any jealousy or any reservations. They just wanted to do really great work. In my opinion, that's how the contemporary movement—that I refer to as 'The Revolution'—really happened. In my mind, it was an absolute revolution, because everybody just came together to create fabulous art. The weaving became better; the weavers went from a standard five-rod foundation to three-rod, so that they could get more design in a smaller space. They eventually even went to a single-rod foundation, to make the baskets finer from a technical standpoint, but also smaller, so that more design could be incorporated into a smaller space. Elsie Holiday was the primary one to use single-rod basketry, but all of the weavers were really pushing the boundaries, not just in terms of design, but also in terms of technical skills as well."

[16:15]

Interviewer: "When did you first start to see some of the more abstract baskets…?

Steve: "I guess it would be difficult to pinpoint exactly when that started. To me, there was always a bifurcation: there were the pictorial baskets, and then there were the geometric baskets. Barry's fondness led him to the pictorial baskets. I always gravitated

more towards the geometric baskets. When we start talking about abstract imagery, you can go back to the baskets of the Great Basin, or even the Pima 'Squash Blossom designs, that were some of the earlier baskets that were woven. But the contemporary Navajo basketry started in a way, again, just from us and the weavers saying, 'What can we do that's different?' So we were going and looking at the bookstores and seeing what we could do, and what would be really interesting. We were all looking at all kinds of different imagery: Oriental Optical art, Egyptian art, Art Deco influences, stained glass imagery…[We were] putting things together, and deconstructing things, and looking at negative imagery, and really just wondering what could be done. I always felt that it was like a confluence of all these designs coming together. I always like the imagery of where the Green and the Colorado [rivers] come together, the confluence—that's how I saw all of this. There were lots of streams or rivers coming together, and just creating a flood of creativity.

"So when it happened, it's difficult to pinpoint. If you look at the basketry, you see where it's going off in all different directions…From an individual perspective, some of the weavers one month would be doing something that you thought was really extraordinary, and you thought they would carry through, and the next month they would be doing something completely different. You never knew where it was going to go. A weaver would come in and look at a rug that had been influenced, say, by Serena Supplee's paintings, and they'd say, 'That's nice, I think I can do something with that,' and a month or two later they'd bring a basket in. Then the next weaver [would see that basket and] say, 'That's really neat, I think I can do something with that,' and it would be completely different. People like Peggy Black bringing in her collage baskets, where she just took imagery from a lot of different traditional stories, and plugged them in everywhere—that's from the Eagle Way, that's from the Long Walk—it was truly extraordinary. Elsie Holiday—if you look at [her] body of work at that time, it just boggles your mind. It literally is Art Deco, and then its Oriental Optical art, and then it's some combination of the two. Who knows, what was coming."

[21:00]

Interviewer asks about the transition, or leap, from baskets with abstract designs based on ideas from other cultures, to an art form that the Navajo weavers have made their own through visual experimentation.

Steve: "I think so. Maybe it's a little more difficult to pinpoint, again, in that respect. If you look at classic [traditional] Navajo weavings, they are very abstract, in a sense. Where Elsie Holiday did the Ganado set, for example, you look at that and [see that] in one sense it's really abstract, but it's based on classic Navajo weaving. So do we fit that into the abstract niche, or do we fit that into the classic Navajo blanket niche; where does it fit? Although it sounds really terrible, the 'Lazy Squaw' basket—which is an unfortunate name, but it's a traditional name—[are] just plain white baskets, or plain red baskets…that just show the weaving technique. That's abstract, but it's based in traditional Navajo stories, the four directional colors, for example. In my mind, the most abstract basket that we ever purchased and collected was Evelyn Cly's black and white [basket] that really has no form whatsoever. That resulted from conversations about negative space…There was also this Navajo concept of balance, and *hoz'ho*, and so the weavers were kind of reluctant to move into this completely abstract arena where there

was no balance and there was no *hoz'ho* and it was just about color or design or weaving simplicity."

"So again it's kind of hard to pinpoint, and hard to categorize, exactly what is abstract…Evelyn Cly, I think she has done some very interesting weaving, [like] the 'ABC, 123' basket, which is based on some early Navajo weavings that we saw—when the Navajo were just becoming accustomed to numbers and characters, they began to incorporate it into their rugs and blankets. You saw this same sort of evolutionary pattern that we saw in Navajo weaving like 100 years earlier, where Evelyn is doing 0-9 and then ABCDEFG—to me those are extraordinary baskets, and to me its very abstract as well, just using letters and characters. It's very complicated when it comes to the abstract and geometric pieces, because in my mind the geometric baskets are all somewhat abstract."

[25:30]

Interviewer asks about experiments with form, ie. Elsie Holiday's translations of a single design onto differently shaped objects.

Steve: "That's the reason that I have always maintained that Elsie is in fact a mathematical genius. Her spatial sense confounds me. The shapes were an attempt to just reach out into completely new areas. It's not just the shape of the pieces—going back to Evelyn Cly, her stick-figure pieces that she would then sew onto her pieces—it was just all of us reaching for new concepts, uncharted waters. The vessels that Elsie Holiday weaves are very difficult; there have never been many weavers who can do them successfully. Sally Black does; in her early career she did really extraordinary shapes. The hat basket, I'm not sure exactly where that originated. That came fairly early in the development of this movement, and as you probably have noticed, it has a ceremonial design on it. I don't know whether that was influenced by Hupa hats, for example; that occurred when I was still living in California. But some of the other shapes—the vessels, what the Navajo people call the *tuse* (?)—probably originated with the Apaches, because you see classic Apache vessels in that particular shape. What I always refer to as the 'wastebasket' shape, or the open-topped vessel, was influenced by some of the weaving that was done in Arizona. They called them wine baskets; they would use the cactus fruit to make wine. The tray; many different cultures [use it].

"If we saw a design that looked really nice on a tray, for example, we would say, 'Wouldn't that look nice on a vessel?' and Elsie would say, 'Yeah, I think I can do that on a vessel.' Eventually we would just do the three of them together, we [did] the tray, and the wine basket, and the *tuse*…and see how it looks. Again, I don't remember anyone ever saying [something] was ridiculous. It was, 'let's give it a go, and see what happens.' There were a few experiments that completely went awry, but overall it worked really well. The one's that went awry we put under the counter and surprisingly some of them actually sold. I remember one particular time when Joann Johnson came in and I had this idea for a basket…I wanted it to look a little like a spider web…She looked at [the sketch] and she said it might work. She did it just like I had drawn it and she brought it in and I thought, 'Oh no, that's not going to work,' but of course I bought it anyway because I asked her to do it. But somebody came in and [thought it was] really great, and wanted to have it. So you just never knew."

[30:45]

"So many people were asking so many times, 'What can we do that's different?' Like the Evelyn Cly baskets that have two ends: we were trying to figure out how we could do a basket that was woven in two opposite directions…that obviously was never going to work, but we were still trying to do it. So what Evelyn finally realized she'd have to do was overlay them and just have two parallel coils, and then you have two ends. It was sort of a failed attempt to do something but it worked out very interestingly."

[32:00]

"Scott asked me the same question [of what the basket weaving has meant to me] and I struggled with it for a long time. Then I realized that what I was actually struggling with was that he was asking me to personalize something that was much broader than me. When I look at the movement, it's important to me in the sense that it's a creative outlet for me. [Although] I have never felt that I have any great artistic talent, I was part of a larger movement, and that's what I mean, it's difficult to personalize it or take credit for it because it was such a broader movement and so many people and influences involved. [Basket weaving] means a lot to all of us who were involved because we helped create what is in essence a new art form. We helped to create an economy that really pushed the artists forward. It improved their lives, and it improved the lives of a lot people, myself included, not just financially but in terms of confidence; artistic confidence and personal confidence.

"There was one particular time that stands out for me as being very important with Joann Johnson, whom I consider one of the best contemporary basket weavers, and she's certainly one of my favorites. We would generally send a lot of baskets down to the Gallup ceremonials to be judged because if they came back with a blue ribbon, frankly, they sold better. I had a number of Joann Johnson's baskets out on the counter that I was preparing to send down to the Gallup ceremonial. She came in and said, 'What are you doing?' and I said, 'I'm getting these ready to send down to the ceremonial and we'll have them judged and see if you can win a few dollars. She said, 'I'm not really the best basket weaver, I never win anything anyways.' So I sent them down and they came back with lots of blue ribbons on them. When she came in, her face was just, really exciting. She recognized at that moment that [she] really is a good weaver and we have all these blue ribbons and [she] won some money, this is really good. And at that point, I saw that her basketry just took off. From that point forward she was doing much better and more creative basketry. She's been known as a weaver who blends really terrific colors, and you have her 'Dawn to Dusk' series, and you look at her body of work where she's blending colors…That's what I think is the most important aspect of all of this. It's not what it means to me, necessarily, it's what it means to all of us that were involved, and it has been in many ways a life changer from all of us."

[36:10]

"It is about collaboration, and if you want boil it down, it's about the good that comes from everyone working together, and how if you put your jealousies and your personal greed aside, you can really create something very special, and I think that's what happened in this particular movement. Everybody saw that there was something much larger than just my own personal interest, or their own personal interest. They weren't afraid to borrow from each other, and they weren't afraid to ask questions. Neither were

Barry and Damian and I; we felt completely free and open about it. That's the freedom that began to occur, the freedom to create different designs, the freedom to ask the question, 'What if we did this?' It all just kind of clicked. I think it was a very extraordinary time, where all of the chemistry came together, and it worked. The weavers created beautiful things, and there was a market for them, and it was just the right time."

Final Thoughts

[38:00]

"Aside from being beautiful objects of art, there is a much deeper meaning [and] a very deep culture behind all of this—images of Changing Woman, who was very important to the Navajo culture, images of the *Ye'ii Bicheii* ceremony. I would like [visitors] to walk away understanding that what is going on in these very beautiful art objects is much deeper than what we see on the surface."

Part II - Evelyn Cly

--Some the text here is notes, indicated by a short dash (--). Direct quotes are in quotation marks.

[0:45. A]

--Evelyn gives her clan names.

[1:30. A] 'Man with Horses' basket

"I just wanted to see how it turned out by making the figures; I did the figures and then I said, 'I'm going to put them on the basket and see what they look like.' That's what I did…I just love doing stuff that I haven't done before, to create stuff and see it and put it on the basket as I went along.

--Evelyn is asked if she always puts the 'entrance/way out' on her baskets.

"Yes, pretty much all the baskets that I have been doing, depending what I have on there. But on these regular baskets, I always have the entrance on there. [This is one of my earlier baskets], and this is one of my first [basket with 3-D figures]."

--Asked where the twining figures come from.

"I got it by looking at a book, and I was curious [because] they were making all these figures. It wasn't out of a twine; the figures that I saw were made out of wires. I figured that if I did it with the sumac it would work…

[4:20. A]

--Asked how she learned to make baskets.

"I started very young, and pretty much I just used to do the water jugs. I learned it from my paternal grandmother; she raised me. I went back and forth between my paternal grandmother and my mom. On my mom's side, see, all my sisters are weavers; they did a lot of baskets. When I went from my paternal grandmother, she was a water-jug maker. I used to just do that at the beginning, before I started anything. When I went over to my

mom, they were doing a lot of these wedding baskets. I just sat and watched them weave, then my mom said, 'We'll start you one, and see how you do it.' So that's how I began doing it. [I started with the ceremonial baskets.] It was later when I started doing pictorial and geometric designs, and that's when I started doing the figures, like on this one."

[6:30. B]

--Asked what inspired her to begin experimenting with form and design.

"Just by looking at designs that I've seen in different places, like on rugs, and I figure, 'I wonder how that will look on a basket, if I make one like that.' So I etched it out on paper first, then just looked at it for a while. Then I put it on a basket in my mind, then I decide to try it and see if it will come out nice if I wove on a basket.

"I don't know [if I'm the only one doing 3-D figures]. I haven't seen anybody else do it yet."

--Asked if she plans colors schemes.

"Basically. I used to just work with three colors on regular baskets. Then later I started adding different colors to it; I wanted to see how it would look with different colors on it.

[8:30 B.]

"[A traditional ceremonial basket] has six in the middle and then twelve on the outside."

[9:00. B] 'Double Coil'

--The figures coming out from the star design aren't anything in particular. Evelyn got this design from one of Steve's copies of designs, illustrations, photography, etc. She did not name this basket; in fact she doesn't title any of her baskets.

"One of my sisters had this design on one of [Steve's] papers that she had…She had this, and I wanted to try it. That's how I got to doing that design on that basket. It had a different outlay at the center; [the center] just one of the things I put in the center to see how it looked."

[11:50. C] 'Imbricated Figures'

"What I usually do is I make the basket first, and then do the figures, and then just sew them on with the sumac; attach them all.

"Sometimes I use the [whitewash], and sometimes, if I want it to have its natural colors, then I don't use it."

--Evelyn collects her own materials, but she says she doesn't have to go very far to get them.

"Years before, when I was deeply into my weaving, we used to go pretty much as far as Green River, or if we don't find any there, we would go as far as Fort Duchesne…With a lot of people weaving, sometimes its hard to find [materials], so we have to go a distance before we can gather some.

[14:00. C] 'Black and White Geometric'

--Evelyn says it wasn't really hard to make. She uses commercial dyes.

"When I'm weaving, I just focus on it, to make sure design come out the way it should be. For this one, I made sure that it all came out the same, instead of one going off. I have to focus on something like that when I'm doing it…[This basket] is off a pottery [design]. My aunt had pottery sitting on the table and I turned the pottery upside down, and it had that design at the bottom. I thought it would look neat on a basket… What I was thinking was to make that the bottom, and then go up and finish [the basket as resembling the original pottery]. I didn't do it. I just did the bottom portion of the pottery on the basket."

[16:40. D]'Positive and Negative'

--Evelyn works mainly with black and white, and a little red.

"That's also off of [old] pottery. This is the sides…when you start on a basket, the way it shows what I was looking at, it will just come in really slow and work its way out."

[18:30. D] 'Alphabet'

"We said we were going to put it the other way, and then Steve suggested we make it go the way [the weave] goes on the basket…I just had to squeeze everything in. My sister [and I] were wondering what [a basket] would look like with an alphabet on it. This was my younger sister. She goes, 'Try it, and we'll look at it when you're done with it. You do it,' she told me. So I started on it, and that's how we did it."

[20:10. E] 'Hat'

"They called it a hat; it was shaped like a hat with the bow…it can be a hat if you have a small head…Somebody else wanted me to do one with real fine points with the basket design (?). They wanted me to put the regular basket shape at the bottom, and then have it come back out, like a bowl. She wanted to use it for a fruit bowl. So we did, I made it for her. Every time I go to her place it will be on her table with fruits in it…it could be a bowl, if you put dry flowers in there, I would, that's what I did. I have a picture of this one at home, with one of those foam balls, with flowers stuck in [the ball] for decoration…You could [show this as a bowl rather than as a hat]. It has that flat surface on the bottom.

"I made another one, that I think Northern Arizona University has. It has a pot shape on the bottom, and then this on top. [This basket] was more like a lid to it. That's how they display it over there; they put the two pieces together.

[24:00. E] 'Numbers'

--Ceremonial style. Evelyn does not have to map it out for it to work.

"I did the numbers before [the alphabet]. I had a preschool teacher that asked me for a number basket. We did one for her. Then my sister said, 'You did the alphabet, now do the numbers [with it].' So I did the numbers and the alphabet together. The teacher still uses it in her preschool class, she still has it."

[25:20. F] ‘Double Decker Positive/Negative’

--The bands are for balance; this basket has a special braided rim.

“[The animals are] deer and a horse. [The deer] is the one laying down…That design—I had some in my other baskets that I did, and I just put them together just wanting to see what it looked like with the two on there…Not all of [my baskets have braiding around the rim like this one].

[28:44. F] ‘Opposites’

--Starts as a single coil which splits out and coils into itself.

“That one we were just playing with, that was Craig (?). He [suggested] doing Tree of Life on a Basket. I said, ‘Are you crazy, do you think it’s going to work?’ and he said, ‘no.’ I started on that, and showed him what I came up with. Instead of doing the Tree of Life I came up with this…he said, ‘That is different.’ I started with one stem, and then I split them, and then that’s how I started overlapping [the two stems]. There are two finishes on there…Later on I did the Tree of Life. I was just playing with [this one]. I wanted to see how it looked.

--Evelyn never maps out a design. “Never—I don’t. When I start on it, when I want to do a design basket, I just start, and then as I go along the design will come out. Then I think about it for a while, and then I say, ‘Oh ok, I’ll start with this design.’ That’s how I start.”

[32:00. H] ‘Abstract Pottery/Bird Motif’

“That one’s one of Damian’s design. I think it is a bird, if I remember right. That is what it was...On a few of the baskets I worked with Damian. He had the design already…I didn’t do any changes. The one he had printed out on a piece of paper was all colored. Steve or Barry, one of the two, said, ‘Just do the black and white, see what it looks like.’ So I did the black and white. [The original one] had different colors.

[34:30. H] ‘The Man in the Maze’

“This one I did and then I brought it over and Steve asked me to take it back and put one of the stick figures on there. That’s how it ended up on there…I had this little cup at home, and the [maze] design was on there, I just got the design off of that cup. But it didn’t have the figure on there, the cup I have…”

[36:00. I] ‘Four Directions Ceremonial’

“I don’t know how many times I had to make that. They kept saying they sold it, and I had to make them another one…I got an order for this one. They are going to use it as a cake topper. I’m making on of those right now. It’s going to be real small. They’re going to have a traditional wedding, and they want that as their cake topper…

“[The outer four directions] was another one of Steve’s ideas. He asked me to make one for him like that, he wanted to see what it looked like. I did [work with Steve a lot]…A couple of years ago I fractured my wrist, and I had to stop what I was doing [weaving baskets] as a side job. Last year the doctor OK’d me to go back on with my weaving. So I started on it, and then a month later I got rammed by a drunk driver. I wasn’t doing anything until a month ago, when I restarted weaving…It’s still kind of

hard for me to sit for a long time so I just have to weave for about thirty minutes and then wander around and then go back to it. But it takes a while for me to finish one. It does [feel good to finish a basket]. People are finding out that I am back into weaving so I'm getting a lot of orders for the traditional one right now, for ceremonies, and then I have a couple of weddings that I'm doing right now…With this one they wanted this as a cake topper, and then I'm going to be doing a little bit bigger size for a ring basket, and then the other one is going to be for the mush that they will be [using].

Final Thoughts

[41:00. J]

"I don't know really…From my point of view, a person, it's up to them what they see in a weavers weaving, what jumps out at them from the design that they're looking at, how they put it, and what they're thinking…

"I don't really want to lose what I was doing before, and not stop what I'm doing on my side job. Sometimes I just want to jump into my weaving and try to push myself to get something out that I have going through my mind. I just want to see it on the basket sometimes. My mind will be telling me, 'You have to do this. You have to do this.' I just want to see it on a basket. If I just push it aside, later on the design will come back. It will kind of speak at the same time, and say, 'Aren't you going to make me? Are you still thinking about me?' Stuff like that, it makes me wonder, 'Should I start on it, or should I wait [until] later?' Sometimes I'll just jump right into it and start it, and that will clear my mind once I start on it. But if I don't it will just sit in my mind until I finish it."
--She agrees that the basket is alive to her.

Navajo Basket Weavers Footage – Disc 9 Transcription – Sally J. Black
--at a few points in the disc, the recording skips backwards, usually 30-60 seconds.

[0:30]

-- Sally gives her clan names.

"I don't know how to say it in English so I just said it my way. I was raised at Douglas Mesa, but I was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, back in 1959. I'm originally from Albuquerque. I always that the reason why I was born in Albuquerque… I'm really famous in New Mexico and I got to [be well-known there]. My mom was in the hospital for so many years, I don't know how many years, and she got pregnant. So I was there and that's where I was born. I always say that I am glad that I was born over there and got famous in New Mexico. That's where it started off. I went to Santa Fe and Albuquerque, that's where I did catch me first [realized?], that I'm a basket weaver.

"From there on I always saw my mom weaving, first. She always does a lot of big rugs and all different kinds of designs. Her favorite one was the *Ye'ii Bicheii* figures—she always put it on her rugs. I always wondered what it looked like on a basket, but I [would] always think that I was too little for that. I always watched her when she was weaving. She's [was] more into basket weaving when I was seven years old, I'd always see her doing it, bringing home sumac, and splitting [it]. I'd just watch her doing that, I'd go to school and come back, and she'd be doing basket weaving. Or she'd do what they call the water jug, it's the one that is like a jug and you put pine pitch [on it]; she did that.

When I turned 8, I really got into it; I wanted to do it too. She said I was still too small to start something. For me, I was thinking that I knew I could do it. I was going to school in Quienta [? Questa?]; we used to get on the bus every morning. But in the evening we would like to do something. I'd just watch my mom, and at the same time I'd clean around the house, and take care of the kids, the kids were small. I wanted to do some of it but she'd say I was too small for it."

[4:15]

"I started thinking that once she goes somewhere, I was going to start [a basket]. They went somewhere, and I knew she wasn't coming home for the whole day. I took her stuff and I start playing around, but it's still not working. I keep doing it, and doing it. I'm going to see if I can do it while she's not here…I start the water jug first. That one was working for me. She found out that I was doing it finally. She said if [I] wanted to, then go ahead and do that. She told me that you have to learn how to peel and split [sumac]. So I just watch her do it and then I start helping her with peeling the bark of the sumac. She told me that the knife was too sharp for me to do the splitting of the sumac. When I was eleven, that's when I started splitting sumac, because my hands were strong by then. Eleven, that's when I start basket weaving, too.

"She just showed me [how to] the start, and ever sense then I started weaving. I just weave, and at the same time I go do school, and come home, and when I get a chance I would work on it…I want to make it really perfect. But my basket didn't turn out perfect. My brother saw my basket; he was just laughing. He just fell down and rolled around laughing, 'Look at her basket!' I was just like, 'Don't laugh at my basket, you never know!' I gave [that basket] to my mom; I think she sold it for $45 at the time. Then I said 'Laugh at me again!' My brother thought it was still funny…"

[7:25]

I sit there and I picture myself—I said 'One day I'm going to be really famous with basket weaving too. I'm going to see some pictures with me somewhere way out there.' I didn't even know what three thousand is; I thought that was the highest [number]. I'd always think I am going to sell my basket for three thousand dollars. I didn't know, I always just think that way.

"We had our own medicine that I took out and took it. It really worked on me; that thing was really working on me. I cried, and I thought, 'What am I doing?' I'm thinking way ahead, but I'm still learning. But I'm going to save myself some money. I want to see Washington, I want to get to know a lot of people. It was too much, what I was thinking, [to the point where] it shut my mind. Then there was a medicine man who came [over]. He said, 'What are you doing? The fire is gone, the kids are cold. What are you doing?' I said 'I took this medicine, I want to be famous, I want to be a good basket weaver. I prayed to this peyote, I want to be a good person.' He said, 'You took this by yourself? Somebody has to be around you. Why did you do that? OK take out the coal, bring it out. Take out the cedar, and you pray to it yourself. How do you feel? What do you want? If I pray for you I might pray for you the wrong way. You pray out of your own heart, out of your own tongue, use that.' They cooked for the kids for me. After that, they left; they didn't want to hear me. So I took out that and I prayed to it. This is what I want. My mom, we learned weaving from her…" [Recording skips back one minute.]

"…I want it too. I wanted to learn too. I want to be with my mom, I want to share that with her. I'm going to learn, and I'm going to teach my mom; we're going to teach each other. And we're going to teach our brothers and sisters too. I prayed for that. I cried. I really did cry. It hurts, even though I wanted to."

[12:30]

"Ever since then, things start coming to me slowly. It was hard, but it came to me. I still wanted to fix that basket, every time I weave. It was still hard. I kept going; I wasn't going to quit. At that time, my mom got sick, too. She was going through a lot. I quit my school, and I started taking care of the livestock, and taking care of my family. At the same time, I'm still [weaving]. She still weaves, but she didn't feel good, so I didn't go back to school. I only went up to fifth grade, half a year, but I didn't learn anything. I just help out, and stay home. I wanted to a lot of good stuff. My mom and dad, they still gather a lot of sumac. I would still help them with cleaning, cutting, and splitting, and peeling. All our brothers and sisters we all get together, and we do [these things] all together. Sometimes we all laugh, we all laugh, my mom and dad and brothers and sisters. We see who is going to win. We get all these bundles, and we all race to see who can do it [first]. That's how we work together. After we split them, and dry the top part, we still do that; we all work together. At that time my dad was there, and he loves to peel, he loves to clean. We used to get help from our dad too. That's how I learned."

[14:50]

"One day in the deer season, my mom left me with the kids and they went out hunting. I took some of that medicine [again]. I said, 'I'm going to show my mom and dad that I can do it. I'm going to make a big basket, see if I can do it. When I took [the peyote] I just keep weaving. I have to run out [and tend] the sheep, and come back, and I have to cook for the kids, and I weave. I don't even sleep that night; I stayed up all night. The next day I do the same thing: take out the sheep, cook for the kids, look after the sheep, come back…I still do the same thing for four or five days while they were out there hunting. By the time I got back, the basket was about this big [indicates about a yard diameter]. I wanted to show my parents that I could do it. They came back and I said, 'Mom, Dad, look what I did.' My mom said, 'You liar, somebody gave that to you. Probably somebody gave you that.' They didn't believe me. I said, 'I did it! Look in the back.' [There were some mistakes in the back.] 'But the front is good!' She was surprised. It took her a while to understand that I did it. She was surprised, and my dad was surprised. Everybody looked at me, my brother laughed at me. He [asked] if I was really getting serious with the baskets. I said yes. I didn't want to take this to the store; I don't know how it goes. At that time I'm not money crazy. She took it to the store. I said, 'Don't say that I did that…' [?]

[17:20]

"Way back, when I was only four years old…she made a big wedding basket and then she put a turquoise in the middle. I was going over there with one of my grandmas; I was catching a ride back to Douglas Mesa. [My mother] said, 'Take this basket and sell it for me. Bring the money back, don't forget.' At that time, that Trading Post was run by Virginia Smith. I went over there and I just gave that basket to her, I didn't know

anything about money. I came home, and my mom said, 'Where did you put the money?' I said, 'What money? I didn't get anything from her.' She went back and she got it. Virginia Smith, she always remembered that: 'This is what you did, I still remember you. That was a good one.' I remember that all the time. That's how we learned [how to sell baskets?] from her, just by looking at her. We just keep doing it.

"One day there was a lady who came down from Santa Fe, her name was Barbara Mollen [?]. She's still working down there. She came along, and she saw me doing the black and white figures. At that time, she came to my mom, but my mom didn't want to do a demonstrating workshop. So I took over and I went down there and I did a workshop with them. At that time, I did a Squash Blossom basket; it's a really big one, it's huge. You've probably seen something like that…I had a hard time; I didn't know how to talk in English. I had to have somebody talk for me, my sister-in-law. It was hard for me, the things that I wanted to say, she'd come up [with] a different story. So after that workshop, when I came back, it really made me think: 'Even though it's hard for me, I'll go back to school at the same time.'

[20:35]

"…At Mexican Hat they had adult education; so I went over there and I started going to school there. I told my mom I was going back to school. When the kids were small I took care of it, and I helped you, but now I wanted to go back to school. So I start, and I went back. I didn't really learn much. [Recording skips back] At the same time I was working at the [Sung?] factory. I had a hard time…I'm still weaving. After that I had a son; I got to know a man and I got a son…So I went to Blanding for adult education full time. I wanted that. But a guy named Mr. Randall [?] came up to me—they know these guys here at Twin Rocks—he said 'You're really famous. I know you. But I'm going to put you with high school students, and at the same time you're going to take some adult education too.' So I start off with the high school, the ninth grade. I didn't know anything. I say yes at the wrong time, I say no at the wrong thing. I get confused with a lot of things. I just tag along, and the kids are looking at me. I almost ran back outside, but I keep telling myself, 'Don't be scared, at least you'll learn something. Go in there and be with the kids no matter what age they are.' So I went back and I start off. They told me it's going to take me five years to graduate. With my prayer and everything it only took me four years. So I think I did good. At my graduation, I guess they picked me for a student speech. I just thought I was going to go up there and get my diploma. They pass out all those papers and it says 'Sally Black: Speech.' My eyes popped out. I ran to my teacher and I said I didn't even know what to say. She just pointed at my head and said it was all in here. I was shaking… I didn't know what to say. They called my name and I went up there, and I just said what I had to say. It just came out. I came down and my teacher said I did really well. What I thought when I was up there—I went to Chicago, I went to Washington, I went to Albuquerque, I went to Santa Fe, I went to Las Cruces, I went to Phoenix—I did a lot of workshops with a lot of people that just came into my head. I thought, 'Now I can do it, I did it before.' That's how I did my speech. It really helped me. To this day, now I can say I can do my best with what I learned.

[25:40]

--Sally is asked if the first baskets she made were ceremonial baskets.

"I started off when I was ten with those ones. But when I was eight, I did the jug. From there I started doing the wedding baskets. Then in a couple of years we did designs from her rug weaving. She really did a lot of different designs. She did all different kinds. That's how we have designs on our baskets. A lot of people said, 'You're not supposed to be doing this. You're not supposed to be putting stuff on the baskets, it's a taboo.' There's a lot everywhere. They're in paintings, and rugs, and everywhere. So we say it won't affect us…

"To this day we really enjoy what we're doing. One day my mom said, 'Basket weaving, it helps us through. It's like our mom'; it gives us money, that's how we support our kids, we buy groceries, and what we need we get, that's how we live. It's kind of like my mom and dad to me. She said that we were just listening to her. It's like that. We're all self-employed…"

Basket Descriptions

-These don't seem to have real titles; Interviewers refer to them by their design or date.

[28:10] 'Dog, Deer, People and Hoya'

"Deer—we only get that meat once a year. We hardly have it. The deerskin we use a lot of ways, for different ceremonials, different ways, [like] the beauty way. We eat the meat...that's why I always like to put deer on the basket. Then the people, the dogs and the men, really like deer meat, and we use all of that…It's still like that. It's kind of like day and night. That's what it is."

[30:00] Early ceremonial basket

"I don't remember. It might be somewhere in the 70s or 80s."

[31:00] 'Butterfly'

"Butterflies in the spring when everything is growing, they fly around and you see them. I was outside my brother's door and I saw a butterfly like that. It makes me happy, and I got the picture of it [in my mind]. I went back inside and I started that basket. I was thinking to myself, 'I'm gong to make that color, it's so beautiful.' It was a nice day and all that, so I got that design…[Interviewer: "Is this a commercial dye?"] …That one is the color I was talking to you about, that's the color…We used to make a lot of those dyes all the time but we hardly do it anymore…The customers always ask for butterflies.

"Sometimes when you are kind of sad or something is bothering you—when you are sitting, the butterfly will come and fly [right in front of you] and stop and [flutter its wings]. When you are kind of feeling bad it will give you a smile. That's where I got that."

[33:15] 'Eagle'

"Well the eagle is everywhere, even on the money. We use the eagle for ceremonies, the feathers…They say you can pray to the eagle, when you see it flying up there you bless yourself with it to give yourself good luck. That's why I always like to do eagle [designs] too. Those deigns, they just come out to you, how you can put it in. That's what I did with all the colors and the feathers around it. I always like to do

feathers. Those are eagle feathers. On top, the blue one is the sky. The eagle is always flying in the sky."

Interviewer: "Is there an eagle beat, a chant or ceremony that goes with [these baskets]?"

"We use the feathers and we always have it in the ceremony where we bless ourselves."

[35:11] 'Year 2000' (?)

"That was special. My mom got that award from the governor. That [basket] went to the governor…"

[35:45] 'Horses and Sun' (?)

"That one I did the four directions—the horse represents East, West, South, and North. Then that's the sun, and the red one…when you see the sun [beams?], that's what it is. They say that the sun is related to the horse, in the ceremony that's how it goes. That's why I put that. Then the *Ye'ii Bicheii* figures, it's the same like the rainbow around it…[the blue is] the water… I got it from listening to the medicine people. It's from the [Blessing way].

"I used to love horses. I used to kind of tame them. But to this day, I can't even sit on a horse without getting scared. That was my younger days…"

[38:00] 'Horned Toad'

"The horny toad is like the strongest creature. It can fight with lightening, anything…they say that is the powerful one. The horny toad can eat ants; that's their food [referring to the red and yellow ants on the basket]…"

"The idea I got when I went to Window Rock. When I did the great seal of the Navajo nation for the Chairman [Peterson?] …We took it over [to Window Rock] and we were sitting where the memorial is. We were sitting, waiting…I saw one coming out. My mom said, 'Look at that horny toad, it's going to eat the ants.' Then it did. After we came back, I did that [basket]. Sometimes you see something, [and the basket] will bring the design out…"

[40:45]

Interviewer: "Have you heard the horny toad is like our grandfather?"

"Yes. I was at boarding school, and there was this lady, she was always scared of all these little creatures. I got [a horned toad], and I thought, 'I'll put it on her shoulder.' She was too mean; she was so mean to us. I said, 'Grandpa, help us scare that woman.' I took it over there, and I put it right [on her shoulder]. She felt it and she screamed and ran, and the horny toad fell off. I picked it up and I said, 'Thank you.' She was crying, and I got in trouble for it. Still, it helped us. It was worth it. They say that the horny toad is our grandpa…They talk about all different stories, when you're sitting down, but some of them you can't talk about at this time. You have to talk about it in the wintertime. I'll just talk about the funny thing I did."

[42:30] ‘Changing Bear Woman’

“It’s been a long time. It’s the coyote, and the bear, and the star, the rainbow lady, and the man, and the four sacred men, and the squirrel, and the ants, and the ram. That’s the winter stories…”

Interviewer: “Do you feel that it is OK that we show these baskets throughout the whole year?”

“Yeah, but not the stories in the summer. We talk about it, the weather and all that, they don’t like it. [But you can show the baskets.]”

[44:00]

--Sally is asked about her relationship with Virginia Smith. Apparently Virginia was very encouraging; she did ask Sally and her mother if they could make new designs that were different from the original ceremonial baskets.

“I just remember, 1965-‘66…that’s when I brought that basket to her and gave it to her and walked out…She just remembered that I walked out without the money. Every time I walk in there she always laughed at me. But my mom, she was more going over there. That lady, the one that came from Santa Fe—she went over to Virginia Smith and that’s where she got the name for Mary, and she had my name too. But my mom didn’t want to go, so I went to do the workshop in Santa Fe…”

“I used to make really small [baskets], and my grandpa came to me and said not to make it too small, because the life will be small, everything will be small. So the smallest you can do is something like this [indicates a few inches diameter]…He was a medicine man, my mom’s dad. Ever since then I don’t really make it small. Even if the order is really small, I say no, that this is the smallest I can do…[With big baskets] everything is long life; everything will last longer.”

[47:30] **Final Thoughts**

“I would like to say that I sure like to let a lot of new people come to see my baskets again, and I want them to get to know my baskets. I want them to be friends with them. A lot of my customers, they come and they say, ‘It really touches my heart. It really makes me feel good.’ They’ll come to me and they’ll say, ‘I want one like that in my house. I want to put that basket in my favorite spot. I’m going to get up and look at it, and drink coffee and look at it.’ Or they’ll say, ‘I’m going to put it in my office and look at it while I’m working and I’ll think about you. When I look at it I’ll always think about you. You’re so special. You’re a very smart lady.’ They’ll say something good to you too. That’s what I like, when they tell me how they feel. I guess that is how they communicate with your basket, in that way. I really like that. I want a lot of new people to come stare, and I want them to get to know that way. I want them to get to know me more, in that way, and our family. That’s what I really like. That will make us happy, and they will be happy too. That’s what I really like. I want to grow those feelings, and our art. It will do good, and it will bring us happiness again, in our life. That’s how I think. I really like my work. Just like my mom said. I’m glad I learned, and I got to know a lot of beautiful people out there. We have a lot of friends. It brings us a lot of good friends, and a lot of good things. I really like it. I really appreciate that. I always appreciate my mom,

that she taught us, and my dad, through all the hard things that they went through. We learned it from her, and my dad, he's in the spirit world, and I always think of him. I really appreciate that, and probably that's why it gives us a lot of good friends. I'm glad to know these people are here. They help us out. And I'm so glad that you guys came down to set this up, and share our thoughts and our feelings through this, too. I'd like to thank you."