Trading Post Tales: Biography of an Indian Trader on the Navajo Reservation

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May 5, 1992
TRADING POST TALES: BIOGRAPHY OF AN INDIAN TRADER
ON THE NAVAJO RESERVATION, 1930-1980

BY
NANCY PEAKE

B.A. Communication Arts, Michigan State University, 1965

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in American Studies

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May 16, 1992
To Walter

For sharing what was indeed a great life.
TRADING POST TALES: BIOGRAPHY OF AN INDIAN TRADER
ON THE NAVAJO RESERVATION, 1930-1980

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NANCY PEAKE

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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The University of New Mexico
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May 16, 1992
Walter M. Kennedy is a living anachronism who spent half a century -- from the pre-World War II era into the 1980s -- practicing an almost mythical career on isolated trading posts on the Navajo Reservation. Kennedy, an Anglo, and his Native American clientele interacted and conducted business in much the same way as their historical predecessors, with little regard for contemporary socio-cultural and economic circumstances prevailing in the "outside world." His personal memoirs -- over five hundred pages of pencilled notes -- vividly recreate those experiences. The transcription and editing of those notes, enhanced by an extensive oral history project, comprise one element of this dissertation.

A second element, utilizing relevant cultural, historical and ethnographic literature as well as other autobiographical and biographical accounts, balanced whenever possible by Navajo accounts, provides interpretive context and continuity by means of endnotes and connective in-text narrative. The result of this dual perspective -- one man's life as viewed by the subject himself and by his biographer -- is a
multi-dimensional examination of the contemporary Indian trader (in many ways still a remnant of the Old West), and his role in perpetuating the myth of the "Indian" to present day Anglo and Navajo societies.

A discussion of the Navajo/trader relationship as a century-old, intercultural phenomenon precedes Kennedy's "trader's tales," providing an introductory framework for the presentation and interpretation of his memoirs. Selected "stories" are then arranged chronologically and thematically in an effort to recreate Kennedy's life and career in its appropriate context. This personalized regional study in Anglo-Navajo relations is by necessity interdisciplinary in its scope and synthesis. The final portrait reveals an individual who continued to play out the trader's life and his many roles within Navajo society as he believed them to be, even as he was forced to confront the changing social characteristics and commercial realities of the twentieth century.
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PREFACE

Walter Monroe Kennedy is a white man who spent over half a century living and working among the Navajo Indians of New Mexico and Arizona. An Indian trader for over fifty years, from the early 1930s to the 1980s, Kennedy's career bracketed an era of monumental change in not only the Southwest but throughout the rest of the United States and beyond. But despite the often cataclysmic events of the world around him—some of which filtered onto the Navajo Reservation—Kennedy managed to conduct his business and interact with his clientele in much the same way as had his predecessors a century before him.

Kennedy's life story, much of which appears here in his own words, testifies as to the power of tradition and isolation in maintaining the status quo in a community's way of life. These "trading post tales," told from the trader's point of view, illuminate the human factor in the day-to-day existence in a small general store which is, for a variety of reasons, the focal point of the Navajo community. Background material as presented here sets the scene for the drama of Kennedy's life through an examination of the complex relationship between the Navajo and the trader by tracing—using related literature—the history of this unique intercultural phenomenon over the past one hundred years.

The introduction "introduces" the reader to both Walter Kennedy and to his biographer, briefly describing our initial meeting and subsequent working relationship, and more specifically the process of recreating Kennedy's life within the format of his own anecdotal memories revolving
around his trading post. Kennedy's own hand-written "stories," supplemented by hours of interviews, constitute the core fabric of this account within chapters organized both by chronology and theme, interwoven with a connective narrative providing context. The result is a dual-voice presentation and interpretation of one man's life, as he remembers it himself, and as it is seen by an outsider who received not only his written memoirs but--an even greater gift--hours of "listening time" while the trader elaborated and expanded upon a lifetime in the reservation trading post.

The conclusion provides perspective, from the biographer, looking back on our cooperative effort from an outsider's point of view, and from Kennedy himself, reviewing his long career from his vantage point in retirement. The appendices--Kennedy's story of his best friend, a "walk-through" of selected pages of his many pawn books, and the synopsis of our discussion of a "typical business year"--are intended to enhance one's understanding of and appreciation for some of the behind-the-scenes aspects of the trading post business. Endnotes, composed of additional Kennedy anecdotes and related historical and ethnographic literature, are to be read as a supplementary text, further contextualizing the primary autobiographical material without disturbing the narrative flow.

The preparation and creation of this life story in its present form has been both an education and a labor of love, thanks to the hero of these trading post tales, Walter Kennedy. His endless patience ("Nancy, you keep asking me about all this stuff I already know all about") and his obvious joy in sharing his experiences ("I can see it all right now
as if it happened just yesterday") helped keep the project alive and progressing over the past three years. The hospitality graciously provided by his wife, Flora, during our two-and-three-day marathon question-and-answer sessions—supplemented by her woman's perspective on trading post life (whenever Walter would let her get a word in edgewise)—added to the pleasure of our cooperative creative efforts. The kindness of the people at Dennehotso who enabled me to travel back in time with Walter added a valuable dimension to my own understanding of his handwritten memoirs. And finally, the encouragement and enthusiasm of Dr. John Kessell during the initial stages of this project, and the friendship and guidance of Dr. M. Jane Young, my dissertation committee chairperson (whose incisive editorial comments were kindly penned in green ink throughout the original draft), helped bring these tales to fruition.
BACKGROUND: The Navajo/Trader Relationship,

Century-old, Intercultural Phenomenon

A good trader has to know his Customers. Know how to handle them. Every one is different. My job as a trader was to see that they run their business in the right way, limit on their credit, pawn. And as a whole run their business so they didn’t get into trouble. Maybe the best way to explain this is the White People and their credit cards. Try to see that the Navajo lived within his means. If he has a problem help him any way you can. But mostly make them help themselves. And that’s how you get their respect.

Walter Kennedy, Indian trader
Navajoland, 1988

The enigmatic, yet symbiotic relationship between the Navajo and the trader is a century-old, intercultural phenomenon in and of itself. The Anglo trader found his way onto the newly-created Navajo Reservation almost immediately after the return of the People from their shameful incarceration at Bosque Redondo, or Hwe'eldi, from 1864 to 1868. This abrupt and almost total destruction of Navajo lifeways had severely threatened the very roots of Navajo culture. Even the symbolic Indian "chief” blanket, for which Navajo weavers were known not only by the mountain and plains Indians but by Anglo-Americans as well, was bound
for oblivion. But over the years the trader gradually picked up the threads of tradition and re-wove them to cater to an alien culture back East. The destiny of the weaver and her woven goods, and in fact that of the entire Navajo economy, was to become almost inextricably linked to that of this "godfather of Indian interest" (Kupper 1945:189). In his discussion of Richard Wetherill’s plan to open a trading post at Pueblo Bonito in 1897, Frank McNitt goes so far as to say that this early entrepreneurial effort would someday "affect nearly every Navajo living in Arizona and New Mexico" (1986:173). James T. Downs, analyzing the trader’s impact upon the Navajo in the material and economic realms, credits his success to the fact that "he has made no attempt to challenge basic Navajo beliefs and practices and has exerted no pressure against Navajo social organization." In fact, Downs asserts, "much to the chagrin of the missionary and government agent, the trader has been the most effective agent of change" (1972:121).

The weaver soon found herself weaving designs that were trader-inspired, spinning with wool colored with dyes encouraged by the trader, and adhering to quality standards indirectly dictated by the trader himself. Soon Anglo tourists were counting among the souvenirs of their southwestern tours the Indian "rug" which would grace parlor floors back home. The popular diyogí, or Navajo rug, came to reflect the ideas and influences of the trader within his respective "domain" on the Reservation. And the weaver, whose sheep-to-rug industry was often the sole support of her family, found herself economically dependent upon him. But, because the trader’s off-reservation reputation and ultimate success at his chosen profession depended upon the numbers and quality of rugs produced by "his" weavers,
there developed a new element in the ageless tradition of the Navajo loom—the interdependency of trader and weaver. The isolation of the weaver and the trading post operator made this mutual dependence almost inevitable, for each relied upon the other to support his or her livelihood. According to Willow Roberts, biographer of trader Stokes Carson, "The life of the trader was closely connected to that of the Navajo. If Navajos did well, so did the trader. Improving economic conditions was the aim of many traders, and to this end they tried to find jobs for Navajos, obtain markets for their crafts, and improve their sheep" (1987:xv).

This seemingly old-fashioned yet dynamic relationship between trader and weaver has been a subject for discussion by practitioners of a variety of disciplines for almost as long as the traders have been a part of Reservation life—from the early ethnographic studies of Washington Matthews (1880-1882), to the more sociological orientation of anthropologist Gladys Reichard who lived with the Navajos for four summers from 1930 to 1933, to Ann Hedlund's contemporary approach to the "ethnography of Navajo weaving as a native craft" (1983). Cultural historians, beginning with the Coolidges and Amsden in the 1930s, Kluckhohn and Leighton in the 1940s, to Underhill in the 1950s, have given trader influence varying degrees of importance. Present day art historians and Native American textile experts, such as Joe Ben Wheat, Marian Rodee, Kate Peck Kent, and J.J. Brody, all credit the trader with an influential role in the lives and livelihoods of Navajo weavers. Brody alludes to the trader/patron's connection to the Indian arts and crafts revival of the 1930s, and his unavoidable association with the "antiquarian romanticizing of contemporary Indian crafts"
To these ethnographic and ethnohistorical views of the Navajo/trader relationship must be added the official government documents—including the BIA investigations and Congressional Hearings in the 1930s and 1940s, the Navajo Nation's own economic reports in the late 1960s, and the FTC report in 1973—which ultimately lead to new regulations and a "change in atmosphere" (Roberts 1987:179) in the bullpens of the remaining Reservation trading posts. That such an innocuous, out-of-the-way general store should ever have become the subject of cultural controversy is a story in itself.

Naalyéhí báhooghaní, "a house with things of value" (McCoy 1987), the trading post as an institution

President George Washington appealed to his Congress in 1795 to establish government-controlled trading posts in an effort to regulate all trade with Native Americans. These original posts, called "factories," were to offer the Indians a "fair deal," selling goods at no more than one-third markup. Their purpose: to encourage good behavior and hopefully provide a buffer zone of "tame" Indians between the colonists and the wilderness. Gay Neale, concluding an historical essay for the trade journal The Indian Trader, offers the bleak predilection that "trade, which was originally happily received by the Native Americans, became one of the means by which the Indian people were brought into the control of the white man" (1977:26).

Seventy years after a few enterprising frontiersmen began selling "white man's goods" to the Indians back East, George H. Richardson opened the doors of the first licensed post in the Southwest at Bosque
Redondo. The first trader to operate under a license after the Navajos' Long Walk home in 1868 was Lehman Spiegelberg of Santa Fe, who established his post at Fort Defiance. That such an institution born to a group of fledgling bureaucrats on a narrow strip on the eastern seaboard survived a century of westward exploration and almost two centuries of commercial progress to emerge as a vital force in the lives of a great many twentieth century Navajos, remains an enigma to many who tend to dismiss the "old-fashioned" trading post as merely another ramification of the mythic West.

The trading post not only survived in isolated areas of Navajo Country, but it flourished in many ways quite unrelated to the businessman's motive for profit. More than a mere grocery or hardware store providing customers with necessary household goods, the trading post was a cultural phenomenon described by Charles Kuralt, roving television correspondent, as late as 1976, as "a forum, market, or roof under which friends may meet" (Kammer 1976:7).

Sixty years ago ethnographers Dane and Mary Roberts Coolidge observed that the trading post served "the purpose of a local newspaper. Birth, marriage, divorce, the selling of livestock, the gossip of the white settlements, are matters of as much interest to the Indian as to the trader" (Schmedding 1951:308). Dave Murray has been operating his Salina Springs post for thirty years and still insists: "A Trading post isn't just a business. It's where people visit, sort out problems, talk about the kids, and gossip. It's really a listening post" (McCoy 1987:13-14). During his fieldwork at Shonto Trading Post in the mid-1950s, William Adams (1963) observed that trading posts were the locus of much activity, and were, among other things, mail-order
centers, post offices, bank and credit unions, and employment agencies."

The trading post was indeed, by all accounts and observations, a cultural phenomenon. But the buying and selling—and more specifically trading—of goods was really what this curious, remote, and romantic "general store" was all about. For the trading post was aptly named, originally based on an exchange of commodities, and upon barter. Roberts (Carson's biographer) noted that "in exchange for groceries, hardware, clothes, and other products, the trader took wool, sheep, jewelry, baskets, pottery, rugs, and any items that the Navajo thought and the trader agreed would constitute an article of value" (1987:45). In his comprehensive historical study, Indian Traders, Frank McNitt states that the weaver would willingly trade away three months of labor at her loom for any of an amazing assortment of the trader's "goods": "Flour, coffee, and sugar—in that order—were the staples most in demand and therefore most in supply at the old trading posts. Tobacco, by the plug or can, was greatly desired but considered more of a luxury than were yards of bright flannel, velveteen, or calico. Canned goods—fruits and vegetables—stocked the shelves" (1972:79). Trader Joe Schmedding recalled that the inventory at his Keams Canyon post in the early 1900s included "dry goods, clothing, hats, shoes, notions, patent medicines, harness, saddlery items, fencing, nails, horseshoes, and stock salt...anything the Indian customers may want, from a needle to a big freight wagon...even nursing bottles and rubber nipples to feed lambs which had lost their mothers" (1951:319). To this vast potpourri, contemporary traders (including Walter Kennedy at Dennehotso) also offered such varied items as epsom salts, flashlights, sateen and
Pepsi Cola.

But underneath this benign and colorful exterior lay the institution itself—the entrepot that caused "profound alterations of the whole Navaho economic structure" (Hill 1948:373). For insight into the force behind these changes, one needs to look at the man behind the counter, the "Walter Kennedy," the commercial pioneer whose trading domain extended for approximately twenty miles in any direction—the naalyéhí yá sidáhí, or "person who sits for the sake of merchandise" (Roberts 1987:30).

**Bilagaanaa Trader:**

"Shogun," culture carrier, and friend to the Navajo

The trader has been called all of these names, by Indian and white man alike. And though still very much alive and well, and trading, in the twentieth century, he is frequently regarded as a figment of the Old West, a storybook combination of fact and fiction. The true character of this simple merchant is colored by tradition-bound stereotypes created and fostered by his customers over the years—both the Indian with whom he traded goods for blankets, and the white man who bought his "rugs" for cash. The Indian trader has even been depicted, particularly in contemporary literature dealing with his business practices, as an outright villain. But in fact, these men of "patience and privation" changed the entire course of Navajo/Anglo relations, and have been described by one writer as "men who preferred the establishment of commerce with the Indians, rather than conquest" (De Lauer 1975:6).

As Willow Roberts explains, by definition "the term Indian trader
describes those who, not being Indian themselves, exchange manufactured goods with Native Americans for raw materials and crafts, usually on the latter's home ground. It carries a connotation of a whole way of life and livelihood, with overtones either romantic or pejorative, depending on the speaker" (1987:xviii). Most of these traders, and their wives, were pioneers in the true sense of the word, drawn to the land and to the people of the Southwest, ready to accept the challenges of living with each. They established their small businesses in remote areas of the vast Navajo Reservation, hours and sometimes days from the nearest "modern" town, and adapted to what were often the most primitive conditions. In many instances, they were the only white men their customers had ever seen. As such they and the "foreign" goods they offered in their posts were the single link between the Navajos and the alien culture from the East. The Coolidges described the trader as "far and away the most important White man on the Navajo Reservation, outside of government officials" (1930:67).

Over the years these traders managed to learn the Navajos' difficult language—well enough, at least, so that they created a secondary language they referred to as "trader Navajo," which enabled them not only to conduct business but to gossip and socialize with their customers and neighbors.14 They learned to appreciate and respect the religion and the cultural taboos of the Navajo people. They raised their families among the Navajo and often intermarried. Their sons (and in the case of Stokes and Jessie Carson, their daughters) became traders. They became trusted friends of the Navajos, interpreters of government policies from far-off "Washindon," intermediaries and buffers between the Navajo and the "official" White society. They settled
disputes among family members, doctored the sick, cashed checks, delivered babies, translated letters, and buried the dead. And, emphasizes McNitt, "If he failed too often in any of these functions, he failed also as a trader" (1972:70).

Coolidge added that the trader had to be "strong, patient, good-humored, able to fight and shoot straight; a social advisor to the Indians...He must be both a good salesman and a good buyer to make a profit...But imperatively, he must please the Indians" (Schmedding 1951:309). Furthermore, writes Marjel De Lauer in her contemporary analysis, "If a trader couldn't be trusted or tried to cheat the Indians, he was soon out of business" (1975:11).

The trader who survived then was, most often, successful. He knew that in order for him to prosper, the Indian must prosper; and herein lay the seed for the growth of their mutual economic dependency. After initially contributing to a general decline in weaving quality through his practice of paying for rugs by weight (the era of the "pound blanket"), he began to actively campaign for the revival of the weaver's former technical standards. Through his selective buying practices, the trader encouraged the weaving of fine rugs and blankets. He insisted on careful, quality wool preparation, sometimes even sending raw wool back East to be processed, then distributing it to his most talented weavers. He imported new chemical dyes and aided in the development of new colors in Native vegetal dyes.

Turn-of-the-century Indian traders actively cultivated an entirely new market for the Indian blanket in the Easterner who wanted "authentic" Indian craftswork to decorate his walls, furniture, and
floors. To this end individual traders helped their local weavers create stereotypical "Indian patterns" that reflected the tastes of their particular customers, even incorporating borders and oriental designs that are today accepted as "traditional Navajo." Hence, the development of the "Regional" rug style, peculiar to weavers trading at a specific post—perhaps the traders' most commonly recognized contribution to Navajo weaving as it is known today. Though regional style patterns are still popular (and referred to by their Anglo buyers by their regional names), they no longer need be limited to, or typically representative of, local weavers in specific areas of the Reservation. Improved roads and transportation mean that weavers are free to weave whatever pattern suits their fancy, knowing that if the first trader is not interested, another potential buyer is just a pickup truck's ride away.

Gary Witherspoon, contemporary anthropologist, has a somewhat unorthodox, yet perceptive, opinion regarding the development of these "regional" styles:

We are told that the traders discovered the dictates of the Anglo market, then directed the weavers to weave rugs to satisfy this market. If the market was truly so dictatorial, why did each trader interpret or formulate its dictates differently? I think traders have greatly exaggerated their role in the development of regional styles. The traders probably did convey strong messages to certain weavers about what would not sell well by not giving the weaver a high trade value for her rug. But traders had very little to do with original creations, other than holding up certain examples of
what they liked to those weavers who wove rugs the traders did not like or felt would not sell well (1987:71).

Perhaps the most accurate assessment of the "regional rug phenomenon" would be the simple, but practical, assumption that trader and weaver worked together to carve out a specific niche in the market, thus creating a unique "look" which characterized the weavings from one individual post to another.

But as important as were the trader’s many functions in the economic world of the Navajo, perhaps even more significant was his role as described by Clyde Kluckhohn and Dorothea Leighton as "a white individual who spread white ideas and practices among The People." They explain that because the trader had daily contact with his Navajo neighbors who saw government employees only rarely and often in negative situations, he and his family "constituted, for all practical purposes, the white world" (1974:130).

This extremely sensitive yet potentially influential position as a "cultural bridge" was analyzed in the report of the 1954 Social Science Research Council Summer Seminar on Acculturation and becomes particularly meaningful in the attempt to understand the Navajo/trader relationship. Scholars purported that cultures do not meet, but people who are their carriers do. As carriers of traditions, such contacting individuals never know their entire cultures and never convey all they know of them to one another. That part of their cultural inventory which they do transmit is conditioned primarily by their reasons for making the contact, that is, by the cultural
concomitants of the rule that they assume in dealing with an alien group (Adams 1963:10).

Though limited in his role as "culture carrier" by his remote isolation from eastern twentieth-century white society, but by making himself and his goods accessible to the Reservation Indian, the trader offered the Navajo the opportunity to "acquire the means to enter the Anglo world, whether he wanted to or not" (Roberts 1987:49).

Troubled waters on desert sands

Then, as now, the trading post and its resident trader were somewhat anachronistic, encouraging the old traditions, yet introducing the new. Because he was, above all, a harbinger of change, the trader became the butt of the Navajos' hostile feelings toward the white man. Within the confines of the trading post "bull pen" where the two cultures met, and across the high countertop where they conducted their business, there lay a great deal of room for mutual misunderstanding.16

John Dick, an elderly Rough Rock Navajo, had very definite opinions regarding traders which he related through an oral history project conducted by the Navajo Community College in 1977. It was his belief that the white men are intruders. They came into our peaceful land to build their trading posts all over the Reservation. We were forced for many years to trade with them for food and clothing, but some of the traders were (and are) crooked. They knew (and still know) that many Navajos do not understand
the value of money or what they want to buy; they often have been cheated by the traders who gave the Navajos only half the value of a rug or a piece of jewelry and then sold them for much more. That way the traders made more of a profit, especially when they made the Navajos take payment in food and merchandise which is priced very high....They finally are realizing, though, what the traders are doing to them and why those traders are becoming richer (NCC 1977:188).

The source of much of this long pent-up bitterness lay with the issue of credit and its counterpart pawn, 17 bones of contention among Indians and concerned "outside" Anglos alike. In his extensive study of Shonto Trading Post in 1955, Adams reported in a positive vein that credit extended by the post is as much an integral part of...modern-day economic life as is household interdependence. It is the ultimate institution which frees the community's living standards from the vicissitudes of a seasonal economy....Jewelry is pawned, with the full intention of redeeming it, and is in fact redeemed in well over ninety-nine percent of instances, and the community lives on its future earnings rather than its principal...Credit limits are determined on the basis of anticipated earnings rather than by the value of the collateral (1963:108).

Adams estimated that Shonto annually spent almost half of its income before it was ever earned. The accumulated debts were then settled at the time of the lamb and wool sales in the fall and spring. But because
credit extension also meant debt collection, the practice has been viewed with suspicion and disfavor by Indian agents and other governmental agencies from its inception.

How then do the trader and the Navajo conduct business during the winter months when entire communities often live on credit? The trader customarily extends credit only in the form of merchandise, often paying for weaving with "goods" rather than cash. As has been the practice for years in this sometimes "cashless" economy, "money" per se is not always a factor in the trading post transaction. Traders frequently bought rugs from their weavers offering half payment in cash and the other half in goods or a piece of jewelry the weaver may wish to own.

At the same time however, the trader who was trying to eke out a living through this mutual exchange of goods was every bit as dependent upon his customers and their promises to pay up when family sheep were sheared, or when the weavers' rugs were finished. Had there not existed a firm foundation of mutual trust, the credit/pawn system would not have survived these hundred years. Proof of its healthy status in today's Navajo economy is the bright yellow sign on the highway outside J.B. Tanner's trading post in Yahtahey, just down the road from Window Rock, hub of Navajo officialdom, bearing the words "PAWN" and "CREDIT" in bold red letters. The basic reality, as true now as it was in the early days, is simply this: the trader who took advantage of his customers simply did not last. The unhappy Navajo just took his trade to the neighboring post, especially in later years when the family pickup replaced the horse and wagon.

Contrary to popular and historical opinion, the trader of old did
not fade from existence after the widespread and often cataclysmic reforms of the New Deal era. Because McNitt's definitive work, Indian Traders, ends "perhaps arbitrarily when an entirely new generation of traders adopted new approaches soon after 1932, coinciding with sweeping changes in reservation and tribal affairs introduced by the administration of Indian Commissioner John Collier—all of which swiftly revolutionized and obliterated an older way of life" (1972:vii-viii), the "new generation" trader was often considered an anomaly, if considered at all.

But the trader as depicted in traditional southwestern lore did not truly vanish until the cessation of the practice of pawn in the early 1970s.18 That he continued to play a vital role in the Navajo economy is further testified by Willow Roberts' biography of Stokes Carson (1987) and Gladwell Richardson's memoirs of his own life as a trader until his retirement in 1961 (1986). Almost no other literature exists, however, documenting the "new generation" trader from the 1930s through today.

World War II did, however, have some impact upon the deeply rooted traditions of trader/Navajo interdependence. Trader Richardson mentions the inevitable changes that occurred when the "returning warriors" realized they no longer lived "in a circumscribed world peculiarly their own...No longer were they forced to sit around their hogans hoping that a little wool woven into a blanket would buy enough coffee and flour to sustain them" (1986:181).

Responding to the challenge, Sergeant Walter Kennedy, a "returning warrior" in his own right, launched his trading career in 1948, one that would last for over three decades. Second son in a family of Indian
traders, Kennedy was typical of the "new generation" traders. Stories of his long career illustrate over and over again that the contemporary, post World War II trader was not, in fact, very far removed from the life and practices of his legendary predecessors. What follows here are Kennedy's personal anecdotes, documenting the end of an era—the final days of the reservation Indian trader whose role in southwestern history has become almost more fiction than fact.

Kennedy's "trader's tales" culminating in the 1980s might appear to lend credence to the 1975 Arizona Highways prediction that "Indian trading posts and traders will soon become as extinct as the Dodo Bird" (De Lauer 1975:6). But his life experiences, and those of his contemporaries, still fuel the ambitions of yet another generation of traders who challenge: "Try swapping a sack of wool or a bag of pinon nuts for groceries at a supermarket check-out stand" (McCoy 1987:12).
Figure 1. Walter Monroe Kennedy, known by the "river" Indians in Kirtland as Litso Begay and called Tah Telly by his friends and neighbors at Dennehotsi. Photograph by Byard Peake 1989.
INTRODUCTION: Tah Telly or "Thick Lips"
(also known as Litso Begay or "Thumb's Boy"

I feel that I have something within my self that very few Traders have ever had. They are very few of the old Traders left that went threw the Stock reduction, Etc. and knowing Navajoes who came from Ft. Sumter [sic] the long Walk."

Walter Kennedy (K89-14)

Walter M. Kennedy is a living anachronism who spent half a century—from the pre-World War II era through the 1970s—practicing an almost fictional career on isolated trading posts on the Navajo Reservation. Kennedy, an Anglo Mormon, and his Native American clientele interacted and conducted business in much the same way as their historical predecessors, with little regard to contemporary sociocultural and economic circumstances prevailing in the "outside world." His personal memoirs—scrawled pencilled notes on over five hundred pages of yellow legal paper—vividly recreate those experiences. The transcription and editing of those notes, enhanced by an extensive, continuous oral history project, comprised the initial phase, the autobiographical perspective, of this dissertation project.

Additional research, providing cultural, historical and ethnographic background, as well as interpretive context and continuity, created a second perspective, that of the biographer. But my goal as
"biographer" has not been in this case the creation of the definitive life story of an Indian trader, but to serve as an "enabler," a catalyst to help dig out buried memories, and as a "translator" helping to clarify and make those memories more meaningful to others. The resulting dual-voice presentation—Kennedy’s, reliving through his own words his career and his life at a reservation trading post, and mine, a voice from another generation in the outside world—is a multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary examination of the contemporary Indian trader (in many ways still a remnant of the Old West), and his role in perpetuating the myth of the "Indian" to present day Anglo and Navajo societies.

From tales of homemade whiskey, pawn, and "watered sheep," to anecdotes about his Navajo neighbors and interfering government men, Kennedy unknowingly illuminates causes and events that enabled the "old-time" Indian trader to survive and function on remote reservation posts until the present day. Often laughing at himself, this desert storekeeper—in fact, cultural broker par excellence—lays bare the ambiguities and defies the myths that surround the oft-maligned Anglo businessman in Navajoland. He shares the experiences and hard-learned lessons of half a century of living behind the counter of that unique cultural meeting place, the reservation trading post.

I first met Walter Kennedy—a big man, wearing blue overalls, a soiled and much-worn red baseball cap, and a big smile—in 1988 in Kirtland, New Mexico, where he had retired after fifty-three active years as an Indian trader. His hobby was tending his memorabilia—thousands of items, from old Navajo saddles (some, gifts
from his customers), Navajo and Zuni silver, weavings, and wedding baskets, to a cradleboard made for his daughter's cat by a former Navajo employee.4

Following up on a story I had read in a trade newspaper, The Indian Trader, about Walter and his Dennehoto Collection, I had come specifically to see his pictorial, or representational, weavings which were the "regional style" that had become the hallmark of his Dennehoto trading post.5 According to Walter,

We Kennedys built up the pictorial rug business. Before Dennehoto only the Gap was bigger.6 We paid lots of money for them. Cash.7 More money if the weavers did pictorials [than the standard "Indian-like" geometric design]. I told them--my weavers--that anything the Navajo done is fine. What the White Man done I didnt want.8 See you dont suggest to the Navajo. You talk. Let them go their own way. Let them come up with the ideas (21 March, 1989).

But there was something much more fascinating in Walter's especially-designed garage museum vault9 than drawer upon drawer of imaginative "paintings of wool"--including yeibichai dancers10 holding snakes (and for each one of these Walter had to pay an extra $150 because "Navajos have a thing against weaving snakes") (21 March, 1989), to woven eagles, elephants, rodeo cowboys and Arabian sheiks.11 There was something even more valuable than the hundreds of pieces of Indian silver, old pawn12 and present-day, made-for-trade jewelry. For there was an old man who had stories to tell--stories he'd been scribbling down in the middle of the night
because the memories wouldn't let him sleep. Stories about the experiences of an Indian trader, a benign despot ruling over his own little world in the middle of the Navajo Reservation while the rest of the twentieth century passed him by.

Walter Kennedy was the real prize of the Dennehotso Collection—a weathered veteran of the trading post bull pen, whose "stories," scrawled hurriedly without benefit of capitalization or punctuation in an effort to "get it down before it got away" (21 March, 1989), tell of reservation life from the vantage point of a white man who lived with, worked with, and truly enjoyed his Navajo neighbors, from the early 1930s until he retired in 1981.

Those "stories," as he refers to them, appear here as much like his original, middle-of-the-night notes as possible. Only where it seemed absolutely necessary—e.g. to make page-long ramblings more readable—did I supply periods and/or capital letters. Walter's choice of capitals (e.g. always with Trader, Money, and Pawn), provide insight as to what he obviously, though perhaps subconsciously, deemed important. Spelling appears as originally written, Walter's own personal shorthand. It is important to note, however, that he never intended that these private "memory notes" be published "as is." But to "fix it up" beyond the barest minimum would be to alter the spontaneity and to change the character, voice, and feelings of the man who wrote them, and as a consequence, the reader's own interpretation of those experiences. My first and foremost concern throughout the transcription was to preserve the persona of the storyteller, with hopes that upon reading these stories in their original form, the "reader" will gradually become a "listener" and hear the stories as if told by
the storyteller himself.

Endnotes, in addition to expanding upon specific references, supply expository details and additional background information—often in the form of anecdotes from Walter himself, or through excerpts from other stories. Though necessary to provide the reader with a thorough understanding of events and circumstances of Walter’s life, this material is not included within the text itself, lest it interfere with the narrative flow of the autobiographer’s presentation. Hence, these notes should be considered as a supplemental text composed of "between-the-lines" communications, intended to enhance rather than impede the telling of the trader’s tales.

Almost as revealing as the many, detailed, and often extremely personal, experiences Walter chose to remember and record, are those which he chose to ignore. For example, of the endless government (both Navajo and U.S.) investigations and harassment during the turmoil-filled 1960s and 1970s, there were less than ten (out of 500) pages of notes that dealt with the events which ultimately pulled Walter’s world down around him (see chapter nine). Consequently, supporting notes and connective material do not attempt to recreate those years with interpretive specifics, but merely to provide meaningful, chronological narrative, along with necessary references, to eliminate important "gaps" in Walter’s life story. Others have discussed those events in depth and to repeat their work within this context would be redundant.14

What follows here then does not purport to be the definitive life history of an Indian trader as seen by an outsider. Nor is this a documentation of the total trader/Navajo situation upon the reservation
over the course of Walter's career. These are instead one man's perceptions of the world around him—his personal experience stories. These are recollections (as opposed to diary entries) of those "happenings" that Walter Kennedy feels were lifetime highlights. These are the stories that Walter tells about himself—recreations of the good times and the bad, of the people and events that carved their niche in the memory of the man who has purposefully decided what was meaningful, and/or important, and what was not. As Walter says, "These are the stories I wrote for my grandchildren" (21 March, 1989).
Figure 2. Just one of more than five hundred pages of Walter's many stories, most of which I can't remember, that's when I do my best remembering, in the middle of the night, because
Figure 3. Walter in his custom-made collection vault, a giant (20’ x 40’), "walk-in," glass-walled, display case. Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
PROLOGUE: A Million Miles from Nowhere

I wouldn’t have been out there if I hadn’t been doing all right. I’d have gone somewhere else. But I’d never have found anything I liked as much.

Walter Kennedy (2 November, 1991)

The majority of Kennedy’s reminiscences originate in an out-of-the-way post with an unlikely name meaning "end of a green valley, because the area used to be under water and was a big lake." It was "a million miles from nowhere," according to his wife Flora (13 August, 1989). But the dusty settlement of Dennehotso, halfway between Mexican Water and Kayenta in northern Arizona, was the place that Walter Kennedy decided should be home back in 1948. The small sandstone building, without electricity, running water, or indoor plumbing when the Kennedys arrived with their infant daughter, would serve as family and business headquarters for the last thirty-three years of Walter’s half-century-long career as trader to the Navajo.

Then, as today, Dennehotso was isolated, with the closest community, in any direction, at least eighteen to twenty miles away—a fact that Walter points out was "good for business, being a hub like that." Monument Valley was about fifteen miles off to the northwest, across boulder- and chamisa-covered flat lands, sliced by rarely rain-filled arroyos. The first paved road was finally built in 1962 (today’s U.S. Highway 160), providing an artery across the northern
end of the Navajo Reservation, connecting Tuba City in the west to Shiprock in the east, making transportation other than the horse and wagon slightly more practical for the first time.⁴

In fact, the very existence of any kind of official or formal gathering place, much less a trading post, at Dennehotso happened by accident. According to Kennedy, a certain Charley Ashcroft⁵ "went broke out at Mexican Water Trading Post⁶ after the wool prices went sky high in about 1923 and then fell out from under everything, and he was left with no place to go.⁷

So he decided to build another store out in this area so he got Perry Smook and Dutch Taft⁸ who owned a truck to take a load of building material somewhere further out. They passed Mexican Water, kept on going and about 18 miles across solid rock and sand they got stuck. They were in the Dennehotso area and they got their truck stuck and were unable to get it out. Charley said this is close enough. So they unloaded and got Indians to carry what they had to the building site.

Hole Kidney⁹ told Charley that this was his place and he would have to pay for it. There was a small spring there. Hole Kidney was a very prominate [sic] Medicine Man. So he and Charley got together and made a deal and that is where Dennehotso stands today (K89-21).

But long before a trading post came to settle on the stubborn sands of Dennehotso there were Kennedys trading with the Indians in the Southwest. Bearing in mind the folklorist's adage that "No story exists
out there by itself [but] takes life from two of us: the teller and listener, writer and reader..." (Jackson 1990:415) let us then go back in time, with Walter Kennedy as our guide and storyteller, and explore his roots, thus setting the scene for his personal saga, *Trading Post Tales*. 
Figure 4. "Kennedy Territory"
Figure 5. Dennehotso Trading Post. (Crayon marks by Lavina who admitted to her father, more than thirty years after the fact, that it was she who had defaced his prize photo.) Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Walter Leroy Kennedy (Walter's father)

Viola Smith Kennedy (Walter's mother, married Roy in 1900)
   Lucille b. 1901
   Earl b. 1903
   Pearl b. 1909
   Blanche b. 1912
   WALTER MONROE KENNEDY b. December 24, 1916
   Troy b. 1919
   Harold b. 1921

Flora Eaton Kennedy (married Walter in 1945)
   Lavina b. 1947
   Ivan b. 1951

Figure 6
Chapter I

The Trader's Roots

I guess I've been a trader all my life. One day when I was only eleven years old I traded horses seventeen times. Started with just one horse and had five when I was through, even though none of 'em was as good as the one I had to begin with. And I was just a kid, trading with men.

Walter Monroe Kennedy (August, 1989)

So it must have been in the Kennedy blood, this talent for trading. But breeding or no, growing up in the back rooms of the family's general store (W.L. KENNEDY GENERAL MERCHANDISE, HORSE TRADING AND LIVESTOCK in Olio, New Mexico) proved to be good training for the Kennedy clan. All four Kennedy boys, Earl, Walter M., Troy, and Harold, would one day make their living trading with the Navajo; and Lucille, the oldest Kennedy and one of three girls, would marry a trader, Elmer McGee.¹ The fate of their children probably came as no surprise to Walter Leroy Kennedy, known to everyone as "Roy," and his wife Viola, for their own romance had begun while each was working behind the counter of Tom Bryan's general store and trading post, THE PROGRESSIVE MERCANTILE COMPANY.² Roy and Tom became partners around the turn of the century, and in 1900 Roy took on another partner when he and Viola Smith were married.³ In 1901 Roy bought the business from his partner, Bryan. He and Viola then changed the name, moved the store
half a mile down the road into the west side of their home, and began raising their family (AK:2 and Briggs 1978:9).

Roy Kennedy (Walter’s father) had come west with Dr. John Coolidge, his legal guardian, in 1883 when he was only fourteen years old. Leaving his Pennsylvania family behind, Kennedy was one of many who hoped the altitude and dry climate might cure his tuberculosis.4 Coolidge and his young ward arrived in the Four Corners area just seven years after the U.S. Government had officially opened part of the Jicarilla Apache Reservation for settlement (Sarah Platt Decker D.A.R. 1961:152). Traditionally grazing lands for roving bands of Utes and Navajos, the San Juan valley of New Mexico was never particularly attractive to the Apaches; but white farmers immediately took to the fertile lands of "To-Tah," the Navajo name for the place "Where-the-rivers-are-divided" or "Where-the-waters-meet" at the junction of the Las Animas, La Plata, and San Juan rivers (MacDonald 1970:9).

The Coolidge family, which of course included Kennedy, chose to settle just west of To-Tah (by now called Farmington by its Anglo citizens) near the new community of Fruitland founded by Mormon bishop Luther Burnham.5 Just three years later in 1886, when Roy was only seventeen, he homesteaded one hundred and sixty acres of choice farmland in the San Juan valley and built an adobe, brick-covered dwelling—the homesite that would one day house the first Kennedy trading post and his family of seven.

Old-timers tell the story that about this time (1886) locals decided they needed regular mail service. So citizen Columbus John Moss
sent officials in Washington a box of his Baldwin apples with the hope that they might be persuaded to establish their own official U.S. Post Office. Apparently the bureaucrats enjoyed the apples very much, but they replied that any post office needed a name. Mr. Moss reportedly thumbed through his dictionary and found the word "olio," defined as "a mixture; hodgepodge; a miscellaneous collection," and decided that it aptly described a place that had a "duke's mixture" of Navajos, Utes, Spanish-Americans, Mormons and Gentiles. Columbus Moss not only received government approval for the name, but also the appointment as Olio's first postmaster (Briggs 1978:286 and MacDonald 1970:62).

Dr. Coolidge (Kennedy's guardian) quickly became a leader among the Gentiles in Olio and in 1895 directed his neighbors in the building of a large, twenty-mile-long community ditch "which headed far upstream where the San Juan accepts water from its small relative, the Rio de La Plata" (MacDonald 1970:62). Roy Kennedy, now in his mid-twenties, worked for two years on this project and was later asked to serve on the board of the Coolidge Ditch Company. The Coolidge Ditch (later called Farmers Mutual Ditch) was a major engineering feat in its day, constructed entirely by dredges pulled by teams of horses; and Kennedy's association with this turn-of-the-century irrigation miracle has been incorporated into family legend.6

Around 1903 Olio citizens felt that their town had outgrown its informal and somewhat serendipitous moniker and, following the suggestion of Elder Brigham Young, Jr., changed the name to "Kirtland" because he thought their situation resembled that of a city in early church history. Local historian, John Arrington says, "The Saints named it for an old Mormon settlement in Ohio, and they laid out its streets
nice and wide like they always do. The main street they named Brigham Young" (MacDonald 1970:61).

So Kirtland was home for the Kennedys, where the "trading Kennedys" had their roots, and where Walter Kennedy lives today in retirement. The farmland along the San Juan River homesteaded by his father, Roy, was the source and location of the first of Walter's many "stories"—stories of a boy growing up with six brothers and sisters, milk cows, cattle, chickens, horses, hogs, and goats, and stories of a family store where the children had daily contact with farmers, traders, cowboys, and Indians.

On Christmas Eve in the year 1916 the fifth Kennedy child was born. Walter Monroe was preceded by his oldest sister Lucille (1901), his brother Earl (1903), and sisters Pearl (1909) and Blanche (1912). Walter's "sidekicks" Troy and Harold came along in 1919 and 1921 to keep him company and make sure he got into plenty of trouble. There was no end to the entertainment that the three young Kennedy boys could create on a large farm with an assortment of livestock, irrigation ditches to play in, and fields of alfalfa, oats, and corn.

Dad had lots of cattle and milk cows. It was our job to bring in milk cows in the evenings. We had lots [of] bucket feed calves. The reason for this was that Dad sold cream and we fed the "bucket calves" separed [sic] milk. [Dogie calves that had been lost or rejected by their mothers were fed separated milk.] Us boys got to riding them and taught them to buck.7 They were strong calves and could really buck. We were not susposed to be riding them as Dad was trying to
fatten [them] but we did.

My brother Harold my youngest brother was really a good rider. Troy wasn't to great. And I wouldn't of taken any prizes. One day we decided that it was time to have a Rodeo. We decided who was going to ride each calf. Harold said he wanted to try the worst bucker. We had a spotted heifer that could really buck. We had made up our own rules. 8 jumps was a ride and the rider counted the jumps. We got Harold mounted up and turned the calf loose. The rodeo was taking place in our hay stockyard. I looked around and saw my Dad looking threw the board fence. It was to late to do anything about it so Harold was riding the calf and doing the counting. Any way he got to #8 and about that time he went sailing threw the air. And the black birds could of made a nest in his hind end before he came down. My Dad just turned around and went to the house never said a word....By the way the bucking calf the one we couldn't ride turned into one of the best milk cows we ever had (K86:4-5).

The senior Kennedy evidently figured his calves were none the worse for wear as they still managed to put on weight despite their extra duties as rodeo stock. But Walter and his brothers pushed their rodeo fun to the limits when they introduced the sport to their city slicker nephews (who were their same ages). In consideration of the newcomers' inexperience, the "expert bull riders" moved the rodeo down to the cow corral "where it had been raining and the cow shit was about 1 foot deep and told them the calves couldn't buck as hard down there and the ground wouldn't be so
hard if they were threwed off" (K86:B-9). Well, the city boys "werent very good riders," and the Kennedy cowboys knew they were in trouble when they sent the visitors back to the house "covered in cow shit, head to toe," knee pants and middies barely visible. Their older sister Lucille was moved to tears by the sight of her sons, but Roy Kennedy preferred to discipline his "dammed little walloppers" with a firm talking to down at the store.

So things went along fine for about a week. It was getting about time for the second cutting of hay to be put up. The hired help were getting ready to haul hay. We had about 3 hay racks and they had to be greased with axle grease. That is the blackest and hardest to get off of any grease there is. You have to take the [hay rack] wheel parts way off to grease them with a home made paddle. Harold told the boys [the city visitors] that if you put some of the Black axle grease on there "manhood" it would sure make it grow. So they said they wanted a treatment. Harold and I helped them with the paddle. When we got them all fixed up we took off and sent them to the house.

It wasn't long until my sister (and there mother) found out about what had happened but we were long gone. We didn't have any company bath room and bath tub but they got the #2 wash tub and gave them a bath and my sister proceeded to go down to the store and tell Dad what we had done. I sure don't think she thought it was funny (K86:B-9).

Roy seemed to have amazing tolerance for this latest prank and
released his sons with a warning about using the "double rope" should there be a "next time." Walter said they never found out "if Harold's Formula worked or not. But if it did, I feel we should get the patent for it" (K86:9).

As Walter wrote later in a story for his own children, "we were raised some what different than children are raised today. We had no recreation other than what we made our self" (K86:3). When they grew tired of entertaining summer guests and riding the family livestock, the boys turned their attention toward other responsibilities like feeding and caring for the chickens, guinea hens and ducks. While gathering eggs one morning,

one of us thought up we would tie a string on a kernel of corn and let the chickens swallow it. But it wouldn't work as Dad soaked corn to feed to the milk cows. So we got a needle and a ball of sacking twine out of the grainery and strung several of these kernels of corn on a string and threw it out to the chickens. And they would swallow it. Then we would wait quite a while and get a hold of the string and lead the chickens around. It was so much fun that we started tying them up. Our mother came out about that time. She didn't say anything but went down to the store and told Dad he had better come up and see what his three sons were doing.

He came up looked around went out the grainery got his double rope and he sure did work over 3 boys. When he got threw he told one [of us] to go in the house and get a pr of scissors. Then he had us catch the 30 chickens we had tied up and cut the string close to there beak so they could swallow.
And all he said - Boys why did you do that? We told him we were breaking them to lead just like he broke a horse to lead. Tie it up over nite and it will lead the next morning. But we damned sure didn't find out whether it worked or not (KB6:15-16).

Growing up was not all foolishness on the Kennedy farm, however. When the "chicken cowboys" were not playing games, they were learning just what it takes to manage and irrigate one hundred and sixty acres of fields and vineyards. Walter remembers that "Dad had made each of us a shovel with a handle the length that we were able to use. Each of us boys had one and it was ours and no one else used it. If he did there was hell to pay as this was something we were very proud of" (KB6:3, 19). Roy would always take one of the boys with him whenever he went out to the ditches to "change the water." Such expeditions were always educating and often made more exciting by encounters with "rattlesnakes which always came in pairs" (KB6:19). Walter says that his father always encouraged his young sons and give us a small piece of land for us to Farm. Plow.

Harrow. Plant. Mark out. Whatever. Never raised anything but [we] spent lots of our time playing this way. Dad had lots of hired help and they were very good to show us and help us with our problems. Working our farm one week we would plant corn. The next week we would plow it up and plant whatever we could find in the grainery. We never raised a crop but we sure had a lot of fun and got a lot of experience out of it. Dad was very understanding and would come out to our farm and help and
advise us (K86:3).

The ultimate "command post" for the lively Kennedy household, however, was "down at the store." The old homestead fields surrounded the Kennedy place of business, and any feed grown on the farm that was not consumed by family livestock was sold in the store to customers. The hired hands, of whom there were always a handful, helped in the fields or did some kind of work for Mr. Kennedy's store. One of the hired help that Walter remembers best from his childhood was Navajo Jim Kennedy.

Old Jim as we all called him had worked for my dad ever since I can remember. His family lived out on the Chaco Wash though I never saw them. He came to work for Dad around 1910 and lived in a tin building Dad had down by the store which had by then been moved from the old home to the highway. Jim worked for Dad for so many years that everyone started calling him Jim Kennedy.

Dad paid him a dollar a day plus his noon meal. Old Jim worked early and late—the eight-hour day was unheard of at the time—and seven days a week. The only time he had off was when he would go home for a few days but his pay stopped when he wasn't working. Jim had a few sheep and horses and a few cows which his family took care of most of the time. In the winter there wasn't too much to do at the store so he would go home and herd sheep and take care of his family.

One winter Old Jim came to Dad and said his wife was sick. He needed some help so he could get a medicine man to
sings for her." Jim’s bill at the store was quite high
but he told Dad he and his wife each had a string of coral
beads and a silver belt that they would pawn to get the help
they needed. The deal was made and Dad put Old Jim’s beads
and belt inside his big safe where they still are today. That
was over 70 years ago.

Jim’s wife was very old. That winter she passed away.
Dad said Old Jim was never the same after that. He was very
old himself and unable to work. Dad helped him with what he
could but Old Jim just went back home. Dad never heard from
him but finally found out that he had passed away. Chaco
was quite a long way away and Jim had been dead and buried for
quite some time when Dad found out about his death. That is
why the beads and belt are still in the safe

(KB9-3:129-130).

Also in that old safe were other mementos of Roy Kennedy’s early
days as an Indian trader. Walter tells about "a bunch of cinco money
that Dad had before the turn of the century." 

He must have had $1,000.00 of it at one time as it looks
to me as if there is at least 700.00 or more of it left. Why
I know it was about the turn of the century it has on it W.L.
KENNEDY * OLIO N.M. which was changed to Kirtland about that
time. That is what the Mormon records show. The cinco money
was made out of aluminum. 5-cent, 25-cent, 50-cent, and
one-dollar. The reason no dimes as pop and candy was
five cents. That is what my Dad said. He said he had this
money made and issued it and paid wages bought livestock whatever the Navajos or Whites had. It was used for the same purpose money is used today. Shortly after he started to issue his cinco out the Pah Delud Burned Bread store at Fruitland issued there cinco money. It was copper. So he said he didn’t know how to handle the situation as he didn’t feel that there was any need for 2 cinco money in the area. So he said he started to honor [Pah Delud] Burned Bread [cinco money].

The reason of this name — a man by the name of Cline baked bread in his store and he inevitably burned it and the Navajos called his store burnt bread and that has been the Navajo name of Fruitland Trading Co. ever since. Getting back to the cinco money. So Dad started to call his money back.15 As it came in he never issued any more. They were a few problems about it but things finally worked out and Dad honored Pah Delud Burnt Breads cinco money. All of Dad’s money didn’t come back in but about $800.00 worth did. There is no record of this in the cinco coin books but some day I will get it done and it will bring a good price as there are lots of collectors looking for these coins for there history (KB9:132-133).

The Navajos who frequented Roy Kennedy’s store had their own name for the good-natured Indian trader who had two thumbs on his left hand. Navajo names often described a physical characteristic, or sometimes referred to a circumstance associated with the person. "It seemed like
it was a custom," wrote Walter. "They called Dad Thumbs (Litso). And us boys were called Thumbs Boy (Litso Begay) here on the river [Kirtland]."

Each of the Kennedy boys would be given their own individualized Indian names by local Navajos when they later established their own posts on the Reservation. The always smiling Walter was given the name Tah Telly, or Thick Lips, by his Navajo clientele at Dennehotso.16

Trader in training

Walter Litso Begay was only ten years old when his dad assigned him his first official job in the trading business. Years later Walter relates this experience in a story labeled simply, "Taking horse owned by my grandfather Schuyler Smith to Cortez." Apparently Roy Kennedy had sold the horse to the Mahoney Road Construction Company which was using teams and scrapers to build a new graveled road from Shiprock, New Mexico, to Cortez, Colorado. The company had bought the horse for one hundred dollars, plus five dollars for delivery to their road camp, about forty-five miles from Kirtland.

The horse was very large 1800# or better. Young. Unbroken but had been broken to lead. I was a small boy at that time and I had a good pony. Dad said Son do you think you could take this horse to Cortez? I told him I thought I could but maybe I could get a neighbor boy to go with me. Dad thought that was all right. He thought I would give the neighbor boy half of the 5.00 that I got for delivery of the horse but I told the boy I would give him a dollar and he agreed. Dad didn't seem to agree but never said anything.
So we were set to go the next morning at daybreak. He got us boys up and we took off. We went as far as Shiprock [about seventeen miles] and stopped [at the Bruce Bernard Trading Post] and had lunch and fed our horses. We had a small sack of oats and nose bags for the horses to eat out of. With the 50 cents Dad had given us we bought us a nehi pop for 5 cents and candy bar 5 cents and a box of Ginder [sic] snaps for 10 cents and that was our Dinner. After lunch we went north of Shiprock. We were instructed to follow the road [survey] stakes as it would be a lot closer and we would not miss the road camp. We got along fine until the big horse we were leading got tired. And when this happened one of us had to stay behind to keep him moving. But long about dark we came to the road camp.

The road hands were all around and a couple of them took the big horse and our ponys and fed them and put them in the corral. They told us to go to the cook shack and get our supper. We had a very good supper and all the canned pineapple we could eat. The foreman came in and told us that there was a couple of cots in the bunk house and we could sleep in them. By this time the road hands were sitting around playing cards and they started teasing us. Told us our ponys weren't any good. That they were the mangiest scranniest most no good horses they had ever seen. And they probly would [not] make it home and we would be doing them a favor to go out there and put them out of their misery. That we boys were never gonna see home again. And the first thing we knew they had us
bawling. I and my friend decided that we didn't want any more of this so we started out of the bunk house. The foreman came in about this time and said where do you boys think you are going. I said we are going home. That the SOBs were causing us problems telling us [we] were lost our horses aren't any good. The foreman said Walter your Dad told me that you were to stay here tonite and you are if I have to stay with you. We cooled down and everything was fine.

The next morning they sent us over to the chuck wagon for breakfast. When we came out they had our ponys saddled, a small sack of grain tied behind the saddle of each horse. My friend and myself decided they were pretty good fellows after all. We were in a hell of a hurry to get home and we rode pretty hard and sure did cover the miles. Being just kids we didn't realize that we were mistreating our horses by riding them so hard. About 2 oclock that afternoon I rode in home. My Dad saw me coming. He came out. There wasn't a dry hair on my pony and sweat and foam was all over her. Dad looked at her and said Son dont you realize you have nearly ridden your Pony to death? He said I am not to happy about this but Im not going to punish you. But I want you to unsaddle her put a horse blanket on her and lead her around for one hour and cool her out. And you better believe I done just that (KB6:25-26 and AK:26-29).

Walter's adventures kept him fairly close to home for a few more years. But when he was fourteen, he decided he would like to be a
"world traveler." With a friend who shared his aspirations, he ran away from home—for a total of five days—riding on horseback as far as Dolores, Colorado (about seventy miles), before cold and hunger got the best of the boys.

School was something Walter never felt deserved his full attention, what with all the necessary "living" he needed to experience. By the time he was seventeen, he was just finishing the ninth grade in high school. This would be the last of his formal education. But he was certainly "high on learning" in a lot of other areas.

By now an expert rider—and horse trader par excellence—Walter spent a great deal of his time racing his horses with the Navajos, and gambling on the outcome of the races.

Every Sunday we would go across the river and race with the Navajoes but nearly always came up on the Short end as horse racing among the Navajoes is different than ours. Each side of track has there own horses. 2 Horses are led out from one side and the other side picks one of the horses. There Jockey rides the other side of the tracks horse. They do their betting on a Navajo blanket or whatever Money Briddles Ropes whatever. The other side Matches it and they have the race and which ever side wins takes all. It seems to me that I was always on the loosing side so wasn't very Profitable for me but was lot of experience and learned a lot about the Navajoes (K86:31-32).

[Continuing, from the Auble/Kennedy collaboration] I’m sorry to say that I always came home on the short end of gambling on the horses. One day I went across the river to
race my Horses with them [the Navajos]. I had a beautiful saddle and bridle and some of the finest Navajo saddle blankets ever made. That evening I came home with nothing but a short piece of rope to guide my mare with. First I lost all my money, then my saddle, next my bridle, and finally my beautiful saddle blankets. If it hadn't been getting cool that evening I probably would have lost my shirt too (AK:34).

Roy saw his son riding in, somewhat less equipped than when he left, and knew exactly what had happened. He just laughed and told Walter that he had hoped "that maybe you would learn what I never did" (AK:34).

Gambling was not, however, Walter's only shortcoming. He smoked, as did most of his friends; and despite Prohibition he was doing more than just a little drinking, due to the easy availability of bootleg whiskey. That summer he was at loose ends, spending most of his time carousing, with not much thought of what the future might have in store. One day after the harvest was in, Roy called Walter over to the store for a serious talk. Somewhat frustrated with his wayward son, he issued an ultimatum: "You either go back to school and make something of yourself, or else" (KB6:32)!
Figure 7. Remains of W.L. KENNEDY GENERAL MERCHANDISE, HORSETRADING AND LIVESTOCK, Olio, New Mexico. The original Kennedy home and store was destroyed by fire while Walter and Flora were living out at Dennehotso, long after the Kennedy children (all of whom were born in this house), now adults, had moved away. Photograph by Nancy Peake 1991.
Figure 8. Roy Kennedy with wife Viola and two oldest children, Lucille and Earl. Note the two thumbs on Roy's left hand, hence his Navajo name Litso, meaning "thumbs." Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
Figure 9. The "young wallopers"—Walter, Troy, and Harold, learning how to plough. The adobe homestead (and former Kennedy store) had been "modernized" with brick facing. Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.

Figure 10. Family plough horse turned "tow truck," proving the value of true "horsepower." Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
Figure 11. The "new" Kennedy store, built "right on the main road" in what was by now called Kirtland when Roy's family and business outgrew the original building (with the old store and homestead just out of sight, a hundred yards behind and to the left). Years after the store closed and Roy had passed away, Flora and the kids lived in an apartment in the rear during the school year while Walter was out at Dennehotso. Walter used the old store space in front as a warehouse for his extra trading post stock. Photograph by Nancy Peake 1991.

Figure 12. Shack just to the left of the Kennedy store where the Navajos stayed who helped out in the store, and where Roy enjoyed gambling with his customers. "Still smells like 'Indian'," said Walter, sixty years later. Photograph by Nancy Peake 1991.
Chapter II

Learning the Ropes at Lukachukai

Son, you may think that the Navajos are not as smart as you are. But don’t go to sleep, or you might come out on the short end of the stick.

Roy Kennedy (K89-14)

With this farewell advice, Roy Kennedy gave his wayward son a suitcase and sent him off on a truck loaded with freight for the Navajo Reservation, destined for older brother Earl’s log and mud-chinked trading post at Lukachukai.¹ The threatened "or else" had come to pass. It was September, 1933, and Walter, at age seventeen, was about to begin his official apprenticeship as Indian trader.²

The Lukachukai post had been in the Kennedy family since 1926 when Roy took advantage of what he saw as a good business opportunity and purchased the small store in the west foothills of the Lukachukai Mountains.³ He had made a deal with his oldest son Earl that in exchange for managing the store, he would retain one half interest. Roy had always had it in mind to turn over his own half to Walter some years down the line.

Walter completed his practical education under his brother’s tutelage. For the impressive wage of four cents an hour, including his room and board, he worked sixteen hours a day learning the ins and outs of the trading business. Specifically, he was paid fifteen dollars per
month, or $180 per year, which Walter broke down to the grand total of
fifty-three cents per day (AK:38). In exchange for this princely wage
Walter would not only trade with the Navajo customers but perform a
great many duties. It was his responsibility to keep the store clean,
to stock the shelves and dry goods racks, and to maintain and clean the
warehouse. He was also in charge of the hay barn, a task which
included unloading and stacking the hay when the Navajo wagons delivered
it, and tossing hay bales into the wagons when they were sold. He was
to sack the corn, beans, pinons, and grain brought to the store for
trade. Another of Walter’s more unusual tasks, and one not often
associated with an Indian trader, was baking bread: “We made lots of
bread out there at Lukachukai. One hundred loaves a day, in a big wood
stove. Shipped it all to Gallup in the pickup (21 March, 1989). Or,
since we [the trading post] were the official post office at Lukachukai,
we sometimes sent it parcel post as it didn’t cost us anything” (20

Earl Kennedy was never one to spend money lavishly; as a result he
had never drilled a well at Lukachukai. Not surprisingly another one of
Walter’s duties as "trader trainee" was hauling two five-gallon buckets
of water ("at least an eighty pound load") up the steep hill from the
wash a quarter of a mile east of the store whenever needed, which was
often many times a day. Needless to say, Walter felt he earned every
dime he made. Earl was a tough taskmaster but considered "one of the
best young traders on the Reservation," and in hindsight Walter knew he
couldn’t have had a better teacher. And it was not as if he were not
rewarded for his hard labor—working many days from eight in the morning
til well past midnight; for after two years he was given a raise to
thirty dollars per month, and this was increased to forty-five dollars
during his final two years at Lukachukai (K86:39).

Walter had his own "helpers" to carry out some of his duties at
the store, many of which centered around the rug trade. There were a
number of prolific weavers in the surrounding area, and the trading post
was known at that time (the 1930s) specifically for its yeibichai
weavings depicting Navajo dance figures, most notably those with gray
and dark colored backgrounds. Walter would put his helpers to work
"carding" the poorer quality weavings. Otah Yazzie was one of
Walter's crew who would spend hours carding rugs--clipping off the
excess strands of wool that stood up on the rug's surface to give it a
smoother surface texture and hopefully command a higher price (AK:39).

During these years the Fred Harvey Company was the largest buyer
of Navajo rugs in the country. The head Harvey buyer, Herman
Schweizer, had contracted with many reservation trading posts in
popular weaving areas to have the first opportunity to purchase their
rugs. During these depression years such an account was indeed valuable
because the Harvey Company "always paid by check within ten days of
purchase" (AK:39). Walter's various chores included sorting the
weavers' rugs as they came into the store, and tying them into bundles
("actually baling them in seventy-pound wool sacks") in preparation for
shipment to the Fred Harvey Company at the Grand Canyon. Walter
explained that the Harvey buyer would, upon receipt of a shipment of one
hundred rugs, select eighty of the ones "he thought best" and ship the
"rejects" back prepaid. Then, when the Lukachukai post had accumulated
another one hundred rugs, Walter would send them on, slipping in a few
of the "rejects" along with the new weavings. "Eventually they bought
them all anyway, whether they knew it or not," remembers Walter with a grin (21 March, 1989).

The aspiring young trader soon discovered that "minding the store" on an Indian reservation entailed much more than passing goods back and forth over the counter. Shortly after Walter had gone to work at his brother's post, a "tragedy" happened to one of Lukachukai's best customers.

The Navajo Shorty was poisoned. Died of Poisoned Raisin Jack. 9 This happened 51 years ago. The bootlegger that made the Poison Raisin Jack was making it on Lukachukai. 10 The FBI investigated this death and they said they had found the still and it looked like to them that they [the bootleggers] did not use copper tubing was what the problem was. 11

The next morning a Catholic Father [from St. Isabel's Mission] 12 came to my Bro Earl and asked Earl if he would do him a favor. Earl said sure. He said he had been called to Gallup and would he [Earl] help bury this Indian that had been poisoned. The Father said he had his interpreter over to the Mission and he could help. I was new at the store so Earl felt like I was unable to take care of the store so he told me to go help bury the Indian. I got in the truck and went over to the Mission. I found the interpreter. He was a young man Navajo. Very frail. He had TB and wasn't very strong so he said we had better get started.

We went out in a shed and the man was in a box 1 x 12
nailed together. I suppose that being poisoned the corpse was swelled about 6-8 inches above the top of the coffin. The lid had never been put on. The Navajo that was helping me said we will have to nail the lid on. I said how? He said he didn't know. I could see that I wasn't going to get very much help out of him as he was very afraid of the dead Indian. This was my First Experience with this.

There was no more Lumber except the 2 1x12 for the lid. I said to the helper I suppose we should nail the 2 1x12 on one end and maybe they would bend enough so we could nail the other end. We finally got the lid on. There was quite a gap but he said there wasn't any more lumber and that it would be all right.

The dead Indian weighed over 200#. We finally got him loaded in the pickup and went to the cemetery. We met 2 more Indians and I asked him to ask them to help us. They refused. My helper wasn't much help. He dropped his end when we got it out of the truck. I was lifting one end of the box at a time so we could get it over the Ropes they had to lower the box into the grave. I was having quite a time as my helper would not lift. Finally I got it done and I looked down. I had blood all over the front of my pants shirt. I was in one hell of a mess. I didn't know what to do. There was a water trough about 200 yds from there. I went over there and washed it off the best I could. When we had bent the board for the lid I suppose he must of broke. [Walter explained that the corpse had literally exploded.] And the 1
x 12 coffin leaked. Any way after getting cleaned the best I could I went back over and finished. This was my first burial. I didn't eat for several days and I haven't forgot it. This was my first but not my last. I believe I got better as time went on. I sure couldn't of done any worse. About that time I came to the conclusion that I wasn't good in school, was not a success at horse racing and a damned Poor Mortition (KB6:33-51).

Through time Walter came to understand "the Navajos' great fear of the dead." Many years later, reminiscing over his experiences, he and an old trader friend Bill Auble philosophized in their written collaboration over what they saw as an "inherited part of the [Navajo] culture":15

In the Navajo way, after a person dies, the "Chindi" or spirit of the person, will remain in the area where the person has lived, for a period of forty days.16 During this period the "Chindi" or spirit has the right to avenge itself for any injury or wrong done to the person while alive. The Navajo perception is that it would be impossible to live around any person for any length of time without harming [him] in some way, is deeply ingrained in their traditional belief. Being close to a dead person or touching them is merely drawing oneself into an immediate confrontation with the dead person's Chindi, who will then bring about some catastrophe on the individual.

Since most white people are ignorant of these deep
seated taboos of the Navajo, they are often asked to perform these burial duties, thus greatly relieving the Navajo from a very distressing and personally dangerous situation. The white man's perception of a "happy hunting ground" has no meaning at all to the Navajo Indians. To the Navajo, there is neither a heaven or hell. After the forty days, the Chindi merely slides into a great void. And in the old Navajo way, [their] names are seldom mentioned, unless it becomes absolutely necessary. After a death, a "Blessing Way" ceremony is held by the family of the deceased, and anything that belonged to the dead person that they wish to keep is sung over and cleansed. A "Beauty Way" ceremony is then held by the family to keep the Chindi away from them personally (AK:46-47).17

Still in his teens, Walter would have another close encounter with a Navajo death during those early years at Lukachukai, a truly poignant experience that would remain with him throughout his fifty-plus years as Indian trader.

About 1934 I had been working for about a year. One evening just before we closed the store a Navajo told Earl that his Daughter about 12 yrs old had Died and he wanted a quilt and shawl to bury her in and would Earl help him bury her. Earl told him that he wouldn't go but he would send me to help him. We had a new pickup so we got into it and went up towards the Lukachukai Mt. It was snowing blowing a regular blizzard. It didn't bother me very much untill we got up to
the old hogan the little girl was in. He told me to take the 
quilt and blanket in and wrap the little girl up. He sure 
wasn't any help. I finally got it done. He wouldn't help very 
much. Finally he did help me carry her out and put her in the 
pickup.

He had told me where we were going to bury her on our 
way to his house. It was just down the road about 1/2 mile. 
He said you go ahead and start to dig the hole and I will ride 
my horse down and help you. I said OK. So I went down where 
he had showed me to dig the hole. By this time it was getting 
dark and wind blowing and snow flying. I sure wasn't to brave. 
I was sure spooked but went ahead and started digging. I 
wasn't wasting any time but I kept working expecting the Navajo 
to show up and help. He never came.

I didn't know how deep to dig the hole but I was pretty 
badly spooked and what I mean I was sure getting with it. One 
nice thing about it it was loose digging. About the time I 
got the hole 3 ft deep 2 ft wide and 4 feet long I new my 
Navajo Friend wasn't going to show up. I sure didn't know what 
to do. I had turned the Truck around and had the lights on 
and could see what I was doing. The little girl was in the 
back of the Pickup wrapped in the quilt and shawl so I 
proceeded to get her into the grave and covered her up. I 
didn't know what else I could do so I went back to the store 
and told Earl what I had done. He said that I had done the 
best I knew how and he thought it was all right.

The next day he told me to load up some flat rocks and
to go up where I had buried her and cover the grave with these
flat rocks (to prevent digging by wild animals). I went up
and scraped the snow off and done as he told me to. The
Father of the little girl came in a few days and Earl asked
him why he didn't help me and he said I guess I was just afraid
and I knew Walter would do it and that's what you told him to
do. I felt that this was the work of the missionaries and the
way I felt I sure as hell wasn't going to take their job as I
don't think I was much of a success at it (KB6:37-39).

Before long Earl felt his younger brother had a handle on the
trading business and could be left alone at the store for longer and
longer periods of time. Soon things reached the point where Earl would
return and stay just long enough for Walter to get caught up on all his
chores and then leave again for business elsewhere. But though Walter
was all bravado up front, he had never been truly alone in his entire
life. Gradually the combination of night sounds--owls, coyotes, and
chants of nearby ceremonials--began to get under his skin. He felt
alone and vulnerable, isolated for the first time in this alien culture.

Confiding his newfound fears to his father brought some relief and
understanding: Roy began to call his son every night around eight (when
the phone worked) to see how he was doing. Another of Walter's concerns
was having to leave the store unattended when he went out to the hay
barn or performed other outside duties, and he complained to his father
that "Earl was too damned tight to hire extra help when he was away from
the store" (AK:43).

Roy applied a little parental pressure and Walter received his
help—which was, in fact, a mixed blessing. Earl hired two young Navajo boys—to be paid one dollar a day, which they took out in groceries, or meals. Otah Yazzie was the day man, and Chat Chizzy Yazzie was night man. Now Walter had his help and companionship, but he found he had also become "chief cook, bottle washer and housekeeper" in addition to his other duties! At the end of the day, by the time he had cooked and served the day man lunch and the night man his supper and breakfast, and washed and dried everyone’s dishes, he wondered "just who in the hell was working for who" (AK:45).

Walter was by this time able to communicate with his customers in passable Navajo and deeply resented the fact that because of his growing competence he was required to stay out on the reservation for at least two months at a stretch, unable to leave the store, while his "boss" would go off for weeks or a month at a time. After about three years at Lukachukai, Walter cheerfully assumed yet another "duty," that of "uncle." Brother Roy and his wife Thelma had a baby boy, called Junior by everyone, who became Walter’s mascot and followed him everywhere as soon as he was able to walk. When the boy was only three years old, he became seriously ill and passed away very suddenly. Terribly depressed at the loss of his favorite nephew, and angry and frustrated with his work situation at his brother’s post, Walter felt he could no longer stay at Lukachukai.

His father was ready to fulfill his promise and turn over his half interest in the trading post to Walter. But Earl refused to lose control and have a "working partner" in the store, which would require him to shoulder his share of the labor again—especially if that equal partner was to be a younger brother who had been his much-used (and
according to Walter, sometimes abused) employee for six years.
Consequently, Walter stated he would no longer work for his brother. As
a result, Earl offered to buy out his father's share; and Roy and Walter
began looking for a post that Walter could call his own.

Meanwhile, at loose ends again, Walter and his friends were
"living up the night around Farmington, Durango, and Cortez, or any
other place that looked like it was ready for a grand party. Even an
occasional trip to Sin City, more properly known, as Gallup, New Mexico,
was not unusual" (AK:50). The years had managed to improve Walter's
gambling skills, and despite his carousing, he was making more money
than he ever had at Lukachukai.

One trading post in particular, up for sale at the time, appealed
to the Kennedys—the famous old Hubbell Trading Post at Ganado,
Arizona.18 "Old Juan Lorenzo Hubbell had recently passed away and
his children had no interest in the trading business" (AK:50). The men
were quite impressed, and but for circumstances beyond their control on
the other side of the Atlantic, probably would have bought the Hubbell
post and Walter's "stories" might have been quite different. It was,
however, 1939. Roy Kennedy knew that his son would very likely be
called into the service, and he considered himself too old to run yet
another trading post should Walter all of a sudden have to go off to
fight a war.

By 1940 the former trading post operator—turned—gambling man was
averaging sixty dollars a month ("and not having to get up at 4:00 a.m.
in the morning to do it"), and Walter found himself haughtily turning
away offers from traders who were trying to get him to come to work for
thirty dollars a month. At this time he was sure his true talents lay
in consuming vast amounts of drink and "taking care of the girls in town" (K86:41). But finally a trader who owned Mexican Water Trading Post approached him with an offer to match his gambling "wages," saying he needed help buying lambs. At his father's urging, Walter went to work for a while as a lamb buyer, "damned sure earning every penny of his sixty dollars."

We had about 3,000 head of lambs and [were] having trouble. The Navajoes were stealing them at nite out of the corrals. We were unable to catch them but we had been counting them out of the corrals every morning. One morning about 5:00 o'clock the trader came in and said its 5:00 Monday morning. Day after tomorrow is the middle of the week and not a damned thing done. So I got up and started counting sheep. I sure did earn my money. We bought sheep for 30 days and then trailed them to town [Farmington] which took another 30 days and it took 60 days for lamb season (AK:52).

Walter continued to drift, working in spurts at other trading posts, including the one at Red Mesa, Arizona.13 Meanwhile his brother-in-law, Elmer McGee, had bought the Leupp Trading Post which sat on a sandbar in the treeless river bottom of the Little Colorado, just northwest of Winslow, Arizona, and he called Walter and asked if he could come work for him.20 His 1-A draft status prevented Walter from accepting any kind of permanent employment, but Roy was afraid that trading experience would not be the kind the Army was looking for. He suggested that his son get some kind of trade school experience. Thus, without a great deal to say about it, Walter found himself at a welding
school in Los Angeles, California. While he was receiving his practical training on the west coast, away from home territory for the first time in his life, Walter's mother died, on October 13, 1941, succumbing to her ill health.

Walter was finally drafted in March, 1942, and his world travelling began in earnest when he shipped out with 10,000 other men aboard a former British luxury liner, the Aquatania (refurbished as a wartime transport ship), headed for the west coast of Africa. His introduction to army life aboard the crowded Aquatania was not the most pleasant experience for a young man whose entire life had been spent in the wide open "deserts" of the Southwest:

We were on the Deck that was even with the water. We had one canteen of water a day. Our meals were Tea and hard tack for Breakfast -- 5# cornbeef & Hardtack for Dinner. This was for 22 men. And the supper or evening meal we got Boil Meat & Hard tack. I cant say we were to happy with our menue but got along fine untill on[e] day we had boiled mutton. It smelled so bad that we didnt know what to do. It was terrible. One of the Boys went over to the Port hole and threw it out but forgot and threw out pan and all. We were so hungry. The life boats had bitter chocolate and hard tack in them. We started stealing it out and eating it and can truely say that it isnt bad when your hungry. It wasnt long before the Limeys found out what we were doing and if we was caught we would be court marshelder. It did [not] make any difference. We still took all we could find (K86:47-48).

After landing in "jungle territory" life improved for the eight
hundred men unloaded there, but only slightly. The hungry soldiers
devoured the "1/2 ripe bananas and 1/2 ripe oranges" offered by the
natives, and the English truck convoy soon had new problems with their
latest "shipment." All the reluctant passengers became violently sick
with the "G.Is" (K86:48).

A far cry from the sandy Indian reservation where he had spent his
years thus far, Army Air Corpsman Kennedy found himself living in an
overgrown mass of greenery with total strangers from places he had never
heard of—almost as bewildered and out of place as the Native Americans
from New Mexico and Arizona who were also drafted and thrust into the
twentieth century, their worlds about to change forever.21

After more than three years ("thirty-eight months to be exact") in
Africa without a furlough, Walter was honorably discharged and sent home
to New Mexico in the fall of 1945 (K86:49). Roy Kennedy had passed away
during Walter's long absence, and his son sorely felt the loss of both
friend and mentor. Without his father's leveling influence Walter
quickly joined the continuing round of parties enjoyed by all the
returning servicemen. "The women were all running after me. Why I was
the most popular guy in town, the best catch in San Juan County!" says
the rogue who insisted he was finally "won" by the beautiful Flora Eaton
(12 August, 1989 and K86:50). "Hmmmph, that's funny," commented Flora,
listening to her husband's account of their whirlwind courtship years
later; "I don't seem to remember the chase" (12 August, 1989).

Walter and Flora were married December 27, 1945, just three days
after his twenty-ninth birthday. The next week Walter began sending out
feelers to various traders on the reservation. It was time to take
things seriously and return to the life the Kennedys knew best.
Figure 13. Walter, learning the ropes at Lukachukai. Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
Figure 14. Newlyweds, Flora Eaton Kennedy and Walter, at the Kennedy homestead in Kirtland. Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
Chapter III

Early Days at Dennehotso

It's like Joe Hatch once told me. If a Navajo wants to get ahead help him or her. Help them build up their herds. Encourage them. Do whatever you can. Advise them. Don't give them nothing but encouragement and advice and make them pay for everything else. And when you get threw you have a good customer.

Walter Kennedy (K89-10:170)

Practical advice and "one hell of a lot of experience" were about all Walter and Flora had to show for themselves after two years of hard work back in the Indian trading business. After the war, Elmer McGee (Walter's former employer at Leupp Trading Post), had offered the newlyweds a proposition: if Walter would come back to the reservation and manage his new Sunrise store (also at Leupp), he would receive one third of the profit from both stores as his share for his labors.

But Walter and his brother-in-law did not always see eye-to-eye on the business management of their combined operations; and the Kennedys' living expenses were mounting up, as they were paying for everything from groceries, clothing, and fuel for the store and living quarters, to gasoline for the car. Walter had to make cash draws for extra items such as medical bills and the birth of their daughter, the towheaded Lavina. Despite the fact that the Sunrise store was making a "good
profit," none of these profits were being distributed. In fact, when Walter confronted Elmer, after he and Flora had been there for almost two years, asking for his third of the profits, he was promptly presented with a bill for $4,400.00 worth of expenses! After a heated discussion, Walter finally settled with Elmer for $1,000.00—an amount about equal to $41.66 a month after expenses (AK:50-59). Angry and thoroughly disgusted with the trading business in general, Walter summed up his Sunrise/Leupp experience with this blunt assessment: "I went down there with a 1940 Model Plymouth and $1500. I came home broke as hell with a 1939 Dodge, a Maytag washing machine, $1,000, and a baby daughter" (K86:50).3

With plans now to become a farmer on the old Kennedy homestead, Walter fixed up a small apartment in the rear of the W.L. Kennedy store which had been closed ever since Roy Kennedy died. To supplement his veteran’s allowance until harvest, he worked for his younger brother Troy for ten dollars a day, whenever he was needed, at the South Side Trading Post located on the south side (the Navajo side) of the San Juan River and accessible only by foot bridge.5 But Walter was not a farmer, and he and Flora struggled to find a situation where they’d be responsible for their own destiny, no longer dependent on an absentee owner for orders and a paycheck. Before the first crops came in or the first hogs were sold, an opportunity presented itself which would set the course of Walter’s life back on track and determine his personal claim to fame.

At the beginning of the summer of 1948 two brothers, Roscoe and Jewel McGee (distant relatives of Elmer, from yet another family of Mormon Indian traders out of the Kirtland/Fruitland valley) looked up
Walter at his farm and told him they were considering the purchase of the trading post at Dennehotso, if they could find a good man to run the place. They offered him an equal one-third partnership and a monthly salary of $150. He needed no money up front and could pay for his share of the purchase price out of the profits. Walter hardly needed the twenty-four hours the McGees had given him to come up with his answer. With Flora's encouragement, he accepted the challenge on one condition: at the end of five years he would have the option to buy them out. They shook hands after a verbal agreement and "the deal was done."  

Sometimes the absolute isolation of a trading post was reason enough for its survival. A business in even the most unlikely location was able to thrive because the customers it served were also isolated, literally cut off from the rest of the world by vast distances and minimal human habitation. Oblivious to the fast-paced, changing society of the post-war United States, Dennehotso Trading Post sat, just southeast of the timeless behemoths of Monument Valley, much as it had since its accidental beginning back in the early 1920s. Due west of the Kennedy home territory in New Mexico, ninety miles of unimproved dirt road lay between Dennehotso and civilization at Shiprock.

Eighteen miles of the road was solid slick rock. The rest was sand or worse, blow sand. When the weather was good which wasn't often the drive took nearly four hours for that [slick rock] stretch alone—if you were lucky. With the deep snows of winter, it was nearly impassable. With the sand storms of spring, it was nearly impassable. With the
sometimes violent thunder storms and heavy rains of summer, it was nearly impassable. In short, one did not travel on these roads, unless there was a real need to do so. Around the store itself was potato roads, just two tracks (AK:63).

In fact, none of the large mercantile houses that wholesaled goods to many of the reservation traders would deliver freight to this small, isolated post. The trader at Dennehotso hauled his own goods in and out of town.⁹

A very primitive life style awaited the young Kennedy family at the trading post that would be their home for the next thirty years. There was no electricity and no refrigeration, though a small kerosene ice box managed to yield three small trays of ice in twenty-four hours. Walter remembered that "five gallons of kerosene would run that thing for as long as thirty-six hours" (21 November, 1991). Coleman lanterns provided light for "home" in the back of the store and in the store itself. Flora prepared meals upon a wood cookstove (which also burned coal, hauled from Kirtland). There were no indoor toilets. A gravity flow well and windmill produced a small stream of water for use in the house. The store had a 1500 watt generator "to ice the pop cooler. We turned that thing on at sundown, then off every night before we went to bed. There was enough extra power there for Flora to iron from and that's all" (21 November, 1991). Dennehotso did, however, have a telephone line because the federal government required this "luxury" service for all BIA schools.¹⁰

The Kennedys brought a milk cow and chickens with them from Kirtland, but had to trade with the local Navajos for fresh meat, usually mutton. Flora faithfully nurtured a small garden so there would
be a few fresh vegetables in season. Rule number one, says Walter: "To survive on the reservation, you had to be one hundred percent self sufficient" (AK:64).

Walter will be the first to tell you it wasn't easy coming into a place like Dennehotso as a stranger, even if you do know something about the trading business. "The Navajoes told me that they would run me out in two weeks. I didn't argue with them too much as they were very much against White Men and very bitter toward me as they sure had been mistreated" (K86:54). In fact, the first year that Walter was at Dennehotso things were so rough, the Navajo Police just stayed away and ignored its existence (AK:69).

Not the least of Walter's problems as the new owner/operator was one as basic as his right to try to run a business there in the first place.

After we got to Dennehotso Hole Kidney Boy--Jack Hole Kidney or as the traders had named him Jack Tinhorn as he was a tin horn gambler, and the Navajoes had nick named him Chico Cheater--came in. Jack was a powerful Medicine Man and wino. He came in shortly after I had gotten Dennehotso and told me that where Dennehotso set belonged to his father Hole Kidney and his father was dead and now it was his. And that I would have to pay him so much each month to stay there but he would take 1/2 money and 1/2 merchandise or groceries each month.

I told him that I had gotten a lease from the Government and that I didn't think so. He drank real bad. Was always causing problems and disturbing every one. Finally Hap
Knight said to me I think that its time you called his bluff. So the next time he came in drunk and was giving me a hard time I said Jack I think we had better go to Ft Defiance and see who has this lease here you or me. I said I think we should go together. We can get up real early in the morning and go see about it. You can ride in with me. He said OK we would do just that.

He left and it wasnt long untill he came back and said I would like to talk to you in the warehouse. I said OK. So we went into the warehouse sat down and he started again. But he said maybe Charlie Ashcroft had paid his Dad Hole Kidney for the Place that Dennehotso sat and maybe we wouldn't have to go to Ft Defiance. He had talked to his Mother and she said that was the way it was and he guess he was wrong.

He became one of my best friends and he was a very good Medicine Man and was one of the best customers that I had from that day on. He drank himself to Death. Passed away in 1965. Raison Jack (K89-21).

Nearly every new trader who went into business on the reservation faced trouble and sometimes real danger from forced incidents perpetuated by his Navajo clientele—from Ganado’s Lorenzo Hubbell who told of the time in 1878 when he vaulted the counter and twisted the ear of a flour thief lest he and his seventy-five cronies who had come for the show think they could get away with this sort of thing (McNitt 1972:321-322), to Stokes Carson, a contemporary of Walter’s father, Roy Kennedy. Relating the trials of Carson’s early trading days, his
biographer, Willow Roberts says that "traders were sometimes openly challenged, especially in the first months of their tenancy at a trading post. No one would interfere in a fight--verbal or physical--if it occurred; a man was expected to defend himself, and the Navajo were curious to see how he would do in a test" (1987:110).13

Walter and his trader friend Bill Auble reminisced over these early difficulties many years later, trying to explain just why there was always this trouble between Navajos and the new traders:

The Navajos were familiar with the likes and dislikes [of the old trader] and after a while had learned how to whittle him down and get what they wanted. The arrival of a new Trader cast all this hard earned experience aside. Which meant they had to start all over again, and break the New Trader in right, and get him trained well enough, so they could again get things back the way they were before he arrived. To the Navajo People this is a long hard process, and distasteful to have to go through this simply because someone new had bought the store. The best way to show this displeasure is to be sullen, discourteous, and sometimes downright belligerent, in hopes that he will sense their displeasure, feel threatened and insecure, and get the hell back to where he came from.

Another way to keep the new owner uncomfortable is to talk to each other in rapid Navajo, with their hands raised in front of their faces, and belittle his [the trader's] inability to speak Navajo as fast as they could, make jokes about his size, appearance, and any physical traits that they
think are amusing, and make audible giggles at the appropriate times, so that he knows they are talking about him. The final touch is to completely ignore his existence, and sidle up to the trading clerk, who they are familiar with, and make bets with him on whether or not the new Trader will last one or two weeks, before totally ruining his Trading Post business (AK:65-66).

Not only was Walter having his share of problems with his new customers, but the hired man—a white man by the name of Bill Jones who had worked as clerk for the former owners and had agreed to stay on and "help" Walter get acquainted—was causing trouble of his own, trying to convince Walter's partners that their manager was incapable of handling things at their trading post. But the McGees were experienced traders, owning five stores between them, and advised Walter that the fastest solution to this problem was to fire the clerk and "find someone who will work with you and not against you" (AK:67). Walter reluctantly followed their suggestion, thinking all the while that maybe his disgruntled employee was right, that he didn't know what he was doing as he "sure was having lots of Problems with the Indians" (K86:54).

In Walter's own words, looking back upon those first few months at Dennehotso, "Things went from bad to worse":

They were just a few very bad trouble makers. One day one of them came in and said he wanted a flake of hay for his horse. I went out to the hay barn and he came around. He came in with a cigarette in his hand he had also been drinking. I ask him not to smoke in the hay barn and he told
me to go to hell I wasn't going to be there very long any way. This was one Navajo that had me pushed into a corner. I was young and strong and wasn't any fighter but could hit pretty damned hard. Any way that's what I done. I let him have it. Done a very good job. He went down and stayed. I found the cigarette and put it out. He was coming around. I set down on a bale of hay and he got up and I ask him what he thought and did he want some more. He said no. What he didn't know was when I hit him I had broken my hand. I don't know what would of happened if he had of said he wanted some more.

Things got some better but not like I would of liked it to. Then one evening at closing time I went over to the door to let every one out and lock up. This trouble maker said I'm going to say in here to nite. Every one laughed but me. I walked up to him and let him have it. He did go down. I just stood back. He got up and shook his head and never said a word and walked out the door. This was the second John Wayne I had pulled and got away with but another broken hand. After this things were a lot better and I did have there respect. When I would have trouble I never used ax handles and I was always sure I was in the right and there wasn't any way out. I feel that [if] you treat people right and that if you try [you can] get along with just about any one but you have to get there respect (K86:54-59).

Things settled down after that and Walter and his customers gradually eased into the comfortable, friendly relationship that has
lasted well beyond his retirement. The new trader--always known before by the "river" Indians back around Kirtland as Litso Begay, after his two-thumbed father--was quickly given his own Navajo name, Tah Telly, or Thick Lips. And Tah Telly is what they still call him today when he goes back to visit with a truck load of corn and watermelons from his garden and a cooler of pop. He gambles with the old women, sitting on the ground, playing the stick game under the trees, while the old men watch and everyone talks (in Navajo) about the old times.¹⁵ Bragging about his linguistic abilities, Walter boasted, "In 'store Navajo' [trader Navajo], I'll go up against anybody, visiting and gossiping" (16 May, 1991).

Back when the Kennedys first came to Dennehotso that particular area was known as "long hair country." That means, "in Trader Jargon," explains Walter, "that both the men and women wore their hair long, sometimes falling clear below the waist, which they tied in a long knot at the back of their head and carefully wrapped it in clean, white, wool yarn. It also meant that the people were very traditional, practised the Navajo Religion, participated in the various sings and ceremonies, were suspicious of outsiders" (AK:65).

There were about 265 families who depended upon the Dennehotso store for trade and supplies, many of them represented by four generations.¹⁶ Walter offered his customers everything from wagons (one of his hired Navajos did nothing but put wagons together), to sateen, to Arbuckle's coffee ("came in one pound packages, the beans, and we ground it in the grinder on the wall"), to the four-ply string from the sugar sacks ("they strung turquoise for chollas which they started wearing on their ears, later on necklaces"), to handmade saddles
that he’d trade for saddle blankets, to Pepsi Cola. "It was sweeter than Coke. The Navajos liked it better" (7 June, 1989).  

I used to sell fifty cases of pop a day. 24 bottles a case. Ten cents a bottle. And ten cases of 16-oz. Pepsi a day. Took a load out every Monday. I sold as much pop as Safeway in Farmington. Always on a cash basis. I would buy twenty-two cases, a semi load, of Pepsi. One time I bought seven thousand cases of Coke. Later on we sold Coke and Pepsi for 50 cents a bottle, and I gave back a dime for the bottle (7 June, 1989).

Regarding his business in general, Walter humbly assessed his strategic "hub" location: "I had all the business. I am good. They like me. People came out of Utah to trade with me. We had the stuff. We had money in back of us. No deal was too big or too small" (7 June, 1989). "I had advantage on a lot of traders because I was bigger than them. All the wholesalers wanted my business" (21 November, 1991). Warmed up to his topic, Walter continued: "You just can’t imagine the business we done out there. We sold tons of pop and candy. All small sales. I’ve seen the store so packed from early morning to late evening you couldn’t even stir in there. It smelled! On late nights I’d have to take the Navajos home because they didn’t like the dark. We had five clerks back then. The store was ‘countered,’ so they couldn’t help themselves. Dennehotso was the best store in the whole reservation. Not the biggest, but the best" (2 November, 1991).

One indication of his acceptance and success that first year (1948-49) is Walter’s report that he bought one thousand sacks of
shelled corn from the locals. That same year he proudly claims his gross sales were $46,000—though the first day he owned Dennehotso he took in only $13 cash. "I was sick, I tell you" (5 May, 1991). The next year he remembers $106,000 in sales. "Then we began to average around $250,000 to $300,000. Like I said, lots of pop and candy. No big sales. And not in cash, as we hadn't always sold the wool, etc. And you only count it when you turn it into cash" (7 June, 1989). 20 But as always, sprinkled in amongst these detailed verbal reports—whether talking business or colorful trader's tales—was one of Walter's favorite sayings: "Remember we Navajo traders are not the most truthful people" (7 June, 1989).

Such a booming business necessitated keeping large amounts of money on hand, despite the amount of goods exchanged in trade. Walter mentioned that he kept a "cash account at the store of $50,000 in tens, fives, and ones. I took $5,000 to the bank at a time. One of the reasons for having to keep all this money was because I got [from the federal government] $22 a person to give out for welfare" (August, 1989).

Many of Dennehotso's regular Navajo customers lived a good distance from the trading post and would only be able to make the trip in for supplies, via horse and wagon, once or twice a month. Consequently, they treated the expedition as a festive occasion.

They would dress in their finest velvet bouses and wear all of their jewelry, turquoise beads, bracelets, concho belts, ear rings, and of course their prettiest shawls. 21 They would come in with their sheep and goat pelts, rugs, and whatever else they could trade, and barter them for groceries,
dry goods and other items needed around a hogan. They would get filled in on the latest happenings of the Navajo Tribal council at Window Rock,\textsuperscript{22} catch up on local gossip, who had married, divorced, or died, since there last trip. They would find out which families were having squaw dances, or healing sings,\textsuperscript{23} to see if they would go as obligated relatives, or as carefree social guests.\textsuperscript{24} When lunch time came around they would buy a loaf of sliced bread and a large can of trading post tomatoes and sit down in a circle on the floor. All a great social occasion (\textit{AK:76-77}).\textsuperscript{25}

Fridays were also busy, social occasions at the store because, explained Walter, every week on that day "the whole BIA school would be brought over to the trading post so each kid could buy something. And each one had to be waited on, separately. Lavina would come too (because she was going to school there) and pretend that she was just one of the Indians--that she didn't even know me" (7 June, 1989).

"Around 1950" [actually 1951] Walter came across a man who was "one in a million and one of the best things that ever happened to me" (\textit{K86:77}). Hap Knight had spent many years working in trading posts, though not too successfully. His downfall was, according to Walter, "his drinking problem." By this time "Dennehotso was going good and I needed help bad. And experienced help was nearly impossible to find" (\textit{K89-23:232}). The two traders "hit it right off" and Walter hired him right off the streets of Farmington. Hap had a great sense of humor and knew how to get along with both Walter and the Navajos. "He was a very smart Man and a good trader," wrote Walter. "Taught me a lot about
[crossed out "all I know about"]] trading. He would ask me what I thought about something about trading and if I didn't go along with him about it he would go tell Flora and then things would begin to happen. They were against me. I allways lost and they were always right" (K86:77). Hap and Walter quickly became close friends—"just like family," and Hap played a prominent role throughout Walter's many "stories" during the decade of the 1950s. (See Appendix A for Walter's story, "Hap Knight," written as a tribute to his good friend.)

Many of the Dennehotso Navajos also came to be almost "family" over the years, whether the Kennedys wanted it that way or not. For example, there was the Navajo who was "part of the deal" when Walter bought Dennehotso. For sixty dollars a month—actually two dollars a day in trade—"he done all the odd Jobs, butchering clerking whatever there was to do." He was not, however, one of Flora’s favorite people.

She watched him like a Hawk and we new he was stealing a little. Not enough to hurt any one but he was good help and good help in this kind of business is hard to come by. What we watched for was when his relations came in to trade.

[When] we were busy he would give them mdse and wouldn't charge or collect for what ever they got. It is one of the biggest draw backs there are when you hire local help as usually they [are] related to quite a few of them. Flora worked on catching him and he would slip and she would catch him again and again.

It got to the point it was bad. Hap said I think you had better have a little talk with her. Tell her how it is that we can't replace him. There is no one here that can do
the work he does and what he is stealing isn't hurting us as were not paying him very much and it is just giving him a better wage which isn't that much and everyone needs an incentive to work. I said your so Damed smart you talk to her. After all Im the Janitor. He said this comes under the Janitors heading. I think I will stay out of this one. The Lady as he called her we get along real well and after all if she runs him off you will [be] doing his job and your own to. I think this is to your interest. I decided I had to do something. You can't tell a Democrat nothing. They no it all. I tried but it didn't work. This started about 1951 and we fought until 1971 when he finally quit. I don't see how he stayed as long as he did. He is still at Dennehotso. He got into Petote real bad and I saw him last summer. He was herding sheep (K89:144-145).

Not only does the trader have to live with his help and whatever qualities or idiosyncrasies they may possess, he has to become intimately acquainted with his customers and their personal state of affairs in order to stay in business. As Walter explains it, "A good trader knows where he is with each customer and if he owes too much and is getting out of hand. You have to know when to draw the line."

Continuing, he describes the ambivalent "fine line" the trader had to walk: "The Navajo could trade on account if he was not unreasonable. You took care of him and knew when to stop. If he owes too much, you tear up the I.O.U.'s or lose a customer. You can't get blood out of a turnip" (7 June, 1989). But those early years at Dennehotso also taught
Walter that there was another side to this coin, that there was a limit to the "advice and encouragement" you gave your customers.

If a Navajo wants to go broke help him as that's where he is going and there is nothing you can do about it. Just help him go down. Some times this is sad as when this happens there is a reason. Sickness is the main one. They just sing it away. Medicine men are expensive and they believe there religion. So when this happens it's not long before they are down and very seldom come back. Once they start down its impossible to stop so just stay away from it. Buy there cattle sheep. If you don't some one else will. When they sell there producing stock thats all. Broke (K89-10:170).

Nevertheless, Walter did feel responsible for his local families, for theirs was a symbiotic relationship; the trader's ultimate success was directly tied to the well-being of his customers. As a result, he often found himself more involved in their personal affairs than he intended. One such incident happened early in Walter's Dennehotso career when he tried to help out by serving as employment agent for his Navajos.

Back in 1947 lots of railroad work being done and this R.R. was using lots of Navajo laborers. The traders received 2.00 a piece for recruiting and hauling [workers] to RR receiving stations. We were a long way from a receiving station 130 miles. So they couldn't come for less than 30 men. The Navajos would work all spring summer & fall. And the cold months the RR didn't work so the Navajos would draw
unemployment. It didn't amount to very much but the Navajos sure went for it. It was good business for the Trading Posts and most of the RR workers lived like kings during the winter months.²⁲

Mark James & Smile Whitesheep were two of them that went. Neither of them could work but the Navajos said they made good water boys and were always ready to go. Mark was a Medicine Man and was into witchcraft.³³ Smile was a loner and a very sick man as he had T.B. but never the less he was always ready to go to work on the R.R. Early spring I had an order for 30 RR workers so I started recruiting. The ones on unemployment were the first to go. The R.R. was very good to take even those that couldn't work to much. Mark & Smile were both in that class. Both drawing unemployment. I talked to Smile and he was ready. Talked to Mark and he said he didn't think he would go. I asked why. He just said he didn't feel like going so he stayed home, but said he would go next time.

But Smile went. He sent his young wife a big portion of his check each payday and I gave it to her. He stayed out about 4 months. Came home and came in. Paid his account said how happy he was to be home and said I had better get home and left to go home. In a few days he came back to the store. He stood around for quite awhile and finally said I want to talk to you. We always went into the Hay Barn to talk. Away from every one. By the time we got to the Hay Barn he was crying. I said Smile what's the matter. He said My Wife had run away.
I said how come. She was in the store the day before you got home. I finally quieted him down and ask what happened. He said Mark had taken his wife to his home and that she wouldn't come back. I really did feel sorry for him but didn't think that I could do anything about it. He said it is all your fault. You are the one that sent me on the RR. That sure did upset me then. I tryed to console him as much as I could but marriage counseling was a bit out of my line. I told him I would talk to some of the Navajos and find out what had happened.

It seemed as tho Mark James and Smiles wife had a Romance going before Smile went on the RR and that was the reason Mark would not go. All the Navajos were wondering what the out come would be. Smile would come into the store nearly every day. He was sure heart broken. There wasn't any thing I could do but feel sorry for him. It looked to all of us [as if] Mark had won. I got another order for RR men. I asked Mark if he would go and he said if I go Smile will take my wife away from me. I asked Smile to go and he said the same thing No. But to get Mark to go and maybe he could get his wife back. So neither of them would ever go again.

It just didn't get any better. [It] had been going on for about 2 yrs. Smile just was grieving himself to death. He wasn't very well to start with and that fall when the squaw dances were going good the Navajos from one of the squaw dances came in and said Smile had died at the dance last nite. I will always feel he just grieved himself to death. I have
always felt some one should of done something but what? I have never been to successful trying to help. Just made things worse. Im sure I always got to much involved for my own good. There have always been a demand for good marriage conselors but my conciling never done much good (K89-25).

Walter's counseling skills did improve over the years as his friendships deepened and he became more and more attached to Dennehots and the lifeways of his Navajos. But he found the early years to be just one challenge after another and discovered more than once that necessity was the mother of invention, illustrated by a story he calls: "Shade Tree Butchering at Dennehots":

1948 and the V.C.A. (Vanadium Corporation of America) Mine started mining at Mexican Hat, Dennehots 16 miles by road from Mex Hat and 7 miles as the crow flyes. But at that time Horses burros was the only way you could get into Monument Valley or VCA Mine. There was a road but was nearly impossible to get to the mine from Dennehots.

There was lots of Navajos at Dennehots who got jobs at the mine. They would ride there Horses from Dennehots to the mine and pack there Groceries in. Meat was a big Problem as they had no refrigeration and us didnt have nothing but a Kerosene refrigerator at the store. The Navajoes would come home Saturday nite and Sunday. Get there grocrys and go back.

We done some sheep butchering at the store and Navajoes really like fresh Mutton. So Sunday Morning we would butcher
for the miners. It was called shade tree butchering. It started out very slow but as more of them got jobs the bigger it got. We had 2 Forked Poles set on the ground with a Pole accross it and they hung the Mutton upside down from its hind legs. Dressed it--slit its throat and skin the pelt, remove the head and make a long slit from the rib cage up threw the belly. The guts fell into a wheel barow under the Sheep. Put the Head in it and then rolled it out side the corrals. And I had a Family--mostly Squaws--that done all of my butchering. This famly was not paid anything. All the squaws got was the guts & Head for there work. They would keep as much as they could eat and sent the rest to friends and neighbors. The Head was roasted in deep coals and the brains would be eaten. The guts stuffed with tallow and cooked over coals until crisp. (These were called "a'chee" and were a great delicacy. In the Navajo way nothing--outside the hooves--was wasted.) As time went on it took more and more help as we were butchering 40 head each Sunday. I had bought two more wheelbarrows and my butchers were selling guts and head out side the fence. They had a good business going and so did I. It sure was a busy Place on Sunday.

This went on for a number of years and B.I.A. Decided it was not Sanitary to butcher under a tree. There was no finer meat or cleaner than what we done but try to tell BIA or any bureaucrat that. They had to come out and tell us how to do it and it was something they didn't know a damned thing about. And it all boils down to the right way or the Gov. way
and they won as usually. At Present time there is very little butchering done on the reservation and none done at the Trading Post as the Trading Posts have been replaced by 7-11 -- Circle K. As far as I'm concerned I feel the old way was a lot the better way (AK86:86-89).

Once every week Walter, Flora, and the kids went to the "show" at the BIA school, along with every Navajo family at Dennehotso. "This was something we all looked forward to," said Flora. "And we all went both times each week—even though it was the same show. We always had a good time with the Navajos" (August, 1989). The price, remembers Walter, "was 20 cents each. They always had westerns--Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, John Wayne. Everyone always laughed and said, 'No more Indians left,' at the end of the movie" (21 November, 1991). Other recreation and entertainment was often in "contest" form, such as horse and foot races and tug of wars. Walter always put up the prizes for these sporting events: "Oranges or whatever. Whatever you were 'long' on. You furnished that." Such festivities drew great numbers of visitors, "usually two or three hundred. Business was fantastic. We were swamped" (21 November, 1991).

What with running the store and the myriad other activities that Walter found himself involved in from sunup to sundown, the agreed-upon five "trial" years passed quickly, with every day a learning experience. And in the midst of Walter's practical education he and Flora became parents a second time when Ivan was born in 1951. His increased responsibilities—combined with a now successful post and his own growing reputation as a trader—made Walter think seriously about his
buy-out option. He had, by the time his first two years were over, paid for his third share—"actually it turned into one half," about $17,000 (21 November, 1991). Even so, after five years he was beginning to feel hampered by the constraints of his partnership; and the years had not been without problems between Walter and Roscoe McGee.

Although the arrangement had been for Walter to do all his own buying, Roscoe had gradually begun shipping merchandise out to Dennehoto for Walter’s inventory. Walter resented the absentee owner’s actions and managed to convince Jewel McGee that he needed sole control. Another more serious problem was Roscoe’s practice of drawing cash advances against his profits which affected cash flow, while his two partners preferred their profits to be plowed back into inventory. Walter decided that it was now time to try to buy the store, but found his assets were short of the purchase price.

Remembering his father’s desire to set up his sons in the trading business, Walter approached his brother Earl for a loan, thinking that he might feel disposed to helping out his younger brother after all his years as the "Lukachukai lackey." The answer, however, was a resounding "no."

Disappointed, depressed, and somewhat humiliated, Walter drove back to Dennehoto feeling all was lost. His good friend and helper, Hap Knight, encouraged him to start talking to banks, pointing out that Walter had always paid cash for everything and that the Dennehoto store "didn't owe a dime to anybody." Hap had his own reasons for wanting Walter to get out from under the McGees, as they had picked up the lease for his own Tocito trading post when his business had gone "bad" and he had lost it—not that they had done anything improper or underhanded.
Hap just resented the loss (AK:95).

Gathering his courage, Walter made an appointment with Art Weinig, president of the Citizens Bank in Farmington where he actually owned a few shares of stock as a savings plan. Walter’s big fear was that the McGee brothers who owned a great many shares in that same bank might in some way attempt to block his loan request. But President Weinig assured him that stockholders could in no way dictate how he ran the bank and promised him, after listening to Walter’s future plans for his trading post, that he would receive his loan.

In the middle of January, 1953, the three partners met at the bank and Roscoe made one last effort to talk Walter out of the “buy out,” but Walter politely declined (AK:95). So, the papers were signed, the McGees were paid in full—about $60,000 for their remaining one half interest (21 November, 1991), and Walter drove home, sole owner of the Dennehotsa Trading Post.
Figure 15. Walter, manager of Leupp Trading Post. Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
Figure 16. Pictorial weaving of Dennehotso Trading Post, woven at Walter's request by Jane Brown, one of his best local weavers. Walter remembered sadly that Jane died just a few days after she finished this weaving. Photograph by Nancy Peake 1991.
Figure 17. East side, Dennehotso Trading Post.

Figure 18. WPA toilet, to right of water tank.

Figure 19. Back yard, chicken coop, and corrals.

All photographs courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
Figure 20. Walter, playing the stick game with old friends during our visit to Dennehotso. Photograph by Lavina Kennedy Bailey 1989.
Figure 21. "Parking lot" at the Dennehotsco Trading Post. Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
Chapter IV

One Hell of a Fine Trader

You buy anything that comes in, even if you don't want it -- to keep people happy and keep them coming back. It shows good faith. That you're there to help them, and it's not all for you.

Walter Kennedy (29 November, 1989)

This had become over the course of five decades Walter's personal credo. Expanding upon his rather unique business philosophy, he continued: "Basically the trader is financially responsible for his entire community. He knows what they're capable of. A good trader knows his people" (7 June, 1989). Walter's "people" at Dennehotso were his life, and the responsibilities he felt toward "his" Navajos dictated the modus operandi for his trading business. Hence, his role as trader was far more comprehensive than the simple provision and exchange of goods. Walter took it upon himself to become personally involved in the general welfare and daily lives of his customers. Serving as employment agent, doctor, gas station attendant, social worker, tow truck driver, and marriage counselor, Walter thoroughly enjoyed his multi-faceted profession as trader and self-proclaimed "mayor" of Dennehotso (7 June, 1989).

His concerns for his Dennehotso families still held true years
after his retirement. Visiting old friends during the drought-stricken summer of 1989, Walter shook his head in dismay when he pointed out the dry twigs sticking out of dusty "garden" patches and the bony, blue brahma cattle wandering around the dry, scrubby desert landscape, many visibly dying of thirst. One man waved as he drove by hauling two rusty thirty-gallon drums of water in the back of a pickup, a futile effort to ease his cattle's thirst. Frustrated at what was now a hopeless situation, Walter said vehemently, "If I were still here, I'd have notified the BIA long ago and gotten water shipped out here. Nobody's taking care of these people now" (7 June, 1989).

Walter was a throwback from an earlier generation of Indian trader, playing the role to perfection as scripted by Frank McNitt in his depiction of the entrepreneurial white man who made his presence felt throughout the Navajo Reservation in the early years of the twentieth century:

Usually unlettered beyond the grades of grammar school [though Walter did have a ninth grade education], the trader was bilingual [Walter was fluent in "trader Navajo"], of course, and tended to think increasingly as an Indian...He had to be a doctor ready at any moment to treat a snake bite or sew up the most ghastly wound. Many times, with the Navahos, he was required to go miles to bury the dead. He was expected to be banker, adviser, and sometimes father-confessor. In disputes between man and wife, as between men quarreling among clans, he had to be a peacemaker. All but lost and forgotten in his frontier post, he was required to keep himself informed of every new shift in government policy as it affected his
Indians and to interpret these policies and counsel his
Indians accordingly. Demands upon his time, his patience, and
his understanding were unrelenting. If he failed too often in
any of these functions, he failed also as a trader
(1942:70).  

Walter, needless to say, failed at none of the above, especially when it
came to giving out advice—though as his own stories attest, he may have
bungled a few cases. Fortunately his sense of humor prevailed (and
often improved with hindsight), and his many successes are anecdotal
legacies from a day long past.

None of his many "duties" seemed to give Walter as much
satisfaction—nor fuel for as many stories—as when he played the role
of Dennehoto's "Dear Abby." He relates one such occasion in a story he
calls simply "Sheep Herders":

It has always been a Navajo Custom that when you see a
herd of sheep and you look close they are always 2 herders a
woman and a little Girl or a little boy.* The reason for
this is that is for the women herders Protection and if she
has a little boy or girl with her they are not any funny
stuff. And the Navajos seem to honor this method of
Protection.

When women go out to herd their sheep they are generally
accompanied by a small girl or boy. Sometimes a sister or
another. The main factor here is that there is less likely a
chance of being pursued by a lonely amorous male. Parties of
two have safety in numbers and greatly restrain the men from
attempting to seduce them.
This happen a number years ago. The old man Clark Gable sort ladies man caught a lady shepherd and he was caught. He was a very honest man and he had credit at the store. One day he came in and told me he was having a little Problem and that he knew that he owed too much but he didn't have any one to turn to except me. He said he had caught a lady sheep herder out and had gotten caught and the husband of the lady sheep herder wanted some money, sheep, cows. He said he had the 3 sheep & cow but the Man said he wanted some money to. I ask him how much. He said he didn't know. He asked me if I would find out for him. I told him I would talk to him and see what it would take to get it settled.

In a few days the husband came in and I ask him to go back in the ware house I would like to talk to him. We went back and I said this man owes you some money. He said yes he did. So he Proceed telling me about it. After he got threw I ask him how much money did he think was fair. He said $100.00 what was a lot of money at that time. I told him that the man didn't have any money but that I would try and help but the old man was drawn up to his limit on his credit all his Pawn. And that I thought that $50.00 in trade and a Pendleton Robe. At that time I think they were selling for 18.00 to 21.00. He thought for a few minutes. He said OK. I told him I would talk to the old Man and for him to come back in a few days.

The old Man came in. I told him. He said OK and he said you sure are my friend and we were always good friends untill he passed away. The old Mans Wife had passed away.
about 6 month before this happen.

The Husband came in a few days. I gave him a Due Bill for 50.00. He could buy anything in the store for that amt and he picked out a Robe.

I thought this was handled Very Nicely and I feel I would of made one helleva Marriage Counseler and I think this was handled in a very Perfessional way. As good as could be expected from a 9th grade drop out.

I havent written any names in my story telling. I do not want to hurt any one in any way. A big Part of these people I am talking about are all ready gone and I dont think they would mind (KB6:92-94 and AK:104).

Apparently situations such as the above were common on the Reservation and the stories and their solutions have become a part of trader "lore." One favorite tale bantered around by fellow traders tells of a similar problem where the trader suggested that the guilty party give his neighbor one of his burros as a "penalty" for sleeping with his wife.

As time went on, the trader noticed that the Navajo with the large herd of burros was slowly but surely getting out of the burro business. He also noticed that the other man was accumulating a larger herd of burros as well as a very large family! The moral of the story is it just goes to show what a good marriage counselor can do (K89-2 and AK:92-94).

So much for the trader's responsibility in upholding the moral standards of his community. There were also a great many times when he
became actively involved in maintaining the physical welfare of his customers as well. Like for instance the occasion when Walter and his long-time trader friend and helper Hap Knight had to play the dual roles of doctor and pharmacist for, seemingly, all of Dennehotso:

There are certain times of the year when the Navajo diet is resisted [sic] to mostly starches, fats, and Native Mutton, and lack almost entirely any fresh vegetables, fruit and roughage. When these times occurred, the people would complain of stomachache aches and stomachache cramps. With these present it almost always led to bad cases of constipation. [We] discussed the peoples ailments, and Hap said he had gone through this many times before. We had nothing on the Store shelves that would relieve this problem. So Hap suggested that I pick up five pounds of epsom salts next time I went to town.

After the arrival of the epsom salts the first customer that complained about the stomachache ache was told that maybe we had some help for what ailed them. We would mix two heaping tablespoons of the salts in a glass of warm water and make them drink it followed by another glass of warm water.

When the customer returned in a few days, we would inquire, "how he was feeling, and did he need another treatment?" The man gave a broad grin, and said "it worked really, really good, and for sure he didn't want another treatment." The word soon spread all over the Navajo Grapevine, and we were kept busy until we had just about dosed the whole community with Epsom Salts. One old man who had
been badly bound up told me, "I took the medicine, and before I could get home I could stand flat footed, bend over, and shoot a stream clear over the top of your store, and never touch a shingle!" Over the years this occurred on several occasions (AK179-80).

But usually "trader doctoring" was much more serious--e.g. the hurried trips over the rutted, dusty road to Farmington, while acting as "nursemaid" and ambulance driver all in one. And often the trader's duties as resident physician were much more demanding than basic first aid and required a great deal of personal involvement, like the time back in 1947 just after Walter had bought Dennehotso:

Well they had a Navajo working there then and when we bought Dennehotso he went along with the deal. Shortly after the Health Department came out with a big deal. All food handlers had to have a Physical. The Navajo working for me was sent to Kayenta for his Physical but he never got it. The rest of us had to have them so our Family Dr in Farmington said he would do it for us. That 2 of us could come at a time. Every one had gotten Physcals except [sic] the Navajo boy. So I made an appointment for him to come to Farmington and brought him in for his Physical.

I came back in a few days to get the report on it. The Dr was quite upset. He told me that the Navajo had syphilis and I sure as hell was upset. The Dr said bring him back in and we will run some more tests. He said no use getting upset and they have cure for it now. I went back to the store and talked to the Navajo and he told me that he knew that he had
something that when they had the CC Camps during the 1929 Depression that they had put him in the Hospital at that time and that he had run away. So I told him that he had to go back and see the Dr and have some more tests. He agreed so I brought him back in. The Dr was a World War II Vetran and had had lots of experience with V.D. I told him that the Navajo had been eating his noon meal with us. And the Dr said I think that you and Flora better come in and have blood tests which we did and maybe we can work something out with the Navajo as for some kind of treatment.

Flora and I had our tests and I came back to get the results. He was in a hurry and I misunderstood him. I thought he said you have it. I guess I was kind of in a daze as I left and came to Kirtland where Flora was at home as she was sending the kids to school here. I told her that the Dr said we had it. She said what should we do. I said I guessed we had better get an appointment with the Dr and see what we can do so I did and he said come in at 4:00. That was one of the longest afternoons I ever spent. I even tried taking it out on Flora. I told her you just set there like nothing is wrong and read your dammed book. She looks up at me and said Im just as upset as you are but there isnt a dammed thing I can do about it. She said set down this isnt the end of the World and I said if it isnt it sure as hell is dammed close. We finally went up to the Dr office. We set in the waiting room and I knew dammed well every one in that room new that we had V.D. Finally we were the last ones to go in
to his office. The Dr said to Flora and I what's your Problem.
I said Dr I asked you about the test and you told me that we
had it and we want to know what to do. He started laughing
and I started getting mad as I didn't think it was a laughing
matter. He said Walter I told you we had the reports back and
there is nothing wrong with you and Flora. You just
misunderstood me. By this time the Nurses and every one left
in the office was laughing about it. I couldn't see anything
funny about it and I still can't but I will say this he was one
fine Dr.

He did say you have quite a problem with the Navajo.
What would you like to do about it. He has to have some
treatments a lot of them. I told him I would like to help him
if I could and that he was good help and I needed him. He
said to me let me think about this and come back in next week.
He said be careful with your Navajo and I wouldn't let him eat
with the Family.

I came back in next week and Dr said if you had some way
to give him shots that he said he was sure we could arrest it
but never cure it but it could be made dormut [sic] and that
he could not give it to any one and he could continue to work.
You go back and talk to him and see what he wants to do. Also
talk to his wife.

I done this but his wife refused to have the shots and
to come in and take the blood tests. He said we couldn't do
anything about her but we had to figure out a way to give the
Navajo the shots. He said could you give them to him. I told
him that I had a man working for me that could [referring to Hap]. We gave lots of shots to stock and it wasn't much different. He said I wouldn't do this for any one else but I don't see any other way and gave us what we needed. Told me what to do. Shot in left hip first day. Shot in right one 2nd day. Shot in right hip 3rd day. Shot in left one 4th day and start over then. And do the same thing over and if he started to swell stop for 3 days and as soon as the swelling or Puffiness went away start over and do the same thing. And he gave us 30 day supply of Pencillin and needles. And in thirty days bring him back in and we will run a blood test which we done. And then he gave us another supply of Pencillin and we done the same thing for 30 days again but he started to have Puffiness and we had to let up on the last end of the 2nd series of shots. But he said continue on but not as many for another 30 days. Our V.D. clinic was really doing good. The Navajo was better so we took him back after 3 months and he took tests and saw that he had done everything he could and it was arrested so we closed our clinic and went out of V.D. business. The Navajo worked for me until 1965. He quit and I never hired him back and I thought I had stuck my neck out far enough and he quit so I didn't feel that I was obligated to take him back but his wife did come in when I didn't take him back. All I got out of this deal--I paid for it--but I did get a degree in V.D.

I saw this Navajo last summer [almost forty years later]. He talked to me for quite a while. He thanked me for
what I had done and that his wife who was a nag had made him quit but he didn't blame me for not taking him back (KB9-16).

The Dennehotso people felt just as comfortable giving medical advice as receiving it, and sometimes the doctoring know-how came from the other direction, as Flora can attest. One of her Navajo friends, [Gladys Richards] was a mother with "at least eight or ten children," used to get after her because "everybody has more kids than two." "Mrs. Kennedy," Gladys would say, "why don't you have more kids? You should go to the Medicine Man. Just go talk to Maude Tsosi. She went to the Medicine Man, and she has a big family" (August, 1989).

Perhaps one of the trader's most valuable contributions to the Navajo communities throughout the vast reservation was his work as liaison between his clientele and the far-off world of bureaucratic Washington which was trying to administer and regulate a people living in a wild, forsaken land known to many easterners only through its portrayal in the Hollywood western. The trader was frequently pressed into service as interpreter and unscrambler of the interminable governmental red tape, much of it irrelevant and inappropriate, that often threatened the simple rural existence of the isolated Navajo.

Imagine trying to adapt the casual and practical "bookkeeping" methods of the typical Navajo family to the rigorous requirements of the Social Security Administration:

In the 1970s the S.C. [Walter's abbreviation for "social security"] out of Farmington started coming to Dennehotso.

There reason was to get all the old People that were eligible off of welfare and on S.C. if they were eligible. The S.C.
employee new that his only chance was threw the Trader. He explained what he was after and also that it was to our advantage to work with him as S.C. paid better [than welfare] and was to our advantage to help him.

We worked on a great number of Cases some good some not to good. It was my Job threw my records to get the sales. That is Rugs Sheep Cattle Horses Wool Pinons corn Beans anything they had sold to the Trading Post for 12 quarters or 3 years. That was the least they could have to qualify. The larger the sales the larger the S.C. Payment.

Annie and Hosteen Tsosie Begay were in there seventys and were eligible if we could qualify them. Annie was one of the Finest Ladys I ever new. She never talked a word of English but was super smart and had more horse sence but I cant say the same about Tsosie Begay Her Husband. He was a old shit if I ever saw one. I had never done anything right since I had been at Dennehotso in his eyes. I was nothing but a crook, cheater and he never even wanted me there and it would sure be alright if I left. But Annie was different. She thought I was all right and trusted me. She just ignore him and I found out that to ignore him was the only way you could handle him. Mostly all he ever traded on there account was Tob[acco] Pop just small for him self. Personally Annie done all the trading. That was his argument every Pay day. He wanted all his money. He didnt want to Pay on Annies account. I asked him one time where he ate his meals and he told me to shut up I didnt know what I was doing any way.
There check came with both there names on it so they both had to Thumb it. He got so ornery that he wouldn't thumb his check but I always had him Thumb it. First he would tell me he wouldn't sign. It is regulations that you have to hand them there checks and you cant hold on to it. He got so bad that I would give it to him and he would carry it around for a while go out side. I felt like I was running a circus instead of a Trading Post. I told him that Annie hadn't Thumbed it and he couldn't cash it as to cash it both their mark had to be on the check and if he did he would be in the Ft Defience Jail. All the rest of the Navajos were having a ball over it month after month. Finally I decided to be just like Annie ignore him. I just turned a deaf ear to him. It helped and it didn't take near as long to settle up with him. When he signed his check I would always give him a pop. How come I just get a Pop and you gave Annie a Water Melon last month and I just get a Pop. I told him you say you dont trade here and your not my Friend and Annie Trades here and she my Friend and Im a cheater. I know I am because you said so.

Going Back to the S.C. If Annie was 70 years old S.C. had to go back to her 65 Birthday and Pay her up to her Present 70th Birthday. 5 yrs at the time she filed. But Annie had to have the money she owed on her 12 quarters of Taxes 3 yrs up front. When we got everything done Mr. Jim Parker the S.C. Agent would figure aprox of what there first check would be. And it was understood that if I would
Put the money up front that I would be the first one paid upon
the arrival of the check. If it was turned down of any reason
I knew I was the goat. If it went threw I would receive my
money & a small amount of interest which was against
regulations. But if the bureaucrats didn't no about this
arrangement they wouldn't loose any sleep. There wasn't any
other way to do it as the bureaucrats didn't have sense enough
to figure anything out. They were jealous of the trader and
they couldn't move with out the trader. The smart men new this
but a few of the rest didn't and made it very disagreeable at
times as a big % of them didn't know straight up (K89-10).

"You see," Walter patiently explained later,"the [social security]
tax had to be paid, and the Navajos had no money. So I paid up front.
Because the Navajo had to have money into the treasury or he couldn't
receive a check." In a very matter-of-fact manner, and not the least
bit defensive, Walter continued: "If I got the Navajo a check for $90,
I got the business out of it. Of course I charged interest because that
Navajo had been living off of that check before it even came in" (21

Truly a "jack of all trades"—banker, marriage counselor,
mortician, country doctor, government go-between, but above all else
Walter was, first and foremost, a trader; and "The Store," along with
all the ramifications of doing business and making a go of it under
oftentimes unimaginable odds, was closest to Walter's heart.
Figure 22. Walter's floor plan of "The Store." When asked if he could draw one, he replied, "I know it by heart, never forgot where the potatoes was, the coffee and sugar. Really was quite convenient, very unique. Could really put a lot of merchandise over the counter." Produced with Walter's direction by Bill Hatch 1992.
Chapter V
Minding the Store

If you want to ruin a Navajo, give him too much credit on his pawn and he'll run from you. Get too much involved and he'll blame the trader for his debt.1

Walter Kennedy (August, 1989)

Pawn was a means of trade unique to the Navajo tribe, originating from the absence of money and the Navajo's skill in working with silver and turquoise. Basically, pawn was a system of credit whereby personal goods (anything from jewelry, saddles, Pendleton blankets, and livestock, to medicine bundles) were given to the trader for less than their value (thus giving the owner a fair opportunity to redeem it) in exchange for whatever goods the owner needed at the time.2 Almost as common, but much less known, was the practice of pawning valued possessions for safekeeping. Pawnning had become a daily activity; and as Willow Roberts points out in her biography of trader Stokes Carson, "accepting pawn had often been a convenience to the Navajo customers" (1987:181).

Unfortunately the combination of the practices of "credit" and "pawn" and their often colorful association with the traditional reservation trading post have stigmatized the Indian trader as the "universal black sheep" in a world where a few white men lived among and made a living by doing business with the Navajo (Leupp 1910:189).
Nothing could be further from the truth.

From a cash-less economy prior to the arrival of the white man, wherein all goods and services (including "Sings" performed by local medicine men) were obtained through barter and the exchange of goods, the Navajos suddenly found themselves chronically cash poor. Seasonal "income"—basically wool, rugs, and lambs, and later seasonal wage work, determined that for much of the year very little cash would, or could, change hands over the counters of the trading post. Restricted, as were their former trading partners, the Utes and other plains Indians, to the boundaries of their reservations, and their meager resources not once but three times destroyed by the invading and interfering white man, the Navajos' material and economic culture has been dependent upon a handful of traders on remote outposts who have been willing and able to advance goods on credit.

In fact, one historian as late as 1972 insists that "in a very real sense, the survival of the Navajo people" depends upon the trader's extension of credit, going so far as to say that "the trader virtually finances the social life of the region for much of the time" (Downs 1972:120). Even when one of his customers is heavily indebted, the trader realizes that there are times—as in the case of illness when the Navajo is compelled by his traditional beliefs to finance a Sing—when need dictates that he must extend even more credit. Should the Navajo have already pledged to his account his spring wool clip, his lamb crop, or the rug not yet off his wife's loom, he would offer the trader material goods as pawn against which he might receive cash or build a reserve against which he might draw more credit.

According to Walter, the accumulation of "pawnable" goods,
especially jewelry, was merely part of a Navajo family's "financial planning," so to speak. "The traditional Navajo people have always used surplus money to purchase jewelry and turquoise. This was their hard goods." They bought it at every opportunity, not only for the pleasure and prestige of wearing it. It was a veritable walking bank account. The Family collection of jewelry [once converted into pawn] carried many a family through a hard winter, or a long period of economic hardship" (AK:133). As such, pawn was not looked down upon by the Navajo, but quite the opposite: goods worthy of pawn were potentially a credit reserve to cover emergencies, or to provide a buffer against the lean months with little or no income.

Walter describes the "pawning process" as straight and to the point: "The customer and the Trader came to an agreement on the value of a piece of jewelry, looked each other in the eye and shook hands on it. The Trader hung the jewelry on a rack, on the wall, behind the counter, and the customer picked out the supplies he needed" (AK:132). One item, however, was never directly financed through pawn and that was gasoline for automobiles in later years. "We didn't sell gas on the book. It just didn't work. The Navajo had to pawn something to get actual cash for gas" (20 November, 1991). His pawn books show several small $4 and $5 "loans," "all of which," said Walter, "were for gas." A staunch defender of the practice of pawn, Walter fully believed "this was a good system for all involved. Trader and Navajo alike. For the Trader it gave a fair rate of interest, and covered a certain amount of the risk loss that he was exposed too. The Navajo also had a place to get needed goods when he had no cash, or had exhausted his credit line" (AK:133).
Tribal trading regulations required that the trader keep a customer's pawn for at least six months. If one fourth of the amount due was paid before five months, the pawn had to be held for eight months. For every additional 25% of the debt that was paid, another two month holding period was added (SID report 1969:16). Upon the expiration date, if the owner could not or did not desire to pay the amount for which the item had been pawned, it was declared "dead pawn"; and the trader was free to sell the pawned item at full value or whatever price he could in an effort to recuperate his original credit loan. However, many traders (including Walter and Stokes Carson at Shonto) never made a practice of selling off dead pawn, regardless of age, "unless and until their owners have refused to redeem them, or have given evidence that they do not intend to do so," even after they have been given "every conceivable opportunity" to settle their account (Adams 1963:198-199). "For instance," said Walter, "you take their Pendletons. We pawned a shawl for five dollars, fifteen to eighteen dollars on the robe. And over twenty years, not twenty went dead that I claimed. You see, we didn't want their pawn. We wanted the money turned over" (21 November, 1991). Hence, as was often the case, the pawn would remain in the trading post for years, buried deep in the trader's vault, accumulating the maximum interest rate as prescribed by federal regulations of ten percent per year.7

As Walter tells it, "We took lots of pawn at Dennehotso but our good Customers Pawn never went dead." He explains:

A lot of it was only in there for safe keeping and if any thing happen to my customers it was good security as usually it was Put in Pawn for a very small amount. And if
anything was to happen you could put his account on the Pawn which was against regulations but what BIA didn't know didn't hurt them (K89:9).

I have had bracelets only worth not more than $30, and I could have given up to $300 worth of pawn credit on them. One lady had a belt not worth $20, and it shows right in the pawn book that I loaned her up to $400 on that one belt (21 November, 1991).8

Each year a small amt of interest was put on the Pawn on a ledger and they were good to Pay this. But it amounted to quite a bit as they were a lots of them done this. Our policy was that we would not loan these Pawn to them for there sings and ceremonies but we had what we called loaners that belong to the store we let them use if they needed Jewelry. Beads. Bracelets. Belts. They were very good to return these but we learned the hard way. If we loaned them theres they had in Pawn they were not to good to return them and some times very slow (K89:106).

As for dead pawn, well we had no market for it when it went dead. We tryed putting our dead pawn up for sale at the store. We had no tourist to sell to only local people.9 And if we sold it locally we had to sell it to one of our customers and the Pawn originally belong to one of our customers so if this happened you were in hot water all the time about Pawn. It was causing lots of Problems so we just quit trying to sell it locally. So after 1 yr we would take it out of our Pawn trays and keep it for some time more and if
they didn't take it out we would put it away (K89:106). We had this big vault at Dennehotso with drawers and drawers of nothing but jewelry and belts. After it was in there for two years I took it down. But check in my pawn books. [See Appendix B for reproductions of pages in Walter's pawn books.]

Page after page of pawn and nothing gone dead. Even though after six months it's mine (21 November, 1989). 10 That is the Main reason I have so much old Pawn. Also I traded new Jewelry for old after I started collecting. I saw a piece of Jewelry I wanted I would trade for it. That is one reason I have such a good selection and variety (K89:106). 11

Oftentimes things other than the everyday or emergency expenses might require the trader to take pawn, items that came under the category of "family capital expenditures"—similar to the purchase of a new car anywhere else. Walter writes of one such occasion back in 1951:

One of the good Customers at Dennehotso Nochi Begay came to the Store. Said he wanted to buy a new wagon. At that Time Gallup Mercantile a wholesale house sold the Indiana Wagon the only Wagon Made. Gross Kelly another whole sale house in Gallup came out with another wagon. 12 It was called the Kelly Wagon. The Indiana Wagon was Red & Green. The Kelly Wagon was orange & Green. The Indiana Wagon was a 2 1/2 inch steel tire and the Kelly Wagon was a 3 inch and the Kelly Wagon was a lot better looking Wagon and just out. I had one and we had just Put it together.

Nochi Begay was quite impressed with the new Kelly
Wagon. Said he would sure like to have this New Wagon. I
told him the Price. $225.00. He said I owe you to much.
Will you take Pawn for it. Money was hard to come by as
usual. I said let me think about it. Wool was cheap. Lambs
were the same. You could buy all the beef you wanted. Good
beef for 10 cents a lb dressed. So a deal this size would
take quite some time to be Paid back. He was a good customer
and I decided that I would let him have it but he would have
to Pawn for it.

I told him and he said OK & brought in his belt he said
belonged to his Dad. Also his Dads Gato & one of the best
Burnham stones bracelets I have ever seen and we made the
deal. 18 225.00 The Pawned ticket is still on the 3
Pieces.

Time went on. After some time he had not Paid anything
on the Belt Kato Bracelet. Hap Knight was working for me at
this time. About 1951 I had started my Collection and this
was 3 old Pieces that were old at this time. I ask Hap what
he thought. He said Kennedy if you are collecting you couldnt
go wrong getting these. He [Begay] hadn't Paid anything on
them. He had Pawned them 3-7-51. On 5-26-52 he came in. We
got to the Hay barn and had a little talk. I ask him if he
would sell the 3 Pieces to me. He said he might. What would
I give him. I said they are in Pawn for $225.00. I'll give
you a new Pendleton Robe to boot. 14 He said that will be
fine.

Now the 3 three Pieces are mine. Hap said the Kato is
1915. Belt 1910 -- Bracelet about 1940. You have 3 of the best Pieces of Jewelry I have seen in a long time. They are Collectors Pieces right now (KB9-9).

Pawn, as far as Walter and his Dennehoto Navajos were concerned, "was just part of our everyday business" (21 November, 1991). He pointed out that the reservation system itself prevented most Navajos from pursuing normal means of securing loans and credit, especially since, according to his estimate, 90 percent of them were not steadily employed. In addition, his house or hogan could not be mortgaged because it stood on ground belonging to the Tribe. His livestock was owned by his wife and her sisters; hence it was difficult to prove his ownership percentage. He couldn't borrow money against his car or truck if he had one because Federal and Tribal laws made repossession on the reservation almost impossible (AK:133).

All of these combined together, is what made the pawn system work well for the Navajos. Four generations of Navajo people had used the pawn system to their advantage, when it was necessary. Further more, many older generation Navajos had gone through their entire life without ever using a charge account at the Trading Posts. Preferring to use their personal and paid for jewelry as collateral rather than be obligated by an open credit account. To them pawn was a way of life, tested and proven (AK:134).

But to be sure, any system built upon such dependency and mutual trust would have its flaws, its abusers, and its critics. In Walter's words, "Storm clouds began to gather in the mid 1960s" (AK:134). The kind of storms and repercussions of those ominous clouds are discussed
in full in chapter nine (in an effort to keep events and activities in a logical and somewhat chronological order). Meanwhile, Walter shares more of his practical principles of "minding the store":

A good trader knows his peoples' income and what they can pay. The saying goes: "If they want to get ahead, help them. If they want to go broke, help them" (7 June, 1989).

As cavalier and/or patronizing as it may sound, this philosophy was rooted in years of experience and in Walter's profound belief that as their trader he really was capable of determining what was best for his people. It is important to remember that if the Navajos felt that their local trader was not acting in their best interests, or should they decide that he was in any way dishonest, or even if they did not enjoy the social atmosphere provided by their trading post, they would simply take their business elsewhere—this was especially true during the bulk of Walter's three decades at Dennehotso when the Indians were increasingly mobile. Unpopular traders did not last long anywhere in Navajoland, certainly not for a generation.

The trading post, or "Store" as Walter affectionately calls it, was, after all, the focal point of the community. And the trader and his personality determined the reputation and ultimate success of the store as both a place of business and as a local gathering hole. The trader had many techniques to insure that his potential customers associated his store with a friendly, accommodating place to spend one's "money." Walter, for example, kept a can of Bill Durham tobacco on the
counter, "free to the Navajo, but I put nails through the can to prevent him from taking too much." Clearly the process of doing business is every bit as important—to both the trader and his Navajo customer—as making the actual transaction, as described by ethnohistorian James T. Downs in his study about the Nez Ch’ii Mercantile Company:

The Navajo does not hurry his shopping...[The store] is a place to chat with friends, catch up on the news, flirt with girls, or negotiate with the informal prostitutes who generally operate near the store. Here, too, he can contact the bootlegger and with a few friends buy some illegal wine for a drinking party in back of the trader’s corrals. [See chapter eight, this dissertation, regarding Dennehotso’s own “Las Vegas.”] ....Even in these times of pick-up trucks or automobiles, a trip to the store is seldom short. A half-day seems to be the least time one spends in chatting, bargaining, and buying, no matter how small the purchase (1972:119-120).

The "charm" of the trading post, and perhaps the key to its dynamics, lies in the act of trade itself. Buyer and seller are forced to become directly involved with one another as individual human beings when negotiating an equal exchange of piñon nuts for Arbuckle’s coffee—considerably more intimate than simply sliding a few coins across the counter and walking away with a sack of goods. The often complicated trading process did not end with a single transaction but often went on and on in a continous cycle, explained Walter. "Like, my weavers would bring me their saddle blankets to trade for groceries or sateen—sateen was a big seller at my trading post for a long
time. Then I would trade those blankets for saddles from a saddle maker in Denver. Then I'd 'sell' those saddles to my Navajos for lambs that I'd take to Farmington" (August, 1989). "This whole barter system was unique on the Navajo reservation," as Walter proudly attests. "I don't think it happened with traders and other tribes, or anywhere else in the world for that matter" (21 November, 1991).

In addition to the usual wool, sheep, and rugs, Walter accepted a great many of the Navajos' material goods in trade, including baskets, horses, piñon nuts, buckskins and other pelts. One of the more unexpected items desired by his particular customers was Zuni-made silver jewelry. "The Navajos like the Zuni jewelry better than Navajo. It's fancier. This from way back in the 1930s when the Zunis had electricity and there was none on the Navajo reservation; so their [Navajo] stuff was cruder, all made by hand, no electric tools. The Zuni cluster bracelet was a big thing at Dennehotso" (3/21/89).

All such transactions involving direct commodity exchange (i.e. trade over cash) were recorded on "due bills" which in Walter's case were sometimes as informal as a paper sack hung on a nail next to the counter. This simple credit record would state the original amount due in trade at the top; and each successive purchase would be subtracted in turn.

For those individualistic, "Walter Kennedy type" entrepreneurs who chose to do business at these out-of-the-way posts, the casual, lengthy, personal involvements that typified the reservation "store" and its many transactions were every bit as important and enjoyable to them as to
their Navajo clientele. Such was certainly the case at Dennehotso. Walter's story about "Billy Blackhorse and the Watermelon" best illustrates how the simple yet complex trading post "system" had become integrated with the day to day activities of everyone in the community:

Billy Blackhorse was a very good Navajo. He Traded exclusively at Dennehotso. And when I took Dennehotso over in 1947 the former trader said Billy is a good Customer but won't pay up his credit in full. Always 300.00 or 400.00 short but never gets to out of hand but just had to have a carry over from the Spring wool untill fall lamb buying time.

It was most of the old traders Custom that in the spring if they couldn't pay up there wasn't much you could do about it as if there wasn't any more wool to pay with it just wasn't there. But in the fall of the year when they sold there lambs they could always go back and get more lambs as they always keep the ewe lambs. But if they cut the wool you had to wait for another year for it to grow back. A lot of the Navajos depended on there wool and lamb crop for there lively hood. Occasionally a rug to fill in. And pawn. They had it pretty well figured out untill the gov. stepped in and stopped us from taking Pawn. The gov. hurt no one but the Navajo on this but try and tell a buercrat what they are doing and you can see what a little book learning can do to People like the gov employs. This is where horse sense comes in and gov employs do not have any. When they passed out the brains they just left them out.

To get on with my story. We run Dennehotso 800AM till 6
pm 6 day a week and from 900 until 1200 Sundays. So in the summer we had quite a bit of day light left each evening. And I noticed one evening that they were quite a few volunteer water melon growing in our large back yard so I hilled them up and started watering them ever evening. The ground is very good and it wasn't long until I had quite a Melon Patch. They were sure big Melons. Just about the biggest I had ever seen. We started buying lambs in Sept. and it looked like my melons were about ready. I told Hap that it was about time we tried one. He said you have watered them too much and they are hallow. I said I'm just a fine water melon grower and it just one more thing I can do better than you so I took one in. And I noticed that it was very light so I cut it and Hap was right. It was hollow and tasteless just like a gourd. Just one more of my failures and I had quite a bunch of them.

You could look over into the back yard from the sheep corral and we were buying lambs. Billy brought his in and I could tell he was short again. He looked over the fence and seen these nice big Melons and he said are you going to give me one. I thought and finally said if you pay up your account in full I sure would think about it. He didn't say anything but in a few days here he came with enough lambs to pay his account and some left over to have a little spending money. And he said how about my Melon. I said fine.

He was a old man about 80 so I said to him is that one you can see from here all right. He said that would be fine.
So I went into the yard and got it but didn't hand it to him. I just walked over to the wagon and put it in for him. He grinned said thanks.

I said they won't be any quilt this year. It was each fall when they Paid up you gave them for Paying up a 10.00 quilt as a gift.\(^2\) It was just a custom and they all expected it. He said fine. Done his trading on wool crop and went home.

They didn't come to the store very often as they lived quite aways and never come in only about once a month just when they needed supplies. He came in and stood back. Never had much to say. He finally said you cheated me. That Melon wasn't any good. They were quite a number of Navajos in the store and they all knew about the Melons as we had given our hole crop away. They got to talking and Pretty soon Billy got to laughing and thought it was a good joke. I give a quilt and every thing was just fine.

I never did have any more problems with him not paying up but I was curious so I took him into the ware house our counseling room and ask him why he would never pay up in the fall as it was the custom. And he said I didn't trust you. I thought that if I paid up you wouldn't give me any more credit and if I still owed you you wouldn't shut me off. And I would take a few lambs to another store and they would pay me cash for them and I wasn't sure you would do that. But I found out that you would pay me in cash not trade. The trader that was here before wouldn't give me any cash and I thought I needed a
little cash.

A few years later the Social Security came out that if you were self employed that after you were 65 years old you could have from the time you were 65 to the Present date but you had to have Proof. I got all my old records out and proved to them that Billy had been self employed and had income with selling of wool and live stock rugs Horses Cattle just so it was income. But there was a sticker to it. You had to Pay Social Security the tax on 4 quarters or 3 yrs up front or no deal. I explained this to Billy. He said I don't have any money. I said Billy I'll Pay the 4 qts for you. Then when you get your back [SS] Pay you Pay me. Social security is very slow but after several months he got his back pay. Payed me. Had quite a some left over. Left it with me at the store and I gave it to him as he needed it and got a small check for the rest of his life. Billy liked to go to our local nite club [see chapter eight, this dissertation] and occasionally had a little wine. A very happy Navajo and more money than he had ever had.

A fellow trader was talking to me one day and said Billy lives within a mile of my store and I have really tried to get his business. I can't figure it out. Dennehotsio is 15 miles away and he trades with you. Is all I ever get out of him is he buys a Box of Matches or a Box of salt. What do you have at Dennehotsio that we don't. I thought for a minute and told him. Dennehotsio has one hell of a fine trader and Billy knows we raise good melons and I told him the story about the Melon.
He said that's a good story but Billy was trading at Dennehotso before you ever had any Melons. Well I said just one thing left. I guess it's my Personality. I didn't tell him we had a nite club and all the fixing at Dennehotso. And Billy was quite a ladies Man. Could of been the reason Billy liked Dennehotso. It couldn't of been the line of bull we Peddled.

Billy passed away in 1972. He must have been at least 90 or more. He never forgot about the Melon and reminded me quite often (K89-2B).

Debt collecting was just part of the trader's job, imbued with rituals expected—indeed often enjoyed—by debtor and creditor alike, as evidenced by the delight of both "players" in the watermelon episode. When Walter "retired" from the trading business and moved away from Dennehotso in 1981, there remained a good deal of "unfinished business."

Just one example: one of his former customers, an elderly woman, still owed him $4,000. She promised him that the next "big" rug to come off her loom would be his.

Eight years later, during one of his still frequent visits to Dennehotso—to "visit" and take his old friends things from his garden in Kirtland, NM—Walter drove around playing what had by now become almost a traditional rat and mouse game, looking for the old woman to ask about the status of "his" rug. The better part of the day was spent talking to folks, asking if they'd seen his weaver. Even after she was located, the elusive old woman would be in sight one moment, shooing her goats along amongst the sagebrush, then once again invisible, as soon as Walter's truck bounced into the vicinity where she'd last been seen.

Finally, as if she had decided it was her move in the game, she appeared
out of nowhere, waving at her old friend.

Walter climbed out of the truck, grabbing a "cold pop" from the cooler in back, gave it to the slight, grey-haired goatherd (wearing a traditional long velveteen skirt and long-sleeved velveteen blouse, despite the 95 degree heat), and proceeded to banter good-humoredly back and forth in Navajo with her. What did she say about the rug, which had been supposedly on the loom for a few years now? She said, translated Walter, "You’re not that old. You’ll get it" (7 June, 1989).

And in the winter of 1990-91 he did indeed get the rug—a large, 9' x 12' pictorial sporting, of all things, tigers riding tricycles (incongruous images retained perhaps from the trip the weaver made to the bright city of Las Vegas with her family during the time she was working on Walter's rug).
Figure 23. The belt, Kato, and Burnham stone bracelet pawned by Nochi Begay for his new Kelly wagon. Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.

Figure 24. The Begay family, ready to head for home in their new wagon. (The infant astride the white horse, held by an "invisible" Walter, is Lavina.) Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
Figure 25. Pawn tickets. Duplicate information is recorded on the back side, below perforation. The owner of the panned item is supposed to tear off and keep the claim check; but Walter said his customers "usually didn't want to bother with that, or else they lost it. They trusted me." Reverse side shows dates when amounts were paid on pawn, verified by the owner's thumb print. These dollar amounts would also be recorded, when paid, in Walter's pawn book.
Figure 26. Due bill sacks, some of which were simple and to the point, e.g. Wool Boy Kid’s, who took $17.50 in merchandise when Walter purchased his calf and cow— that amount being paid by the calf, leaving a credit balance of $22.50 for the price of the cow. Or, Fur Hat Sister’s, whose rug Walter bought for $15.00— $7.00 of which was applied to her account at the store, leaving a credit of $8.00. (Next page also.)
Some due bill sacks served a long-term "accounting books," such as this one for Dis Cheene Bitsi. Her $34.00 credit lasted for many trips to the store, though successive purchases of pop, peaches, a pair of $6.00 shoes, candy, calico and more, until she reached her $34.00, so noted by Walter's "N.M.," i.e. "no more."
Figure 27. Walter with weaver of "Las Vegas" pictorial, checking on the progress of the overdue debt. Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
Figure 28. Close-ups, circus figures on finished "Las Vegas" rug. Photograph by Nancy Peake 1991.
Chapter VI

Doctored Wool and Watered Sheep

The Navajo paid up two times a year. With the wool clip in the spring. With lambs in the fall. That's how they made their living.

Walter Kennedy (2 November, 1991)

At the very core of the trading post "system," and the key, therefore, to the well-being of Navajo and trader alike, were the sheep. Capable of producing two entirely different "cash crops" a year, at timely six-month intervals, this woolly animal was not only the means by which a family could accrue goods, such as jewelry which when worn by the owner would testify to his or her wealth; but the sheep was in and of itself a measure of wealth--the larger a woman's herd, the larger her "worth." In addition, the sheep has been for years the traditional mainstay of the Navajo diet. Even after being consumed as mutton stew, the sheep continues to produce income for its former owner when its hide is sold as a wool pelt.

During at least forty of Walter's fifty years as a trader, reservation life revolved around a livestock economy. Credit extended on a year around basis was paid off twice a year--during wool season in the spring and lamb season in the fall. Walter figured that the average trading post would buy from thirty to forty thousand pounds of wool each spring which they would, in turn, contract to a wool broker or textile
mill" (AK:92). In the fall, Walter usually bought anywhere from one thousand to two thousand lambs. These he sold to firms who "fed them out" and then resold them to the meat packing houses.

Credit accounts at the trading post would be paid upon at these two times; though in the fall after the lambs were sold, Walter tried hard to encourage his customers to fully "settle up" and pay in full (at which time he gave each paid-up customer his traditional cotton quilt). Because this cycle was repeated year after year, many traders also often found themselves conducting business on credit with sympathetic bankers who understood the Navajo economy and would grant the traders ninety-day wool or sheep loans, depending upon the season. Walter, however, insisted on doing business with his wholesalers on a "strictly cash basis," thereby "taking" a two percent discount each and every month (2 November, 1991).

Many of Walter's customers at Dennehotso also tried raising cattle. Livestock sales, both sheep and cattle, according to Walter, helped improve the financial condition of some of his Navajo families. Their efforts to enlarge their herds kept Walter busy pursuing another of his many projects. He was constantly "venturing up to southern Colorado and Utah and buying the surplus sheep and cattle, at good prices, and bringing them down to Dennehotso and selling them at a substantial profit" to his customers at the trading post--true to his philosophy of "making money on the things you know how to do yourself, without hiring other people to do it for you" (AK:100).

But probably the most lucrative livestock deal ever consummated during Walter's career could not be attributed to the experienced trader, nor to any of his savvy Navajo customers, but to his wife Flora
working quietly behind the scenes. It seems that Walter had built up quite a herd of donkeys as a result of one of his money-making projects. His plan was to breed the donkeys with Shetland ponies, "which were very popular with the Navajo, also Siamese cats," explains Walter.

About 1951 right after Hap came to work for us the B.I.A. was having a stock reduction. Horses. Mules. Burros. They were paying a fair price. The Navajos had lots of horses Burros Mules and we started buying. So I got the bright idea that I would keep the Jenney burros and buy a Shetland Stud and have 1/2 Shetland and 1/2 burros. I think they are Jenettes. And I was going to make a Million. So I keep all the Female burros and I got 25 real nice Jenneys and came to town and bought a Shetland stud and took it to the store but it wouldn't have anything to do with the Jenneys. But I really worked at it. Bought two more Shetland studs still no results. Finally I said to Hap maybe if I would take them into the Ranch maybe that would work so that's what I did. Still no results (K89-32).

Meanwhile, Flora, who was staying on the Kirtland ranch property in order to send the children to school, was spending all her time chasing escaped burros "all over creation." Under Flora's watchful eye, the donkey herd did expand in size; but their only purpose to date had been to provide endless recreation and entertainment for Walter's kids who rode them all, every day, always bareback with only a bridle and sometimes just a rope around the neck--too often leaving the gate open when they were finished. At the time of the "Great Livestock Deal" the Kennedy donkey herd numbered twenty-seven, all female, and all named
with appropriate lady-like monikers like "Frances." The delinquent donkeys must have by this time made the trip back to their home base on the reservation, because when Walter picks up the story where he left off, the scene is once again Dennehotso.

As he tells it, one day Walter was away from the trading post on business and some folks came by from the production crew for the movie The Greatest Story Ever Told. While filming nearby they had spotted Walter's donkeys, the lone white one in particular. They told Flora they wanted to buy that white donkey for Jesus to ride into Jerusalem. Flora, busy tending the store in Walter's absence did not want to be bothered and replied, "You buy one, you buy them all." "Well," says Walter, still chuckling years later, "danged if she didn't sell them the whole herd--at $50.00 a head, an unheard of price as they were only worth about $5.00 or $10.00 apiece" (7 June, 1989).

But despite Flora's apparent talent in the donkey trade, sheep were what the trading post business was all about. The continuous income-producing abilities of this lowly animal had become the cultural and economic mainstay of the Navajo Nation. Every spring, when the nighttime temperatures no longer dropped below freezing, the Navajos began to think about shearing for this was the first opportunity of the year for most to earn money. At the same time the traders began to get ready to receive the spring wool clip. Walter explains that they had to order a sufficient quantity of six-, seven-, and eight-foot long bags for sacking the wool, as well as thousands of "wool ties" for his customers' use. "These special ties were about five feet long and were used to tie up the individual wool fleece after it was shorn from the
sheep. They [the ties] were made of a special material that would dissolve when the fleeces were thrown into the steaming vats to begin the scouring process" (AK:148).  

Some of the people would bring their wool to the store already stuffed into the long gunny sacks, while those with fewer head to shear would bring their fleeces in any available container, "wrapped in a blanket, large cardboard boxes, etc" (AK:148). Sacking the wool was a major project in itself. The sack would be fastened to a wooden hoop supported by posts. The wool was put into the sack and then someone had to get inside the sack and "tromp down the wool with his feet" (August, 1989). Then he needed to sew up the sack itself. The experienced trader, advises Walter, always resacks his wool. Although this amounted to a great deal of extra labor, it worked to his advantage because then he was able to see what he was buying. Among the things the trader had to watch for were:

how much sand had been sprinkled into the wool. And one gallon of water poured over the wool would add eight pounds to it.

Two well placed rocks in the fleeces could bring an extra $5.00 when the sacks were weighed. Often times when a subterfuge was found, and pointed out to the seller, he would grin and say "I was just make a joke on you Walter. I was just wanted to see if you could find it." Everyone observing the transaction would giggle a little bit, glad that it wasn't himself that had been caught (AK:149).

It is important to note that since the sheep traditionally belong to the Navajo women, so does the wool. The men apparently feel
themselves under no obligation to help their wives with the work
involved in spring shearing, though Walter mentioned that those who did
help "did not have a guilty conscience about charging their wives a
healthy fee for their labors" (AK:149). Hence, almost all transactions
having to do with the sale of wool and eventually the lambs were
negotiated between Walter and the various women of his community.
Walter gives away some "tricks of the trade" and elaborates about some
of the specifics when he talks about "Wool Buying at Dennehotso":

The first thing that came along in the spring, First
Mohair buying as Goat will start to shed there mohair if you
wait to long. Any more the Goats are very few and they are
sheared an Put into small Gunny sacks and brought in this way.
When Mohair was cheap there was a Gov. incentive. When it was
high no incentive. We would resack it into large sacks.
Mohair was a cash Purchase at Dennehotso as they were small
quantities bought at a time and it had been a long Hard Winter
and a few cash Dollars was looked forward to.9

Wool was a different story. It was to be Paid on there
accounts. It was a much larger quanitie but it was also
resacked as a very small Percent of them had a tendency to add
a little water Sand, anything that would weigh. Also some
would dig a hole and wet the hole down good in and around the
hole. Put there large sacks of wool in this hole for a few
days which would cause it to absorb moisture which the trader
is unable to detect as it is very uniform. But when you empty
the sack and you feel the wool and it is cool you will find
that you are going to have a very large shrink [shrink] and you
should buy it accordingly. This is a very small percent that does this.

When the wool is bought and resacked it has to be weighed and loaded in our truck and taken to the ware houses on the Rail Road, Gallup, Farmington, Winslow, Holbrook, Flagstaff. This is quite a job as these sacks weigh from 250 to 300 lbs. There are ears on both ends of sack so one man on each end of sack. There is quite a nack in loading wool. It sure does take good strong men to load it when it is done by hand. When you are loading wool always Pick up your end first and the Man on the other end has twice the work as he had to pick up his end and Part of yours too. It sure does make the man that Picks his end up last grunt.

Your wool is Put into the ware house. The buyers come by and look at your lot of wool and core it. That is to run a cutter threw the center of the sack which cuts out round oval 6 or 7 foot long piece of wool. It is then ticket for staple shrink quality what ever and then they give you the Price. If they buy it it is Put into Freight cars and shipped [to] the scouring [scouring] Plant and you are threw for that year (KB6:115-117).

Typically Walter puts everything into perspective and brings it "right to home" when he tells a story. His "Tully Blackwater" account might well be given the subtitle, "Springtime at Dennehotsop":

Tully Blackwater was one of Dennehotsos better Customers. In spring of 1951 Tully Brought his wool in to
sell. Four 6 ft sacks. Normal weight Per sack about 225.
Packed Firmly should of weighed about 900# very most 950. 1st
sack 285#. 2nd 300. 3rd 320. 4th 311#. 950# wool what it
should of weight. And 1215 about 265# to much. I knew some
thing was wrong but I didn't know what. We were Paying 40
cents lb for the wool. I took my knife and ripped a sack open
and seen that it had been sanded was what made it weigh so
much.

I never said any thing. He owed me a large account and
I felt I had to collect it so I never said any thing. I just
figured the wool up and used the weight that I thought it
should weigh. 950# 2 40 cents. $380.00. He never had enough
to settle his account which was nearly always true in the
spring. They never were able to Pay up as it just takes more
to live the winter months than it does summer and fall. He
was short over a $100.00 which we never complained. Most of
them never cleared there accounts in the spring. All accounts
had to be Paid in full in the fall. If they didn't have enough
we just sent them home fore lambs untill they got it Paid.

Anyway he [Tully] would of had enough if I had paid him
for the sand but I hadnt so he was short. I never said
anything to him one way or another but I did tell the Navajo
boy I had sacking wool to clean it up shake all the sand out
of it that he could get. You cant never get it all. When
they sand it they Put white sand in it that they get out of a
wash. I told the wool sacker to keep it separate and to Put
it into boxes and tie it up real nice.
I told Hap about this. I asked him what would you of done. He said just like you done. But I said Im going to do a little more. Im keeping the sand and the next time he comes in Im going to give it to him. I am having it all boxed up in fine shape. Hap said Walter you dont want to do this. You will just run a good customer off. You didnt pay for the sand just let it go. I said no. Im going to stop this and I think this will help stop it. Im going to give it back to him the next time he comes in.

So I done just what I said I would do and Hap was right. I lost a good customer. Hap said later to me Kennedy you dont know the difference between 25 cents and $11.00. I think he was right. The man quit trading with us and never saw him. He still owed us a $100.00 but never Paid it. Never saw to much of him for a number of years.

Hap Passed away [in 1958] and about 1968 the Navajo came back into the store one day and said I would like to talk to you. I said OK. So to the Hay barn we went. He said it been a long time. I said it sure has. He said my wife is the one that put the sand in the wool. Always they blame it on some one else and its best to just agree. I agreed and said I thought that was right. He also said I have always wanted to trade here. My wife wouldnt let me. He said now Im going to drawn S.C. [social security] and I would like to come back here to trade. I said fine. And I want to Pay my credit. I said fine and went back into the store and got the slips on it. Brought it back and he reached into his pocket and dug
out the Money and Paid it. I told him to wait and I went back into the store and got a quilt. It was fall of the year and gave it to him as a gift. We shook hands and were once again friends. I told him that he could start trading again.

He said I have a little money left and I'm going into the Tuba City Hospital. I asked what wrong. He said it's my stomach it hurts all the time. I learned later from his kids that they sent him to Albuquerque but in a few days I heard he had passed away. I guess Hap was right again. All those years I lost his Trade just because I didn't know 25 cents from $11.00. I never found out what he died of. Cancer I think. But the Family did trade with me until I left in 1981 (KB9-19).

Just as the "wool season" begins with the last frost in the spring, the "lamb season" officially gets under way at first frost in the fall. By far the largest percentage of any post's livestock trade was dependent upon sheep, and the fall "lamb season." It is here, amongst Walter's tales of the seasonal activities of life at Dennehotso, that he first mentions "watered sheep." According to Walter:

A Navajo Trade Mark is not all but some will sand, wet there wool, fill there lambs on water before they sell them. Sand at 40 cents to 80 cents a lb or water at 40 to 80 cents a lb is a good Price. The lamb buyers insist that a lamb before he is weight for sale has a 12 hr shrink [shrink] or is off Water and feed for 12 hrs before he is weight. Wool that has been sanded or wet they don't even want, but the Navajo is
going to try to get ahead of the trader and he will try it if there isn't a 12 hr shrinking Period. The buyer and seller has to get together on a shrink which could be 6 lbs Per Hundred wgt or what ever can be agreed on.

It was in the fall of the year we were buying Lambs. A Navajo never sold his Lambs untill in the evening as they were full an had ate all day. This day was no exception. About the time we were ready to close here came a wagon Load of lambs in to weight and buy just at closing time. It ment we would [not] get closed on time. All the help would be up set but one thing about it it didn't hurt the help to be upset. But after a hard day in the store every one wanted to go home as we run from 8 in morning to 6 at nite and the days were getting shorter. So any way I went out to buy the lambs.

They had 5 lambs with there feet tied in the wagon. The way they were weight was to Put a #3 wash tub on the scales and put the lamb in the tub on his back with his hips going in first and they can't move or jump up and run away. It is just the way it was done. You balanced the scales with the tub on so you gave honest weight. We started weighing the sheep and I noticed they were really full of water. I never said anything just like nothing was wrong. After we had them weigh I would them take off what I thought was fair for the extra water I had weight. Ever thing was going fine.

They turn the tub up so the last lamb could get out. They had done a good job of filling him up with water. I hadn't started to figuring on it yet. We were standing there
and the last lamb we weight let a blat and jumped about 4 feet straight up and fell over on his side dead. I was quite surprised. I didn't say nothing. When I realized what had happen I said to the ladie you had better cut its throat as the meat will still be good. She said I don't have any knife. I loaned her mine. She done the job. I looked the other 4 lambs over. They seemed to be all right but I wasn't in any hurry as I sure didn't want any of those lambs. They had the [dead lamb's] hide about off. They had butchered on the spot.

I waited until they were finish and I could see what had killed the lamb but I could see what had happened. It [the lamb] had broken in side. They had to have water to clean it out as it would taint the meat. We had a water hose close and we done our own butchering in the sheep corral so no Problem. I went into the store figured up her 4 head took a good shrink. 10 lbs or so a head. She Paid on her account. Just another day at the Store. Always something interesting happening.

I'm not an expert on how to fill a sheep up with water to get them to weigh more but I began to ask around as to how it was done. I got 2 ways. 1st was to take all water away from lamb for about 3 days and than warm some water and just before you sell it let it drink. As a lot of the water runs right threw I have seen a lamb so full that it just would stand and drip constantly. 2nd way was not to take the water away as long and give them a spoon full of salt in there mouth and give them warm water. Why the warm water they would drink
more than they would cold (KB9-22).

The trader’s role as community livestock broker may not be as well known as his more recognized activities as wool and rug buyer. But buying lambs may be more critical because the fall lamb sales provide the last real income generated before the long, cold winter. After all trading post accounts are brought up to date, remaining cash and credit acts as a buffer until spring. In addition to his preparation for buying the lambs themselves, the trader needed to make sure he had the necessary stock on hand for his clientele at this prime purchase time—things like winter clothes, pot bellied stoves, anti-freeze, and kerosene lanterns and Coleman lamps (AK:144).

Walter points out that the Navajos were not the only ones who had cause for rejoicing when autumn rolled around: "Lamb season was one of the high lights of a Navajo Trader as he would be able to get away from the trading Post and get a little fresh air."

The BIA gave you 10 day buying Period and you could herd the sheep in the area of the store for this time. And when your ten days were up you would have to start moving them out on the way to the Rail Road. Our outfit consisted of 1 wagon for Bed rolls, Grocers [groceries] feed for the team, whatever was needed to trail the herd and 2 sheep herders usually a dog. The wagon driver was all so the cook. It was usually better to have a Husband and wife on the wagon. Also wood was a Problem as this was late fall. Oct Nov was chilly and wood was a must as there wasnt any on the trail in. Water was another Problem that is for the sheep. Gov wind Mills and
springs were all claimed by the Navajos on the trail. They were very ornery about letting us water our sheep so we had to go ahead of the herd and map out our camp so as we could have water. It was sometimes quite a problem so we had to find away to get the Navajos to let us water. The way I finally solved this problem was giving the Navajos that claimed the water apples Melons. This would usually do the trick.

But it was a long hard walk. 25 to 30 days. We would go from water hole to water hole. It was just like a vacation for us. The herders and cook looked forward to this each year and new where all the water holes were and where the good grass was. So they were a great help as they new the trail. We would keep buying lambs as long as they were on the trail and every nite after we closed the store I would haul them to the herd. Also wood Grocers what ever they needed (KB6:112-114).

Walter elaborates on the story thus far, explaining that his herd would usually number well over one thousand. Some of the sheep might even be having late lambs along the way. He remembers that once a sheep had triplets on the trail. "But she only took to two, so I had to take a pop bottle with a nipple so they could feed the lamb riding on the wagon" (7 June, 1989). Getting back to his written tale, Walter continues:

When we traveled over half way I would move Flora, Kids to town and I would service the herd from town so it was a vacation for all of us. We all looked forward to this each year. After about 30 days we would get to Farmington South
side of river. It was quite a problem getting the sheep across the bridge as there was quite a lot of traffic but it could be done. After getting them across the bridge it was quite a job putting them on the train as usually there was 10 to 15 thousand sheep that had to be loaded. The Narrow Gauge was doubled decked and the lamb buyers would sometimes bring there dogs to help us load.

After loading I would give my herders a small amount of money to spend and have a time on the town. I never had Navajos herding that drank so didn't have that problem. After one nite in town I would get the Two Herders and load them and there bed rolls in the truck. Then give the wagon [driver] Hay Grain Grocers enough for the 6 or 7 day trip back home and go back home and wait for another lamb season (KB6:112-114).

While Dennehotso was waiting out the winter, many of the women were busy weaving rugs to supplement the family income. Walter and the other Kennedy brothers had always favored the maverick pictorial weavings over the geometric designs that had become universally recognized as "Indian" thanks to the personal influence of traders across the reservation. Walter boasts that he took off where his brother Earl at Lukachukai left off and "really built up the pictorial business. Before Dennehotso, only the Gap [Tuba City area trading post] was bigger" (21 March, 1989).

The secret of his success was that he "paid lots of money for pictorials, more money than for the Indian designs." As added incentive he always paid cash for the pictorial weavings, rather than extend
credit or pay on credit accounts as was frequently the case when traders received rugs. Needless to say, hard cash in the dead of winter when almost no cash was generated was incentive indeed. He also gave his weavers free rein with regard to what they chose to depict in their figurative weavings. "You don’t suggest to Navajos. You don’t draw pictures. You let them come up with the ideas. I always told them anything the Navajo done is fine, but what the White Man done [as far as designs were concerned] I didn’t want" (21 March, 1989). He did, however, "buy magazines by the ton, show them pictures, tear out pictures and give to them, always telling them to come back with whatever." The resulting weavings were sold primarily to wholesalers and dealers because Walter "didn’t like tourists and wasn’t set up to deal with them." (See chapter ten, this dissertation.)

Vida Rose Joe was one of the more accomplished weavers at Dennehotso, a woman who truly enjoyed working with the more difficult pictorial subjects such as animals and birds. Walter explains that any figure containing round or semi-round objects is the most critical test of a weaver’s skills. Mrs. Joe’s rugs always sold well for Walter, seldom remaining in his inventory for very long. Many of the most beautiful became part of his own collection. One "Vida Rose rug," a hand-spun, vegetal-dyed creation about three feet by three feet, depicted as its central theme an eagle in flight with talons extended, swooping down to snare a small rabbit. Surrounding the eagle were birds, horned toads, a squirrel, coyote, frog, spider, ant, mouse, bee, deer, buffalo, and two large snakes, one gold and the other black, writhing diagonally toward the top corner of the rug. Walter paid "top dollar" for the rug because he wanted this one for himself.
He points out that according to Navajo religious tradition "only the medicine men have the special powers to depict snakes in their special sand paintings, and mortal Navajo people should not attempt to cross this line, as it portends something evil happening to the violator of this rule" (AK:130). Vida Rose began having problems because of weaving the snakes, bad dreams and other "supernatural" symptoms. She told Walter that since he bought the rug he too was to blame for her strange symptoms and that the only way things could be straightened out would be for her to go to a medicine man and ask him to perform the appropriate "sing." This would, of course, be very expensive.

Walter reminded her that he had already paid her several thousand dollars for the rug and he thought this should be sufficient for any ceremony. But, as Walter figured, "she needed some guilt transference, and I was the logical one." In the end he had to help finance a sing for Vida Rose, and she then resumed making beautiful rugs for him again. Walter insists that "it was still a very worthwhile expenditure because I got every fine thing she created" (AK:130-131).

Rugs have become, over the years, the symbol of the relationship between the Navajo people and the trader. Distinctly Navajo in style and technique, the end result is often the product of combining the traditions and needs of the Navajo with the aesthetic desires of the white man. But the rug's value and utility to the reservation Weaver of Walter's era almost always depended upon the trader acting as the agent in its eventual sale. Ironically, as James T. Downs points out in a chapter entitled "Wealth and the Trader," when the Navajo wanted a "soft, colorful 'Indian blanket'" to wear himself, he would buy one from his trader that had been manufactured in a factory in far off
Walter shares a rather unusual rug story that is not exactly what one would expect about the traditional "symbol" of the Indian trading business.

We bought lots of rugs at Denehotso. We had some beautiful weavers and also some very bad ones. We had two very old Navajo Ladies out there. They wove saddle blankets. They were terrible. But it was traders etiquette that you didn't shame a bad weaver before her friends by refusing to buy an ugly Rug. You just didn't Pay very much for it. Anyway after years of Buying I had quite a stack of bad rugs like the old Ladies saddle blankets so I took an armload out past the corrals and tryed to burn them.

Fact is that no air can circulate among the wool fibers makes them almost impossible to burn. All that happens is that they smolder and stink to high heaven. The Navajos had gotten after me about the burning. Later that day a medicine man came to talk with me and said they were superstitious [sic] of this and didn't think I should do this burn the saddle blankets. He said that something that came out of a womans mind was very spcial and it was a taboo to destroy by fire something of that kind. That the weaving of a rug even a bad one was the creation of a womans mind. I told them I had Paid for them and they were mine any way. I told them that I wouldn't do it any more.

So Hap and I spent many a night over the years digging deep holes and burying rugs. Two hundred years from now some
space age archeologist may dig around the ruins of an old
Trading Post and be totally confused by the Navajo Post
Classical period practice of digging grave sites for
rugs.¹⁴ He would have to come to the conclusion that it
was an isolated incident practised only by the old Dennehotso
culture (K86:82 and AK:85-86).

But if the seasons at Dennehotso revolved around the sheep, as
Walter’s many stories attest, the rich cultural fibers that tie those
memories together were provided by the many people who lived around this
isolated trading post and inextricably, for more than thirty years, wove
their daily affairs and concerns in and among those of the trader and
his family.
Figure 29. Ivan Kennedy riding Jesus’ white donkey. Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
Figure 30. Flora poses during "wool season." Note the "ears" on the wool bags. Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
Figure 31. The Vida Rose pictorial weaving. Photograph courtesy of Lavina Kennedy Bailey.
Chapter VII

A Good Trader Knows His People

I wouldn't take a million for the experience and knowledge that Navajoes have taught me. I have found over the years that if you pay for experience and knowledge it stays with you long and it isn't easy to forget.

Walter Kennedy (K89-14)

The comfortable, easy-going relationships that Walter apparently enjoyed with the majority of his customers at Dennehotso did not happen overnight. Flora mentioned that there were "hard times when we first came out" for they had to overcome all the "bad feelings" generated by the previous trader who had had seventeen years to alienate the Dennehotso community. She allowed that they had experienced none of this so-called "breaking in" period when they lived at Leupp. "But here the Navajos all wanted to see how far they could go. See if they could run things. Some were the meanest Navajos I'd ever seen. But after they got to know Walter, things were much better" (August, 1989).

Judging by Walter's own stories about his encounters during the early years at Dennehotso, all the give and take and finesse required during the crucial "getting-to-know-you" months were downright enjoyable, at least in retrospect, and right up his alley. His friendships with his women customers in particular ("the real business people in the family") proved to be long lasting and eventually colored
with respect on the part of all parties concerned. But this hard-earned rapport was not established until after Walter had passed through his required "trial by fire."

Two characters we had at Dennehotso were two old women. They were the first ones I got acquainted with. The Trader that was there when I went told me I was sure in for a lot of trouble with the two Ladies as you couldn't do anything to Please them that every thing was wrong and you are. Whoever was this Trader was nothing but a big cheater and [the Navajos said] why didn't you go home this was there Place and to get out the quicker the better. He said it went on and on. He had just turned a deaf ear to it.

Mrs Nochi as she wanted to be called could not speak a word of English. She came in. I just acted dumb like I didn't understand her. She went on & on. I just let her go for about the first 3 times she came in. I knew she was a widow. She had found out I could understand her that made her mad as hell as she had said things maybe she wouldn't of said. Any way she started in on me. I just acted like I didn't hear her. Made her that much worse. I finally broke down and said I heard you had a boy friend. All the Navajo listing [listening] as she alway drew a good crowd all laughed. That didn't make her feel to good. She finally went home.

The next time she came in same thing. Finally I went over to the pop cooler and got a Pop and I told her I had forgot but a Man had left it for her. I think that is name was Puggie. He was a old man lived close to the store. Her
crowd laughed again but she wouldn't touch the Pop.

A few days she was back. She started in again on me. I went over to the clip board and where we keep due bills. That is just like money. When one Navajo owed another one for something such as work they had done or a Pint of wine or sack of Flour they didn't have money but a Due bill good at the store for whatever amt. Sometimes even sex. We never keep track of that Part of it but was a trade system back in the old days when there wasn't any money. It took the Place of money. And the system was done with Paper sacks. That was the record we keep for the customers or the one recieving it.

How they got the Due bills was when they sold a rug wool Lambs anything they had for sale it was written on a Paper sack 1/4 Brown Bag. For instance rug they sold [for] 20.00 they owed Ten--Bal Due $10.00. Good for trade or transferable to some one they owed (KB9-7).

Walter explained that he only used the "sack system" to "get their confidence." The visible, tangible record of expenses hanging on a nail, where each customer had his own brown paper bag with each and every transaction pencilled in at the time it took place, seemed much more trustworthy to his Navajos and was certainly much easier to understand than the "official" accounting that Walter kept in addition. He used the McCassity System favored by fellow traders of that era. "McCassity books" are standard carbon receipt books with the name of the trading post imprinted at the top. The trader gave his customer the yellow carbon copy and kept the original for his records. Walter has his thirty-year collection of McCassity books in desk drawers, many of
which are still "active," a decade after his retirement. "I get them out whenever they bring a rug in [to Kirtland], or take them with me when I go out to Dennehoto to settle old accounts" (20 November, 1991).

Now, returning to Walter's story about due bills and Mrs. Nochi:

This day Mrs Nochi came in as usual mad. I Pulled this sack off the Peg board and I said Puggie left you $2.00. He said he owed it to you. The usual crowd had a good laugh. This was one time she had nothing to say. I had gotten the best of her. Did you stay over to his Place last nite? This capped it off. She had nothing to say. Just left and didn't take her Due bills.

For years she would come in and start on me. Is all I would have to say Where is Puggie. Wheres your Husband. She always said Nee sa shut up. We got along fine. I know she liked me as she wouldn't trade with any one else. Wait till I got to her. She was killed in a car accident in 1977. Another friend of mine down the drain. I sure did miss her. She was quite the Lady.

Bessie Clah was the other one I was having a lot of Problems with. Sure was a lot meaner than Mrs Nochi and I sure was at a loss as to how to handle her. One morning she came in. I was sure dreading it as she always got the best of me but this morning she didn't start right in on me. And I will never know why I said it I said whats the matter with you are you sick? She said why? You never told me this morning Im no good. Something must be wrong. She never spoke a word
of English but she did have 3 pet words she used but they were God Dam Shit and it always got a laugh. You never new when she was going to use them.

But every time she came in I always asked how she was. Was it going to rain today. It sure seemed to help. I was real nice to her. She was trying to be better to me. As time went on we got on a good sound relation and were good Friends. If it wasn’t going to good was all I had to do was use her Pet words God Dam Shit. It always helped.

She was just like Mrs Nochi. She would not trade with any one else. She wait untill I could wait on her. She Passed away 1975 just old age. But I sure miss her to. I bet she is giving the Trader down there hell. Maybe up there (K89-7).

The old folks in particular endeared themselves to Walter, and vice versa. One of his favorite people was a very old man, Hoskanini, whom Walter called affectionately Skinny Bennally. Hoskanini was one of the few remaining people on the reservation who could count themselves as survivors of the Long Walk and imprisonment at Bosque Redondo. He was only a small boy when he was captured by Kit Carson and his army back in 1866 and then forced to march the long, four hundred-mile trek to Fort Sumner, New Mexico, the dreary place where the Navajos were incarcerated until finally released and allowed to return home in 1868. Hoskanini gradually made his way back to the Dennehotso area and remained there the rest of his life (AK:60).

No one really knew for sure just how old Hoskanini was. But he
was apparently very lonesome as he stayed around the store a lot and he and Walter "came very well acquainted. He was also White eyed, the only Navajo I have seen that way. He was not well liked among the Navajos. Some of them said he was a Wolf Man or witch." Aside from his long walk to and from the Bosque Redondo when he was young, Hoskanini was not well traveled. He used to tell Walter that he wanted to go with him sometime to Farmington; because although he had been to Kayenta once, he had never been to any place with "lots of Houses."

Walter reports that the late 1940s were rough times for the Navajo people. A lack of jobs, poor roads on which to travel to distant work opportunities, and a series of severe winters had brought them close to starvation. As yet there were no federal welfare programs, tribal aid programs, or food stamps to help them over bad times. In fact, Walter remembers that the winters of 1948 and 1949 were so bad around Dennehotso that the U.S. military made air drops of emergency food and livestock feed to help the people survive (AK:71).

One of those cold winter mornings Hoskanini came into the store at Dennehotso and told Walter that he and his family were hungry and had had nothing to eat for several days. He told Walter that he didn’t have any money, but he did have a very old Navajo saddle he would sell to Walter. Walter had to tell him that he was in a poor cash position himself and that he "didn’t really need to buy a saddle." But the old man said he just wanted to "trade straight across for groceries."

Walter agreed to take a look at the saddle which turned out to be a "homemade squaw saddle, covered with rawhide and probably over a hundred years old. Actually it was made by his Father while he was at Ft Sumter [sic]." Such an old saddle was rare indeed and Walter let
Hoskanini trade for $12.00 worth of groceries—a pile so big that the old man couldn't even carry them all, and both felt extremely pleased with the deal that they'd made. Walter wrote in a story years later, "I looked the saddle over and decided that collecting was something that I would like to do. This is probly the most expencive piece I have in the Collection (that took me 53 years to complete) but as far as Im concern the most Preseous. This saddle is what I have left of a old Friend" (AK:71 and KB6:66).

It was around this general time frame that Jack South, BIA Superintendent of the Western Navajo Agency, drove up to the trading post and informed Walter that very shortly a large shipment of one hundred pound bags of potatoes would be delivered to the store for the trader to distribute to the Navajos at Dennehotso. Since Walter was already selling potatoes at the store to his customers, he wasn't too enthusiastic about giving sacks away free. But he explained to the agent that they needed a lot of road repair work done around Dennehotso as many of the roads were nearly impassable, and suggested that perhaps the potatoes could be given away in return for work improving the roads. South, as Walter described him, "was not your typical Federal Bureaucrat. He knew that rules were made to be broken. So he said that even though road work for potatoes was unorthodox, as long as he didn't know anything about it, he couldn't see why it wouldn't work" (AK:72 and KB6:60-61).

Just about this time "Skinny Benally" [Hoskanini] came into the store and Walter asked him if he'd like to help out with the "potato project."

I asked him if he would be the Boss. He agreed. No one at
any time in his life time had ever given him any responsibly. He could neither read or write. We started. He was the Boss, Time Keeper. He made a very good one and was very fair but if any one did not work he told me. The Pay scale was 1 sack Spuds 1 days work. 1/2 sack Spuds 1/2 day work. They came in each evening and he told me what they had coming and next day he had a new crew and we did get some road work done.

Shortly after this one Morning his son in law came in to the store and said the old man was sick. I asked what was the matter. He said he had the Big Cold (Pneumonia). I told the son in Law I would try to get down to see him but I got busy and never went that day. Next morning early the son in law was back. He said the old man is very bad would you come now and see if you can do some thing for Him. I said Yes I will go right now. We went down to his Place. They had moved him out in a brush arbor which is the Custom when some one is real sick and if they Pass away they don’t have to burn the hogan.³

I went over to the brush arbor to see him. I new that I was to late. He was twiching and jumping on a sheep pelt and in a few minutes he Passed on. I felt terrible and just didn’t know what to do but I talked to the Son in law & asked him what he wanted to do. And he said we have to bury him. He said we dont have any tool ax shovel Pick and he has no cloths other than what he has on. I told the Son in Law Ill go back to the Trading Post and get what we need. I went back to store and got the tools also the cloths which consisted of 1
Pr socks 1 waist underwear 1 under wear top 1 Pr shoes 1 Pr Pants 1 shirt. All in very large sizes as we put them over his old clothing. Also 1 quilt 1 robe. 

I took them back and we Put the cloths on him and dug the grave. We wrapped him in the robe and Put the quilt around him the best we could and put him in the grave. Covered it in side the arbor and the son in law had a old horse there and shot it and also had a old saddle that he cut the stirrups off and cut it up real bad. Then he picked up the shovel and broke the handle out. I had picked up the ax and said we didnt use this so I guess we wont Need to break it. He said thats right. The son in law next set fire to the shelter. I have always felt very badly about this. I felt I had let the old man down. At that time we didnt have any Medicine. We done the best we could with Aspirn and Vicks Vapo rub (K86, 60-63).

Dad spoiled these people. He was always there to help with their problems.

Lavina Kennedy Bailey (7 June, 1989)

Of all Walter's many stories, these friends-and-neighbors anecdotes are among the most interesting and offer first hand illustrations of the diverse roles played by the reservation trader. As long ago as 1910 former Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Francis Leupp, concluded a generally not very complimentary account of the trader with the following tribute: "There are few parts in the drama of reservation
life which a trader of the older generation has not been called upon to
play, and the stock character in his repertory is that of Everybody's
Friend" (1910:189). Walter truly considered himself to be "everybody's
friend" at Dennehotso and thoroughly enjoyed what were at best
adversarial friendships with his favorite "foes."

Many of his good friends at Dennehotso were also his employees at
one time or another. An example of one such long-time relationship was
John Tsosie

who worked when he felt like it but was a wino and didn't stay
to close to the job. You couldn't depend on him but there
wasn't nothing he couldn't do so he was such good help that we
used him when ever he would work. [Tsosie was the same
employee who made the traditional Navajo cradleboard for
Lavina's cats. See endnote 5, Introduction.] $2.00 a day and
dinner which was a 40 cent pkg of rolls and 10 cent Pop and 20
cent can of vienna sausage. The reason for giving them there
dinner is they wouldn't buy it them selves but if you gave it
to them. And it boils down a man can't work unless he eats.
So it was the custom when they worked what they ate for lunch
was free. All Navajo help was this way. And we had 3 working
all the time. They ate on the Meat block.5 When they was
finished right back to work (K86:70).

John Stanley was a well-respected Dennehotso local whom Walter was
pleased to call a "close friend." He was featured in a story Walter
entitled, "Going Some Place?"

I had been at Dennehotso quite some time. I had gotten
Pretty well acquainted with our customers and one day one of
the better ones (came in). What I mean by better he was quite
wealthy lots of cattle sheep horses. He had quite a large
permit but run lots more than he had permits for. Wool
lambs had been quite cheap and he owed Dennehoto quite a some
of money around $2,500.00 which at that time was quite a bit.
I told him that his account was pretty high and could he bring
in some cows and cut it down some. He said what's the matter
are you going some place? I told him know. Well he said if
you were going some place I think I could bring some cattle in
but if your not going any place I don't think I will as I can
pay you later. So that was that. He let me think about it
for a few days and brought some cows in and cut his account
down.

Shortly after this he came in the store one day we
weren't being busy. We always went back in the warehouse to
do our talking. He said he wanted to talk to me so we went
back and talked. After he got threw I told him I would like
to talk to him. So I told him I wanted to ask him a question.
He said OK he was ready. I said were did you get all those
cattle horses. He looked at me kind of grinned and said he
didn't know. But said up around Bluff Utah Blanding Utah they
were a lot of Mormon cattle ranches and that the cows & horses
would cross the river and wonder on to the reservation and
would go up into canyons and valleys and get lost. And he
ended up with quite a few cows & horses. You might say I am
protecting them so no one could steal them. He said they
would eat the ones with Brands on Cattle Horses but would keep off spring and Put there brand on them. He said you will have to admit Walter not even you could buy cattle at a better price any place. I thought it was a good story and I am quite sure that it is true.

He was also in two Movies, she wore a yellow ribben, also the searchers. He was a very good looking Navajo high cheek Bones long hair well built. He said John Wayne was really a nice man but John Ford was a S.O.B. [because, Walter added, "as director Ford was constantly telling Stanley how to act like a Navajo, which he probably resented"] (KB6:99-100).

Walter's women friends at Dennehotso would often, but not always, be friends of Flora too. Their stories about the local ladies inevitably present different pictures of the individual. Walter, for example, considered Gladys Richards one of the "most interesting well educated Indians at Dennehotso." Gladys was married to a Mexican man who was named John Lee. When Walter asked why she didn't take her husband's name, she replied that since she had been married before she simply "didn't want to change her name as she liked it" (KB6, 108). Her claim to fame, as far as Walter was concerned, was that Gladys was also one of the best Gamblers At Dennehotso. They played cards under the trees at Dennehotso from Morning untill they couldnt see at nite. I have seen as high as 4 games going on at one time just like Las Vegas. When times were tuff they played the stick game and I used to Play with them.7 When I played the stakes were low. The older
squaws were the only ones that ever played this game. They
would come in the store and ask me to play with them.

She [Gladys] was another one having a hard time making
ends meet in 48-52. The reason that the RR was not having
very much [work] at that time and VCA did not get going
until a little later. She also was making a little raisin
Jack #1 quality and considered one of the best bootleggers in
the area. Quite a demand for her Raison Jack (KB6:108).

Flora, however, remembers Gladys as someone she could really visit
with and as a never-ending source of “advice.” It was Gladys who
thought Flora needed more children and “really should go see the
medicine man.” Flora noted that whenever Gladys came into the store she
always had “things to talk with Walter privately” and would announce to
all that she was going to get him and “take to the wareroom,” telling
Flora, “Oh, Mrs. M’Kennedy, you know I’m just talking business” (August,
1989). Many years later, after the Kennedys had left Dennehotso, Gladys
and Walter had a falling out over her pawn and she quit trading with
him, even refusing to speak with him, although she continued her
friendship with Flora. Walter recorded his version of the “Gladys
Incident”:

When the FTC traders stopped us Navajo Traders from
taking Pawn in 1974 we had lots of Pawn. [The tumultuous
events of the 1970s are discussed in detail in chapter nine,
this dissertation.] Most of it was taken out. A lot of the
Navajoes came in and asked if I would keep there’s until they
took it out. I agreed but told them that I would charge them
10% every 6 months. They said that it was fine and I didn’t
sell any thing that they had made arrangements for me to keep. Gladys asked to keep hers. I agreed and I told her about the 10% every 6 mo. She agreed. This was in 1974. BIA reperceptivene came out in 1982 8 years later [after Walter had retired] and seen this Pawn hanging in the Vault and said what are you doing taking Pawn. I said look at the dates. It [he] said you must get rid of it or at least move it. I Notifyed every one that had Pawn left. They most of them came in and took it out. Gladys came in and I figured hers up and she had a number of Pieces. When I told her what it was she got Very Upset Mad and told me I was a big Great big Cheater. She said all right she would take the Coral beads and I could have the rest. I told her No take it all. She stormed out of the store.

In a few days here came in a DNA Attorney. He said Gladys had come to him and that I had cheated her. So I got my records out and we went over them. He said it looked all right to him. He didn't know what her problem was. Gladys came back in and she said the DNA attorney told her that I had better give her beads back. I told her no soap. This was after I had sold Dennehotso. So he contacted me and I gave him my attorney name and address. That has been nearly four years ago and I haven't heard from them. I still have her beads and bracelets (K89:110-111).

Jesse Mitchell was an older woman who worked for Flora, whom Flora felt she "got really close to" over the years. Jesse was very
attractive and many of the local Navajos said she was a witch and thought that "she had put a spell on them." Jesse and Walter were not friends. Flora remembers that "she and Walter fought all the time. She wouldn't even come into the store if he was there. She would come to the gate and holler for me. There was a personality clash with Walter," explained Flora, "because he always measured the people by how well they paid their bills and stopped their credit if they didn't." Gladys, on the other hand, was always able to talk Walter out of anything, "even if he said he was not going to give her another dime" (August, 1989).

But Walter did not always have the upper hand, and as a result experienced occasional setbacks in his relationships with his customers. He remembers one such incident in the story he called "Kangroo Court":

We had been at Dennehotso quite some time and I received a letter in the mail [from the Navajo Tribal Trading and Enterprise Committee] that the Navajo People at Dennehotso had some complaints and that they would be there and have court (Kangroo). I guess is what it is I was quite concerned about it and could not figure out what it was about. Any way the day came. They did not have a chapter house they had there chapter Meeting in the store or out under the trees at the store.¹³

The man from Window rock [a Navajo Tribal Council member] arrived and came in the store and introduced him self a Mr Hubbard. He said he was there to go over the complaints. I ask him what the complaints were. He said they were Two. I asked him what they were and he said #1- I wouldn't stay home. 2nd- Coffee Pots were to high. He asked me where we were
going to have this meeting. I said I sure dont know. There is to many to have it in the store so we will have to go out under the trees. We went out under the trees and Mr Hubbard [speaking in Navajo] asked them to state their case.

One of them got up Noche [Nakai] Begay and said I wouldnt Stay at the store. I couldnt understand what he was saying as I thought I was there all the time. I told Mr Hubbard the Store was open 8:00 AM 6:00 PM 6 day a week. Never had it been closed. I could not see where they could complain. We got to talking about it some more and come to find out I was doing all the Freightig out there and I got up at 2:00 in the morning and came to Farmington-Gallup or where ever I had a load and this was happening once to twice a week. I would leave Flora, my wife and the Navajo boy that was working there to take care of the store. Why I left at 2:00 AM I could make the trip and be back by sun down. Flora was afraid to stay alone but didnt bother her for me to get up early and leave but she wanted me back at Sun down. I told Mr Hubbard what was happening also that we were not financially able to hire our freight hauled and the roads were to bad that no one would do it for us. And if I didnt haul the merchandise my self the prices the Navajo paid for groceries would be 20 to 30% higher. And Flora & Navajo took good care of the store. Mr Hubbard said well just go in to the next complaint.

Sam James got up and said we were selling our Coffee Pots to high. I told Mr Hubbard we did not sell any higher
than any one else. Sam got up again and said yes we did. We had our Coffee Pot was $6.00 and every Place else they were $2.00. I woke up about that time and went into the store got two Coffee Pots. One was marked 2.00 the other 6.00. Brought them back out and said to Mr Hubbard this $2.00 Coffee pot is a very light weight 1 gal size. This other Coffee Pot is a Seamless Heavy 2 gal size and is a lot bigger and better Coffee Pot. Mr Hubbard said is this all the Complaints. They said it was. He said lets recess for a few minutes and come back in a few minutes. I would like to talk to you again about this.

Mr Hubbard and myself went into the house and set down to a cup of Coffee. I just didnt know what he was thinking. Finally he said I dont see any thing wrong here. What should I do. I asked him if he would go out and tell them my side of it where they could understand. He said he would try which he did. Then I got up and said I would tell them the truth. I told them I had two women and I was going to see the other woman these two times a week. They all laught and I said lets go have a Pop. They all lined up and we had a Pop and that was the day of the Kangroo Court. And I never heard any more about not staying home or Coffee Pots (K86:89-91).

There is no doubt that Walter's ever present sense of humor contributed much to the general ambience at Dennehotso, but what must have contributed even more to the many long-standing friendships that endure to this day was buried underneath the jovial and sometimes
overbearing facade—a sincere liking for his Navajo customers and a genuine concern and sympathy for their well-being. Walter’s story, "Eunice Black," exemplifies his unique place in the Dennehotso community.

On Nov 20 1986 Lucy Black Brady & John Brady came by our Place and they had a Picture. They told me which I knew that Lucy’s Mother Eunice Black was very sick and that they had a Medicine Man singing over her and that he had told them that this Picture they had was a taboo over her and was causing evil spirits to around there home and also causing a Problem with her Mothers sickness. They told me that they had talked extensly with the Medicine Man and he had told them to destroy or Burn the Picture which they didn’t want to do. The Medicine Man asked them if they had any one they could give it to and they talked it over and asked if it would be all right if they gave it to me. Which the Medicine Man agreed would be all right and that he [the subject of the painting] would not bother me in the least as I was a White Man and would not be bothered with the evil spirits that was causing Eunice Problems.

So they gave it to me as a gift and told me it would be all right if I Put it in my Collection. I was very grateful to receive the Picture as a gift as I was very well acquainted with Dogi Lapi (Gray Mustache) the Man in the Picture as I had know him in my early days at Dennehotso as he traded with me at that time. His Son Tully Black Eunice Husband had worked for me at Dennehotso for 35 years so I felt very Honored to
receive the Picture as they are Part of our Family.

Why they gave me the Picture was I was unable to understand. What they were trying to tell me as they said Eunice Tullys wife said that the eyes of her father in law keep fbbing her and that it made her quite upset and spooked her to where she was unable to sleep. Just Watch his eyes and after looking at the Picture I can see why this is the first time I have even seen this. So I was spooked to.

Eunice Past away Dec 8 1986 [five years after Walter retired]. Ivan [Walter’s son] & I attended the Funeral at Dennehotso. In the Navajo Traditional Fashion all her Personal belonging Beads belts Bracelets were buried with her which is the Navajo way. I was quite surprised as their reemery was really nice. The graves were rounded up real nice. Names on each grave. I felt that some of us should go out there and take a few lessons from them on the upkeep of a cemetry. Weeds clean off land and real nice.

This was quite a day for me as I was so surprised. Why I was suprised about the cemetry was that the only way that I had ever seen a Navajo do any burying was covering them with rocks in some out of the way Place. Caves rock ledges where ever they could find to Place them out of the way. And I went completly threw it [the cemetry] and it brought back lots of sad memorys as there wasnt any one in the cemetry that I didnt know and had had dealing with Them and had help on the financial end as the there burial. I had gone to a # of funerals but this was my first visit to there cemetry. It
was quite a day to remember and brought back sad and fond memories (K89-13).

Another memento from one of Walter's favorite people among the old folks at Dennehotso occupies a prominent position in his crowded office in his private "museum" at his Kirtland home—a Navajo loom with a half-finished pictorial weaving. The weaver, Annie Tsosie Begay (the same woman whose "S.C. check problem" Walter solved in chapter four), had passed away in 1978 "when she was in her eighties," leaving the unfinished rug on her loom. Apparently troubled by the presence of the rug and loom, and wondering what to do with them, Annie's family consulted the local medicine man for advice in their proper handling. Walter continues the rug "history" on a small, typed "story card" attached to the loom:

The Medicine Man determined that the loom should be burned, in Anncie's Hogan, along with other personal items that she had intimate physical and spiritual contact with. However, the Medicine Man declared, the partially finished rug could not be burned, because it had too much of Annies spirit in it. A Granddaughter volunteered to finish the rug, but the Medicine Man said it would be a dangerous thing for her to do. After much discussion, the family approached their Trader, Walter, and asked for his advice, about what to do with Annies rug. They pointed out to him, that since he was not a Navajo, Annies Spirit wouldn't bother him.

It was mutually agreed, by all parties, that Annies son, John Tsosie, who worked at the Trading Post, would build a new
loom, to string the rug on, and that Walter would pay for all
the materials and labor necessary to complete the task. In
addition Mr. Kennedy was to buy the rug itself, to help defray
the burial costs. Thus, Mr. Kennedy became the owner of a
half completed rug, loom, and all of Annie Tsosie's weaving
implements, and solved a vexing family problem dealing the
Navajo Religious Taboos. [Walter penned a note to the bottom
of the card:] Another one of my Friends gone but one thing
about it I'll never forget her as I think of her quite often
as a great lady.

Reminiscing about his many friends and experiences at Dennehotso
must have set Walter to philosophizing. Pencil in hand, after half a
century of living with the Navajos, he had this to say in 1989:

The old Ways of the Navajo People is slowly going and
the White Man has won again as I feel that a lot of these ways
were as good as ours and some of them a lot better. I feel
that if you gave a Navajo a small Place where he could live
and have his herd of sheep a few Cows a Place for a small
garden to Plant Corn, Melons he was happy. But the White Man
has brough him wine Cars and he is unhappy but dosent knew why
he not happy. But if the Navajo had never seen white men he
would of been better off (K89:183).
Figure 32. Old friends, now residing at the Dennehotsa cemetery—Fur Hat Sister (Clah Declois Sis), Annie Begay, and Mrs. Nochi (Nakai). Photographs by Nancy Peake 1989.
Figure 33. Due bill sack allowing Puggie $2.00 credit, "left by Thomas Leonard." The dollar amount suggests that perhaps Puggie loaned his friend money for a "night on the town" at "Little Las Vegas."
Figure 34. Pages from some of Walter's McCasity books, hundreds of which were used over the years, their carbon sheets still stashed in boxes in his "office" today.
Figure 35. The pawned squaw saddle that fed Hoskanini’s hungry family and now occupies a special place in his Dennehotso Collection. Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
Figure 36. The painting of Gray Moustache whose "moving eyes caused evil spirits" to worsen Eunice Black's sickness. Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
Figure 37. Annie Begay's unfinished rug. Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
Chapter VIII

Medicine Men, Bootleggers, and Little Gallup

Years ago you had a good Trading Post if you had 6 good Medicine Men and 6 good Bootleggers. You had a hell of a good Trading Post as they were the two things that made the revenue come in.

Walter Kennedy (K89-11)

"In fact," emphasized Walter, "if you've got these two things, you've got it made. You'll be a millionaire in twenty years" (7 June, 1989). Needless to say, this wasn't quite what happened at Dennehotso, with regard to the trader's projected "millionaire status." But over the course of time Walter developed a highly personal and pragmatic approach as to the best way to run things out on the reservation. His formula for success was downright unorthodox. But it worked.

To these initial requirements Walter added a third, guaranteed to boost the profit potential of even the most remote trading post: "When you had a Little Gallup or Las Vegas [i.e. night club operation] to go with it you had one of the most Fabulous Trading Posts there was!"

And that is what I had. It wasn't large but it was the very best. Dennehotso was the greatest small Trading Post on the Reservation.

1st. Medicine Men brought in lots of business. Large crowds went to the sings Dances sand Painting cermonies. And
if there was a large sing in the area it brought in the business as ever one supported the sing [with] food cloth baskets and would come for miles. Any time you can get this kind of traffic around a Trading Post your going to have the business. Lots of transince [transients]. People following sings Dances whatever. Dennehotso was one of the best places to see new faces and they [the sings] drew good crowds. After the ceremony the Medicine Men would have the Medicine baskets also as Pay. What ever he got for Proforming the ceremony you had a shot at that if the Medicine Man was from there. Or if not if he received cattle sheep or horses or what ever he excepted for his services. The Trading Post had first chance at it.

The Navajo ar just like us they have always got a hot shot Medicine Man that can Perform wonders just like our Drs we have. And we had some of the Best Medicine Men at Dennehotso. If you dont believe me Im sure you could ask them. Im sure they would tell you they are the best.

It is not difficult to understand how, in this sparsely-populated land where friends were scattered miles from one another in their effort to find adequate grazing lands for their stock, anytime the services of a medicine man were required, the event became important in more ways than for its religious and curing purposes. The ceremonies were every bit as significant—especially in later years when families often lived away from their homes in the white man's world—for their abilities to reinforce social and cultural ties and to strengthen family bonds. And
any time large numbers of people gathered for any reason, the natural place to meet was the local trading post. Such a gathering could not help but be good for business.

The second ingredient of Walter's three-part recipe for a successful trading post seems an unlikely partner for the local medicine man who was the traditional, respected elder statesman of the Navajo community:

Boot leggers.⁴ Boot legging has been out there before Prohibition. And back in the 1930-40s Navajoes made their own Raison Jack. I suppose that would be what it was called as a batch consisted of 5 lbs sugar, 60 cents.⁵ 1 # delmonte raisons 20 cents. And we were able at this time to buy cake yeast Flishmans about 6 cakes in a pkg wrapped in a kind of Wax Paper in a card board box. This yeast was about 1 1/2 inch square about 1/4 inch thick. 20 cents. A batch didn't cost very much but they didn't get very much out of it. 4 to 6 pints. They used jars to put it in. They all made their own and sold it to each other. What I know about making Raison Jack wouldn't write a very big book. But what I don't know would write one hell of a book. But we did have some of the best Boot leggers [Jack makers] at Dennehotso. At the present time I don't know of any that Boot legged that are not dead.

There was very few Problems with this as back then they never had that much as there stills were small. So when they got drunk they were out [of jack]. So they couldn't stay that...
way. I think it [was] just like this [for] most of them in
the old days. The Makers were there [own] best customers.
Very little trouble. Once in a while they would run off a bad
batch and make them sick and some times kill one of them but
who was to know. Just bury them and let it go.

It was quite common for there customers to get very sick
on this as they didnt have Copper tubing and the right
fixtures to Produce it. I think the biggest Problem was a
shortage of Copper tubing so they would use what was
available- aluminum steel tubing-which sometimes wasnt very
good as it would poison them or make them deadly sick. They
did have Glass bottles so that was no Problem. The copper
Kettle I never knew how they came by that. I never asked any
one and all the good bootleggers are all dead. I have no one
to ask.

The police would raid a still once in a while especially
if they had got wind of some one dieing and some one thought
it [the jack] was bad.6 I saw this happen a couple of
times and if they thought it was true they would send them up
for about 3 yrs.

Back at this time it was quite a Problem as it was very
hard to catch any one. The only way you could get to there
stills was by horse back or burro. They were well hidden and
the F.B.I. was the only law enforcing body there was and they
had about as much idea as how to catch any one like that.7
Was nearly impossible so they done just as they pleased. And
it wasnt a very big operation to start with. And they didnt
waste their time on it (K89-11,-27).

One of the more "famous," and certainly the most picturesque bootlegger at Dennehotso—and one of Walter’s good friends—was an old woman who was around ninety years old when she first ran into some real trouble in a story that Walter calls, "Fur Hat Sister and the Treasury Department":

Fur Hat sister was one of the Small children that came back on the Long Walk from Ft. Summter [sic]. She was very Poor. Had a few sheep and goats but was nearly blind and could not weave. She had no way to make a living as her husband had died and left her alone. I notist that one time when she had a little money she always bought 1 or 2 lbs of raisons, 20 cents a lb also 5# sugar and yeast. At this time I had guessed what she was doing. Making Raison Jack (K86:95).

Apparently Fur Hat Sister did not let her age or infirmities stand in the way of her zest for life and its various entertainments. Walter told his trader friend Bill Auble that she was "addicted to gambling." She was quite capable of cajoling Walter into "financing her way into a spirited stick game. The stakes were five cents a head and winner takes all. Sometimes the pot would rise to the dizzying sum of twenty five cents" (AK:107). Auble and Kennedy continued the "Raison Jack story" in their collaboration:

Fur Hat Sister ran her distilling operations on a strictly cash basis. One of her customers became irritated at her for refusing to sell to him on a credit basis. Feeling
rebuked by her refusal he let the secret out to the local authorities who weren't too sure just how this case should be properly handled, if at all. Since the possession of alcohol was prohibited on a Federal Indian Reservation the local authorities got it out of their hair by passing it along to a higher authority.

When the BIA Federal officer received the case he too was looking for a way out of this dilemma. Being a Navajo himself, he wasn't about to put an old, half-blind Navajo lady in jail and be forever punished by his Navajo relatives, for being unsensitive to a revered old lady's plight. He studied the papers closely, and found his way out of the worrisome problem. The papers said she was suspected of distilling this alcohol. Now distilling was a very grave offense, and came under the Treasury Department's tobacco and alcohol tax division. With a sigh of relief, he promptly passed it on to the nearest Treasury Office, which was in San Francisco.

Now the Treasury Department was in a fix, they didn't have any agents on the Navajo Reservation, and arresting and prosecuting this flagrant abuse of federal law soon became a major priority with the San Francisco office.

Fur Hat Sister was completely unaware that she was causing such a tremendous commotion in the Federal bureaucracy of the western United States. Her little still had the capacity of producing raisin jack at one gallon a batch, each and every month. When poured into empty pint wine bottles,
this yielded, eight pints of elixir at fifty cents a pint, and a grand total of four dollars per batch. This vast amount of money kept Fur Hat Sister happily involved in the stick game.

The Treasury Department, turned it over to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, who immediately teletyped the information to the Phoenix, Arizona, F.B.I. office, who then telephoned the F.B.I. in Gallup, New Mexico, to take up surveillance and make arrest with all possible speed.

Old Fur Hat Sister had no idea of how important she really was, as she walked to her still to check on her latest batch. She was totally taken by surprise, when two white men, dressed in suits and ties, flashed a piece of paper at her and, talking in rather rapid "Bilagana" english, took her into custody. They dismantled her tiny still, confiscated her whole gallon of still green raisin jack, and put her in a U.S. Government vehicle to be transported to Tucson to await Federal trial.

The whole Dennehotso community was buzzing with Fur Hat Sister's sudden rise into high importance by her recent arrest. About a week later another Government vehicle drove up to the trading post, dropped off Fur Hat Sister, and drove away (AK:107-109).

Walter was, of course, delighted to see the old woman and couldn't wait to find out what had happened.

She described the long trip to Tucson, and upon arrival there, was placed in a jail cell. Everyone asked a lot of questions, which she didn't understand, because she didn't
speak English. And she said she didn't know Nothing. Then she tried to explain her side of things, which they couldn't understand because they didn't speak Navajo. They brought in some local Pima and Papago Indians to try to talk with her, which was also impossible. She said things weren't too bad in jail. They fed her good. In fact, she had more to eat, than she'd had for years (AK:109).

Walter assumed that since they couldn't find an interpreter to explain the charges and have her stand trial, the authorities had dropped the charges, which was indeed the case. Everyone at Dennehotso thought the affair was over. This, however, was not to be, as Walter remembered in his own notes:

Not long after this she brought a letter in that she had received from Tuson. I looked at it and it said Tax on alcohol $2.60. She asked me what to do. I told her I sure didn't know what to do. Just wait. Every so often she would receive another letter with interest added to it. I did not know what to do so we just kept waiting.

It went on and the interest keep going up. She had no money. She was just bearly existing as it was. She came in one morning with another statement so I decided they were not going to leave her alone so I wrote her a check and had her thumb it on the back. Put the statement in with it and sent it in. It wasn't very much less than $5.00 but we never heard no more. Another case solved and we didn't have to call in the bureaucrats to spend a bunch to solve it (K86:95-96).

Walter likes to add a punchline to this story and points out that
the Feds probably spent about thirty thousand dollars pursuing the case of Fur Hat Sister! When he paid off her debt of $3.09 to society, he charged the amount to a bracelet she had in pawn. It was there in his pawn vault when she died. "I still have the bracelet and it is one of my most prized possessions" (KBd196).

So much for bootlegging in the "Old Way." Everything changed when the law was passed in 1951 permitting sales of alcoholic beverages to Native Americans off the Reservation. Walter reminisces and describes the effects of the new legislation upon his people at Dennehotso.

During this time (the 1930s and 1940s) the traders didn't have any problems as there wasn't much volume of it [raisin jack] made. And when they sold it there wasn't that much to be had for them to stay drunk constantly. No drunk problems. But this changed about 1951. They started selling booze to the Navajos in bars in Farmington Cortez. This is what started the Problem as they were getting transportation and were able to go to these bars buy wine what ever. And it wasn't long until they were buying wine by the cases and taking it to the reservation and bootlegging it to the local People (KB5-27).

Dennehotso, was known for being a pretty tough place. There were a lot of Navajo Bootleggers, selling cheap wine and other forms of alcohol to their friends and neighbors, if they could come up with the cash. Very few white men ever tried to bootleg on the reservation. It was an automatic five year term in a Federal Prison for a non-Navajo caught selling
liquor on the reservation. When a Navajo was arrested, it was either overlooked, or a ten dollar fine in Tribal Court. The profits to the Navajo Bootlegger were so huge, that an occasional fine was just part of the overhead.

\[ AK68-69 \], \[ AK68-69 \]

I sure know that it raised all kinds of hell with our local bootleggers and it wasn't long until they were hauling wine in by the truckloads. They paid 40 cents for a bottle of wine 1 pint at the bars—a little less in 10 case lots—and got $2.00 pint at Dennehotso. Beer was 2 for 25 cents and it sold at Dennehotso for $1.00 a bottle. Quite a good profit in it. After a while it got so bad that Hap said we are going to have to put badges on all the bootleggers at Dennehotso to keep them from selling it to each other.

It was bad as our Indians were pushed out and Navajoes from Shiprock and Farmington Cortez took over the bootlegging. So we got very little business out of it and we shut down our due bills and money loaning as it was bad. We had very little control over it. It is next to impossible to run a Trading Post with a bunch of Drunks around sponging off the customers trying to get enough for another bottle.

And it wasn't long the bootleggers found out when the local People got there Welfare Social Sec. and tribe checks. Business was really good on these days. It was bad. No police. Fights. Family fights. Small children drinking. It was so bad at times we would close the store. It hasn't gotten any better. It is one of the worst Problems
that they have out there. Dope is getting started in a big way. I just don't know why our gov. lets this go on as the Navajo People are a lot better People than the Whites are. If the Gov had left them alone this Problem wouldn't of been as the old system of a small still was not much of a Problem. If you want something done wrong get the gov. to do it.  

Education sure doesn't shine very good in Problems like this one but try to tell the educated fools about it. All the good horse sence has gone down the drain.

The Navajo Police would pick up Bootleggers with a pickup load. Take them to Ft Defiance Tuba City. The bootleggers would beat the Police back. It got to the point that whole Familys would be in the business. There was a time the biggest bootlegger at Dennehots so they was unable to catch. They knew he was doing it but they would stop the Pickup no wine. They came and asked Me How he was doing it. I told them I didn't know but would see if I could find out. I talked to every one. They knew what was going on but no one had the answer.

One day an old man came in the store. He was one of the ones that at one time was the best home made Raison Jack maker there was and he had lost all his business when they had started hauling it in. I talked to him quite awhile and I told him the old way was the best. He said he thought so to. We talked for quite some time and I told him that they were trying to catch the big bootlegger but had not been able to find any wine in his Pickup. He thought for a while and he
said they are not hauling it in Pickups. I said how come. He said you have seen 3 real nice horses over in the Pasture close to the store. I said I sure have. They belong to our #1 bootlegger. He said this man has a string of Pack horses and I think he is packing it in from Bluff & Blanding at nite. He said this has been going on for quite awhile. I knew he was a hell of a good bootlegger but I sure didn't know he was that smart.

My Police friend came in in a few days and asked me if I had found out any thing. I said I sure don't know. Maybe he has a airplane. He said I think you know and I didn't think you would tell me but it was worth a try. They did catch him but it didn't do any good as he was loose in a day or two. The Police lost interest as they wouldn't do anything with them any way. Why fight a lost cause. The Navajo have had good teachers. Look at our Polititions. No wonder they call Window Rock Little Washington (KB9-11,-12,-27).

So that was bootlegging and its role in trading post "modus operandi." Part three of Walter's formula for success is another story altogether:

Some time after they started selling booze to the Indians it was long Possibly 1965 a operation started at Dennehotso called Little Gallup or Las Vegas. The operators must of got the idea from the bars in Cortez Farmington Gallup. You could get beer, wine by the drink also they had girls. It was quite an operation. A one horse Whore house.
The Navajo Police stayed away from it. They only tried to stop there source of supply as far as the drinks. The girls were already there. Our local people were great supporters of the operation and kept me well posted as to the goings on.

Quite interesting. Occasionally a good fight and lots of gossip but very interesting. They new that I wouldn't tell on them. I had never squealed on one of them yet and sure didn't intend to start. That is why I got along so good with them all. Just look at all the good gossip and entertainment I would miss out on. And I felt like a operation as large as Dennehotso needed a night club. They were not bothering me and I'm quite sure it helped my business as they done a lot of it went through the store.

Due Bills. The girls excepted Due Bills as we sure had a lot of them for $2.00 and they were made out to the girls and they weren't selling wine. I wasn't there I'm just guessing. I sure couldn't prove it anyway. They say the Navajoes are years behind the Whites but I sure don't think so. What community the size of Dennehotso has a Night Club with all the trimmings?

Jr was a Patron of Las Vegas. He was always leaving $2.00 Due Bills for the girls and to leave them we had to have the girls name. Due Bills couldn't be taken out of the store. They had to be left at the store and we had a nail we hung them on. One day he left Joesphene a $2.00 Due Bill and left. Jr was a lady's man and quite a little bit on the smart side but we all liked Jr. In a few days he came back in and
we were all standing around talking quite a number of us. Jr came in smarting off. No one could keep up with him. Every one was always trying to get even with him but he usually kep ahead of every one. I dont no why but I went over to the Nail we had Due Bills on. Came back over where they were and said Say Jr Josephene left a Dollar here for you. She said since you had such a little one that it was just a Dollar. Every one Laught. Jr left and had no more to say that day. Back the Next day [and said] You got Me this time. When I left Jr was still one of Las Vegas best customers. A Navajo sence of humor is a lot different than ours. I dont know How to explain it (K89-12).

Likewise, a trader without a sense of humor would probably have been ill-equipped if called upon to meet the many challenges provided by the behind-the-scenes activities of what Walter refers to as a "quiet little ol'back roads trading post," the likes of Dennehotso.
Chapter IX

*Storm Clouds Gathering*

I should try and explain about the Gov employe or Bureau Crats. Most of them were appointed by there Father, Uncle, Or Friend was a Congressman or had a high up job in Political areas and they sent them out there where they couldnt git into there hair just ours. Most of them 90 day Wonders. They thought is all we were out there for was to cheat the Navajos.¹

Walter Kennedy (KB9-10)

There was no love lost between Walter and the folks from officialdom, and there is no doubt that when push came to shove he was always on the side of his Navajos. But any of the many circumstances in which government checks were involved were particular thorns in the side—not only for Walter who was put in the position of mediator and often went "out on the limb" financially, and for the Navajos who were often elderly and just couldn’t understand the whys and wherefores of checks, signatures and "real money," but also for the white man who was the outsider bearing rules and regulations that had little or no relevance to the folks living off the beaten track in Dennehotso.²

Because government checks were all mailed through the trading post and therefore inevitably had to be cashed by the trader, they were considered much better security than cash and were frequently drawn upon
as credit. "Sure," says Walter, "they spent their check money with the
traders. The Navajos don't go anywhere. And when the checks come in,
the trader just finds something in his store that the Navajo can't go
home without. Then, the trader has the money for the Navajo when he has
something to pawn in the future. That's just the way it works" (20
November, 1991). For many of these very reasons the trader and his
role as banker were often viewed with suspicion by "outsiders" as Walter
attests in "Problems with Checks 1947":

We had a social worker that came to Dennehotso about
every 3 months to check and inquire as to how the elderly
People was geting along. She would ask them about their
troubles How they were geting along. If they had gotten their
last check which amounted to about 22.00 every 3 months.
Which isn't much to remember but really went further than you
think.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flour 25#</td>
<td>80 cents</td>
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<tr>
<td>cloth 15 cents yd.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B.P. [baking powder] 8 oz.</td>
<td>10 cents</td>
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<tr>
<td>shoes 1.50 Pair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coffee 1#</td>
<td>20 cents</td>
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<tr>
<td>1# can Decileous [delicious] Jam</td>
<td>20 cents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sugar 2#</td>
<td>20 cents</td>
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<tr>
<td>salt 1#</td>
<td>10 cents</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 1/2 siz Canned Tomatoes</td>
<td>25 cents</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| spuds 10 lb.          | 50 cents    | With 3 onions in each sack
| lard 1#               | 20 cents    |
| Pop                   | 10 cents    |
Candy bar Oh Henry 05 cents
1/2# mixed candy 10 cents
Corn 2 cents #
apples 5 for 5 cents large - 25 for 25 cents small

They had there own meat raised there. Own corn squash Melons Beans. It really wasnt as bad as it seemed as they had some income from there Rugs lambs Cattle wool. Is all they had to buy is the staples which I have listed. There wants were very small. This $22.00 went further than $300.00 would today. They didn't have to have everything like it is today.

Any way back to the social worker and the Navajo and there checks. There was quite a number of them and they told her that they hadn't received their checks. She knew that they [the checks] came to the store and that I had been the one that was responsible for there delivery to the old People. I told her that I was quite sure they had received these checks but that I didn't have any record other than my deposite slip that I took to the bank and I was quite sure that the only way they could tell for sure was to get the cancelled checks. She said she was going to make Dammed sure that they had received them and she would ask the Goverment to do this but it would take some time for them to do it but they Dammed sure would. She was very upset and thought I had taken there checks which I knew I hadn't. I knew that if they had came in they had gotten Them. She was quite hatefull about it and really thought that I had stolen them.

This was a new Problem. I didn't know what to do. I
thought I had to do some thing so I decided that if they had
to sign for there checks and I had a record of them that I
could Prove that they had received them. I finally came up
with the Idea that I needed a ledger to keep these records in.
Name. Date received. Check #. Signed by mark. I never had
a ledger but I did have a Delmonte want book and that is what
I used which I still have for your inspection. I had
them sign, also numbers of check and Date they received it.

Another 3 months went by and the social Worker came
back. They had no other Place to meet other than the store so
I asked her if she had her report back on the checks the
Navajo had not received. She said no but they expected it
back in a few days and they would know what they were going to
do about it at that time and that I would Probly be the first
to know about it. And she asked if I had Posted the notice
that she had sent on the Bullentin board of old People she was
to see and I told her that it was Posted and they were all
there to see her.

She started calling them in to get the information.
When she got threw she came up to me and said Mr Kennedy you
sure have a big Problem there. They are twice as many this
time that didnt get their checks as they were last time. Im
going to have to call in the F.B.I. This is a Federal
Offence. I sure do feel sorry for you but there is nothing
else that I can do. I said it sure looks bad for me dosent
it. She said I sure dont know but it is going to be bad for
who ever got these checks. I then asked her if she had the
numbers of the checks. She said no but I have the name and
the amount of the check. I asked if she would mind if I saw
her list. She said fine. I looked her list over and told her
that Maybe I could help her & F.B.I solve ther Problem. Said
hows that. I Pulled out my Delmonte Want book and we went
over my records. It worked out they had received ther checks
and had signed with there mark. She was dumb founded. She
started apologizing [apologizing] and was still apologizing when
she left. At my request the FBI reported back that every
thing had checked out on the first checks (K89-24).

A few years later Walter again found himself in hot water with the
F.B.I. over government checks, this time because he decided to solve a
local "Problem" by doing what he thought was in the best interests of
his customer:

Sarah Son was a Navajo Lady about 65 yrs old in 1954.
Her and her Husband Hosteen Son lived at Dennehotso. They had
a few sheep & Goats a Very Small Farm. She did do some
weaving. They also got a small 40.00 a month [social
security] check. He was at least 85 yrs old and they were
geting along just fine untill he got sick and they had to have
Medicine Men to sing and try to get him better but to no
avail. He passed away. They had sang away most of there
sheep and were in quite a bad shape as far as anything to eat
except for the small check.

The check was in his Name. The check came in. She was
hungry. I didn't know what to do. Finally I had her thumb it.
Wrote her name on it and under his name. I had her thumb mark and I wrote her name by Sarah Son underneath her signature.

This went on about four months. One morning I looked up and a white man with Sarah Son came into the store. He pulled out his badge and said he was with the FBI and that he was there in regards to Hosteen Sons checks. He couldn't talk to her so he had found her at her Hogan and they told him there that he could come into the store with her and I could help him find out what he wanted with Sarah.

He reached into his briefcase and pulled out 3 checks signed by Sarah. He asked me what had happened. Did Sarah get these checks. I just said just ask her she will tell you.

And I said you must need an interpreter and I said I will be glad to ask her. He said please. I ask Sarah if she had gotten the checks and she said yes that I had given them to her. He said that is forgery and I said she just signed for her husband. No one forged his name. It says by Sarah Son. He said who done this. I said I did. He said why and I told him that her husband had died and the old lady didn't have anything to eat. I didn't know what else to do as she was hungry and if I sent the check back she would have nothing and maybe in several months but not likely Washington would get her the checks back and 4 months was a long time to diet. I didn't sign any treaties with the government that the government wanted me to feed the Poor Indians was my understanding. And I didn't feel it was my place to feed her until they felt like it and could get this mess straightened out as I thought the lady should eat.
He said will you make the checks good. I said no I never got them. But he said you gave the checks to her. I said there is no Post office here. I dont get Paid for handing out mail. He finally said I have never had any thing like this happen to me before and I sure dont know what to do. Take her in? Or both of you. He said I believe you and her both and she doesent seem to be worried or up set. I just said she knows Ill get it straightin up and Im not to worried either as who would run the store if you took me in. You would have a lot of hungry Navajos. He said you sure have a good Point there.

It was getting along towards dinner time. Flora my wife came in & saw we were talking. She said Walter dinner is ready. I said to the Man would you eat lunch with us. He kind of hesated [hesitated]. I said there isnt any Place else to eat. He was very uncomfable but agreed. I told Sarah to wait. I gave her a Pop and some cinimon rolls to eat and we went into the house. Flora was real friendly and talked to him. She didnt know why he was out there. We set down to eat. She really had a good dinner and he seemed to relax and we finished eating and he said why dont we see if there isnt something we can work out and I will go back in and talk to my superiors. I cant see that you and the Navajo lady have done to much wrong. He said have you any ideas. I told him yes why didnt he just go back to Gallup and leave us alone and every thing would be all right. He said that would be fine but Sarah only could draw 22.00 a month and she was getting
40.00. Husband and wife drew 40.00. A widow or Husband drew 22.00.

So Flora went in to take care of the Store and we set and drank coffee and talked about his Problem. Finally I suggested that they forget about the 3 checks money she had all ready drawn as it had gone to Pay for Medicine Men and funeral etc so her husband really did get it. He agreed If I would send the next check back and he agreed to get the check changed to Sarah so she would not have to go on a diet. I would help Sarah with groceries untill she received her check with one Stiplation that he had to get approval from his office. I also told him that he could take Sarah and me in to the Ft Diefence [Defiance] Jail. I didnt Know in what charges but the Gov sure had the ability to make some thing up. Any way this was the way this Problem was worked out.

What this F.B.I. Man didnt Know was that me and the Navajos at Dennehotso would of helped Sarah get by. She had a Place to live and the Navajos are very good to help People that are down and out. No one ever goe's hungry. If one has to everyone doe's. I dont think this holds true to day. I think it is Dog eat Dog but in the old days we were just one big happy Family. Just wanted to be left alone.

This F.B.I. Man came back a number of times and came in to see me. We got quite friendly. He told me that this experience we had at Dennehotso was one of the most Interesting he had ever had with his job and was unbelievable the cofidence the Navajos had in me and what ever I said was
the way it was. [He said] Every one I talked to said go to
the Store the Trader will help you. I never lied to them or
cheated them in any way but I did try to keep up with them and
they all knew it. Sarah is real old now. She must be over
100. I go to see her quite offen. Take her Roasting ears
Melons. She still remembers the good old times and is just as
sharp as they get to be and talks well of me to her grand kids
and Great Grand Kids (K89-20).

Several incidents over the years similar to those above
contributed to Walter's strong opinions regarding the whys and
wherefores of the strained relationships between the trader and various
government representatives: "Over the 50 years I was trading with the
Navajos I learned this. The social workers, Gov employs, beaurcratts,
were very Jealous of the Navajo trader. If they needed something done
with the Navajos they had to go to the traders to get it done"
(K89-24:253). He attributed the traders' influence over his customers
to the fact that his post was "where their bread and butter came from.
If someone's feeding you, you had to go along with what they said"
(August 1989). Basically, writes Walter, looking back on these
experiences,

the Navajos had no respect Trust feeling for the Gov. but did
have for the traders. I think that this is still true today
with all the old traders. But these New 7 to 11-Thrifty Way
there is no respect feeling or trust like the old traders
had.6 It is a time gone by. There is no more the reason
of this Misunder Standing of wheather they had gotten there
checks or not. Was in thier way of thinking if they said they had gotten their checks they may not get another one so why take chances. The gov had lied to them so many times why not get even as the gov was the one that started lieing. They [government people] had been a good teacher for them. Then again maybe they had forgotten. The Navajo would live a very simple life if the gov. and burercrats would leave them alone. The Navajos are a lot smarter than they give them credit for (K89-24:254).

Not all of the "white men" who invaded Navajoland in the mid twentieth century were government bureaucrats. Many of them were "big time businessmen," miners who were beginning to capitalize upon the vast reserves of natural resources buried in the sands of Dennehotso territory. Between Walter and the newcomers there existed an uneasy truce, for theirs was also a symbiotic relationship.

"Right up the canyon, about seven miles from the store by horse and wagon crosscountry," was a large deposit of uranium ore. For about a ten year period, beginning in the early 1950s, the federal government's need for ore to fuel its atomic-related projects created a "boom period" in certain isolated areas of the Navajo reservation. The Vanadium Corporation of America (popularly called the VCA) was the extracting firm that made its presence felt in the neighborhood of Monument Valley and in particular at Dennehotso. According to Walter, the VCA operated its own refining mill in Durango, Colorado, and "they would haul the mine tailings away to Durango and Shiprock." Many of the young men around Dennehotso were hired to work in the nearby mine, "at
seemingly high wages," and were consequently considered good credit risks at Walter's store. "Most of them are dead now, having got the Black Lung at a fairly young age" (August 1989).

"I would go to Farmington to get the cash for their paychecks, about $3,300 to $4,000 for payday every two weeks," says Walter recounting the details of his banking services. "The bank and the IRS never could figure out what was going on" (August 1989). They would pay up their accounts every payday and at the same time buy two weeks' supply of staples and grocery items to take care of their families and to pack back to the mine for themselves. During the mining years Walter ran a seven-day-a-week operation for the benefit of his customers and operated his own slaughter house on Sundays "as meat was an item high on the list for the hard working miners" (AK:98). "I had the biggest bulk of the miner's business," brags Walter, "so my competitors didn't like me very much" (August 1989).

Politics on the home front

Walter's general disdain for government and the local politicos did not reach so far as to prevent his own forays into the political arena however. In 1955 he was approached by the Republican party's San Juan County (New Mexico) chairman and asked to consider running for County Commissioner. Despite the lack of enthusiasm from his Democratic wife who felt that "the Republicans were sure hard up for commissioners," and his own feeling that his ninth grade education did not qualify him for the job, Walter agreed to run. He did not, however, ante up the required "very substantial donation" the party demanded to
get him elected, perhaps partly because Flora told him that for every dollar he donated to the Republicans, she would donate an equal amount to the Democrats (KB9-4). Despite the odds, Walter managed to win "nearly every precinct" and served for two years, stirring the county's political pot with his own practical principles and philosophy.

One of his first actions as commissioner was his opposition to granting a liquor license to one of the Party's "largest donators" who wanted to open up an "operation" in the vicinity of Navajo Dam. As a former alcoholic Walter had personal objections to creating new liquor licenses, in addition to the proximity of the location to the Navajo reservation and his first hand knowledge of the problems such a license would create. His frank and naive refusal to sign encouraged the other two commissioners to withhold their approval also, saying they "wouldn't have had the guts to tell them [the applicants]" if they had been called upon first. Walter, needless to say, reported this first victory to his wife as the occasion when "that damned bunch of Democrats were trying to get liquor licenses through us Republicans, but they were damned sure stopped" (KB9-4). Even though he was asked to run again after his two-year term expired, Walter declined, remembering the advice of his father: "two years in politics won't hurt anyone, but watch out after that. You will become just like the rest of them" (KB9-4).

Walter's other venture into the "white man's world" of bureaucracies and organizations was closer to home, at least with regard to his trading post affairs. In 1972--a year that would be filled with action and controversy, he was elected president of the United Indian Traders Association, a group still going strong after its formation by
fellow southwest traders four decades earlier. The group was very much involved in investigations in the early 1930s concerning the sale of imitation Indian arts and crafts. But the burning issue during Walter's tenure was the Federal Trade Commission's investigation into trading practices and perceived abuses of regulations governing the trader's relationship with his Indian customers.

The brouhaha that engulfed the reservation in the early 1970s, and would eventually contribute to the demise of the traditional trading post, had its roots in the activism of the 1960s, when minority groups throughout the United States began finding and expressing their many voices, looking for ways to increase their political power and economic well-being. Growing social unrest and the movement for reform filtered into the remote desert lands of the Navajo, gradually creating a climate ripe for change.

In 1963 the Smithsonian Institution published a study by a white, reservation-raised anthropologist who had spent much of his college career working at Shonto Trading Post; and what at any other time would have been filed away on university library shelves with other dissertations now became an instrument of inquiry, signifying a change in attitude toward the trader, long considered just another colorful character making his living in Indian Country. William Y. Adams, despite his sympathetic portrayal of his employer (Stokes Carson) in his pivotal role as "both supplier of foods and a point of contact with the Anglo society and jobs," also obviously perceived his role as "occurring in a colonial situation in which a dominant society, in the figure of the trader, behaved with classical paternalism toward another culture" (Roberts 1987:155). This became the accepted point of view that fueled
the fires of reformers and raised the consciousness of the new Indian spokesgroups in the 1960s.

Walter made no mention of this pivotal study in his memoirs; and when asked what he knew about the "Shonto study," he replied: "Never heard about it. That's news to me. Didn't mean a thing" (19 October, 1991). He attributed his lack of memory on this particular point to the fact that "long hairs and everyone else were coming to the reservation for stories. It got to the point that you didn't pay a lot of attention to them." He did, however, know Stokes Carson (whose post was the focal point of Adams' study) "real well," though he was "much older" (thirty years) than Walter. "You see Stokes and I was competitors—not at Shonto but at Oljato, just 15 miles away as the bird flies, and about 50 miles by road" (20 November, 1991). Walter continued:

Old Stokes came in drunk one day—he was an alcoholic—and said, "You have all the business, you might as well have this too," and handed me the account for a Navajo who owed him $400. Well, this same Navajo owed me $2,500. He was a good customer. You see there was this jealousy among traders, and I'm just as bad as they are.

As far as that [Shonto] report you mentioned, I never seen anything about it. Couldn't comment on it. A lot of them people were out there doing the same thing [making studies on the reservation]. Those people came and when they left after nine months, we had another baby or two. They went into the hogans in spring and summer and lived with the people. It was none of my business, but it did happen. I seen it happen. The Navajos would talk to me about it (2

The trader and his operations, basically ignored and unquestioned for almost one hundred years, had become (in the late 1960s and early 1970s) the target of investigation and dissatisfaction. The seeds of discontent had been planted among the official world far away in Washington, but apparently with little or no knowledge by the very traders whose lives and professions were to be so drastically altered once they took root and sprouted into reservation-wide investigations in another ten years. Roberts points out in her analysis of Adams' thesis and its impending impact upon the times that while the trader, who served to translate the Anglo culture to his customers, was as a consequence a figure of influence in the Navajo society, he was a stranger to his own, "walking between two cultures, not quite immersed in either" (1987:155).

Because the trader's own way of life was secured by the old ways of Navajo dependence upon him, he was now a conservative force, much different from his earlier role as "agent of change." No longer interested in promoting new markets or new directions in native enterprise which might contribute to a full cash economy and in turn weaken his position, the trader was now an advocate of stability and the status quo. In fact, concludes Adams, "in advanced stages of culture contact, therefore, the trader may become the most influential single agent, either European or native, for the preservation of indigenous culture" (1963:307).

Apparently Dennehotso, in its remote location half a mile down a
dirt road from the highway (which was itself a rocky, sandy dirt road until 1964), was just far enough removed from the mainstream of reservation life to remain out of reach of the movers and shakers of the early 1960s, at least for a few years anyway. Walter's retrospective memoirs bear no mention whatsoever of troubles brewing and the impact these winds of change may have had upon him personally, if indeed they blew across the Kennedy trading post at all. He was, as his various stories attest, busy from dawn to dusk, tending to the daily operations of his store and immersing himself in the problems of his long-time friends and customers.

Meanwhile, down in Window Rock, the Trading Committee of the Tribal Council, a Navajo group formed to oversee trading on the reservation, stirred itself to action after a long period of relative inactivity and, via an article in the Navajo Times in June 1969, reminded the traders of the temporary nature of their leases and licenses should they fail to comply with regulations. The committee, in their newspaper article, cited three general "problem areas." One was the apparent disregard of some traders for the fact that there were no state sales taxes on the reservation, therefore prohibiting the charge of same. A second problem, which would become an issue of monumental proportions before the investigations of the 1970s were over, was the issue requiring traders to pay in cash all checks (welfare and social security) mailed to them for individual Navajos, keeping none of the amount due for payment on delinquent accounts. When questioned about this long-time practice of using incoming check money to pay on outstanding accounts, considered a "convenient" way of doing business by many Navajo and trader alike, Walter explained:
Sure we did that. Take a blind woman. She gets her check. We are right out where everyone can see the transaction. We take her hand, grab her thumb, put it on the pad so she can "sign" her check. We paid on her accounts and the balance we give her in cash. We never took everything away from their checks. But they had nowhere else to spend it, but on the shoe game or the stick game [gambling]. Why I even loaned them money so they would have spending money. I charged a high rate, 20% a month, 240% a year. But about that check cashing deal? That didn't bother us out there [at Dennehotso]. We were the ones who got everybody social security checks--fifteen years of back checks. They had to come to the trader to do that, and they appreciated that (2 November, 1991).

Roberts also makes the point that this "controversial" check cashing system was not really questioned by Navajos when the bulk of their buying activities took place at the local trading post (1987:172). Often having little opportunity to earn actual cash money, they treated the checks they received (both welfare and employment) as virtual commodities, exchanging their value for goods, or as credit towards goods purchased in the past. This system worked well for both trader and customer until the opening of small convenience stores throughout the reservation where credit was not accepted. Desiring the supplies offered in the newer stores, former trading post customers demanded that their checks be converted to cash. But the trader naturally wanted his existing accounts paid in full and was not in any way eager to pave the way for his customers to do business with his new
competitors—especially if it meant spending "his" money.

The third bone of contention addressed by the Navajo Trading Committee was the perceived abuse of regulations dealing specifically with pawn. Roberts, again, while writing of Stokes Carson’s trading career in this same time period, summarizes the existing rules as they were detailed by the Trading Committee in its newspaper notice:

There could be no thirty-day deadlines on pawn, as were now common. A written receipt was required showing the transaction date, description of the pawn, the amount loaned against it, and the "true" market value. The pawn had to be held for a minimum of six months, unless the owner of the pawn had paid at least 25 percent of the amount five months after the date of pawning, in which case it had to be held for another two months. For every additional 25 percent of the amount due that was paid, an additional two months was added to the length of time the pawn had to be held. If the time had elapsed with no payments (i.e. eight months from date of receipt or two months from last payment if that payment brought the amount paid on the pawn up to 25 percent, 50 percent, or 75 percent) a pawn piece had to be displayed conspicuously for thirty days before it could be declared dead pawn and sold (1987:161-162).

When asked what he remembered about the Trading Committee’s newspaper three-part ultimatum, Walter again had no specific recollection: "That newspaper always had some article about some trading post overcharging. That [article] was probably just one of many. There was something in there all the time" (2 November, 1991).
Traders have got a name they don't deserve, in my opinion. But of course that don't go far.

Walter Kennedy (2 November, 1991)

That same year (1969) the long arms of the federal government reached the domain of the reservation traders by way of the DNA (an OEO-funded legal services center for the Navajo Tribe, officially the "Dinebeiina Nahilna Be Agaditahe" or "Lawyers for the Restoration of Navajo Life"). Though created under the auspices of the new Civil Rights Act, many Navajos were ambivalent and oftentimes upset over what they perceived as this newest example of the federal government's authority over tribal affairs (Roberts 1987:160). Though Walter admitted that the effort to provide free legal aid to Navajo People who could not afford an attorney was "a fine concept that never generally worked for the majority of Navajo people," he typically had definite opinions of the "government white men" who staffed the office in Window Rock:

Many of the young lawyers who joined the D.N.A. had just graduated from law school and had failed to pass the bar examinations to practice law in their home states. This was a great opportunity for them to do further study and receive a salary from the government at the same time. Others, who had passed the bar, wanted some trial experience that they would not receive as a junior law clerk in a large law firm. All of
them were more or less dedicated to the proposition that the Indian people needed to be saved and they would be the saviors (AK:135).

Inevitably, remembers Walter, "among the first business groups attacked was the Traders" (AK:135). Specifically, in August 1969 the DNA filed a suit in the U.S. District Court charging traders with credit saturation (a phrase used by Adams in his thesis for the granting of credit by traders), saying this practice "absorbed most of the income in a community" (Roberts 1987:162). Walter admitted that "a lot of traders got the Navajos in so deep they couldn't wiggle.

But we took an interest in our Navajos at Dennehotso and seen that didn't happen. I was very careful. If a Navajo had a $300 check, I let him trade $250 so he had $50 cash left. Same way with cash. He had to have a balance [left over after making a purchase or paying on an account]. I never let it get saturated so the Navajo was not able to pay. The definition of a good trader: don't let them get over their head. Even if they get mad, they'll be back. When you saturate, you ruin a good account. When it gets too high they're unable to pay up and many will just go out and start with new traders."

We had no trouble at Dennehotso that way [with credit saturation]. We weren't doing them things. We weren't guilty, so the DNA wasn't getting complaints. Our Navajos would support me over and instead of the Tribe or the DNA (2 November, 1991).
It is important to note that at this point in time no individual trader was charged—though in the 1970s the tribe, acting through the DNA, did bring suits against specific traders. The DNA had brought suit instead against the men in charge of the three agencies responsible for regulating trade and traders: the Secretary of the Interior, the area director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. The court ruled against the suit, but the seeds for turmoil were sown; and the federal bureaucracy now had its feet firmly planted in the sandy soil which had been for almost a century the trader’s domain.

Walter included surprisingly little in his memoirs about what must have been serious disruptions caused by these young, often idealistic, government lawyers, summing up their actions in a brief paragraph:

The D.N.A. encouraged disgruntled Navajos to file suits against them [the traders] for any variety of reasons. This caused an immediate reaction between the two groups. The Traders were forced to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in defending themselves against unwarranted and sometimes spurious [sic] law suits. This was also driving a deep wedge between the Traders and the Navajos who previously had lived in harmony for more than a hundred years (AK:135).

Walter later added that the DNA also tried to sue the traders over their pawn practices, but they never followed through. He expressed regret because he felt that if the traders had been sued, "maybe we could have gotten in the door and shown case proof. We could have proved our pawn methods weren’t wrong. We traders were even trying to put the pressure on the FTC, but it didn’t work" (2 November, 1991).
The stormy summer of 1969 set the stage for another project that increased tensions between traders and Navajos. Though the published result might more accurately be classified a "political statement" (Roberts 187:163), the study conducted by eight Navajo students for the Southwestern Indian Development group (SID), a Navajo-run research group (whose executive director, Peterson Zah, is at this time the first President of the Navajo Nation), was definitely anti-trader in its presentation and conclusions. The report inevitably criticized, among other abuses, pawn practices and, once again, the fact that traders used individual Navajo’s checks to pay on their outstanding accounts. The student investigators entitled their report, appropriately: Traders on the Navajo Reservation: A Report on the Economic Bondage of the Navajo People.

When asked what he thought of the SID report and how it affected his relationships with his Navajos at Dennehotso, Walter replied—again illustrating the ambivalence and/or ignorance of the traders to the paper trail being created against them: "I could have gotten a report on it. I just don’t remember. Every day stuff came in the mail. I just went on about my business. Threw a lot of stuff out. But I do have every check I ever wrote while I was in that area." He does remember, however, three young Navajo girls he thought might have been with the SID: "We were real nice to them. But my impression was all they was interested in was getting their pay check" (2 November, 1991).

But for the presence of the "Good Lord," Walter’s story may have ended here, on the forefront of the battleground that was yet to come.
On Thanksgiving night, 1970, right around sundown "when things don't look like they really are," Walter and Flora were on their way to Kirtland in their brand new pickup. They came over a slight rise in the road "just this side of Red Mesa" and drove right into a herd of cattle. They hit two cows ("killed 'em both"), and their truck flipped over twice. "A Navajo preacher found us and prayed over us until help came," said Walter reliving that night more than twenty years later (21 November, 1991). Flora had broken her neck and was helicoptered to Albuquerque. Walter's back was broken in two places and he was taken to the hospital in Farmington where he spent the next three weeks "flat on a board." Flora, "by some miracle came out of the whole thing in much better shape" than Walter and was even home before him. Walter was soon back at Dennehotso, trading with his Navajos, having forced the accident to the back of his mind. Not a word of this near disaster appeared in his memoirs. There were other things to worry about at the trading post.

Storm clouds began to gather in the mid 1960's. There was a rising militant minority of young Indian people across the Nation, who took up the cry of "white people have cheated the Indians ever since they arrived on our shores." This had an appeal to some young Indian people, who were having an identity problem. They did not have enough education, technical skills, or aggressiveness to compete in a fast moving and demanding majority society. They were also being rejected by their own Indian elder society, because they would not accept a role in that life style. They were in a cultural
vacuum, and couldn't fit into either society (AK:134).

With protests in vogue throughout the country, and representative minority groups becoming increasingly politically active, the American Indian Movement (AIM) adopted the Navajo cause against the trader and caused considerable unrest in the early 1970s. Even those who were less militant than AIM viewed the trader as a symbol of the old ways, and as a consequence he became the "scapegoat for the Anglo world and the Navajo position in it" (Roberts 1987:166). Walter had very definite opinions about the AIM people and viewed them generally with the same low regard as he did the meddlesome white government folk who poked their noses into reservation business:

They had a good following. Peterson Zah was one of those AIM people. Lot of them were older people. It spread like a church, all through the reservation. They didn't get much into the Dennehotso area, so weren't too active. They wanted people they could prove stuff on.

One Navajo who worked for me for years just up and left because of AIM. He decided not to come to work one day. Back in 1947 he got $60 a month, the highest paid man in the area. But he went along with that peyote deal. He'd go to sleep standing up at the counter. But he was good help. He didn't get hostile because of AIM. He said he left over a pair of boots. Told me not to let his wife put anything on his bill. But I let her buy boots for her kids and he got mad. Later he sent word back that he was wrong (2 November, 1991).

Meanwhile, and along about the same time that the AIM people were
making themselves heard, the BIA finally admitted that its regulations
governing traders were "inconsistent and ineffective"\(^\text{18}\) and called
upon the Federal Trade Commission to investigate the business practices
of reservation trading posts. As was often the case with those
government representatives who ventured from the nation's capital into
Indian Country, there were vast differences between the traders and
their examiners not only in generation and geographical and educational
background, but also in experience, which made productive exchange of
information, or at best simple communication, nearly impossible.

The summer of 1972--the same year that Walter was president of the
United Indian Traders Association--the FTC conducted a series of
hearings at various locations throughout the reservation (Window Rock,
Kayenta, Shiprock, Crownpoint, Tuba City, Chinle and Pinon).\(^\text{19}\) And
once again, Walter chose not to include these hearings among those
events he deemed worthy of "passing along to his grandchildren." They
were advertised as "open sessions at which complaints could be heard
from Navajos as well as testimony from the DNA and tribal officials and
from traders" (Roberts 1987:166). As the hearings progressed, their
contents became fodder for the front pages of newspapers across the
country; and the traders consistently found themselves misinterpreted,
misunderstood, and misrepresented as the villains in a situation that
they felt had been for years a comfortable and fair give-and-take
relationship with "their" Navajos. The majority of the old time traders
had spent their careers living and working in small communities on the
reservation and sincerely believed that they had made the lives of their
Indian customers much better through their presence.

"For the FTC to come out here to the reservation was like me going
down and trying to run the Gulf War," said Walter in disgust, trying to put those years in perspective (20 November, 1991). He had his own stories about the invasive FTC hearings at which many of his trader friends found themselves on the defensive:

First off, the BIA and government were jealous of the traders. They couldn’t control the Navajos and the traders could. Because the Navajos were our source of information, our livelihood and bread and butter. Those FTC men that came out couldn’t even talk to us. They had no knowledge about the Navajos, about trading. But they were the ones making laws. They [the FTC] would send some college boy from back East. He didn’t know anything. Wouldn’t even talk to us. I’d ask him, "where in hell did you get all that information?" He’d just turn his back and leave. Wouldn’t even argue with us.

But we brought it on ourselves. We wouldn’t tell them anything. Any time you have the control we had, you’ll have people out for you. There was traders out there not doing right. Some traders said I was selling stuff at too major a profit. But I wouldn’t be where I am today if I hadn’t done that. Whether or not I done wrong, I don’t know. The FTC never mentioned how traders kept people from starving to death. We just saw that the Navajo was spending his money correctly. There’s a right way and a wrong way to make money. And we done it the wrong way, according to the FTC.

About those hearings: the FTC would make appointments with traders through the UTA’s attorneys [the firm of Charles Tansy in Farmington]. They wanted to make examples of a few
traders. No one in the association ever supported the hearing. I was one. And I was president. Though I went to several hearings with our attorneys. The traders didn't do much rebuffing. They wouldn't let us. We never accomplished a damn thing.

The association [UTA] during those years was as weak as anything could be. About 135 members. Membership would rise when a trader was called on the carpet. But the association didn't stand up for us. No back bone. They just went along with anything the BIA or DNA done. A bunch of appeasers. The traders' motto was "don't rock the boat." If we had, I'd still be there [trading at Dennehotso] today. But the traders were just on edge. Didn't want anyone to bother them. But what we were doing wrong could have been straightened out. Then we'd just go at things a different way, a way they would accept (2 November, 1991).

It is important to point out that much of the dissatisfaction and resulting accusations were caused by abuses of traders at unlicensed off-reservation trading posts who did not have to abide by the tribal or BIA trading regulations or put up the required bond money. Acting as traditional trading posts (with regard to accepting pawn), but lacking the personal community and family ties to their customers, the border traders were in fact able to conduct business outside the true letter of the law, unhampered by the moral and legal requirements which governed their counterparts within the reservation boundaries.

Walter said that reservation traders were at a "real disadvantage
because their leases and licenses were all federally controlled. The
FTC couldn’t touch the off-reservation traders [who were under state
control]." Specifically,

the interest rate on pawn in New Mexico was 54%, but the
federal pawn regulation for reservation traders was 20%.
And that’s what I charged down the line--20% for the first
year if I kept it two years. The second year I charged 10%
every six months. Though I always thought that if I got
thirty to forty percent profit on groceries, I should have got
the same on money, if we’re going to ‘sell money’ (2 November,

They took the way of life away from the Navajo.
Walter Kennedy (2 November, 1991)

The end result of the disruptive and invasive FTC investigation
was a seventy-five page staff report, The Trading Post System on the
Navajo Reservation, published in 1973, which was, not surprisingly,
extremely negative toward not only the traders but the agencies
responsible for regulating trading practices and seemed to focus upon
the "economic captivity of the people." Major offenses as
detailed by the FTC included abuses of the practice of pawn, the issue
of using checks to pay on accounts, and high prices made possible by the
trader’s apparent "monopoly." Walter’s remembered reaction to the
report itself which heavily criticized his life profession was predictable
because of its very absence: "I don’t think the traders ever got that
report. That is I never saw it [at the time]. The association got some reports, but they always went to the attorneys" (2 November, 1991).

Commenting on the report, after I sent it to him nearly twenty years after the fact, Walter said,

It's a bunch of lies. Only a few traders done that. Not the good traders that stayed out there. And all that about bad accounts—I lost less than one tenth of one percent to bad accounts in thirty-five years. Ninety percent of the Navajos did not want reforms. Now there's no market for wool or lambs. The government pays the Navajo welfare now and they don't make their own way. If ever a wrong was done to the Navajo people, the FTC done it (20 November, 1991)!

But Walter, who after nearly fifty years as a trader had an immense appreciation for the wit and business acumen of his many Navajo customers, would have agreed with Roberts who questioned (in her thorough and incisive analysis) the obvious bias of the commission in depicting the Navajos as "dupes to the trader's dishonesty" (1987:179). FTC critics attributed the trader's "monopoly" to the "ignorance and poverty" of his customers. The demeaning report continued: "Many Navajos are illiterate; most are unsophisticated in commercial transactions. A debilitating cycle of Navajo destitution and na" "ayet permits the trading post to attain monopolistic stature. The monopoly is then perpetuated by exploiting the Navajos' indigence and privations" (FTC 1973:15). Walter, on the other hand, directly ascribed his own person "monopoly" to the fact that he simply had "the best trading post around, and everyone knew it" (7 June, 1989).
The immediate ramifications of the FTC report were manifested in the BIA's revision of trading regulations, and the ultimate consequences were far more serious than any of the well-meaning reformers had ever dreamed. As might be expected, the new regulations required that checks brought by Navajos to the traders had to be cashed in full, with no amount held back to pay on accounts. The trader was, however, permitted to advise his customer as to the amount of his debt (Roberts 1987:180). New and more stringent licensing requirements went into effect, including a separate license if the trader elected to buy and sell livestock. Walter, who had always had a steady trade in sheep and cattle, thought these new regulations were not really worth making a "stink" about: "I just paid it and forgot about it. $25 or $30, I really don't remember. I didn't fuss and fight, just paid it" (2 November, 1991).24

Trading post leases now had to be approved by local chapters. Customers who had complaints against the trader could effectively complain to the chapter and prevent his lease renewal. Traders were now required to attend public meetings twice a year to answer to any customer's complaints. Asked about the required public meetings, Walter replied, "I never knew nothing about that" (2 November, 1991).

The new regulations also stated that a trader could not give gifts to the Indians, either on an individual basis or for a Sing. "What?" scoffed Walter in disbelief, when asked for his opinion on this particular ruling. "They never told me that." Furthermore, the traders never did stop giving gifts. It was a Navajo tradition. Every trading post trader had his own idea about that. Every fall I gave quilts away. I wasn't stingy with my
customers. I gave away damn near as much pop as I sold. I bought 7,000 cases of pop from Coca Cola at a time. Once I bought 30,000 cases of Pepsi from Durango at one time in the late 1970s [after the new regulations], and I gave a hell of a lot of it away (2 November, 1991). At Christmas time we gave everybody calendars. And we worked with the Chapter House and gave them meat and potatoes. Summertime I gave them watermelons (August 1989).

To say "no more gifts" is not realistic. If someone was sick and the family came in having a Sing, we gave a sack of flour, coffee, sugar, salt. It was just natural (2 November, 1991)!

To no one's surprise, pawning practices--previously casual agreements between the trader and his customers, recorded by a wide number of ingenious bookkeeping methods--were severely re-regulated.25 New regulations required that not only did each pawn item have to be accompanied by a receipt stating name of pawnner (including his census and social security number), dates, descriptions, loan amounts, finance charge, dates and amounts of payments, but the trader now also had to have a pawnbroker license (in addition to his trader's license) which meant he had to post an additional $25,000 bond. "I don't know what that bond's all about," said Walter. "I sure never bought one" (20 November, 1991). Such ponderous regulations, plus the resulting paperwork determining the holding, sale and eventual redemption of pawn, seemed calculated to eliminate the practice entirely.
Another shock to the old system was the ruling that if the trader wished to continue the courtesy of extending credit to his long-time customers, he had to require lengthy government application forms (even though the applicant might not have been able to read or write) and send monthly statements showing finance charges and payment dates—all according to the stipulations of the U.S. Truth in Lending Act. When asked if this stopped him from offering credit to his clientele, a feisty Walter replied: "Certainly not! And I still do it [even after retirement]. If they come by with a hard luck story, I still help them out" (2 November, 1991).

He described this latest batch of government "red tape" as follows:

The final destruction of the Pawn system was the passage of the Federal "Truth In Lending Act." This act was passed in the congress in 1972, to protect low income people, or any one else, from signing contracts which charged them extremely high interest rates. It was a consumer protection law aimed at unscrupulous dealers selling appliances, furniture, used cars, etc. on long term contracts. It forced them to disclose to the customer the annual percentage rate of the finance contract. Instead of saying "its only 3% a month," they had to state in writing that it cost 36% a year. The legal papers in this contract ran six or seven pages long.

The D.N.A. lawyers determined that since some of the Traders loaned cash on pawned jewelry that the "Truth In Lending Act" would apply to the Traders. In effect, if the Trader made a $5.00 cash loan on a piece of jewelry, the
D.N.A. wanted the same paper work as that required on a $4,000.00 contract loan.

The total frustration that the Traders felt with this new development was the simple fact that they had been federally regulated for 50 years with a 10% annual interest maximum and it stated so on their Traders licenses and leases (AK:136).

Actually, as Walter pointed out, the off-reservation traders who were formerly exempt from all restrictions and regulations contained in the license and lease granted by the BIA to traders within reservation boundaries fought the hardest against the new federal act, since the Truth in Lending law applied to all, not just Indian traders under federal control. "They would have to totally change their pawn system, print new tickets and contracts and learn how to live with a totally new pawn concept" (AK:136).

But the ultimate death blow, reported Walter, fell in 1974 when the BIA and Navajo Tribal Council informed reservation traders that they had no choice but to conform to all aspects of the new Truth in Lending Act as described above. When asked just how the traders were given this ultimatum, Walter couldn't remember specifics.

Every week we'd just keep getting all that stuff in the mail; but we couldn't understand most of it. We changed pawn tickets like they wanted. We tried to go by the rules and regulations. And about those new receipts—we had to give the Navajos their pawn receipts. But they didn't want them and wouldn't ever bring them back. We never sold their pawn anyway. They always had the opportunity to get it out

The bureaucrats back in Washington who were writing all the rules and regulations apparently never stopped to realize that many of the people who would be responsible for carrying them out had never even finished high school and were not experts in deciphering "legalese"—any more than were the supposed beneficiaries of those regulations, many of whom could neither read nor write. The majority of the old traders and their long-time Navajo clientele had little regard for the reams of paperwork that poured into the trading post mailboxes.

Despite the lack of "stories"—in fact, no reference at all in his 500-plus pages of notes—relating to dramatic events in the years leading up to this climax, Walter did include the "final act" in his memoirs:

The FTC stopped us, Navajo Traders from Taking Pawn.

Another one of the Gov big deals. They didn’t know what they were doing but give a few beaurats a little authority and they can screw it up for every one. It was very very bad for the Navajos. It was a way of there life and the Gov took it away from them—also us there bank. And the Trader was the bank. I will agree that they are a few bad traders on the reservation but what barrel dosent have a bad apple or two in it? They could of taken care of it in a different way and know one would of gotten hurt. But try and tell a bureaucrat with a little authority that and you have a Problem. To this day the traders on the reservation are unable to take Pawn (KB6:109).

The reaction of the traders [to the 1974 directive] was virtually
unanimous: "[They] took a long, hard look at the extensive, and expensive, record keeping involved, and at all the new reporting regulations required, and the constant harassment from the different agencies, and made a decision. 'They would end the Pawn system on the Reservation'" (AK:137).

Needless to say, this decision "came as a big shock to the traditional Navajo people" (AK:137). Roberts reports that such a "startling and unexpected result" of the new regulations might have even been assumed by many to be an act of "revenge" (1987:182). The DNA—which had initially "hailed the new law as a step forward for equal rights for the Navajo people" (AK:137)—now, in an amazing turnabout, briefly considered suing the traders for conspiring against their Navajo customers but never followed through.

Meanwhile, many of the Navajos living in isolated areas on the reservation were forced to travel 200 to 300 miles to the border towns in order to pawn items for cash and/or merchandise. Walter points out that they were now "pawning with strangers who were charging them up to 54% per year interest when under the reservation system it had cost only 10%" (AK:137). One astute old Navajo (referring to the supposed equality motivations behind the new law) protested to Walter: "I don't have any education, but when I have to pay four and a half times more to get my pawn out, who does this make me equal to" (AK:138)?

Walter's solution to survival after pawn was discontinued was simple: "I just started selling money—at 20% a month" (2 November, 1991). In other words, since he could no longer accept pawn as collateral for extending credit, he would simply loan, or "sell," money instead. Nothing in the new regulations prevented him from playing
banker. Somewhat apologetic but also a little defensive, he added: I don’t want to make the traders look any worse than what they are. But I think we ought to write it as it was. I’m not too proud of it, but if you’re going to save your business, what else were you going to do? I never tried to cheat the Navajos in any way. Sure, they talk about me being the biggest crook [among themselves]. But no one else could ever tell them that. They never even weighed me when they weighed their wool, their lambs. They trusted me.

When they took Navajo pawn away, they took the Navajo livelihood. The Navajo was the one affected the most. For example, take the lady who had a belt she paid $50 for. I let that lady draw up to $300 on it, never quibbled. It was valuable to her. Not to me. They took the way of life away from the Navajos (2 November, 1991)! True to character, Walter’s summary statement regarding the cessation of the practice of pawn was succinct and to the point: “When all the smoke had cleared, the White Men and the Government had won again. The only losers were the Navajo People” (AK:138)!
Figure 39. One of Walter’s ledger pages used to record checks received by Dennehotso Navajos, stating check number, amount, and, when necessary, the recipient’s thumbprint.
Figure 40. "Want Book"—product advertising with blank pages, distributed by wholesalers to their customers.
Figure 41. One of Walter's many pawn books (saved from his "Day One" at Bennett's) along with a bracelet (never redeemed) that appears on the open page, still bearing its original pawn ticket. Photography by Nancy Peake 1991.
Chapter X

Dudes and Rubbernecks

They were all either scared and lost or looking for a bargain or a place to pee.

Walter Kennedy (K89:146)

Running close behind the government bureaucrats, on Walter's list of "most un-favorite white people," were the tourists. Apparently it was not unusual for the traders to look down upon these uninvited "guests" from the outside world, and often for good reason. But it is ironic that in the very years that the federal "outsiders" were hacking away at the old customs, and threatening the trader's life and livelihood, there was also a growing awareness from the travel industry that the West and its inhabitants were worth reviving and marketing to tourists. As a result, waves of unthinking and uninformed visitors began arriving on the reservation, often treating the people who lived there as if they were mere actors on a movie set—which was exactly what much of the Navajo homeland had become. Such famous westerns as Stagecoach, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, and My Darling Clementine were filmed only a few miles from Dennehotso. Some of the native actors were regular customers at Dennehotso. Even William Adams, author of the Shonto report, speaks in nostalgic tones when he comments on tourists and their negative impact on the reservation where he had lived for many years:

[...]

Richardson
I, too, am haunted by the vision of my favorite canyons and mesas littered with papers and bottles; of endless rows of roadside curio stands vying with each other in sheer hideousness; and of an unending procession of casual and unappreciative visitors in slacks and sunglasses. These things to me are a threat to a cherished way of life—yet I recognize that they are only the incidental though inevitable byproducts of a fabulously high material standard of living (1963:26).

Navajos, too, often resented the intrusions of the curious white man driving around the reservation unescorted, pointing his camera disrespectfully at any Indian within range of his viewfinder, and (in Walter’s words) "always out to buy something for nothing" (7 June, 1989). Writing about the invasion of tourists in his book about the Gouldings and their Monument Valley trading post (just "down the road" from Walter), Richard E. Klinck says their thoughtless numbers "could too quickly recall the feeling of hostility toward all whites, a feeling not natural to these people, but still not forgotten from the last century" (1984:94).

The overall ignorance of the tourist, and general lack of appreciation of a culture much older and far different from their own, contributes much to the misunderstandings between the local indigenous populations and the outside visitors. Too often the tourist arrives with preconceived notions about the legendary, "primitive" Red Man and his mythic environs and is unable to treat his hosts as fellow human beings deserving of the same courtesies as any American citizen. Trader Gladwell Richardson, whose forty year career parallels and overlaps much
of Walter's experiences, was so disgusted by "stupid" tourists that he chose to begin his own autobiographical account with an incident that occurred while he was working at his first trading post (sometime between 1918 and 1920).

His opening sentence announces that some "rubberneck" tourists had purchased several expensive blankets from Richardson's employer at Houck Trading Post, and as a result the trader felt obliged to satisfy their curiosity about a local healing ceremony and asked Richardson to take them. Referring to the incident as a "regrettable error," Richardson describes the scene in the hogan: "The Navajo woman sat in the west end of the medicine hogan near the chanters. As was customary, she appeared for treatment naked to the waist. One of the white women tittered and spoke loudly to the man sitting on the ground next to her. The visitors continued their comments concerning the patient." Three times he cautioned his charges about making rude remarks about this sacred ceremony, but to no avail. The Navajos translated the "whites'" coarse remarks loud enough for every Indian present to hear. In sudden and deep embarrassment the woman pulled a shawl about her upper body; the stupid tourists had made her ceremonial nakedness obscene." The medicine man asked Richardson to take his "friends" away, but the tourists objected and had to be forcibly removed by the Navajos. To make matters worse, the white men then provoked a fist fight with their hosts. Needless to say, Richardson left the tourists in disgust, the men justly "clobbered," to find their own way home, despite the cold March night and a three mile walk through snow and mud back to the trading post (1986:3-4). Similar tourist anecdotes, all typical of the "ugly American abroad" lace Richardson's memoirs, serving as a
continuing theme throughout his long trading career.

Stories and parodies of tourists are prolific throughout the Indian and trader communities, and date back as far as one cares to remember—from the Indian "guides" who directed Coronado and his touring companions further and further east into oblivion toward the nonexistent cities of gold, to the Pueblo clown dancers who wear bermuda shorts, sling cameras around their neck, and delight in taunting the gawking tourists on the sidelines, to the weaver who offered her finely crafted rug for sale bearing the carefully woven words, "Go To HELL." Walter reports that Navajos at Dennehotso would amuse each other by begging from the tourists while laughing at what they considered to be their inappropriate attire, the inevitable shorts worn by man and woman alike.

Trader Elizabeth Hegemann delights in telling of the tourist she met while living at Shonto in the 1930s whom she had taken to the Anasazi ruins at Betatakin. Having discussed with the woman the clothing worn by the cliff dwellers, the food they ate, the ancient basket pieces and pottery sherds, she was stunned when her visitor remarked, "This is a perfect location with water and everything, but why did they build so far from the railroad" (1963:365)?

Richardson also has stories about the naivete of the curious "dudes" who came off the highway, cameras "snapping away," any time the Indians brought their stock in to his Cameron trading post. One time he completed the count of sheep being sent off to Flagstaff and announced to twenty or so tourists gathered at the corral that 2,836 had just run through the gate. An incredulous bystander asked him how he could be so sure of the exact number. Richardson replied, "You count all the legs as they rush through and then divide by four. Simple." The amazed and
somewhat disbelieving tourist then asked how he remembered what the hundreds totalled. The trader answered, this time to the city man’s satisfaction, "The black sheep are known as counters. For every one going past, you automatically count one hundred" (1986:142-143).

Folks such as these then too often typified the new white invaders of Navajoland, and they soon found their way to the more remote outposts on the reservation. Small chartered planes began flying visitors into country where the majority of the population still used wagons for transportation. A few motels cropped up in the land where hogans and sandstone trading posts were the architectural standard. Formerly nearly pristine Indian territory quickly became meccas for the white man intent on rediscovering the West.

Pavement, however, was the real purveyor of tourism. In 1964 the main roadway, Route 160, was paved from Shiprock in the east to Tuba City in the west. A paved highway now ran north out of Flagstaff to Shiprock, providing an easy route to the Grand Canyon, to the mysterious Hopi mesas, and all the way across the northern end of the Navajo Reservation in Arizona, passing, by less than twenty miles, the Navajo Tribal Park, Monument Valley, depicted in movie theatres throughout the world—complete with tipis and buffaloes—as the ubiquitous setting for the classic western. And barely ten miles from the new highway, the ancient ruins at Betatakin in Tsegi Canyon at Navajo National Monument were no longer limited to exotic destinations for the elite tourist able to afford private guides and pack trips. In short, Indian Country was now available to the average American on vacation.
Southeast of Monument Valley, just over the top of Comb Ridge, a mere ten miles as the crow flies, and a few hundred yards from the new highway, lay Dennehotso. Even though the old dirt road ran right in front of the store, there were more people travelling on the new Route 160, and as a result more people wandered off the main road and found themselves on Walter’s doorstep, often lost, and even more often looking for public facilities.

How did they ever find Walter’s trading post, situated as it was, off the beaten "tourist track?" "Well," answered Walter, "they’d always ask the Navajos where the trading post was and they’d point them in my direction" (August, 1989). The Indian trading post per se had apparently by now attained the reputation of being the place where one could see, buy, and actually play a part in an authentic western tradition. The late 1950s and 1960s also saw an increase in the number of off-reservation trading posts established in an effort to capture the business of the increasing numbers of tourists coming to the reservation. Adams refers to these enterprises as "retail curio stores dealing in Indian and pseudo-Indian crafts." He differentiates between the genuine trading post and the newer stores, saying, "the latter commonly designate themselves ‘trading posts’ because of the fancied picturesque connotations of the term; but they are, of course, straight cash operations serving a strictly White clientele" (1963:104). This was exactly the kind of clientele that Walter despised—"lots of poor people, with bunches of kids, always looking for bargains. And we tried to get rid of them as quickly as we could. The tourists were always demanding service and we had no service" (August, 1989). He wrote about the way he and his friend Hap Knight treated the tourists who came to
Dennehotso:

We tried to be nice but he [the tourist] got to be very trying at times. They would come in and say they wanted to buy rugs. We were very polite and take them in the rug room and show them the rugs we had. There was always some thing wrong with them. To high - not what they were looking for. Some of there relatives had bought a bunch of rugs last year for about 1/4 of what we were asking for ours and they were finer rugs better weave lots cheaper. Go threw all we had and then they would want to look at the bottom one the one that was $4.00. Dig it out and that one to high. Not what they wanted. All in all that 1/2 day shot to hell and we still hadn't made a sale. And that's work showing them rugs.

Then they would like to see the Dead Pawns. Same thing. To high just wasn't what they wanted. And to top every thing else off they had 4 kids that had to go pee ever 3 minutes or maybe they were bath room inspectors. We never knew. We needed the business but Hap and I decided it wasn't worth the trouble. So the next bunch of Tourists came in wanted to look at rugs we said we don't have any. How about Dead Pawn. Sold the last we had yesterday. We all need to go to the bath room. We don't have any. Go out side any Place. No one will bother you. Hap and I both agreed that was the way to handle a Tourist Trap.

This went on for some time. Flora was in the store one day a bunch came by. They talked to Hap. No Rugs. No Pawn. No Place to Pee. They were really up set. Flora didn't say
any thing that day but a few days went by and another bunch came by. They talked to me. We were out of everything and had no Place to Pee. Flora didn't say any thing until they left and she said I think this is disgracefull. You talking to the Tourist this way. Both of you are rude insulting and just out right Mean to these People. Most of them are nice People. They are in a strange Place. They are scared up set and any one likes a bargain and every Place but Dennehotso has a bath room. No wonder we are not doing to good here.

But that was the way we done em up until the time we sold out in 1981. We whole sald all rugs Jewelry Pawn wool Mohair lambs What ever and we quit having any Problems with the Tourist. They all found out that there was a hell of a big bathroom out side and they all used it.

And I will say this when one of the Tourist Came in scared Lost we did try to help him get straighten out. When tourists having problems we weren't that ornery. Flora never gave Hap and myself credit for any thing nice we done. She still thinks we were rude. She said you and Hap have lots of time to talk to the Dammed Navafoes. Hap said well they know what they want and there not scared and they Peed before they come in the store. That makes a hell of difference Hap Told her. I dont believe Flora would of traded with Hap or me if there was any Place else to trade. She was one of our better customers. Hap said she was a little rude with us at time just unreasonable. We were trying to do the best we knew How. She could not understand why we both Perfered Navafoes to
Tourists (K89-6).

Flora had her own opinions about the troublesome tourists and agreed that during their many years at Dennehotso they "really didn't have a lot to do with them." She said that Walter didn't show them rugs, "because he didn't have the patience." Flora tried to explain: "You see we got our living from the Navajo. There were no bargains for tourists. We didn't want to sell retail and couldn't give the same deal to someone buying just one rug as to someone buying the whole pile." She reiterated Walter's frustrations, saying, "They always wanted to see everything. Then they wouldn't buy. And the tourists interfered with Navajo business. They [the Navajos] would go out and hide with white people in the store. Tourists ran the Navajo trade right off" (August, 1989).

The Kennedys were not alone in their disregard for tourists. Richardson recalled that the tourist trade was "always more trouble then profit." He went so far as to say that "the arrival of tourists always called for increased watchfulness. In the tourist crowds containing children, things always managed to disappear. Sometimes even small children, without restraint from their parents, would pick up 'souvenirs'." His wife, Millie, even understood enough "to feel safe from tourists only when Navajos were around" (1986:191).

Walter did admit that the tourists were good for something. "I used to trade coins with them and, thanks to those tourists and their coins I have quite a valuable coin collection today" (20 November, 1991). But as rule he found most of the tourists who made their way to Dennehotso unpleasant and "downright condescending. One man came in
here, looked around, and said to me, 'I know you're hurting for money. You're in bad shape. I'll just relieve you of these old saddles' (20 November, 1991). It takes little imagination to conjure up the old trader's response to the stranger's big-hearted offer! As for the tourists' attitude toward his Dennehotso clientele, Walter said that "most of them were actually afraid of the 'Indians,' especially the ones from back East" (20 November, 1991).

When it comes to putting the tourist in perspective, Walter would undoubtedly add a hearty "Amen" to Richard Adams' scholarly assessment of the traders' prevailing attitude toward the vacationing public: "There is, in fact, a common tendency for traders to say that tourist trade is 'a nuisance.'"
CONCLUSION: It Was a Great Life

When you see a Navajo on a horse going to the Trading Post at a pretty fast clip you can bet your bottom dollar that this Navajo has figured out a way to out trade the trader. This is what made my life so interesting. Quite a challenge. The 60 years I have spent with them has been well worth it.

Walter Kennedy (K89-14)

Over the course of half a century Walter mastered all the many talents and idiosyncrasies required of the Indian trader, and added a few characteristic qualifications all his own. His experiences, recorded simply and honestly "as best as I can remember," reflect more than anything else a deep satisfaction with a lifetime career doing something he genuinely liked.

A recurrent theme, running throughout Walter's stories, is his abundant sense of humor and and ever-present willingness to laugh at himself and at his own mistakes. Obviously the trader without a ready chuckle would not have lasted long at a place like Dennehotso. As Walter's collection of stories attest, the trader's life was, if nothing else, always unpredictable and called for a great deal of imaginative problem solving to keep the customers happy and make ends meet. "There was," Walter said, emphatically, "lots else to do besides trading" (K89-14).

Despite the turmoils of the 1960s and 1970s--whether he considered
the issues merely a peripheral "pain in the side," or remained amazingly and blissfully ignorant of the paperwork that would gradually destroy his way of life, or simply and stubbornly chose to ignore the harbingers of change—Walter managed to conduct business as usual at Dennehotsö until 1981 when he decided to retire. The trader and his post were both anachronistic survivors of the Old West. During a decade when the old trading posts were closing their doors all over the reservation, the "mayor" of Dennehotsö carried on; and his long-time customers remained faithful until the day he left for the family farm in Kirtland (New Mexico).

The location of Walter's trading post—far from reservation boundaries and outside competition, despite the convenience and increased mobility afforded by the "new road," may have contributed, more than any other factor, to its continuation. Adams, in his summary analysis of Shonto, raises the interesting possibility that such an "environmental limitation" has perhaps more impact upon the trader himself than upon his Navajo customers who always have the choice of leaving their remote home and going elsewhere. In fact, he continues, the Navaho, given the desire, has the undeniable right and opportunity to free himself from the economic limitations of traditional Navaho life with its inevitable consequence of dependence on the trader. The latter, on the other hand, is stuck with this location and its consequence of dependence on the Navaho and on the traditional, uncapitalized Navaho economy. Of all the individuals and agencies involved in Navaho-White culture contact today, it is the trader and the oldest and least-educated Navahos who are least able to adapt to changing conditions and times. Both
are condemned to the reservation, and to the limitations of reservation life, by their inability to compete, each in his own way, with their White counterparts in the outside world (1963:292).

But "condemnation" is hardly the word Walter would use to describe his home and his life work, as is evidenced by his many late night efforts to preserve treasured memories. In fact, when writing about the final years of his career, he refers to those "older generation Traders" and "older generation Navajos" as allies, "caught up in the same struggle...in a daily battle to stay alive in a fast changing lifestyle and economy" (AK:151).

Nor do many of the older Navajos today talk about their relationships with traders in such a negative vein as "condemnation." Outsiders may presume that the increasing mobility of the Navajo people, and in particular the income-producing weavers, has generally decreased the dependence upon and desire to trade with local traders for foodstuffs, weaving supplies, banking services, and the like. This is not, however, always the case.

Gloria Duus, former director of the Office of Navajo Women and organizer of the Navajo Weavers' Association in the late 1980s, talks of many areas of the reservation where the trader still plays a dominant role in the local socio-economic way of life (20 November, 1986). Many of today's traders and their families (the Foutzes, Tanners, Clarks and Carson's) have been operating reservation posts for generations and have literally become a part of the local family structure, often through intermarriage. Duus explained that many of the Navajo people have developed a loyalty and dependence on the trader-oriented way of life
and have a genuine reluctance to depart from the old ways and their "friend," the trader.

Dolly Manson, contemporary Navajo weaver from Big Mountain at Horsesprings (also Miss Navajo Nation in 1981-82 and at time of time of interview, University of New Mexico psychology graduate student) said, "The trading post is the center of communication on the Reservation—the place where you meet your friends and drink coffee." And contrary to current popular opinion that weavers no longer need nor wish to deal with their local trader, she emphasized that "most weavers want to maintain their relationship with their trader. He has almost become a family member. You give him respect. He's like a provider" (20 February, 1987).

Award-winning weaver and instructor Pearl Sunrise (recent recipient of a Fulbright cultural exchange scholarship to New Zealand and presently Director of Education at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture in Santa Fe), shares this apparent positive view: "Traders who are on the reservation for a long time and work with a family become friends over the years. When you make something and you need the money, you go there and it's like your friend; and he'll always lend a hand in times of hardship. When you finish your rug, it just goes there directly" (4 April, 1987).

Both women, however, alluded to a few problems. Sunrise pointed out that because many weavers do not have the means to travel, to spend money on gas, food, and maybe even overnight lodging, and to seek out other traders and auctions to market their rugs, they have no other choice but to do business with their local trader. Manson was more specific: "Most weavers are not very aggressive when bargaining. The
trader has already set his price. He says 'no' to her price. She gives in because of her demanding situation at the time... usually the weaver puts a certain price into her head and why bargain for more. Besides, she needs the gas money to get home" (20 February, 1987). Increased exposure and opportunities with outside businesses and the popular Native American arts and crafts exhibitions, combined with efforts of the tribe to educate the weavers, will undoubtedly have an impact upon both the prevailing positive and negative aspects of today's Navajo/trader relationships.

The biggest thing the Navajo wanted from the trader was security. At Dennehhotso he got what he wanted. When he was in trouble, he knew where to go. And I never lied to one of 'em where he could catch me a mile. I might not of told 'em everything, but I never lied to them (21 November, 1991).

Indian traders are frequently categorized as having one of two different, and entirely opposite, types of influence upon their Navajo neighbors. They are either considered "agents of change," or "preservers of the old way." But the apparent dichotomous nature of the trader, as evidenced by Walter's stories, need not be so contradictory. For, in fact, each of these characteristic roles feeds upon and encourages the other.

Successful traders, the likes of Walter Kennedy who made lifetime careers at their various posts, were good businessmen, merely following good business sense in meeting the demands of their customers with a ready supply, recognizing that one could not easily and/or profitably
change the needs and ways of the marketplace if he hoped to survive.

Richard Adams also recognizes the role of "trader guidance" in the Navajo's adaptation to economic and material changes. But he also perceives the traders as self-motivated men "who have carefully selected and promoted the new subsistence activities with an eye to their own future—in other words in such a way as to perpetuate the seasonal, uncapitalized cycle with its inevitable dependence on trading post intercession and credit" (1963:293). Therein lies the opposing view that the trader, rather than encourage change, has indeed labored to preserve the old order.

But whether the trader's motive was profit-oriented as Adams believed, or merely based upon his perception of how to amicably reside among his customers and at the same time best meet their needs given their way of life, the fact remains that cultural change has occurred least in the areas of the reservation—specifically the northern and northwestern portions, which include Walter's beloved Dennehotso—"where the Anglo-American sociocultural system has been represented largely or exclusively by trading posts" (Adams 1963:294). Adams concludes his discussion of this locale, which he labels in the 1960s as being "trader domain," by crediting the trading post with being an important "correcting mechanism" through its efforts (often inadvertent) to help modern day Navajo culture "maintain its equilibrium in the face of continued White cultural encroachment." 2

It was, however, inevitable that "White cultural encroachment" would in one way or another (sometimes directly instituted by the Navajo Tribe itself) determine the fate of the traditional trader and his post. Walter, with the help of his trader friend Bill Auble, recorded
pertinent events in 1980, the year leading up to his retirement:

As the year 1980 came around, there was a growing conflict on the reservation, between the Navajo Tribal Government and the Traders. Many of the Trading Post leases were due for renewal, the Tribe was back pedaling on the issuance of the new leases. The Tribe's attitude was very etnocentric [sic]. They wanted to build large shopping centers in key centers around the reservation and lease them to large chain store operators, and bring about modern supermarket type shopping to the Navajo people. This was fine for the new generation Navajos who were employed by the B.I.A. or Tribal Governments, and were living with a wage earners cash economy. But to the older majority, of livestock economy, and barter style Navajo people, this was the end of a way of life.

The chain stores, did not extend credit on next months check. They did not purchase the products of the Navajo people. Their wool, lambs, pinons, cattle, rugs and other income producing products. These products like their pawn, were being forced off the reservation, into the nearby border towns.

To take up the slack due to the slow progress of building the shopping centers the tribe began to issue scores of convenience store licenses, all across the reservation. This was bringing additional pressure on the traditional Trading Posts. The Navajo Tribe wanted the surviving Traders to tear down their old stores and build new modern and more sanitary facilities. This was a perfect example of the
"Catch 22" situation. The Traders said to Tribe, "Give us a new, long term lease, and we'll build these stores." The Tribe said "Build the new stores and we'll give you leases."

The bankers took their traditional financial look at these new conflicts and said "We cannot finance new store constructions, unless you have a lease that is long enough to insure the repayment of a heavy mortgage liability. For many older traders who had spent 50 or more years living on the reservation. This was the death blow to their way of life (AK:151-52).

Needless to say, the above frustrations were also the "death blow" to Walter's way of life as he'd known it for over fifty years. In his mid-sixties when these conflicts rumbled across the reservation, the Dennehotso trader gave "long and deep thought to these problems, and decided it was time to sell his store and retire" (AK:152). Recounting that decision a decade later, Walter remembers that "things were not good. Absolutely not what it was supposed to be. Not like the old times" (20 November, 1991). When he found a buyer, Robert Tanner (who had been in business with his brothers in Kirtland and whose family, also Mormons, had been trading with the Navajo for three generations), Walter announced his decision to the people of Dennehotso. The local chapter house, voicing regret at his departure, approved Tanner's purchase of the store.

In June, 1982, the entire Dennehotso community honored Walter by holding a "Social Squaw Dance" at the local school. Walter remembers it as "a day long affair, with traditional Navajo feasting going on continually. The children sang Navajo songs and performed skits. They
held a competition for Navajo singers, and cash awards were presented to the winners. And lots of tearful goodbyes" (AK:153). Flora also has fond memories of this "farewell party" where her Navajo friends came and cried and "hugged my neck and told me not leave as they would miss me" (August, 1989). Prodded for more details, Walter added that it was a little bit on the white side. They had a regular Navajo "band." By that I mean the usual Singers. The girls danced with the men. They had a little program they put together and made me get up and give a little speech. There was lots of food--mutton stew, fry bread, coffee. No presents. I paid for it all. They came to me and said they were putting on a party, so I gave them the stuff to do it.

It was just real nice (20 November, 1991).

So ended the official career of trader, Walter Kennedy. His ties with Dennehotso were never severed, however, and remain an ongoing, vital ingredient in retirement.

The trading post in its old, "traditional" form has not, despite radical change and the retirements of many of the old traders within the last decade, disappeared from the reservation. The question remains, however, just how will the Navajo's growing awareness and quest for greater self sufficiency affect the Indian trader of today? Is the legendary presence of his trading post so tightly woven into the threads of reservation life that tradition and family loyalty will suffice to keep him and his business alive? Though his importance as a two-way "culture carrier" has diminished while young people continue to move into careers away from the reservation, the value of his trading post as
a "social institution" still seems fairly well entrenched (according to Navajos who maintain lives both on and off the reservation, vis-a-vis Manson and Sunrise). Though he may still buy wool, hides and blankets from his customers, today's trader must also function as a convenience store clerk, selling everything from appliances to popsicles, even renting video tapes. But given these newer, impersonal demands upon his business, he may no longer "have the time or savvy enough to stitch up an open wound...settle a domestic dispute or bury a small child" (McNitt 1962:361).

There are few of these "old traders" left. Fewer still who have taken the time to record their life stories for their grandchildren, and the grandchildren of their Navajo clientele. Walter Kennedy belongs to that select group of men who not only created the "trading post myth," but who lived and worked to keep it alive today. These traders earned, over their years of hard work and dedication to the families who frequented their posts, the Navajos' regard as "best friend, father, son, and brother, all combined. The one to go to for help and advice" (Richardson 1986:192).

I have been told by the Navajos themselves that I think just like they do. I hope this is true and feel it was quite a complement as when that happens I think you could say you were a Navajo trader (K89-14).

Of all the many roles he played as trader, the one of "trader friend" was what Walter valued most and is perhaps how he'd like most to be remembered. Indeed, in the decade since his retirement, Walter
has held on to those cherished friendships--making no bones about the fact that he often prefers the company of Navajos to Whites--and makes a regular practice of filling his truck with produce from his garden and heading west, past Shiprock and on to Dennehotso to visit with his old Navajo customers, sharing the many stories and experiences that cemented their relationships during their many years as neighbors. Hardly a week goes by without at least one Navajo family finding their way to Walter's "office" in Kirtland, to show him a rug or a basket, or sometimes just to visit.

I can think back and live it all over again (K89:22).

Seated at an old battered desk covered with stacks of yellow legal paper filled with years of midnight scribblings, and surrounded by his collection of lifetime memorabilia, the old trader/philosopher grinned, always good for one last story:

Its like that Navajo that died. Went down to the Pearly Gates. St Peter said to him I will grant you one wish. The Navajo thought and finally decided that he would ask for one million Dollars. In a few days a Trader passed away. St Peter told him one of your Navajo Friends just went threw here a few days ago and I granted him one wish. He wished for a million Dollars and I granted it to him. Now you and the Navajo are friends. Im going to do the same by you. Grant you a wish. The Trader thought a minute. St Peter all I want is the address of that Navajo that you gave the million Dollars to.
So that's the way it is. How I would love to go back knowing what I do now. But we don't have 2nd go arounds. I can't see that it could have been much better than it was. It was a great life (K89:22).
APPENDIX A

Hap Knight

Though Hap only worked for Walter for "eight years or so," he made a profound impression on his friend and is mentioned time and time again in Walter’s many stories. The story that Walter wrote about Hap in particular is by far the longest of any he put together, consisting of eighteen pages of yellow paper (and not one punctuation mark from start to finish). The personal nature of the following tribute indicates that Hap’s importance as a Dennehotso figure is far greater than the relatively small proportion of time he occupied in Walter’s life as a trader.

The Idea of this is to try to Put some of our feeling of myself and Family that we felt about Hap. Hap was one in a Million. I never new Hap. I had heard of him before I hired him and knew his Uncle John Walker. But some off this took Place before I became active Trader so some of this is what Hap told me.

Hap came out of Utah. His younger life was working in the Mines in Utah. Was not raised as a Navajo Trader. John Walker got him to come from Utah to work at Toesito. It means Hot Water. [McKlittt states that Jess Foutz and Sante Bowen built Tocito Trading Post in New Mexico in 1913 (1962:301).]
I think Hap came from Utah in about 1920. He did not talk good Navajo. I made fun of him all the time as I thought I was better than he was but that was the only thing I could beat him at. But he did understand it real well but I never let him forget I could do something better then he. I would be talking to a Navajo he would say what he saying and it was the worst thing he could of done as I never let him forget it. I had to interpret for him. The reason for this Hap went into trading with the Navajoes at a later age than I did so he didn't pick up on the language as much as I had.

John Walker died but he left Tosito to Hap. Hap had a drinking problem from the Mines in Utah. After John Walker died Hap started drinking again. It was [not] long before he was in trouble and it was [not] long until he lost Tosito and he had gotten down pretty bad. I knew what he was going through as I had gone through the same thing but I had quit.

Dennehotso was doing good [in 1951] and I needed help bad and experienced help was nearly impossible to find. I came in to Farmington. Hap was on the streets drunk. I talked to him ask him if he would like to go to work for me at Dennehotso. He said he sure would like to but he said I have this drinking problem. I said that's fine. We don't have a drinking problem at Dennehotso. We just don't drink. We have lots of good drinking water and all the pop you can drink. He said I can [not] leave right now. I have a sister here and I have a few things to take care of as if I go to work for you I won't be coming to town very much and I think that this is
fine.

I didn't quite understand but later I did. He was trying to tell me he needed help and he had to stay away from the supply as he wouldn't be able to stop drinking. I said Hap if you want to try it the Farmington Merc has a truck going out each Tuesday and you can catch a ride out with them. Just go down there and find out when and you can come out with them. I told him that I would pay $150.00 more and board and room.

I didn't think he would ever come but the next Tuesday he came out on the truck. He was to stay in the house where our family lived and eat his meals with us. Flora & I we had a 4 yr [old] little girl Lavina. His room was in the same house that we stayed in to start with. I sure didn't think it was going to work out. The Navajoes were causing problems but that is to be expected. The Whisky had him down and he just was not able to cope with his problem as stopping drinking Cold Turkey is a big problem for anyone. I had gone through this I understood.

Flora and I just didn't know but we stayed right in there as we sure did need his help. About 2 weeks we saw a big change. He was getting a lot better and in a month I knew I had a jewel as he was really doing a good job. He didn't seem to care for little girls. Lavina was a mess spoiled rotten and he was good to Lavina but she felt he didn't like her but it was just his way. When he found out that Flora made Lavina respect her elders it seemed to make a change and he took some
interest in her.

Flora was PG with Ivan. Shortly after Hap came Flora came to town to wait for the big day. It left Hap and I out there to batch just the two of us there and long Winter evening. We sure got better acquainted and we sure hit it of good telling each other our experiences. He told me I have never seen any Trader that has as good of a relationship with the Navajoes as you do. They believe every Dammed word you say. How did this come about? I told him about all the Problem I had had when I first came out there. They have lots of respect for you now. I just said wait and see. It was only a few day and a drunk Navajo came in and insisted on fighting with me. I worked him over Pretty good. After it was over he [Hap] said I understand why you have there respect.

Hap wasn’t the best cook in the world so I done the frying of spuds and meat. That was mostly our diet when Flora was gone. He wasn’t a dish washer either. I had to do that.

As time went on our whole Family started to except him as Part of our Family. There was nothing that he was not included in and we were very close. Flora always fixed him a birthday dinner. He really took a lot of worries away from me as I was gone a lot hauling Freight and Buying but I was always home at nite. We had a well operated store. If we didn’t have anything that we could sell we got it. It sure did help our business as we were Pulling business that wasn’t ours as we had anything they wanted. But it takes a lot of work lots of long
hours.

Flora came back with a Baby Boy Ivan. Hap was there when I told the Navajos he looked just like Puggie. He sure got a kick out of it. Things went on as usual. Ivan was walking and talking and I noticed I didn't have any little Boy. He followed Hap around all the time. Hap was always there and I was gone a lot. I could see why as Hap and Ivan sure had a good relationship. We had a table chairs out in the back yard and I had noticed Hap and Ivan would go out there every evening and I also noticed Hap saying to Ivan Tuffy lets go out. That was Hap's nick name for Ivan. Ivan was about 3. Ivan called him Hap at Hap's request. Hap said to me Ivan came in a while ago it was about 3 oclock in the afternoon and he said to Hap - Hap run the sun of bitches out. Lets go rest. I just shook my head went into the house and told Flora. She wouldn't believe it. Made her Mad.

Hap had been there 4 years. He arranged going to Town about every 8 months. He had saved all his Money. He said he was going to buy a car. I said that's fine. He left never took a drink this time. Came back with a old clunker sober. He took me out to look at it. He was a good Navajo trader but I could see he wasn't a very good car buyer. I said to him you have just bought a lot of Problems. The least you could of done was get something I could borrow. I dont even want to borrow that wreck. He said you are so damned smart why didn't you offer to help me. I told you I was going to buy a car and I expected for you to help me. You have your nose in
everything else why didn't you offer to help me. I told you
and the way you acted I didn't think you wanted me to have a
car and so I went in and bought the first one I saw. Now you
got me in this mess. I think you should get me out of it. I
said I will see what I can do. Lets not get in any hurry.

They was lots of work around Dennehotso at this time.
Lots of car salesman repossing car Etc and they were in and
out of the store all the time. One came up from Flagstaff. I
told him we were interested in a new car. We had a Dodge we
wanted to Trade in. He asked what I wanted. I told him a
good small car coupe with all the fixing in it delux. He said
I'll look and see what we have and maybe I'll bring one out if
its what I think you want as I'm back and fourth all the time.
I told him to call if they had anything that we could use. I
told him it was for Hap and that we both couldn't leave to go
in to look at it and both of us had to see what we were
trading for. He said no Problem. He called back and said
they had a chevy coupe Delux color blue that was a dream and
he thought any one would be Proud of. I said bring it out if
you want to with the understanding if we cant made a deal no
obligation. He said fine.

I told Hap. Hap said Kennedy I want you to do the
trading. Whatever you think will be all right with Me. Hell
Hap I dont even no what you Paid for the Dodge. He said
$900.00. He said I'll trade with the Navajoes and get along
fine. You are kind like all the wholesaler. You dont give
a dam how mad they get and Im just to nice. I just dont like
to trade with whites and its just down Your ally. Your just a big a chicken shit as they are and Im sure you will do a good job and trade for a car that you would like to borrow.

To make Walter’s story just a little shorter, Walter did just that; and Hap became the proud owner of a "the best looking Chevy coupe" the two had ever seen. The seasons passed,

And things were real good. Hap and I really worked good together had a lot of good times and lots of experiences. Hap was a early riser 4:30 or 5:00 every Morning and the Bad Part about it he would [not] let any one else sleep. The only time he would let me sleep is if I had been late bringing in a load. Then he would leave me alone but any other time Kennedy rise and shine. Lots of work to do around here I cant do it all. So I might as well [get up].

We were batching out there as Flora was staying in Town sending the Kids to school. I never liked to leave Hap there alone so I tried hiring some older man to stay with him as I never got any time off and had no time with my Family. But he was so Dammed ornery with them he would fire them because he knew I would be be back to stay. He was very Badly spoiled but thats the way we liked him. He would get up drink a Cup of Coffee Open the store. All the old timer new this. When I would get up he and the old timers had all ready done there trading. He said he already had a 1/2 day work done while some People layed in bed.

One morning [in 1959] Hap got up a little earlier than
usual. I had known he was having problems. He was very
moody and I knew that he was past due for a big drunk as he
hadn't went to town for over 1 year. He said I'm going to town.
I said fine. I said I will write your check and you can go.
I settled up with him as he just drew his money when he went
to town and he would deposit it. He didn't have much to say.
He said I see you in a few days and I must of not been in my
right mind as I said to him I'm not going to pour you out of
the bottle this time. Ever time he would go to town he would
get drunk and hole up some place. Wouldn't drive or anything
like that but he was hard to find and I had to come in to get
him. I couldn't find him or his car as they were both hid. I
had tried sending some one else for him. They would find him
and he would refuse to come back with them. So it was left up
to me to get him or [he] would just stay drunk.

I would have to leave Flora with the Navajo help and
come in to get him. If Flora was in town sending the kids to
school she would have to get her Mother to stay with the kids
and she would come out to the store before I could leave. We
never left the store in 40 years that Flora, Hap or my self
was [not] there. It was just one of our policies. Any way I
was getting ready to go in. I had called a friend of mine the
County sheriff and ask him if he would locate Hap which he had
done for me before. I tried to get him if he found him to
throw him in jail till I got there. He said he didn't think
that would be right as Hap never bothered any one and he liked
Hap to. So he said we will try to locate him for you. Check
in with us as soon as you get here.

That was about 2:00 oclock in the after noon. I was going to leave early the next morning to go get him. About 4:00 that after noon the Police from Kayenta called and said Hap Knight had just fell over dead with a heart attack. They knew that he worked at Dennehotso. They also said that he had just told some one that he was going home to Dennehotso. I was really in shock. They said what shall we do. I said Ill call his sister in Farmington. She is the closest relative that I know of. I said I dont think that it is my Place to make any disission on this. They said right. I called Edith Kingland his sister and told her and told her I couldnt do anything that they said it was up to her. I also told her if I could do any thing just to call.

I sure felt Bad. If I would of just gone and got him after a week or 10 day like instead of waiting 3 week or a little over maybe this wouldnt of Happened. I have Kick myself a million times for this but I had lost another Good Friend and a very Smart Man. This has taken me a long time to get over as I cant help but blame my self for waiting so long to go get him. I had tryed every way there was to get him back and had found out I was the only one that could get him back. If I would send some one else he would [not] come with them. The Sheriff wouldnt hold him for me. I new it was a waste of time not to go get him myself. If he had been a mess and if I had had a justified reason for not geting him it would been different. He was Hap. Done me a very good job.
Done his work well. Was my Friend and he was sick.

When I had gone after him before he was very smart about hiding. I would find him. He alway said Im not going with You. I just was deaf. I would get him out to the car say get in and him still saying Im not going. I would just act like I didnt hear him. If he didnt have a bottle I would stop at some bar get a Pint of Whisky and we would start for the store. When he would get out of hand I would give him a small drink but I would also tell him that when it was gone that was it. He was very conservative.

When we would get home I would help him to bed and watch over him. He did sleep a lot. I gave him all the water I could get down him. Nothing else after we had run out of whisky. This would be quite a job and me having to work in store and try to get him sobered up. My family usually did not stay. I would send them to Town. I never remember of them being there. Its sure not to great a job but he would start to get better after 3rd day. And after that he would sleep a lot and wasnt to much trouble. About the 3 day I would start in giving him V8 Juice and made him drink lots of water. About 5th day he would get up eat crackers soup just something light. Then after that he would get better but he would get up and say I feel good Im going work to day. I say Hap Ill let you know when you go back to work. Go back to bed. About 8 to 10 days when he got back to normal eating and wasnt nervous he would go back to work and good for 8 mo to a year. I have got along with out him for 31 years but would of
gotten along a lot better if we hadn't lost him.

Hap was a appeaser [sic]. A Drunk would come in. They never bothered any one but the boss. Hap said you don't help things any. You have a chip on your shoulder. You are always ready. You don't even try to get along with them. Some times I think you like it [if] one would come in. Hap could see trouble. He would say Kennedy your Wife wants you in the house. You let me handle this. He keep me out of a lot of trouble. I said it was to keep me from getting hell kick out of me. He would calm the Navajo and get some one to take him home whatever he could do. After the Navajo sobered up they would always come back and apologize even if we had trouble. It Never failed.

Hap had a craving for Mutton Stew. Why I never could find out. Every so often when we were batching he would put on a Mutton Stew. I never liked it. Couldn't even stand it. Stank up the whole house and store. I would raise hell every time he would put it on but never done any good. He still cooked his Mutton Stew. One Morning he was putting on a batch and is all I said that shit again. He looked at Me and said I can build a fire out in the yard to cook it. I said fine Ill help you build the fire because every one needs all the mutton stew they can eat. But he had his stew any way. We damned sure could get along on a lot less mutton stew (K89-23).
APPENDIX B

Pawn book pages

Walter saved every one of his many pawn books, from the very first day he began operating Dennehotso, through the day he retired. The names which appear over and over again read like old friends—characters as familiar as Gladys Richards, Jack Tinhorn, Puggie, Mark James, and Sarah Son. Reproduced on the following pages are two pages each from three different years, each approximately ten years apart, representing over three decades of "doing business" at Dennehotso.

Successive figures on a single entry indicate increased amounts loaned against that item, and/or the amount of the reduced debt when payments were made either with goods or through credit from an incoming check. Follow, for example, on page 272 (150 and 151 in the pawn book), #2865: Sour Water pawned his saddle for $52.55 on 11/13/48. He borrowed upon separate occasions small amounts up to a total of $75.00, whereupon he began reducing the amount owed. He finally redeemed his saddle on 7/27/52 (nearly three and a half years later) for the amount of $14.50. Walter explained that the word "Self" next to the last amount simply means that the person redeemed it himself—as compared to #2858 (on the same page), where Bake Red House redeemed the bracelet pawned by Stanley Yazzie.

Notice on page 273 (pages 152 and 153 in the pawn books) #2903 in
which case Walter apparently wanted (for his collection) the belt pawned by Graham Begay on 11/20/48 and gave him $65.00 in trade for the belt on 6/1/50, thus cancelling the debt.

Whereas the majority of the pawn amounts are small, note #2402 on page 275 (pages 52 and 53 in the pawn book): Henry Black initially pawned some beads for $276.00 on 11/5/59 (Walter explained that "beads" could be anything from turquoise, to coral, to silver). The amount continued to grow, with occasional reductions, to an all-time high of $1392.60 (which included the interest added on 12/23/60) before being redeemed at a final figure of $715.61, when Walter recorded it as "Out," "Out," "Out," of pawn (Follow the arrows to figure this one out).

Other notations indicate additional "wrinkles" of the pawn business. For example, "NM" next to an entry (#2866, #2876, etc.), is Walter's personal code for "No More;" that is, "I would not let them raise their pawn amount any higher" (18 January, 1991). Then, see #39223, page 276 (pages 62 and 63 in the pawn book) with regard to the bracelet pawned by Puggie on 5/15/71 which evidently needed to be reset. Walter added the amount for the repairs to the amount owed when Puggie redeemed his bracelet the next month. Also, note #’s 39431 and 39432 on page 278 (pawn book pages 74 and 75): the Roos each pawned against items in "lay away," but apparently never purchased the bracelet and watch (though Jane did reduce her debt by $50) and the items pawned against were subsequently placed "back in stock."
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- Rice: 1
- Fish: 1
- Vegetables: 1
- Fish: 1
- Beans: 1
- Salad: 1
- Juice: 1
- Bread: 1
- Cheese: 1
- Milk: 1
- Restaurant: 1
- Ice Cream: 1
- Cake: 1
- Pie: 1
- Jello: 1
- Cookies: 1

**Subtotal:** $570

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<td>Green Tea</td>
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<td>Water</td>
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<td>Bottled</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/19/71</td>
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<td>Beans</td>
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<td>Salad</td>
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<td>Salad</td>
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<td>10/24/71</td>
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<td>Juice</td>
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<td>Bread</td>
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<td>Toast</td>
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<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>Bob &amp; Betty</td>
<td>11:00PM</td>
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<td>10/29/71</td>
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<td>Pie</td>
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<td>Apple</td>
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<td>10/30/71</td>
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<td>8:00PM</td>
<td>Jello</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cream</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/31/71</td>
<td>Sue &amp; Aldo</td>
<td>7:00PM</td>
<td>Cookies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chocolate</td>
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**Subtotal:** $570
APPENDIX C

Goods for Sale

I kept everything there was to sell. They used whatever we got. If they asked for it, I had it.

Walter Kennedy (21 November, 1991)

Asking to select a "typical" business year at Dennehotso—one that might best illustrate day-in and day-out over-the-counter transactions, Walter opened his desk file drawer to see what was available.

"Perfect," he said, hauling out a two-foot high stack of stuffed manilla folders, "1960 -- here's everything. Every invoice and receipt from 1960. Back when things were just like they always were. Like they were supposed to be" (20 November, 1991). This was indeed a "perfect" year to use as a "sample"; for in 1960—still a good decade before the outside world decided it was necessary to regulate the trader's affairs, the trader and his Navajos still lived very much the same as they had been since the turn of the century, especially in regard to their economic independence and their relationships with each other.

We spent an entire day (21 November, 1991) going through the folders (everything neatly filed according to month of receipt), talking about each and every piece of paper—from telephone "tolls" from the BIA ("because they own the phone because of the school, and I was the only other phone at Dennehotso, but it belonged to the BIA"), to a dues notice from the United Traders Association, to at least a hundred
invoice sheets from various wholesalers.

Most prominent among the latter was the Kimball-Gallup Company which apparently was Walter’s primary supplier for basic stock. Other wholesalers whose invoices appeared on a regular basis were the Charles Ilfeld Company ("wholesalers of everything"), Henry Hillson and Company ("notions, specialties, work clothes"), Walsh Novelty Company (novelties, notions, souvenirs, curios, and beads — I was his biggest customer, that man’s stuff had a good profit!"), United Garment Company, Babbit Brothers Trading Company ("wholesale hardware etc."), packing companies (meats), Hermann H. Heiser Company out of Denver (whose letterhead declared, "Pioneer Saddlers and Harness Manufacturers of the Great West"), T.J. Wack Distributing Company ("flour and feed"), Rainbo Baking Company, and A.M. Bloomfield ("wholesale produce and groceries").

Walter talked about a wholesaler he remembered as being "big" back in 1951, Kirk Trading Company from Gallup.

Their guy came out one day and said he had camp stoves, [horse] collars, sides of leather, collar pads, stove pipe, all kinds of odd stuff. He said, "Come make me an offer on everything." He wanted to close and said I could buy it cheap, for $500. Hap said to me, "You’re the only one I know of who would buy all this stuff." I bought it and I sold on that over the years. Still have some of it left [stored in the remains of the old Kennedy general store next door to his Kirtland home].

These wholesale houses really liked to trade with me because I’d buy big amounts. Money didn’t scare me because I was really making big money. I had credit all over the world.
Bought reject tires from New York State. I had an unlimited rating with Dunn and Bradstreet, the only one in that area. It went from my father to my brother to me. I had the advantage on a lot of traders because I was bigger than them. All the wholesalers wanted my business. I was always pulling something. Like one time I bought 100 cases of stove pipes, 22 in a case, and I sold 'em all!

The "basic necessities" required by the Dennehotso Navajos were, according to Walter, coffee ("They liked Schillings which I bought for 30 cents a pound, sold for 40 cents"), sugar, flour, baking powder, lard, potatoes, and salt side of pork. The pork "came in 100-pound sacks from the Swift Packing House, not local; I bought it for 10 cents a pound, sold it for 25 cents." Walter explained that he "generally figured on around 33 1/3% profit on groceries and necessities. But," he pointed out, "you could sell anything else for any damn thing you wanted to."

What follows are highlights from our day-long conversation relating to the many diverse items found on Walter's assorted invoice sheets with the intention of presenting, through the kinds of goods purchased by his customers in the year 1960—sometimes along with prices at which they were bought and sold—a picture of the life and times of the Navajos at Dennehotso. Selected items that caught my own eye and encouraged questions are discussed, as they may have appeared in Walter's monthly folders, followed by an odd assortment of products that begged for more explanation. Asked how he could possibly remember all
of these details, Walter answered, "I remember this stuff because I lived it. That makes the difference."

JANUARY

3, #1600 shawls @ $21.75 and 3, #2500 robes @ $18.75
(These were the Pendleton blankets, fringed "shawls" for women, and plain-edged "robes" for men.)

12 aquarios blankets @ $3.40, 12 sachem blankets @ $2.40,
and 12 Mohawk Indian string cotton blankets @ $1.95.
("cotton blankets used on beds for sleeping")

2 boxes of pawn tickets for $14.42

carton of 100 calendars
("I gave out calendars at Christmastime (which I ordered in October, but I also gave them out when people paid their bills -- or, I gave 'em whatever I had the most of. I had one happy bunch of Indians!")

FEBRUARY

from Levi Strauss, 84 pair #501 jeans @ $2.87
(total pair of jeans ordered, 187)
(Walter sold all Levi jeans for $4.50 in 1960. "My brother Earl was the Wrangler dealer and I was the Levi dealer. We would exchange brands and pay each other cash.")

wagon from Glen Bloomfield, $185

MARCH

BBA sheep shears 2 pair @ $29.35

150, 6 1/2 foot wool bags @ $.75

6,000 fleece ties, 1,000 @ $6.65

7 dozen side combs
("With rhinestones, for the ladies' hair. Really a piece of junk. Sold like hotcakes. The stones would fall out and they'd buy more. I sold rhinestones also for their blouses.")
APRIL

48 cartons of Koolaid (72 packages to a carton)
("We sold Koolaid by the ton! Was very popular. I paid one and a half cents a package, sold for ten cents. Once I bought 100 cases from Blackburn, 36 cartons to a case."

28 dozen seed beads, rocailles beads, rhinestones, needles and thread

MAY

Vienna sausage ("very big at Dennehotso")

potted meat ("Like Spam, but an off-beat brand. Cheaper than Spam. I sold it for what Spam would cost, but still made a profit.")

men's briefs

JUNE

Pendleton jackets (from the blankets) from United Garment Co.
  style 657, 1 dozen, $69 (total)
  style 657 x, 1/2 dozen, $81
  ("We always bought plaid at Dennehotso."

from Henry Hillson and Company,
42 dozen sox
3 dozen western shirts
men's shoes from $5.35 to $7.60 pair
boots $8.60 pair
bandanas
boys' Wrangler overalls

chewing gum
("Big flavors were Bazooka bubble gum and spearmint, Doublemint, and Juicy Fruit."

Navajo wool dye
("Best brands were Tintex and Perfection. Best selling colors at Dennehotso were maroon, black, and green. Then purple and scarlet. 'Turkey red' never was very good in dying. I sold dye for ten cents a package. Used for cloth, blouses. They dyed velvet, plush, sateen when it got dull or old, or if they wanted a change. Or for new outfits."

JULY

Navajo hats from Babbit Brothers
("Called the Notoni. It's the hat with the high crown."
AUGUST

from Southwest Housewares in Albuquerque, capguns ("Sold the hell out of 'em!")

20 cases of flashlights
("Couldn't buy too many. They were cheap and didn't hold up too long, so I'd just keep selling them. Kerosene was their only power. I bought kerosene in bulk from a truck, kept in a 500-gallon tank. Sold it in beer bottles til the government got on to us. Used old pop caps with a regular beer bottle capper back in the 1930s before the rules and regulations. Sometimes it burnt hogans down because of the expansion of kerosene. I also used to make ketchup and put it in beer bottles.")

padlocks ("Everybody had a cheap padlock for the chain on their hogan door. I paid $1 each, sold for $3.95.")

split leather collars for horses

ladies nylon panties

unbleached muslin ("used for the lining for their plush shirts, also for the belly band on a dress")

squaw shoes
("High laced shoes for rattlesnakes. At first I bought for $2.50, sold for $5. My last shipment cost $4.50, sold for $7.95. They were popular 'til the 1970s when rubber soles came in.

"Also sold lots of saddle oxfords, those black and white shoes. Sold like they was going out of style. Kids shoes were the brown high tops. But they wouldn't sell without nails on the bottom. They wouldn't buy 'em. So I bought them regular and had the manufacturer put dud brass nails on the bottom. I had happy customers at Dennehotso. Everything was just right.")

SEPTEMBER

Swift brand luncheon meat ("Baloney type meat really popular.")

from Hermann H. Heiser Company,
phoenix heeled and toed shoes [for horses]
("We kept horse shoes all the time. Other trading posts didn't even handle them.")

174 lariats,
bridles, reins, cinches ("all kinds of tack")

baby bottles
mirrors

OCTOBER

from Rainbo Baking Company out of Phoenix, cookies and bread ("We sold bread like it was cake.")

150 calendars

NOVEMBER

Timex watches from Henry Hillson Company
("I bought lots. Called a "dollar watch," a pocket watch. The time was never right, but no one ever really cared what time it was. But every day they'd all come in and set their watches by the store clock.")

laundry stoves
("The Coleman stoves came in two sizes. But with one size they could put a tub on the stove and use two burners to do their laundry.")

DECEMBER

14,600 pounds of lump coal from Hogback Coal

1 Christmas tree, $2.95 ("For the house behind the store, because even when the kids went to school in town, we always spent Christmas at the store.")

playing cards

peanut butter

gulf salt ("Table salt, but not iodized which would of cost me two times as much. Came in a square red box.")

A great many other items appeared frequently thoughout the year on invoice lists which add to the overall picture of the Dennehotsot clientele, including:

Skoal chewing tobacco ("Came in rolls, 8 cans to a roll, which I put in a dispenser. Came in five-case lots. One month I bought 216 rolls of eight.")

Vicks cough drops and syrup
Aspirins ("bought 'em by the gross")
Ben Gay
Alka Seltzer ("Don’t know exactly what they done with it. But they sure bought a lot of it. Called it ‘bubbly’.

"This was what we carried in the line of medicine. Nothing fancy. It’s a wonder we didn’t kill some of them. You couldn’t send it home to use. We gave it to them right there."

Cleo satin ("a slick cloth that they made skirts out of")
sacking needles ("A hooked needle, had a curve on one end -- for sewing up fleece bags, finishing rugs. We had all sizes. One time we were out, so I took the key from the Vienna sausage can and sharpened up the end and sacked my wool. Worked fine."

black nylon hair nets
oil cloth ("big seller -- for tablecloths")
Johnson’s Glo coat (almost every month)
("I used it for the store, the tile on the floor. I’d just dump it on the floor and let the Navajo help spread the film around. I don’t think anyone else done that in their store.")
candy (always on more than one invoice each month)
("Bought candy by the tons! I would take the pickup with closed sides and go all over the country and pick up ‘slow movers.’ Fill up the truck with candy, novelties. Then make up a fifty cent package (cost about 5 cents) and they’d sell like hotcakes. We’d fill ice cream bags with hard candy. I used the Navajo workers and we’d do 500 to 1,000 bags at a time. Sell the bags for ten cents. Stuff I bought for ten cents a pound. From the Bishop Candy Company I got drop shipments at the narrow guauge railroad -- 1,000 pounds of candy at a time.")
potatoes ("We started packing potatoes, 16 pounds, in brown paper sacks way before anybody did it. If we weren’t organized, we couldn’t do our business.")

A day (nor even a single year) was not long enough, as far as Walter was concerned, to discuss Dennehotso business. Still raring to go after almost nine straight hours, he said, "Hell, I wish I could go back to trading again -- back to this very time, 1960!"
Figure 42. Walter models a brand new "Navajo hat," the Notoni—leftover stock from his trading post days, fresh out of the original hat box from Babbit Brothers (now part of the Dennehotso Collection). Photograph by Nancy Peake 1991.
Figure 43. A brand new pair of squaw shoes (also called "the sheepherder's shoe"), a favorite of Navajo women from 1880 to 1950, according to Walter. "The high tops gave ankle support and were good for walking in snow, mud, and kept stickers out of their feet and protected against rattlesnakes." Photograph by Nancy Peake 1991.

Figure 44. New pair of children’s shoes (also from Walter's unsold trading post stock). Note the brass "dud" nails pounded into the sole along stitching. Photograph by Nancy Peake 1991.
ENDNOTES

All references from Kennedy’s memoirs have been coded for ease of identification in the endnotes. The initial packet of "stories" (Kennedy’s term) were given to me in March, 1989. Kennedy numbered the stories in this packet from #1 - #27, though the stories were not in any way chronological. Another group of stories was given to me in August, 1989, and I continued the arbitrary numbering from #28 - #34. I then assigned page numbers to each hand-written page as received to facilitate my own use and reference. Kennedy wrote all these stories, #1-34, at various times after the fall of 1986. Hence, reference to this particular collection shall be designated as KB9-story number and, if appropriate, ipage number.

Kennedy gave me an additional set of stories in the fall of 1989. These stories formed the basis for a collaborative account prepared by Kennedy and a trader friend, William Auble, in October, 1986. Since Kennedy wrote this initial group of stories some time before 1986, but after his 1981 retirement, they will be identified in the endnotes as KB6:ipage number. The rough draft, a hand typed collection entitled Reminiscence [sic] of a Trader, created by Auble and Kennedy and based upon these stories, is referred to as AK:ipage number.

Background:

1. After a relentless winter pursuit by Kit Carson, the beleaguered Navajos began their Long Walk in March of 1864 to the Bosque Redondo, or Hweéldi --the reservation along the Pecos River on the plains of eastern New Mexico where they were incarcerated for four years under the order of General James H. Carleton. Troops from nearby Fort Sumner maintained guard while Carleton's plan to convert the Navajo people to self-sufficient farmers failed miserably due to the poor location, mismanagement of limited resources, and abuse of the captive Navajo population. In June of 1868 a treaty was negotiated and the Navajos began their Long Walk home, to burned out hogans and plundered fields--to a new reservation comprising only about one-tenth of their previous lands, excluding all their fine eastern grazing lands and most of their water resources. For discussions of conditions leading up to the Long Walk, the imprisonment at Bosque Redondo, and investigations which eventually initiated the release of The People and the resultant treaty, see Locke (1986) and Bailey and Bailey (1988).

For the Navajo perspective on this same series of events, see Howard H. Gorman's oral history in Navajo Stories of the Long Walk Period (1973): "From Fort Defiance the Navajos started on their journey. That was in 1864. They headed for [Fort Wingate] first, and from there they started on their Long Walk. Women and children traveled
on foot. That's why we call it the Long Walk. It was inhuman because the Navajos, if they got tired and couldn't continue to walk farther, were just shot down. They had to keep walking all the time, day after day. They kept that up for about 18 or 19 days from Wingate to Fort Sumner, or Huweldi. . . . When we were taken to Huweldi, a harmless people, for four years, the White Men got all our land--north to [the La Plata Mountains], toward the northwest to [the La Sal Mountains] to the [Green River], and beyond to the mountain with no name [Mount Henry]. The Navajos used to have, and live on, that whole area. Later, the white people took most of that territory back.... In June, in the year of 1868, the treaty was made legal for the Navajos; so they started their journey back right away. According to written history, a little more than 7,500 Navajos returned from Fort Sumner" (1973:31-42). For an engaging first person account of this period in Navajo history, read Bighorse the Warrior, retold by daughter Tiana Bighorse (1990).

2. The finely woven Navajo "chief blanket" (a stripe-patterned shoulder blanket) was a highly-desired trade item throughout Indian country. Though the wearer was not always necessarily a tribal chief, he did have to be fairly affluent (e.g. possess an equal value in trade of quality leather work or prize horses) to be able to "afford" one. Painters George Catlin and Karl Bodmer depicted a number of Plains Indians wearing these blankets in the 1830s, thus recording their widespread popularity for all of America to see.

Among the "white man's goods" the trader introduced around the turn of the century was the colorful, factory-made, "Indian pattern" blanket made by the Pendleton Woolen Mills in Oregon. Indians everywhere could now buy the Pendleton for the equivalent of five dollars, whereas a good Navajo blanket was worth as much as fifty dollars in trade (Andrew Nagen, interview, October 15, 1986). In the face of such competition it was only a matter of time before the "home craft," i.e. for family use and native trade, part of the weaver's livelihood would be no more. Even today the Pendleton is the prized gift among Navajos; a new blanket is commonly presented for ceremonies and special occasions.

3. Though the trader's influence on a weaver's product may have been indirect, his methods were very direct: he offered more money or trade value for those weavings he felt he could profit from most himself. For those weavings he did not want, he offered less money or simply refused to purchase them at all.

4. Walter M. Kennedy, subject of this dissertation, started his first "official" job as an Indian trader at a trading post jointly owned by his father and older brother in 1933--during the time period when Indian arts and crafts first began to gain outside interest as "romantic" reminders of the past.

6. See *Traders on the Navajo Reservation: The Economic Bondage of the Navajo*, prepared for Southwestern Indian Development, Inc., "written by Navajos for the Navajo people" in 1969. As stated in an accompanying letter by SID president, Charley John, and executive director, Peterson Zah (today first President of the Navajo Nation): "...eight Navajo College students conducted the investigation and compiled the documentation through action-research. In every case, the trader was interviewed. His customers were likewise interviewed..."


8. Kennedy's future was likewise affected by these new regulations concerning the practice of pawn. See chapter nine, this dissertation. For a thorough discussion of the interdisciplinary contributions to the literature of the weaver/trader relationship, see Adams 1963:508.

9. Federally sponsored trading houses were discontinued in 1822, but there followed such outrageous practices on the part of the private trading competitors that Congress once again found it "imperative to intervene on the side of the Indians" (see McNitt 1972:45) and in 1834 passed the "Act of Congress to Regulate Trade and Intercourse" with Indian Tribes which governed the licensing of all future Indian traders.

10. McNitt 1972:46. Historians seem to disagree (among them, Kluckhohn and Leighton, Nusbaum, and Hedlund) as to exactly who was the first licensed trader to the Navajos and in what year he appeared on the Reservation, though all acknowledge that by the 1870s the trading post was well on its way to becoming "one of the most necessary and influential institutions of the Reservation system" (Nusbaum in Hegemann 1963:ix).

11. Any, and all, of these descriptive observations could have been applied to Kennedy's Dennehotso trading post during his thirty-three year proprietorship from 1948 to 1981.

12. *Bilagaanaa* in the Navajo language means an Anglo Caucasian (Navajo Curriculum Center 1986:1), often used as an all-purpose slang word for the White Man, sometimes in a derogatory way.

13. For example Adams' critical academic study of Shonto trading post (1963) became the catalyst for the investigations and resulting reforms in the late 1960s and 1970s. Though certainly not his intent, the thoroughly depicted business practices of his employers, the traders at Shonto, were not well perceived by the outside world. The Navajo's own SID report (1969) and the FTC staff report (1973) were each particularly damning with regard to traders.

14. See Adams' section on "Communication" (1963:212-214) for a discussion of "Trader Navaho" or "trader talk," which he defines as "a form of speech known and employed almost entirely by traders and
Navahos, and reserved for trading situations. In this regard, as well as in its formal structure, it is a true 'trade jargon', one of several types of pidgins or marginal languages which have been distinguished by linguists."

Kennedy is fluent in what he calls "trader Navajo." I spent the day with him at Dennehotso (7 June, 1989) and observed him visiting his old friends in their hogans, even gambling with fellow senior citizens. Not a word of English was spoken by any during the entire day.

15. During the 1890s traders customarily paid for weavings primarily by weight which, as Kate Peck Kent points out, "obviously did little to encourage the careful cleaning and carding of wool or the spinning of fine yarn" (1985:83). Kaufman and Selser go so far as to say: "This led to such evils as using dirty, unwashed wool because it weighed more than clean, fluffy wool, or even adding sand and dirt to the wool to weigh it down" (1985:75). Needless to say, these "pound blankets" were quite often poor quality, coarse-woven blankets, with little attention paid to design or weave.

16. Typical trading post design varied only slightly around the practical floor plan described by Roberts of "high counters built on three sides around the front door so that they enclosed a space for people to gather in, buy, sit and smoke tobacco: this was referred to as the bull pen. The floor behind these counters was raised a few inches above ground level, a psychological vantage point because it made the trader taller than his customers" (1987:23-24).

17. Pawn was a means of trade unique to the Navajo tribe, originating from the absence of money and the Navajos' skills in working with silver and turquoise. Basically, pawn was a system of credit whereby personal goods (anything from jewelry, saddles, Pendleton blankets, and livestock, to medicine bundles) were given to the trader for less than their value (thus giving the owner a fair opportunity to redeem them) in exchange for whatever good the owner needed at the time. Much has been written on the subject of pawn, a great deal directed at the trader and his supposed unfair practices. For general background information see: McNitt (1962:55-57), Roberts (1987:46-49), Kluckhohn and Leighton (1974:80). For detailed discussion and explanation of the transition of pawn in the Navajo economy and the changing role of the trader as Reservation "pawnbroker," see Roberts (1987:177-182). See chapter five, this dissertation, for Kennedy's attitudes toward pawn and his experiences with pawn at his trading post and chapter nine for investigations of trading practices and resulting new regulations concerning pawn.

18. See chapter nine, this dissertation, for detailed discussion and related Kennedy experiences.
Introduction:

1. Kennedy consistently refers to Fort Sumner, meaning the U.S. Army outpost at Bosque Redondo, as Fort Sumter.

2. Though the current academically accepted term throughout the southwest for the non-Indian is "Anglo," this is not universally recognized throughout the country or, most importantly, by Kennedy and his fellow traders. Hence, initially and during the presentation of introductory material the white man shall be referred to as an "Anglo." But as the narrative evolves and Kennedy begins to tell his own story, this non-Indian shall be referred to hereafter in common "trader lingo" as a "white man."

3. For stories about and an explanation of Kennedy's term, "watered sheep," see chapter six, this dissertation.

4. Immediately after a baby is born, a cradle is made for him or her which is used daily as a bed, for carrying the child, and as a resting place during his waking hours. The cradleboard is generally made of pine wood, and the pieces that hold the board together are made of strips of leather. According to Navajos at the Rough Rock Demonstration School, the baby is wrapped in blankets and tied upon the board where he is "protected and secure for his first years of life." The cradleboard also has an important spiritual meaning in the Navajo world because the first one was made by First Man, Talking God, and Coyote for Changing Woman. "The board which forms the back and the curved headboard were made of rainbow. The covers were made of white, blue, yellow and dark clouds. Along the sides were loops made of zig-zag lightning. Sunrays were used to tie all the pieces together and to hold the baby securely" (Navajo Art, History and Culture 1984:2).

When Kennedy's daughter Lavina was small, she told her dad she "had to have" a small cradleboard; so he asked John Tsosie, an employee if he could come up with one. John thought "the problem would be the bow that protects the baby if the cradleboard falls." Kennedy reports that John got the measurements of Lavina's doll and things went along fine, but he couldn't get the bow to work. He would plain [sic] the wood down and soak it over night but we didn't have the right kind of wood so as soon as its dried it would break. I told John I had to be going to town. Cheese came in Hoops. 4 20# cheese to a hoop. And it was made out of wood and made just like a barrel. I had gotten them from the wholesale houses before for the Navajoes. Well John finished it up and come to find out Lavina had him make two cradleboards. I told John the cradleboard business was finished. Get back to work.

That afternoon Flora and I heard Lavina crying and we found that she did not want the cradleboards for her dolls. She was trying to tie her kittens down in them and they had
scratched her. I asked her why she had asked John to make two cradleboards and she said one was for girl cats and the other for boy cats. It is impossible to tie a cat down in a cradleboard (K89:71-72).

5. The Indian Trader (Vol. 20, No. 3, March 1989) carried a feature story about Walter Kennedy and his Dennehotso Collection (p. 17). The saddle mentioned in note 4 which initiated his personal collection of "weaving, jewelry, artifacts, and memorabilia" is representative of an array of 912 catalogued items spanning 150 years of Navajo material culture, most of which originated in the Dennehotso area and were obtained either through trade or by actual purchase. The article went on to say that most of the weavings in the collection were pictorials. Kennedy actively encouraged his Dennehotso weavers to produce the figurative weavings by paying more money—"and always cash"—for them (21 March 1989).

See Mera (1975:Chapter 4) for discussion of pictorials and Peake (1989) regarding pictorials, "an original Native American folk art." Navajo weavings which depict graphic representations of human figures, livestock, birds, and trains were not common before the 1880s; though a blanket which included in its design four tiny red ducks was taken from the body of chief White Antelope in the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre. Wheat (1975:3) mentions a pictorial weaving seen by Kit Carson in 1840. The difficulties in creating a naturalistic motif were increased by the limitations of the Navajo loom technique. "None of the realistic features on pictorial blankets has an appearance of being derived from anything of a ceremonial or ritualistic nature, including sandpaintings, which might appear to have been a likely source" (Mera 1975:33). Today's yeibichai and sandpainting rugs (see note 11) were specifically created for twentieth century Anglo customers.

6. Joseph H. Lee, a son of John Doyle Lee of Lee's Ferry fame, after farming for a while with the Mormon colony of Moencopi near Tuba City, "probably before 1880, when in partnership with a J.C. Brown, chose the high dividing point on the Hamblin Trail, forty-five miles south of his father's old ferry [on the Colorado River], and built the Gap Trading Post" (McNitt 1962:265). After Lee abandoned this post, a new store was built on the west side of the Hamblin Wash by a trader named Johnny O'Farrell. When this store burned in 1937, it was replaced by a third Gap Trading Post on the west side of Highway 89. The Gap was originally not a reservation post, subject to government regulations, until the reservation boundaries were extended in 1900 (Roberts 1987:87).

7. Rather than extend credit for the amount of the rug, or pay the weaver with groceries or weaving supplies, Kennedy always made a practice of paying for rugs with hard cash, "good money. It makes a big difference" (21 March, 1989).

8. Kennedy's reference to "what the white man done" means the trader-inspired designs and colors perpetuated by individuals to best meet the demands of their particular Anglo customers.
9. In 1986 Kennedy and his friend Bill Auble, also a former trader, catalogued "The Dennehotsso Collection" of over 900 artifacts (out of a total of more than 1,600 pieces) and set up an incredible display in a large room, about 20' x 40', especially built for this purpose. Large glass showcases line four sides of Walter's "museum room." Underneath the display cases are pull-out drawers for storage of more jewelry and weavings. A thick bank-vault door serves as the entrance to this wealth of memorabilia.

10. Anglo-Americans favor the yei, yeibichai, and sandpainting rugs because of their supposed symbolic content; though, according to Kent, "while not sacred in themselves and not used in Navajo rituals, such weavings do depict religious themes. Yei are the Holy People as represented in Navajo sandpaintings, or dry paintings (compositions that medicine men 'paint' on the ground with colored sand in connection with curing ceremonies, images that must be destroyed the same day they are made). Yeibichai [weavings] are closely related stylistically to yei, but the rows of figures represent Navajo dancers in ceremonial attire rather than Holy People" (1985:93). Because these are religion-related themes, many weavers still have a reluctance to reproduce them in permanent form, and consider this a dangerous and sacrilegious act.

Hosteen Klah (Old Left-Handed Man) was the first person to be recognized for weaving drypainting or sandpainting rugs (though he was not the first weaver to do so). A Navajo singer, he wove his first replica of these sacred ceremonial designs in 1912 for a trader's wife, Franc Johnson Newcomb, in spite of the objections of fellow Navajo Medicine Men. Encouraged by promises that his efforts would help preserve Navajo traditions, Klah created a group of woven sandpaintings for Mary Cabot Wheelwright and her Museum of Navajo Ceremonial Art in Santa Fe (now called The Wheelwright Museum of the American Indian). See Rodee (1987:149) and Kaufman and Selser (1985:78). For a personal biography of Hosteen Klah by his friend Franc Newcomb, read Navajo Medicine Man and Sand Painter (1964).

11. The "sheik" rug is a large (9' x 12') floor rug woven with handspun wool in different shades of natural dyed yellows, black, white and brown. The rug was half-finished when Walter first saw it on Effie Black's loom. He decided he wanted it for his personal collection, providing she would weave some animals into the remaining half. The finished rug is a combination "Teec Nos Pos"/pictorial, including assorted animals, men on horseback, and a fully-costumed Arabian sheik. Asked the meaning of the incongruous sheik, Walter replied, "I think it's Skinwalker. It means whatever fits the story" (21 March, 1989). To call this rug style "Teec Nos Pos" (indicating a design pattern typical of that region) is incorrect, according to Walter, who says it's really "Dennehotsso," the kind favored by most of the weavers in the area. "You find very few like this from any other place" (27 November, 1989).

Folklorist Margaret K. Brady explains that "Skinwalkers are human witches who wear coyote skins and travel about at night....According to traditional Navajo belief, Skinwalkers climb on top of a hogan when a
family is asleep and drop pollen, specially made from the ground bones of human infants, down the smokehole. Contact with this substance brings the sleeping person ill health, social problems, and sometimes death. Skinwalkers, then, as witches, constantly threaten the highly valued order and balance of Navajo society with the inherent possibility of chaos" (1984:20-22). For a complete discussion of the symbolic and actual roles of Skinwalker and witchcraft in the Navajo social universe, refer to Brady's chapter one, "The Anomalous Navajo Skinwalker."

12. Old pawn refers to any good (jewelry, rugs, saddles, guns, even livestock) left with a trader for credit, and unclaimed or unredeemed after a specified period of time. Originally government regulations stated six months, then, in 1973, changed to a twelve-month, plus a thirty-day wait period, before sale of pawned goods was allowed. (For related stories, see chapters five and nine of this dissertation.)

13. When Walter gave me his stacks of stories, he said, "Here, Nancy, you fix it all up. I only went to school to the ninth grade, and I don't know all that fancy kind of grammar and stuff" (21 March, 1989).

14. Willow Roberts, in her 1987 biography of trader Stokes Carson (Twentieth-Century Trading on the Navajo Reservation) gives an excellent account of "skirmishes" during those tumultuous decades. Refer to chapters 15, 16 and 17 for her thorough discussion, background, and analysis of events. William Y. Adams' 1950s' study of Shonto trading post and the role of the trader (published by the Smithsonian Institution as BAE Bulletin 188 in 1963) scrutinizes (in 307 pages) the ethnographic, anthropological, sociological, and economic aspects of the trader (again, Stokes Carson and family) and his post during a time frame comparable to a segment of Walter Kennedy's long career.
Figure 45. Cradleboard John Tsosie made for Lavina’s cats, now part of Walter’s Dennehotso Collection. Note bow piece made out of a cheese hoop. Photograph by Nancy Peake 1991.
Prologue:

1. This was Walter’s explanation of the name Dennehotso. Regarding the confusion and various spellings that appear even today in contemporary books and maps, he explained (during a day-long tour of Dennehotso and its environs): "The government wanted to change the spelling to Dinehotso, and they changed all the U.S. road signs. We had a big fight about that. But all the Navajo signs, like the chapter house, still read Dennehotso" (7 June, 1989).

2. Walter supplied more of the primitive details: "When we first went to Dennehotso we had coleman gas lights and 1 kerosene refrigerator. No cold pop and 3 small trays of ice over 24 hrs. Wood stoves and heaters. Out side toilets. We did have water in the house. Gravity flow windmill" (K86:53). Electrical power finally came to Dennehotso sixteen years later in 1964.

3. From conversations with Walter during Dennehotso visit, 7 June, 1989. Later he elaborated: "I had all the business. I am good. They like me and we had the stuff. We had money back of us. There was no deal too big or too small" (11 August, 1989).

4. Walter’s Navajo clientele still used wagons as late as the 1960s for most of their reservation travel. Though he always had some kind of truck (which was a necessity because he did most of his own freighting), Walter explained the continued practicality of wagons: "Wagons didn’t use much gas. And I was using 300-500 gallons of gas every three to four months with my truck" (2 November, 1991). In one of his stories (K89-9) he describes two different wagons sold by Gallup wholesale firms in 1951: the red and green Indiana Wagon sold by Gallup Mercantile Company, and the orange and green Kelly Wagon created by Gross Kelly. "The Indiana Wagon was a 2 1/2-inch steel tire, and the Kelly Wagon was a 3-inch. And the Kelly Wagon was a lot better looking" (11 August, 1989).

5. Charley Ashcroft was the son of Mormon James Barton Ashcroft who was sustained as the Bishop for the Burnham Ward in the Fruitland area (in which Olio, Kennedy’s family home town, was included) in 1897. After Charley got out of the trading post business, he became chief of the Navajo Police at Fort Defiance for several years. "He always used to come out to the store at Dennehotso, since he had a soft spot for the place, as he built it. And he became real good friends with the family" (29 November, 1989).

6. Mexican Water Trading Post was built by Hambleton Bridger Noel (Hamp), a former freighter for the Hyde Exploring Expedition which had expanded its archaeological work into the trading business. Noel was first hired by that company’s manager, Richard Wetherill. In 1905 Noel built his first store at Teec-nos-pos. Two years later he built a second post "about thirty miles farther west, on high plateau land south
of the San Juan, calling it Naakaii-toh, or Mexican Water. This was empty country of redrock mesas where few white men had ever been" (McNitt 1962:339-343).

7. This date differs from Willow Roberts' research (1987:101) which mentions "Dinehotso" Trading Post as "dating from the early 1900s." She bases the earlier date on McNitt who refers to Ben Wetherill, travelling "by way of Mexican Water and Dinnehotso in 1917-20" (1962:295). It is my belief that McNitt was merely referring to the community of Dennehotso, since Kennedy's first-hand knowledge of Ashcroft's building of the actual trading post sounds more plausible.

8. According to Walter, Smook and Taft were partners in a car dealership in Farmington, New Mexico at the time. Ashcroft hired them to take his load of building materials out to the reservation "because there were damn few trucks in the area, and they were probably the only ones who could do it" (20 November, 1991).

9. Walter says that this man's Navajo name "Hole Kidney" refers to a kidney-shaped knoll or hill "somewhere in the area" (11 August, 1989).
Chapter one:

1. Elmer McGee was just one of many McGee traders, all related in some way. The McGees were Mormons whose trading roots went back to the mid-1800s with trading expeditions beyond the Colorado River. Navajo-Mormon trade became more permanent with the Mormon colonization southward and the establishment of actual trading posts near their farming settlements. Some of those early pioneer Mormon trading families are still active on the reservation today; among them, in addition to the McGees, are the Foutzes, Hunts, Kerleys and Lees. See Adams (1963:151).

2. Thomas Bryan, a tall Irishman with a flattened and twisted nose, was one of the original settlers in the Farmington area. As early as 1880 he and his brother-in-law (a "Mr. Virden") had built their first trading post, called Naschiti. See Rosetta Briggs's Our Valley (1978:6-9) for more details, though somewhat confusing, of Bryan's mercantile career.

3. According to Walter Kennedy, his mother, Viola Smith, was the first white child born on the Florida Mesa in southwestern Colorado.

4. Even before the beginning of the twentieth century, the southwest, and specifically the Territory of New Mexico, was being touted by journalists, travel writers and government propagandists as a haven for health-seekers. Mark Simmons writes, "In fact, a French medical society issued a statement asserting that, of all habitable places in the world, New Mexico was the one most free of consumption, as tuberculosis was then called" (1982:343). The generally high altitude and thin atmosphere combined with the low humidity to provide relief and in fact cure many people suffering from respiratory ailments.

5. For details of early Mormon settlements in the San Juan Valley see MacDonald and Arrington (1970:57-61).

6. In their collaborative account Kennedy and Auble expanded upon the financial operation of the Coolidge Ditch Company. In order to pay the "Ditch Walkers" or "Ditch Riders" who were employed to patrol, maintain, and clean the ditches, and repair valves and locks to connecting ditches, the farmers and water users paid ditch assessments. But during years when crops were poor, many people could not afford to pay those assessments. "But good times or bad the ditches had to be maintained. The Company was responsible for the maintenance, and payment to the ditch workers. When the company had no funds, due to lack of payment by the water users it created a major problem (AK:4).

Like many other companies of this period the Coolidge Ditch Company issued scrip and time sheets to the workers which could be used in local stores to purchase groceries and goods in lieu of cash. Roy Kennedy was one of the merchants who would honor the Coolidge scrip. They would often have to
hold the scrip for long periods of time, until the company could afford to redeem it. If cash were needed, Roy would discount the scrip by 10% from the face value. When the companies [sic] assessments were paid they would buy back their scrip and the store owners like Roy would have made a profit on the goods sold. It was things like this that kept a small isolated community going when times were financially bad. An old friend quoted Roy as saying, "I never lost a dime on a widow that I had extended credit to, or helped in any way. But I sure lost a bunch on the men" (AK: 4 and K86:2).

7. Auble and Kennedy mentioned that "all three of the boys had been put on a horses back by the time they were two or three years old and riding horses was natural for all of them. The boys had horses and burros to ride and they rode a lot at very young ages" (AK:5).

8. The original store and home combination had become too small for the Kennedys' expanding family. In 1918 Roy built another adobe building with brick veneer right on the road, a few hundred yards in front of the "old" store, and just west of where Walter and Flora live today (16 May, 1991).

9. Kennedy explains that "My Dad Fatten these Navajo cattle and sold them to a butcher shop in Farmington. I think there was one at that time [called] Hubbards. Also sold them in Gallup to the Miners" (K89-10:211).

10. In the eyes of the Federal Trade Commission Roy Kennedy would have been advanced in his hiring practices to have had Navajos helping out in his store at this early date. In a highly negative report prepared in 1972 the FTC discusses the trading post as an employer: "Trading facilities are typically managed by a white man and wife, with additional help from children or relatives. Pressured by the Navajo tribal legal department, posts have recently commenced hiring local Navajo residents. Although half of trading post employees are now Navajo, most are employed in menial positions. Some employers do not hire Navajos at all. Those few that enjoy positions of responsibility are compensated at a lower rate than comparable white employees" (1973:28-29).

The "dollar a day plus a noon meal" salary that Roy Kennedy paid Old Jim in the 1920s sounds almost generous when compared to the salaries that Walter paid his workers three decades later in the early days of Dennehotso: "$60 a month which amounted to about $2 a day in trade" (August, 1989). Walter Kennedy, as did his father, always had local Navajo help in his trading posts.

William Y. Adams writes about wages of Navajo employees in the 1950s in Shonto: A Study of the Role of the Trader in a Modern Navaho Community: "Shonto Trading Post employs one Navaho helper throughout the year, at a salary of $30.00 a week....Shonto is believed to be the only store on the entire Navaho Reservation employing a 'clerk' who does not speak English." The store also employed seasonal Navajo helpers to
sack wool and herd sheep for the annual lamb drive to the railroad, "the only qualification being able-bodiedness. Older and unacculturated men are preferred as shepherders. Very commonly, such temporary employment is reserved, if possible, for persons owing delinquent accounts, as a means of settling them" (1963:127-128).

11. Basic to the Navajo way of life is the maintenance of hozho, or beauty and balance. If either his psychological or physical well-being was "out of balance," the traditional Navajo would summon a singer or "medicine man" to affect a cure. Kluckhohn and Leighton discuss the singer in *The Navaho*: "The ways in which the myths describe the invention of the curing rites and the relationship of the inventor to his first patient suggest that the man who conducts a ceremonial is the psychological equivalent of an older relative who forgives the patient for his or her guilty wishes....Navaho religion is formalized so that any man of enough intelligence can learn to be a Singer. They have great prestige, are revered for the aid they bring, are much in demand, and may obtain large fees" (1974:198, 248).

With regard to the mutual benefits of the singer’s livelihood, Kluckhohn and Leighton point out that "ceremonial life gives opportunity for personal expression to more than the small group of Singers....The giving of a rite—particularly an elaborate one—also confers prestige. It shows not only that the family are doing their duty by one of their number but that they have the wherewithal to pay for it. Hence rites are sometimes given primarily as gestures of affluence rather than because some one of the family is really ill or disturbed. They seem to be the Navaho form of conspicuous spending. To give an unusual ceremonial with elaborate equipment—to summon a famous Singer and invite guests from miles away—is perhaps the best way for a family to show the world that they have ‘arrived’" (1974:230). However, the most common and more frequent Sings were, as in Old Jim’s case, to affect a cure for an ailing family member. (More in endnote 17, chapter 2, this dissertation.)

12. The beads and belt once belonging to Old Jim and his wife are today part of Kennedy’s prized Dennehotsa Collection.

13. Because of the lack of cash in circulation on the reservation where trade was traditionally based upon the barter system, many traders issued their own form of scrip and/or coins, referred to as "trader money" or "seco." Adams discusses the early exchange system and concludes with the statement that "the use of trade money has long been outlawed, but it can still be seen at a few of the more isolated stores on the Navaho Reservation" (1963:152). According to Walter, the use of "cinco" ("probably related to old Spanish terms") or trader tokens was officially abolished by agreement of the Indian Office and the United Traders Association in 1935 (28 November, 1989).

14. The back side of each "seco coin" was imprinted: "GOOD FOR $1.00 (or 50, 25, or 5 cents) IN MERCHANDISE NOT TRANSFERABLE." At a later time Walter suggested that "maybe the coins were made of pewter [rather

15. Kennedy explains that when his father's cincio money came in, rather than simply exchange it for cash, he traded back goods, or paid wages (to his Navajo employees), or bought cattle from his customers (13 August, 1989).

16. Walter's wife Flora would be called "Flowa" by the Dennehotso Navajos. Their children also were given Navajo names: daughter Lavina was "Bitsi Lagaii" or White Head for her light blonde hair; and son Ivan was "Puggie Biye." Puggie was an old Navajo man who lived in a little rock house near the Dennehotso Trading Post. According to Kennedy and Auble, this man had a large, bulbous nose that made him look different; so the local people called him "Puggie." It seems that Puggie was a loner, having left his wife, when she became involved in the peyote clans. Puggie was a fixture around the store most of the time. The only time he would be gone was when he was mixing a new batch for his little home made still. Puggie would hang around the store from opening to closing, and was joked about and revered at the same time, by the community. Each day Walter went through the produce items and vegetables. If something were about to get too ripe or getting a little soft or wilted, he laid it aside for Puggie (AK:88).

In November, 1951, Flora went into town to await the birth of her second child. When Ivan was born, Walter left immediately to meet the newest member of his family. Upon his return to Dennehotso, the Navajos gathered around to ask about Flora and her new son.

One older lady asked Walter what the boy looked like. Walter was in a good mood. He gave it a moments thought and said the boy was all red and wrinkled up and in fact he looked just like Puggie. The crowd roared with laughter, all except Puggie. He was flushed with embarassment, and left as soon as he could make his way to the front door. Soon after Flora and Ivan returned Puggie came into the store and announced to Walter and the customers that he had "come to see his boy." Walter took him into the house to see Ivan. When they came back into the store, Puggie, who was pleased at seeing the baby before anyone else proudly announced that "His boy, was sure some good boy." Ivan's Navajo name from that day forward, was 'Puggie Biye' or Puggie's Boy (AK:89).
Chapter two:

1. Walter translates Lukachukai as: "loco weed in a level spot" (18 November, 1989). The first trading post was established at Lukachukai, along the western base of the red-rock escarpment of the Lukachukai Mountains (one mile east of the junction of Navajo Routes 12 and 13 in Arizona), in 1892 by George N. Barker.

2. Walter notes that his arrival on the reservation coincided with a particularly difficult period that tested Navajo/White relationships, because 1933 was the year that John Collier (the New Deal Commissioner of Indian Affairs) first presented his plans for stock reductions to the Tribal Council as a remedy for extreme overgrazing. The government rationale for this drastic program failed to take into account the place of sheep in Navajo life. In addition to destroying the livelihood of an entire people, stock reduction seemingly left the Navajos without a future and as emotionally scarred as their imprisonment at Bosque Redondo. Government implementation of the program was insensitive and inhumane in the eyes of the owners of the sheep, who basically considered their flock as "family." Oftentimes whole herds were burned or slaughtered by appointed police and left to rot.

Walter Kennedy was working at his brother's post in Lukachukai during the stock reduction period. He said, "The government paid [the Navajo] one dollar a pelt. We [the traders] got reimbursed with a voucher when they sold them to us. The family was allowed to keep the meat. But it was such a lot of waste. And the whole area stank so bad." And then, reiterating his pet peeve: "The federal government—if you want something done wrong, they'll do it" (21 March, 1989)!

In his assessment of the stock reduction program, Adams states that Collier became the "modern Navaho culture-villain" and is referred to throughout the reservation as "the man who took away our sheep" (1963:46). In fact, he continues, Collier and his hated program "have supplanted Kit Carson and the 'long walk' as symbols of Navaho resentment, and the military period of the 1860's has faded into the quaint unreality of folktale." See Adams' summary of the reduction program and its effects, p. 239. For an excellent analysis of stock reduction and its impact on the reservation from a sympathetic Anglo point of view, see Roberts (1987), especially pp. 85-89.

To appreciate the impact of stock reduction as perceived by Navajos who experienced the program, refer to the oral history collection Navajo Livestock Reduction: A National Disgrace (NCC:1974) and the chapter "Stock Reduction" in Between Sacred Mountains (Rock Point Community School:1982). Essentially, the Navajos did not associate too many sheep with erosion and the need to reduce their numbers to save the range, but precisely the opposite: "the reduction of the stock 'caused the rain clouds to diminish,' which kept the grass from growing, and this in turn resulted in the erosion. The vast majority of the Navajos never
accepted or understood the need for livestock reduction^ (NCC 1974:x). See also Boyco (1974), When Navajos Had Too Many Sheep: The 1940's.

3. According to H.L. James (1976:37), license transfer records show that a W.R. Cassidy sold out to Earl Kennedy in 1928, although Walter insists that his father Roy and brother Earl purchased the Lukachukai Trading Post as partners in 1926 (AK:38). Earl's son Kenneth managed the post after his father's death in 1971 until its closure in 1979.

4. The Lukachukai area was at the time one of two on the reservation known for its Yeis rugs (refer to Preface endnote 11), the other being an area along the San Juan River to the northeast of Lukachukai. The Lukachukai Yeis were heavier and more coarse-textured, hence more suitable for floor coverings than wall hangings.

5. Usually the term "carding" refers to the combing of the raw wool into parallel fibers that can be easily spun. Two hand-held, metal-toothed cards or "towcards" are used to rake the wool back and forth, transferring the wool from one card to the other, and at the same time straightening the fibers into a loose fluffy mass called a "rolag."

6. Fred Harvey was an Englishman whose name became permanently linked with the Santa Fe Railroad when he began to offer quality dining to railroad passengers in a lunchroom in Topeka, Kansas in 1876. At the time of his death in 1901, the Fred Harvey Company had acquired at least 26 restaurants, 16 hotel-restaurants, 15 newstands, and 20 dining cars on the Santa Fe Railroad (The Heard Museum:1976). Harvey's son-in-law, John Frederick Huckel, then began expanding the company's area of operation into the sale of Indian crafts, collecting and commissioning items aimed at satisfying the traveler's growing desire for souvenirs of the exotic Southwest, as well as furnishing museums with artifacts for their developing collection/exhibits of American Indians. Since freight rates were "extremely advantageous," yielding a "virtually insured profit," the Fred Harvey company served as a supply source for the East, sending empty boxcars into Indian Country (as the Santa Fe Railroad billed their popular tourist routes across the once "barren" Southwest) to be filled with Indian-made crafts for sale to the rest of the world.

7. Herman Schweizer was the creative entrepreneur, and chief buyer, who masterminded the Fred Harvey Indian Department for forty years. With amazing foresight, beginning at the turn of the century, Schweizer marketed the material culture of the Indians through elaborate sales rooms incorporating Native American architecture (e.g. Hopi House at the Grand Canyon) while encouraging prospective buyers with the presence of appropriately-costumed Indian craftspeople selling their wares at the train station (e.g. the Alvarado Hotel in Albuquerque) and/or entertaining the travelling public with native dances. For further information about Schweizer see Bart Ripp, "Jewels of the Desert" (1987).

8. Walter explained that since the trading post got all the cancellations [postal fees] from the post office ["because we were the post office"], "it didn't cost anything to ship rugs--just like the
9. "Raison [raisin] Jack" was the home-made brew concocted by local Navajos out of sugar, raisins, and yeast. See Chapter eight, this dissertation, for Kennedy’s stories about the presence and impact of this beverage at Dennehotozho.

10. Walter refers to those who "brew their own booze" and those who import it illegally by the same term, bootleggers.

11. State and county law enforcement agencies had no jurisdiction within the Navajo Reservation. Therefore, the F.B.I. was the federal agency designated to handle major crimes and incidents.

12. Missionary activity began on the Navajo Reservation as early as 1871 when, responding to President Grant’s "peace policy" and the "misguided notion that the solution to the Indians’ problems would be found in making Christians out of them and by giving them the benefits of the white man’s education," the Presbyterian Home Mission Board sent Miss Charity Gaston to become the first white teacher to the Navajos (Locke 1986:406-407). The Indian Bureau and Department of the Interior, in effect, passed along the responsibilities of "civilizing" the Indians to the various religious denominations, assigning specific tribal groups to individual sects. The Presbyterians initially were assigned to the Navajos, though before long the Catholics, Methodists, Mormons, and eventually Mennonites, Seventh-Day Adventists and others were all competing for the Navajos’ souls. See Locke (1986), Part Six, Chapter Two for in depth discussion.

The U.S. government encouraged this sectarian activity by making it possible for missionaries to receive treaty and tribal funds until 1917, but by then mission schools were well entrenched—each striving to replace the native religion with their own particular brand of Christianity. St. Isabel’s near Lukachukai was just one of these many missions.

13. Fear and avoidance of the dead—but not, as Gary Witherspoon explains, a fear of death itself (1977:20)—remains widespread even today throughout the Navajo reservation, despite the teachings and presence of Americans for over one hundred years. Adams reported that a common practice during his 1950s research at Shonto was to carry dying people outside the hogan in order to avoid the necessity of abandoning the family home (1963:90). See Chapter seven, this dissertation, for Walter’s story about his friend Skinny Benally. Locke reports that unless proper precautions are taken in the burial process, "the dead are believed to be capable of returning to earth as ghosts to plague the living" (1986:30). In earlier days slaves buried the Navajo dead; later the white traders were often asked to assume this duty, vis a vis Walter’s own experiences.

14. The custom of burying the dead in single, random gravesites changed due to the influence of the white missionaries. During my day-long visit to Dennehotozho with Kennedy in August, 1989, we went to the local
cemetery ("new" during his residence) to "visit" his old friends who had been the subjects of so many of his stories. Though outwardly resembling the Anglo burial ground with a short white picket fence surrounding the sandy field, the collection of graves, each a sandy mound about a foot high, had a distinctly non-Anglo aura. Individual headstones varied from the usual plain, weather-worn wooden cross with the name carved in the crosspiece (e.g. "B BITAH'S WIFE" or "POORMAN KID") and the birth date carved in the vertical section above with the date of death below, to a large white enameled wash basin, to a few stone markers—one a hand-hewn piece of local sandstone with crude carving, and another a formal marble stone, professionally carved, complete with horse and rope encircling Will Tuni's epitaph: "MAN OF WISDOM LEADER OF MEN." Graves were adorned with plastic flowers and occasional U.S. flags for veterans.

15. Indian trader (and collaborator) William E. Auble met Walter Kennedy "in the early 1970s"; and though he was only ten years younger than his friend, he admits that "his [Walter's] trading experience is a generation a head [sic] of my own" (AK: preface). Auble spent his career on the western Navajo Reservation, but he and Kennedy had many mutual friends.

16. A "chindi" or "skinwalker" is a witch, in Navajo eyes. This abhorred ghost, in whatever form, usually appearing at night in dog-like forms (coyotes or wolves) is closely connected with the Navajos' universal dread of having anything to do with the dead. This underlying fear, according to Robert Young, is because the Navajo believes that "when one dies, the evil remains behind within the physical body and thus it must be avoided" (in Brady 1984:23-24).

17. At the core of Navajo ceremonial life is the Blessing Way, the story of Creation, or the "emergence" of the Navajo People into this world, and the events that followed. This is the most sacred of all Navajo ceremonials, and when conducted in its entirety, is a nine-day event. The purpose of this series of chants is to place the people (or the patient) in harmony with the world around them and with the Holy People. Kluckhohn and Leighton explain that the Blessing Way is a "precautionary, protecting, prophylactic—not a cure" (1974:212). Consequently the Blessing Way is given frequently. Patients and occasions calling for the Blessing Way "sing" are as diverse as pregnant women, men leaving for or returning from military service, puberty rites, marriage, the consecration of a new hogan, and newly chosen headmen.

Apparently Auble and Kennedy share the common Anglo misconceptions about the multi-faceted Blessing Way ceremonial. Because the chant often translates the Navajo representation of hozho or harmony into "beauty," it is often confused with and misnamed the Beauty Way. Kluckhohn and Leighton describe the actual series of Beauty Way chants as belonging to the group of Holy Way chants that deal with "troubles which have been traced to lightning, thunder, the winds, snakes, various animals, and other Holy People" (1974:220).
18. The first post to occupy the famous Ganado site was Pueblo Colorado, established by Charles Crary in 1871. William B. Leonard carried on until he sold out to Juan Lorenzo Hubbell who renamed the post after his Navajo friend Ganado Mucho. Hubbell died in 1930, leaving the operation to his son Roman who, according to Kennedy, must have had doubts about continuing his career as the Ganado trader. He remained, however, until his own death in 1957, leaving his wife to carry on for ten more years (James 1988:65-66). On April 3, 1967, Hubbell Trading Post was purchased by the federal government to be operated as a National Historic Site. Today the post is both a functioning business and a living history exhibit under National Park Service management, run by the Southwest Parks and Monuments Association.

19. Fifteen miles west of the more famous Teec Nos Pos post in Arizona, Red Mesa was one of more than twenty trading posts owned and operated by the six Foutzes brothers. The Foutzes were Mormons whose home territory was also the Fruitland/Kirtland area near Farmington, New Mexico. The Foutzes and Kennedys have been friends and neighbors for at least three generations, their trading paths often crossing and intermingling throughout the years. In fact, the trader who today owns and operates Kennedy’s beloved Dennehotso is Phil Foutz. When we stopped in during our visit in August, 1989, so that Kennedy could show me his former domain, he was distressed to see the transformation and the “uncared for” look of the place. Many of his old friends appeared outside to visit, but Kennedy felt uncomfortable holding court, saying that “Foutz doesn’t like me to hang around because people just come to visit and won’t come in and buy.”

It is important to note an error in McNitt (1962:300) who reports at the time of his writing that the Foutzes owned or operated twenty posts, including among them “Dennehotso,” which could not have been possible considering Walter’s ownership and residence there from 1948-1981.

20. Walter refers to Leupp Trading Post in conversation and/or notes as "Loop" or "Sunrise."

21. Trader Toney Richardson reflects upon those changes after his own return to the Reservation after the war, along with six thousand Navajos who found it impossible to return to the Old Ways: "The Navajos’ economic standard had improved astonishingly. Their attitudes were changed by knowledge of other people, of far lands. Now for the first time, The People were not forced to live in a circumscribed world peculiarly their own" (1986:181).

Tom Sasaki pointed out in his study of Fruitland, New Mexico, A Navajo Community in Transition, that the returning Navajos were much more "individualistic," resulting in a breakdown in the former system of extended families and communal responsibilities. Rather than distribute bounty among relatives (which "once seen must be shared upon request"), "farmers now sold surplus crops to traders. With the cash received, they paid their old debts but avoided any traditional obligations to
indigent relatives." Sasaki observed that the old relationship with traders also began to change: "Traders no longer gave credit freely when they observed that a customer’s sheep were being ‘mortgaged’ to several stores or when they knew that an Indian spent his cash in town" (1960:23).
Figure 46. The Dennehotso cemetery. Photograph by Nancy Peake 1989.
Chapter three:

1. Joe Hatch, another Mormon Indian trader from the San Juan Valley, was the son of Ira Hatch, one of the original pioneers in the Fruitland/Kirtland area. Ira came West from Ohio in 1840 and spent many years in Utah and Arizona as a missionary among the Indians. When he and his wife, Amanda Pease, were living near Kanab, Utah, an Indian man brought them a seven-year-old girl, saying his wife had died and asking if they would care for the girl. According to McNitt (1962:341) the girl was a Paiute. Shortly thereafter Ira's wife died and friends offered to take the girl now named Sarah. Meanwhile, Ira continued to live among the Paiutes, Hopis, Navajos and Utes, returning when Sarah was nineteen to marry her. Joe Hatch was one of their three children (Briggs 1978:4).

2. McGee had purchased the second Leupp area trading post (located on the Colorado River) during the war. He had offered Walter temporary employment in his first Leupp post while Walter was awaiting his draft call. As Walter tells it, eventually "the store at Sunrise [under Walter's management] was making money, but McGee's store was not" (21 November, 1991).

3. Walter gleefully recounted the time when McGee came to visit him at Dennehots in 1970: "He came here and decided to make up and by then I could have bought and sold him" (21 November, 1991).

4. Walter explained that at the end of the war, "with all the defense plants and war-oriented industries closing down, and millions of servicemen returning home to a very small job market, the federal government realized that the young men would have a hard time even finding a menial job. They [the government] established a policy whereby the veterans could draw $20 a week, for fifty-two weeks, to tide them over while looking for work. This program was jokingly referred to by the ex-servicemen as the '52-20 Club'" (AK, p. 60).

5. Troy Kennedy was actually the manager of South Side Trading post, an employee of Ken Kline the owner. Walter said that whenever he had to work at South Side, he would drive down to the footbridge and then walk the remaining mile to the store (21 November, 1991).

6. A trading post operator did not actually buy the trading post or the property upon which it sat. He could, however, buy the leases to conduct business at a specific post. Leases are jointly granted by the BIA and the Navajo Tribe, and the trader is required to post two bonds—one (to the best of Walter's memory, and the specifics changed during the course of his fifty-three years as a trader) of $10,000 to the BIA (U.S. Government), and the other of $20,000 to the Tribe. At the time he purchased Dennehots, he recalls that "all the business was done with the BIA" (29 November, 1989).
7. Walter never wanted to make any deal unless he would have a share of the business, insuring that he would benefit from the fruits of his own hard labor. As he put it, "My brother Troy and I were good traders. We got the point. And we wouldn't go to work unless we got an interest [in the profits]. We both knew how to make money" (21 November, 1991).

8. In its negative analysis of the trading post system in the early 1970s the FTC discusses this isolation as an "abusive" and "monopolistic" practice—as if the trader were responsible for the physical landscape (and the fact the many Navajos "persist" in living many miles from the nearest road) and purposefully used it to his advantage. The report did note, however, that "confronted by low population density in most areas, it is not economically feasible for trading posts to be located in close proximity to one another; the volume of business would not be adequate to support each facility." As a consequence most trading posts do not compete directly with one another, resulting in what the FTC considers a "geographical monopoly." Walter called it simply "captive trade" (9 November, 1991).

In the words of the report, "the trader maintains his monopoly through the geographic isolation of Navajo residents. The reservation is characterized by great distances between communities and by the lack of transportation facilities. The trading post is, for the many Navajos without access to transportation, the only source for all necessary goods and services. The trader is presented with a secure, stable population who must patronize his facility." See the Staff Report to the Federal Trade Commission 1973:12,15. Of particular interest is Chapter IV, "Abusive Trading Practices."

9. The distance and isolation was not as much a factor as were the bad roads on the reservation. Those few companies that did deliver to trading posts added hefty freight charges to every shipment. Because Walter preferred to haul his own goods rather than pay the freight, he did his own freighting from Farmington and Gallup, "wearing out a brand new truck every year for the rest of his trading career" (AK:100). The gasoline trucks in particular would not deliver to the trading posts—all of which had their own gas pump out in front. Walter hauled in gas himself, by the barrel. Five hundred gallons would last the Dennehotso post about three months (7 June, 1989).

Richard E. Klinck, in his book about Goulding's Trading Post in Monument Valley, says the intra-reservation roads of shifting sand and slick rock "should not be identified by that name at all...in this the land where the sure-footed horse and burro are the unrivaled kings of transportation" (1984:103). He paints a colorful picture of the "Dennehotso" environs, especially its roads which are only "a bit better than going cross country" (1984:103-109).

10. Adams reports that the magneto phone line installed in the years between 1934 and WWII connected most of the trading posts and newly completed schools of the region with each other and with Tuba City and Flagstaff. Until its replacement in 1955 with standard phone service, this party line "was believed to be the longest in America, with 41
subscribers and over 700 miles of wire in a single circuit" (1963:45).

The Kennedys finally got their indoor bath in 1955. The infamous "road" was "improved" (partially paved, after a fashion—"oiled," says Walter) in 1962. Electrical power reached Dennehotso in 1964 (August, 1989). Not many of the Dennehotso Navajos took advantage of electricity. "In the first place," says Walter, "it's got to be free or they don't want it. Second, you can't easily put a transformer on a hogan. It just wasn't practical. Originally they had it only around the housing project. I always sold lots of kerosene and gasoline for lights" (21 November, 1991). Television reception was limited to one station, and only the Kennedys and the school had a TV. "But we used to do our rug buying in the living room, and the Navajos would watch TV then."

11. Hap Knight, Walter's good friend and employee, is the man from whom Walter always said that he "learned more about the trading business than from anyone I had ever worked with in my life" (K89:23). But Hap did not actually appear on the Dennesoto scene until 1951, though Walter, writing many years later, included him in this earlier incident. Later stories (related in this dissertation) are filled with Dennehotso anecdotes in which Hap played an important role.

12. Fort Defiance was the administrative center for the Southern Navajo Agency, one of five regulatory divisions established by the federal government. The Navajo Indian Police and the Court of Indian Offenses (the primary regulatory body at each agency) were responsible for enforcing those regulations concerning trade or aimed at eradicating "vices" (Bailey and Bailey 1988:107-109).

The U.S. Army post Fort Defiance was established by Colonel Edwin Vose Summer in 1851 in the heart of Dinétah, the land of the Navajo, at Canocito Bonito, a site considered holy by The People (Locke 1986:265). Today Fort Defiance is just inside the Arizona border, seventy miles north of Zuni and 190 miles west of Albuquerque.

13. Roberts continues with her analysis of the situation: "Relations across cultures are not always easy, and they are made less so if one of the cultures is taking over land, a way of life, and economy. Misunderstanding, frustration, disappointment, and inability to communicate all take their toll. A trader could be disliked as a symbol of the culture he represented, and he would have to prove himself as an individual" (1987:110-111).

Walter did mention that "no one ever stayed alone. You were afraid if alone. I didn't love to stay out there by myself." Though he did say he never worried about being there with his family and was never concerned about his children, Lavina and Ivan. The real trouble apparently began after alcohol was readily available: "Booze was the real problem. Sometimes a drunk would go home for his gun" (August, 1989).

14. Walter explained: "A lot of traders used to hit [troublemakers]
over the head with axe handles. It was called 'The Equalizer.' I never had to use one, and I never was whipped while I was out there. But I was scared a lot of times" (21 November, 1991).

15. During my visit to Dennehotso with Walter in the summer of 1989 he took time out from our hogan-to-hogan tour to get down on the ground with a group of old women (bedecked in silver and turquoise, and dressed in their long velveteen skirts and blouses, despite the mid-nineties heat of a mid-June afternoon) and throw in his coins for a good-natured "stick game." With much laughter and obvious joking on both sides (all in Navajo) Walter came out the loser but in good spirits, happy to be back at "home" with his old friends.

He later described the stick game as "somewhat like Parcheesi, There's this big rock in the center. You take your three sticks, which are white on one end and black on the other, and hit the rock. The sticks fly up in the air and fall down. Depending on the number of white ends showing, you get a certain number of jumps [or moves] with your marker, which can be anything. I used a pencil. You start around and see who comes into home first" (29 November, 1989).

16. There was an official record, "more or less," which accounted for Dennehotso area families. Walter explained that "the BIA brand books gave all the family heads. Listed the brand, the owner, and his census number. Then each area of the reservation had its number. The BIA had all that stuff, but they came to me for the information" (21 November, 1991).

17. James T. Downs discusses the importance of selling well-known brands in the trading post as opposed to the "popular view" that the trader could offer cheap, shoddy merchandise "to be palmed off on unsuspecting 'natives.'" He pointed out that "the Navajo is a hard-headed customer, stubbornly loyal to products that have served him well and generally suspicious of new products. In a largely illiterate population, familiar and unchanging labels are of great importance" (1972:121).

18. Adams referred to soda pop as "the lubricant of Navaho commerce; so much so that its consumption on some occasions has become almost literally a ritual" (1963:210). Walter certainly must agree as he never visits Dennehotso without a large cooler full of "pop" in the back of his truck. Before initiating a conversation with anyone, he offers them a can of soft drink.

Adams continues his discussion noting that soda pop is nearly always the first and last item purchased at the trading post, with the first bottle consumed during the often lengthy trading process. He also observed that "it is the only currency with which minor services such as helping to load and unload mercantile trucks are rewarded...as well as traditionally and ritually given as a reward for large purchases or paying off large accounts. 'Anyone paying his bill in full gets a bottle of pop' is or was standard trading-post policy throughout the length and breadth of the Navaho Reservation" (1963:210).
19. Roberts assesses this apparent popularity of the isolated traders in her Carson biography: "A Navajo, asked the reason why he or she shops at a trading post, will give a number of answers, both practical and personal. The trader may pay good prices for rugs, or give credit, or know of a job, or the store may be convenient and may carry necessities. In addition, the trader may be liked, or the store may be a good place to meet other Navajos, avoid non-Navajos, remain within the Navajo world" (1987:194).

20. Lest one wonder how so many people (representing these sales figures) could possibly frequent such an out-of-the-way general store, Walter describes the old days as "usually people three to five deep at the counter. I sold 12,000 pounds of flour in three weeks. I sold fifty cases of pop a day. Later on we sold drinks cold out of a walk-in refrigerator. It took one man a day just to work the cooler" (7 June, 1989).

Walter explained the high dollar figures: "The stuff was high-priced. We made a good profit. We had to, there was a good mark up. For instance, in 1947 a horse collar cost $3.50. We marked it $7.50. Fifty cents was freight. Maybe we got paid, maybe we took a rug. Maybe we made something, maybe not" (August, 1989). See Appendix C for discussion and examples of products and prices from "sample" year, 1960.

Adams' research at Shonto prompted these conclusions regarding sales: "The gross sales volume of all trading posts is subject to considerable annual variation, owing largely to fluctuating commodity prices and an uneven market for Navajo labor....Net profit (owner’s salary not deducted) averages between 10 and 15 percent of gross" (1963:145).

21. Walter explained that "most of the Navajo women and their little girls wore shawls wrapped around their shoulders. It was a traditional style of dress for Navajo females, and still is among the traditionally raised Navajo women" (AK:76). His daughter Lavina refused to wear a coat—even after she began going to school in Kirtland after the third grade, insisting on her shawl, "which she wore everywhere." The shawl, in fact, is an Anglo trader-induced "tradition" among Navajos and Pueblos alike. The bright, multi-colored shawls are imported from Czechoslovakia and have become as widely accepted by their respective wearers as a part of their "native" dress as the Pendleton blanket, also introduced by the trader.

22. The great round "window" rock, at the place the Navajos called Tseghahodzani, had been an important Navajo shrine and was one of the four places where Navajo Singers came with their woven water bottles to get water for the Tohee — the Water Way Ceremony. In 1934 John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, selected this site for the new Navajo Central Agency. Buildings were erected there to house both the Navajo Tribal Government and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Window Rock is today the Navajo Nation Capital (Locke 1986:447).
23. See Locke (1986:29) for a detailed discussion of the Squaw Dance today. "What is now known as the squaw dance was once an important ceremony, the Nda, or Enemy Way. It was held for warriors returning from contact with an enemy people. Nowadays the squaw dance, held in the summer, is a three-night affair, held at a different location each night, that functions as a coming-out affair for young Navajo girls. The squaw dance and other summer festivals give Navajos an opportunity to see old friends, exchange news and gossip, to look over prospective mates for their children and to trade livestock and equipment, and buy and sell jewelry and other articles."

Kluckhohn and Leighton point out that "all Navaho rites have secondary social functions. People are drawn to them not only because they wish to acquire 'religious' benefits or because they are under pressure to assist; they come also because the rite offers a chance to see and be seen, to talk and to listen" (1974:228).

24. The extended family giving the sing was responsible for all costs involved—for the services of the singer, as well as cost and preparation of food.

25. Walter's small daughter Lavina, even at age three, was conscious of the proper attire to wear when playing with all her Navajo friends. Since she didn't have a shawl, she would wrap a brightly colored towel around her shoulders. Never shy, Lavina thought nothing of adjusting her towel and sitting on the floor of her father's trading post with his customers who were taking a "lunch break" from their "business." She sat in a circle with her "hosts," dipping slices of bread into a large can of tomatoes, "smacking her lips as loudly as the rest of them" (AK:76-77).

26. It was a private joke between Walter and Hap that Hap really ran the show and Walter was just the store janitor.

27. Flora Kennedy was a "die-hard" Democrat (in the eyes of her husband), while he was always a staunch Republican. Their political differences, as perceived by Walter, are a continuing thread throughout his stories.

28. Peyote is a hallucinogenic derived from the cactus plant and is used for ritual purposes in the Native American Church, a religion that is Indian in its origin and became popular throughout the plains, prairies and southwest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Navajos never felt that membership in the Native American Church required them to reject their traditional religious beliefs or rituals. In fact, according to Bailey and Bailey, "most Navajos came to look on the [Native American] Church as another ritual...and incorporated the peyote ritual into the traditional Navajo ceremonial system" (1986:276-280).

29. See Adams (1963:126) for a general idea of the income received by singers or "medicine men." The time period he considers parallels that
of Walter's residence at Dennehotso. At Shonto the most active singer is estimated to earn "about $600 per night of activity... These figures do not include the value of free board received while on duty. Singers receive about half their income in cash and the remainder in livestock, jewelry, blankets, cloth, and baskets."

30. The 1973 FTC Report describing "Abusive Trading Practices" (Chapter IV) mentions the trader acting as employment agent for his Navajo community, specifically including railroad work. In its pervading negative tone the report states that the trader "often prefers those having credit accounts or pawned items at his trading post. The trader then sells the chosen employee the clothing and supplies demanded by the position and sometimes even transportation to the job. When the job is completed, the Navajo is expected to return to the post with his check. If he does not, he may expect not to be hired again" (p. 28). As is typical throughout the lengthy report, such broad generalizations are not supported by specific case studies.

31. Walter said the Navajos were hired "to lay ties, drive nails, lay new tracks wherever the railroad was. They worked in the summer when it was nice. And in the winter they signed up for unemployment" (August, 1989).

32. Walter sincerely believed that "the trader was financially responsible for his entire community. He knows their income and what they can pay." Because he felt this personal obligation on his part, he also felt it was his duty to enable "his" Navajos to make the most of any and all employment opportunities. When they drew unemployment, "that's where the trader came in. You cashed their unemployment checks. It was called captive trade: sign 'em up [for jobs], give 'em credit, and they have to pay it. Always leads to a big bitch with the government" (August, 1989).

Adams discusses railroad income and unemployment compensation at Shonto for the year 1955 (1963:132-134). He mentions that "every family receiving unemployment compensation drew credit against it" as it was "considered one of the most secure of all credit bases, since it is received in the form of checks and mailed through the store." Tom Sasaki, discussing the "Navahos" of the Fruitland community in the 1950s, adds that "traders urged heads of families to work for railroad companies; and although they had no direct access to pay checks, they were able to see that the family was fed when unemployment checks arrived" (1960:53).

33. Fear of witches is widespread throughout the Reservation. Those who were suspected of practicing witchcraft represented the "darker side of Navajo society," explains Roberts (1987:69), in contrast to the medicine men who "healed and balanced." The belief in witchcraft acted as a system of checks and balances and as a threat to socially disruptive actions while encouraging conformity to approved behavior. Ultimately these beliefs in the "supernatural" manage to affirm community solidarity by acting as a sanction for the enforcement of social cooperation. See Kluckhohn and Leighton for a discussion of "The

34. Kennedy and Auble elaborate in their collaboration: "In the early 1950's, and for a period of about ten years, there was a boom period going on in certain areas of the southwest. This was the result of the federal governments need for large quantities of uranium ore for the atomic related projects it was involved in. Vast deposits of this ore were being discovered all around the Four Corners area. One such deposit was located just North of Dennehotso in the area known as Monument Valley. One of the extracting firms was the ...VCA. They operated a refining mill in Durango, Colorado, and were mining at many sites in northern Arizona and southeastern Utah" (AK:97).

35. Kennedy and Auble report that the VCA was hiring hundreds of Navajo men, including many from Dennehotso, to work in their mines "at seemingly high wages. Since they were steadily employed, they were given credit at the Trading Post. They were paid twice a month and paid off their accounts in the same manner. They would come home on Saturday and leave on Sunday, to ride their horses back to the mine" (AK:98). Sasaki (1960) discusses the the Navajos' ability to adapt and adjust to the social and economic changes that occurred with the availability of wagework on the reservation in his Chapter VIII, "Emergence of a New Order."

36. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is an agency of the United States Department of the Interior whose primary function is to promote the general welfare of the American Indians, especially those living on reservations. The BIA is represented by superintendents or area directors, sometimes called "agents." The BIA was responsible for the maintenance of law and order on the Navajo Reservation until the tribal police force was established in 1953, but even then maintained control of the Navajo police until 1959. Even after 1959 Navajo jurisdiction was limited to civil and domestic problems and offenses committed by Indians on the reservation in violation of the Navajo Law and Order Code. See Iverson (1981:74-77) and Bailey and Bailey (1988:242).

Presumably the BIA felt that the butchering done by the Dennehotso Navajos was a "domestic problem" that called for some action on their part. However, wrote Walter, "when confronted with the fact, that this was the accepted way of the Navajos in butchering their own mutton the B.I.A. denied any knowledge of how the Navajo butchered their own sheep" (AK:99).

37. Circle K and 7-11 are convenience store chains that have in many places on the reservation replaced the old trading posts, though often their owners still find themselves performing many of the "services" required of the old traders.
Chapter four:

1. Kyle Cook, manager of J.B. Tanner’s Albuquerque outlet, agrees: “In order for the trader to get the three best rugs, he has to buy the five mediocre and the two at the bottom...or else the weavers will pass the word around that ‘he’s not buying rugs,’ and they’ll look for another trader” (11 November, 1986).

2. The sparse vegetation that gave the landscape its only green was something Walter said the Navajos called *toski*, “the same thing as greasewood—the stuff that the sheep and goats will feed on” (7 June, 1989).

3. James T. Downs further emphasizes the vital role of the trader and his post in the contemporary Navajo community. While he dismisses the presence of the federal government, missionaries, and even the Navajo tribal government as “foreign and dissident elements,” he says: “the trading post, however, stands as an accepted, almost indigenous, institution essential to [Navajo] life. Without the trading post, Navajo culture could never have developed as it has. The role of the trader is as real and as important to Navajo life as is that of the shepherd or the medicine man, and yet the trader is not a Navajo. He is, as are most traders on the reservation, a member of a family that has roots three and more generations deep in the reservation and in Navajo society and that has developed the institution that links Navajo life with the rest of the world” (1972:113).

4. Walter provides interesting “background explanation” in his collaboration with Auble:
   The Navajo are a pastoral people, and the large flocks of sheep, generally belong to the women. So with ownership, also comes the task of herding and caring for them. The Navajo Culture is matrilineal, that is, all property, is passed from mother to daughter. Not from father to son. In older days, men were considered unstable. They were killed, wounded, or captured, when on raiding or war parties. The stable side, was the female side. They are the head of the Navajo Clans. When a man marries, he becomes a part of his wives family. All of their children become a member of their mothers clan, not their fathers (AK:104).

5. Due bills represented a form of unsecured trading post credit that was an economic necessity, as was pawn, amongst the Navajos whose seasonally oriented herding “industry” was their primary means of subsistence. The due bill apparently replaced the metal *secro* (“cinco money” as Walter calls it), which was a token often stamped with the trader’s own post. Secro was officially abolished by agreement of the Indian Office and the United Traders Association in 1935. Walter pointed out that the due bill was still subject to government regulations, and was “not allowed to leave the store and could only be
used through the store" (28 November, 1989). The Navajos themselves used the due bill (as was the case in this story) when they owed each other money and had no cash. The due bill was made out to the amount owed, allowing the recipient to draw goods at the trading post on the debtors account with the trader. (See chapter eight for practical uses at Dennehotso.) For a discussion of tokens and seco see McNitt (1962:83-86). Also see Bailey and Bailey (1988:148-150) on unsecured credit.

6. Perhaps Walter was referring to trader S.I. Richardson whose experiences were related in his son's book Navajo Trader. Gladwell "Toney" Richardson tells several stories about his father (who was a trader from 1896 through the early 1950s) in the role of "judge" and marriage counselor. S.I. once solved a local dispute between two friends, one of whom offended the other by sleeping with his favored younger wife, by suggesting that the guilty party pay his friend a burro from his large herd in exchange for the night spent with the young wife. Apparently the trader's advice was satisfactorily received, for later that year the owner of the burro herd came into the post and asked S.I. if he remembered having him pay one burro for sleeping one night with his friend's wife. Then, laughing, he said, "Well, I don't own even a single burro anymore. He has them all" (1986:66-67)!

7. Walter explained that the Civilian Conservation Corps hired Dennehotso Navajos to work on such projects as "building reservoirs, windmills, lakes, water troughs and WPA toilets for the Whites" (28 November, 1989). Both the Dennehotso Trading Post and the Kennedy General Store in Kirtland had one of these fine outdoor toilets. The Kirtland facility, cement stool and all, sits proudly in the back yard of the old store today.

8. Because Lavina was growing up to be "a little Navajo," Walter and Flora decided she'd be better off going to the "white" school back in Kirtland (even though a good share of its students were Navajos). Consequently, when Lavina was in the third grade, Flora and the children began living on the family farm in Kirtland while school was in session, returning "home" to Dennehotso for Christmas and the summer vacation. Ivan never did go to school at Dennehotso. In the meantime, Walter was "missing all the family life and all. I was communicating between Kirtland and Dennehotso, and Hap and I were living like bachelors at the Store" (21 November, 1991).

9. Gladys Richards, according to Walter, "was one of the most interesting well educated Indians at Dennehotso.

She was married to a Mexican Man who was named John Lee. I asked her one day why she didn't take her Husband's Name she said she had been married before and she didn't want to change her Name as she liked it. She was having a hard time making it....Gladys was also one of the best Gamblers at Dennehotso. They played cards under the trees at Dennehotso from Morning until they couldn't see at nite. I have seen as high as 4 games going on at one time just like Las Vegas when times were tuff. They played the stick game and I used to play with
them. When I played the stakes were low. The older squaws were the only ones that ever played this game. They would come in the store and ask me to play with them (K86:108).

10. Since the majority of the older Navajos were unable to read or write, a thumbprint was accepted as legal signature, even on government checks. Walter recorded each signature in his books for verification.

11. Some traders made a practice of using their Navajo customers' checks to pay on outstanding accounts. Consequently the money often never passed through the recipient's hands, a practice for which traders were heavily criticized in the 1960s and 1970s. (See chapter nine, this dissertation.)

12. Fort Defiance was the administrative center for the Southern Navajo Agency. The Navajo Indian police and the Court of Indian Offenses (the primary regulatory body at the agency) were responsible for enforcing those regulations concerning trade or aimed at eradicating "vices" (such as bootlegging). See Bailey and Bailey (1988:107-109). Tuba City, however, was the administrative center for the Western Navajo Agency and much closer to Dennehotso. The police, according to Walter, were "much bigger" at Fort Defiance (21 November, 1991).

13. Jim Parker was the primary social security agent who worked with Walter on all the original cases at Dennehotso. "He'd pick out the individual, and I'd come up with four quarters of income. Then he could take him off welfare" (21 November, 1991).
Chapter five:

1. Adams strongly made the point that it was "largely left up to the trader to manage pawn credit properly," going so far as to say that should pawn "go dead," he may be blamed by his customer-in-debt for allowing too much credit (1963:198). He later discussed the trademarks of the "sustained-profit" trading post (of which Walter’s Dennehotso would have indeed been included) as being: "conservative pawn policy, aimed at maximum redemption; minimum cash loans; refusal to buy mature sheep, ewe lambs, jewelry, and other productive resources; and a complex of activities designed to assist the community to a higher income level"—the ultimate goal, to keep local resources within the community to the benefit of all concerned (1963:271-272).


3. As if the destruction caused by Kit Carson’s troops who burned their way through Navajo croplands, hoping to force massive surrenders, while rounding up survivors for the march to Bosque Redondo was not enough, two widespread stock reduction programs in the twentieth century, affecting both sheep and horses, devastated the core of Navajo existence which traditionally revolved around their livestock.

4. Without credit, there would often have been no business to conduct. Roberts believed that "credit" apparently originated around 1920 as a means of attracting customers in response to competition, and as such was a means of keeping prices low. Credit was given against the value of a family’s sheep and then secured by a pawn piece (1987:48). Adams discusses credit as an "integral part of economic life" and estimated that the Shonto community (the subject of his research) annually spent between 40 to 50 percent of its income before it was earned (1963:108-109).

5. Downs considered credit to be part of the trader’s "continuous public relations campaign attuned to the tenor of Navajo life" (1972:120). In addition to extending credit to his clientele, the trader was also expected to make contributions in the form of extra food to the families staging Squaw Dances and Sings; in the same way as other customers purchased gifts of candy and fruit as gifts for the hosts, he "always threw an extra measure in the bag." The trader also knew it was prudent to provide skeins of wool for decorations of horses, wagons, and later automobiles used the first night of the Squaw Dance—part of his ongoing effort to maintain his benevolent presence in the community social affairs.

6. Downs states that there are two kinds of "goods" considered to be
"wealth" by the Navajo, hard and soft. "Hard goods include silver and turquoise jewelry, saddles, silver horse gear, wagons, and other durable materials. Soft goods include blankets, good clothing—especially plush shirtdresses and satin skirts—tanned buckskins, special flat handwoven baskets of traditional design, hats, and other less durable items" (1972:114).

7. "The Report On the Economic Bondage of the Navajo People" prepared by the Navajo organization, Southwestern Indian Development, Inc., stated that, despite regulations, "interest rates vary, from a flat 10% to 20% fee or a 10% per month of the unpaid balance – this last figure is equal to an annual rate of 120%. In the course of our survey we encountered monthly interest rates as high as 30%, equal to an annual rate of 360%" (1969:16). Walter insisted that he always adhered to federal regulations, but he admitted that "others charged 10% per month" (August, 1989).

According to Walter there were no interest charges "in the beginning. The Trader made a profit on the merchandise. The customer could see his turquoise beads hanging on the wall, and knew they were still there, and safe. It wasn’t until later years, that the pressures for cash loans, created the pawn interest system. It also caused the Federal Government to step in and issue regulations governing all pawn transactions" (AK:132).

8. Adams discusses the other extreme, in which items of high value were pawned for small amounts (decidedly to the trader’s advantage should that item eventually become dead pawn). Such a policy "consistently restricts the credit value of pawned articles to a fraction of their face value, but it insures their redemption by so doing. Silver belts valued at $150.00 have in some cases been held to credit limits of $20.00." In these cases, pawning "depends on what the man is worth and not what the piece is worth" (1963:198).

9. Dennehotso was not ideally situated for tourist trade because travelers would have to turn off the main road to find the trading post. Walter was also not inclined to cater to the traveling public. See chapter ten, this dissertation.

10. Walter’s records (every single pawn transaction ever made during his thirty-plus-year tenure at Dennehotso is carefully preserved as recorded in the original pawn books) do attest that the majority of the items pawned were, in time, redeemed. "If it’s not in the last column, it’s not redeemed," points out Walter (21 November, 1991).

11. Talking about the hundreds of silver pieces he collected over the years, Walter explained that there were "very few silversmiths at Dennehotso." Most of his silver jewelry he got from other places, often trading "the lower end [poorer quality] of rugs for jewelry from dealers, mostly out of Gallup." The biggest customers for the jewelry Walter purchased were his own people (21 November, 1991). Much of this same jewelry, by virtue of the pawn system, eventually ended up in his personal collection.
Walter said that silver coins made into buttons were popular as a means of exchange in the 1940s and 1950s. "They were used instead of dimes. They'd just cut one off their shirt sometimes if they needed the money" (August, 1989). He told of one lady who came into the store in 1960 wearing an orange Navajo style velveteen blouse covered with dimes, so attractive that Walter offered her $800 for it. She refused his offer, but made a similar shirt in blue velveteen and managed to talk Walter out of $1500 for her efforts. This shirt occupies a key position in his Dennehotso Collection display today.

Walter also collected Navajo "beads," turquoise, coral, silver, and any combination of the above. The beads were handled in the same way, working their way through the various stages of the pawn system, from vault to owner, and when not redeemed, into Walter's personal collection:

But when I put them away I put them in cellophane sacks and put them in a suit case. I didn't pay any attention to them but I done them all the same way. I didn't pay any attention till one day I open the suit case up and look at what I had. I found out they were quite a mess. The Cellophane bags had a acid in them that caused the string to rot. It was sure a mess. I had and old Man there that done all my bead repairs stringing Etc. and he said he would try to put them back like they were. I had a special ball of twine for stringing beads. It was a string taken out of sugar sacks cloth bags. It was stronger than ordinary string and he had keep it for this purpose. I took about 5 Bags strings of beads at a time and when he finished he brought them back and got some more. I didn't put any more in Cellefane bags (K89:106-107).

12. The mercantile houses, explained Walter, were wholesalers who handled anything and everything he would possibly want to sell to his Navajo clientele—from wagons, to cloth and velveteen, to peaches, to plow handles, to "whatever." "And I bought it all, and by golly I convinced those Navajos of mine that they wanted, and needed, to buy it from me" (21 November, 1991)!

See Appendix C, "Goods for Sale," for examples of the variety of items "needed" by Walter's customers, recorded in the year's invoices.

13. The ketsch. (Walter uses "gato" and "kato" interchangeably) is a bowguard worn on the wrist. Burnham stones refer to the turquoise from the Burnham mine, according to Walter (21 November, 1991).

14. Walter figured the price of a Pendleton robe in 1952 (at the time of the wagon "sale") was $15.50, "about the same as it was in 1933 when I first started trading. Then in 1959 it went up to $18.75." He points out that "the Pendleton robe [or blanket] was worn by the men, whereas the Pendleton shawl with fringe was worn by women. And the shawl was always $3.00 more." Apparently Navajos on different areas of the reservation had their own preferences regarding Pendleton design—though again this may have been the trader's own particular preference. "At Dennehotso," explained Walter, "we sold stripes" (21 November, 1991).
15. Roberts supports this statement (discussing Stokes Carson) when she explained that one of the ways a trader could keep track of his customers' incomes was through their incoming checks which were treated as "counters of exchange also, to be paid not in cash but in food, clothes, and hardware." She explained that traders knew just how much credit to allow against welfare, railroad payment, and unemployment checks because they all came to individual Navajos in care of the trading post. The smart trader was always "careful not to let the amount of the bill exceed the amount of the check...and inevitably most checks were spent at the trading post" (1987:145).

For a thoroughly derogatory interpretation of check handling by the trader and his efforts to "gain physical possession" of the Navajos' incoming checks in order to "effect credit saturation," see the FTC Report section, "Check Handling" (1973:19-21). This situation is further discussed in chapter nine, this dissertation.

16. Walter explained that he pounded the nails "up into the can from underneath the counter, then flattened them down on the inside. "Tobacco," says Walter, "was cheap. Cost me about three to five cents a pouch" (21 March, 1989).

17. Stateen was used for making shirts. The favorite colors of Dennehotso Navajos were navy blue, brown, green, and maroon. "It cost me twenty cents a yard," said Walter, "and I sold it for 40 cents a yard. Originally they made their shirts out of velveteen, the plush material you put in coffins" (21 November, 1991).

18. Downs states that the flat handwoven baskets—often made by "Navajoized" Paiute families in the northwestern portion of the reservation—are often required in curing ceremonies and as partial payment to the singer performing the ceremony, and in neither case does the basket have any specific utilitarian or commercial value. But to serve his customers, "the trader keeps a number of baskets of varying size and quality on hand...He sells these at a standard price to Navajo, and usually the day after the ceremony buys them back from the singer's wife at a slightly lower price" (1972:119). Walter calls all these baskets "wedding baskets." He tells of "selling" the same baskets over and over again, generally taking a basket back in trade and then "making fifty cents" every time he traded it back to a Navajo for something else (20 November, 1991). For more on baskets, see endnote 3, chapter 8, this dissertation.

19. According to Walter, the Navajo-made jewelry was heavier. Since the Zunis had access to power tools earlier, they had perfected the art of cutting the stones and "did finer work" than the Navajos—even though some Navajos tried their hand at the kind of inlay work for which the Zunis are so well known. Walter ascertained that "the Navajo copied from everyone else. Never did nothing on his own" (August, 1989).

20. Adams discusses the use of due bills with transactions involving direct commodity exchange and describes the negotiation of a due bill as
"almost a matter of ritual, in which the amount remaining to be traded out must be stated after each selection has been subtracted. The customer will almost never make an additional purchase until this information has been supplied. A due bill even for so small an item as a single saddle blanket is likely to be covered on both sides with scribbled subtrahends and remainders by the time it has been settled in full" (1963:208).

Not surprisingly, the FTC Report considers the due bill as "serving the fundamental purpose of credit saturation" because it "permits the trader to avoid the use of cash as a medium of exchange" while at the same time "it restricts the Navajo's market mobility" as they are negotiable only at the post where issued. Further "abuse" is also possible because the due bill is the only evidence of debt. The report then states that the use of due bills is prohibited on reservations other than the Navajo by "applicable BIA regulations" (1973:22).

21. The quilts that Walter gave as gifts for payment of accounts were cotton batting, "factory-made with a machine. Small, but big enough to cover a small ordinary bed. We sold them all the time. They weren't too great and didn't last too long. But it made for a good feeling after they settled up their account to give them a gift" (August, 1989).
Figure 47. Painting of the "shirt of many dimes," custom-made at Walter's request for his Dennehotso Collection. Photograph courtesy of Walter Kennedy.
Chapter six:

1. Navajo women traditionally own all family property which includes most importantly the primary income producer, the herd of sheep. Roberts points out that the men do claim their jewelry, clothes, and horses as their own possessions (1987:96).

2. "The biggest year we ever had we shipped 2,100 head of lambs," said Walter. "But it was usually around 500 to 1,000" (2 November, 1991).

3. Walter boasts that it only took him six months to be "cash only" after he bought Dennehotso. "Started business in June and was on a cash basis by that December. Oh, I owed money, don’t get me wrong. But I never let the wholesale accounts pile up" (2 November, 1991).

4. When he first arrived at Dennehotso, Walter said he always bought beef from his Navajos, never sheep. "I just ‘hunked’ it up and sold it right back to them. Paid them ten cents a pound [on the hoof], got 25 cents back. I didn’t cut it or slice it as we had no refrigeration. Just sawed it up into hunks" (2 November, 1991).

5. It is interesting that in this case (yet another federal stock reduction program), while the purpose was ostensibly to prevent overgrazing on Navajo lands by an excess of Navajo-owned animals, the BIA had no apparent objection to Walter buying those same animals and grazing them on the same lands.

6. Lavina, Walter’s daughter reports that the best birthday party she ever had was the "donkey party" when she was in the sixth grade. "We all spent the day riding the entire donkey herd. Not many kids can have a birthday party like that" (6 June, 1989).

7. Downs mentions that "even before the snow has melted, the needs of the individual owner may force him to begin shearing. At this time the activity is carried out by the nuclear family of the owner. Later in the spring the entire homestead group cooperates in shearing the bulk of the herd [although] the wool of individual owners is sold separately in order that their accounts at the trader’s may be kept properly" (1972:116).

Large clippers that look like grass clippers are used for shearing. Walter still has "in deep storage" down at the old Kennedy store in Kirtland boxes of the clippers he sold to his clientele at Dennehotso. The shearer tries to keep the fleeces intact, clipping from the back of the neck to the tail. Weavers prefer the wool from the back, shoulders and flanks.

8. Walter’s receipts for the year 1960 indicate that he purchased 6 1/2 foot wool bags in lots of 150 for 75 cents the lot. He bought fleece ties at $6.65 for 6,000.

Writing about the "wool season," Walter and Auble explained that "the first animals to be sheared every spring were the angora goats. They were much more hardy than the sheep, and could withstand the cold much better. Most of the mohair clip was finished by May 1st. Depending on the weather, the sheep shearing would generally start about 10 days later. By the 1st of June it was about finished" (AK:148).

10. "Srink," as Walter uses the word, refers to the amount of estimated loss in pounds after the wet wool dries out, hence "shrink rate." He also talks about "srink" when buying sheep which have been encouraged to drink tremendous amounts of water before a sale to increase their total purchase weight.

11. "Staple" refers to the overall quality of the wool fiber, with regard to length and fineness.

12. Trader Toney Richardson reported that he always "knocked off six pounds for water" when he bought lambs. His Navajo helper, however, always subtracted fifteen pounds. When Richardson suggested that they ought to give a better break, the Navajo replied, "You know that they stop by the water tank before they bring sheep to sell; but perhaps you don't know that these people salt them overnight first" (1986:91).

Walter's standard "shrink rate" on lambs was three percent, "three pounds per hundred" (October 10, 1989).

13. The "ten day buying period" was established by the BIA to protect the Navajo lands around the trading post from being overgrazed during the waiting period before shipping out. After the lambs are bought by the trader, explained Walter, "they are yours, and they don’t want you taking the grass away from the Navajo. So we hauled them out to the sheep camp every night after buying—even though there wasn’t any grass in front of the store anyway. They [the BIA] said you had to move the sheep at least four miles each day, but they didn’t say which way. So, if the feed was good, we just moved them back and forth within four miles until the herd was ready to go" (20 November, 1991).

14. Classic Navajo weaving, with its various subdivisions, is generally accepted as traditional weaving produced from 1650 to 1865 (the Bosque Redondo era), and is described by Kate Peck Kent as (1) serving the autonomous Navajos' own needs; (2) using design patterns which evolved from their own simple basketry designs without the intrusion of foreign aesthetic; and (3) using wool from the weaver's own sheep, carded, spun, and dyed herself (1985:49). Walter refers to the "Post Classical period" meaning those years after the Navajos returned to what was now reservation lands and began weaving primarily for the trader.
Chapter seven:

1. Walter added a note to his "Mrs Nochi" story regarding her name: Mrs Nochi real name was Nochi Wife. Her Grand Daughter came in one day and said her Grandmother didn't want to the called Nochi Wife that her Name was Mrs Nochi. From that day on it was Mrs Nochi. It wasn't hard of a job to change it as I sure let ever one know what her new name was (K89:149).

2. When asked just what, or who, was a Navajo witch, Walter replied, "Well, they get buggered, have illusions, see things not there. They witch each other. I didn't mess with it though. I learned from my brother Earl to stay away from that stuff as it could get you in trouble. I knew who the Navajos thought were witches. The way I got it figured it out they were loners. Like this old man. Quiet. Didn't seem to have many friends" (20 November, 1991). Refer to endnote 12, Preface, regarding Skinwalkers.

3. Navajo tradition dictates that should someone die inside his hogan, that hogan must either be burned or abandoned, often with the north wall pulled down which, according to Roberts, signifies that the hogan was contaminated with death (1987:68). Hence, when a family sees a member is dying they remove him, along with all his belongings.

4. The quilt was one of the cotton batting quilts Walter sold in the store as bed covers. The robe was, of course, a Pendleton blanket.

5. "The meat block," explained Walter, "was where we cut up the mutton and we kept it right up to stuff" (20 November, 1991).

6. The BIA, as part of the ongoing stock reduction policy, issued permits to individual Navajos allowing each to keep a specific number of "units." Walter said that a sheep, for instance, equalled one unit; a cow, three; and a horse, four units (20 November, 1991).

7. For information on Navajo stick game, refer to endnote 15, chapter three, this dissertation.

8. In their collaborative account, Auble and Kennedy explain Walter's concern and the ramifications of the formal hearing process: The filing of a complaint against a Trading Post owner, is generally a very serious breach of Tribal regulations. This could involve the Trader's business practices, ethics, honesty, morality, or a myriad of other breaches, deemed unsatisfactory by the Navajo Community. The Trading and Enterprise Committee is composed of 18 Tribal Councilman from the Districts all over the reservation. One or two of them are dispatched to conduct a hearing on the complaints filed by the Chapter. If these complaints are justified, the Trader is brought before the total Committee, and after inditing him on the filed charges, they recommend to the
Tribal Council, that his lease be cancelled, His Traders License be revoked, and that he be evicted from the Navajo Reservation, never to trade on reservation land again. In effect the initial hearing held for the Chapter Members is in reality a from [sic] of "Kangaroo Court" (AK:101).

9. Walter described local Dennehotso government as being represented by the Chapter which "consists of the members of a community, who elect officers, and represent the views of the Community to be passed on to their District Councilman, who in turn will present their positions to the Navajo Tribal Council" (AK:101).

Tapahonso explained that the chapter system, which began in 1927, was local in scope and organization, and "officially" replaced the traditional local government by Navajo headmen, though often those same headmen were elected as chapter officers by the community. The federal administrators gained access to Navajo communities through the chapters which acted as "relay stations" passing information to the people (1986).

The chapter system experienced a decline in popularity during the stock reduction program since they were first used to disseminate information about the program. Eventually the chapters emerged as centers of resistance to stock reduction, causing the BIA to withdraw their support of the chapters. In the 1950s, however, the chapter house building program, offering financial assistance and recognition, helped to revive the whole chapter system (Iverson 1981:69).
Chapter eight:

1. Walter's stories about bootlegging, as presented in this chapter have been compiled from three of his hand-written anecdotes (KB9-11, -12, -27), all different versions of basically the same events. Hence, unmarked quotations represent a combination of all three, still using Walter's own words.

2. Traders supported the need of the Navajo people for ceremonies and stocked the necessary supplies, including sing cloth, lengths of fabric, usually cotton, in different patterns and colors, to be bought and given as gifts at sings" (Roberts 1987:150).

3. Whateford writes that baskets were needed in Navajo ceremonies "to hold sacred pollen, corn meal, prayer feathers, medicines...and other things usually belonging to the medicine man, or singer, as part of his ceremonial bundle. Baskets were also turned over and beaten as drums, or used as resonators with a rasp...Most modern Navajos buy the baskets at the trading post or purchase them directly from the weavers. Some or all of the baskets used in the ritual become part of the medicine man's fee, which may also include livestock, jewelry, and cash. Popular medicine men accumulate many baskets, which they usually turn in at the trading post for exchange of goods, or cash" (1988:32-34). For more on Navajo baskets, also refer to endnote 18, chapter 5, this dissertation.

4. Walter refers to those who "brew their own booze" and those who import it illegally by the same term, bootleggers.

5. Walter reports that "out at Dennehotso sugar was a good item as we had quite a number of stills. But there were one or two there seemed to have a little operation of some kind not big but steady. And we sold lots of sugar raisins yeast as to keep the small operations of bootlegging. You had to have the ingredients to produce and I sure didn't want to cut short of Raisin Jack" (KB9-8). In 1951 he purchased three hundred, 100-pound sacks of rock hard sugar at the bargain price of 4.00 per hundred pounds from his friend Tabby Brimhall who had bought it off the Black Market during the war.

A side benefit, and just as important, in the sugar trade was the four-ply cotton string that the 100-pound muslin sugar sacks were sewn with. "I had learned that the Navajoes like to string their coral and turquoise beads with it. You couldn't buy 4-ply just 3. And the 4-ply was a lot stronger. So we had saved this and kept it in bales. When someone needed some strings we always had it for them. That was one thing that was free" (KB9-8).

6. Illegal alcohol was one of the specific problems that lead to the creation of a Navajo Police Force in 1953. Much of the land was a "veritable no man's land as far as policing was concerned" and particularly vulnerable to bootleggers from surrounding communities,
both Anglo and Hispanic, selling quantities of cheap liquor to the Indians. The states could not always handle the resulting Indian problems and asked for help from the Tribe. See Gilpin (1980:181) and Roberts (1987:29-30).

7. In the years before the creation of the Navajo Tribal Police, the F.B.I. was designated to handle major crimes and incidents because state and county law enforcement agencies had no jurisdiction within the Navajo Reservation.

8. Since Walter's handwritten account is used in conjunction with the Kennedy/Auble collaboration in the telling of this tale, the difference in style is more evident in this chapter than other places in this dissertation. For example, Walter wrote "right to the point" and used no punctuation in his pencilled notes; I have supplied periods for ease of reading. When Auble typed their collaborative account, he used an excess of punctuation (commas in particular), and often infused his own "literary" style.

9. Since the BIA maintained control of the new Navajo police force until 1959, Walter's comment regarding the "BIA Federal officer" is in reference to the local Navajo policeman. See endnote 36, chapter three, for more information on BIA.

10. Pima and Papago Indians (who live scattered throughout the western two-thirds of southern Arizona and northern Sonora, Mexico), speak the Piman language of the Uto-Aztecan language family, as opposed to the Navajos who speak an Apachean language of the Athapaskan family (Fontana and Young 1983:125,393).

11. In fact, as is verified by the photocopy of the actual draft, Walter wrote that check to pay to the order of the Collector of Internal Revenue.

12. Sasaki writes of the 1950s era in his account of the Navajos of the Fruitland (Kirtland), New Mexico area:

   On weekends and before attending squaw dances and fiestas, [the Navajos] borrowed heavily from traders. It was not unusual to spend $30 to $40 in a few days. Before repeal of the law which prohibited sale of intoxicants to Indians, Fruitlanders purchased pint bottles of wine from bootleggers at $3 and quarts at $5. Purchases of three or four pints or two quarts were frequent, and arrests for disturbing the peace or for driving while drunk became numerous. After repeal, sale or consumption on the reservation was still prohibited, so bootlegging continued. Some Navaho bootleggers estimated that they earned between $75 and $100 at weekend squaw dances (1960:104).

13. "Tribe checks" refer to the "welfare type that the tribe itself puts out," i.e. the federal government gave monies, or grants, to the Navajo Tribe to disperse to individual chapters for specific work projects—road building, chapter repairs, etc. (29 November, 1989).
14. Apparently Walter was not the only trader who held the federal government in low regard. Roberts, in her Carson biography, points out that the relations between traders and the government were somewhat ambiguous. Traders and Indian Service employees were sometimes friends, when distance and work permitted. Sometimes they looked on each other with distrust: the trader for the agents’ and school teachers’ unfamiliarity with, even ignorance of, the region; the BIA employees for the traders’ failure to support government policies in the community (1987:134).

15. Bluff, Utah, is on the north side of the San Juan River which serves as the northern boundary of the Navajo Reservation. Blanding is further north, about twenty miles up the road, not an unreasonable distance for a pack horse to cover in a single night.

16. In yet another version of this story, K89-27, Walter states specifically, "I told the police."
Chapter nine:

1. Again, Roberts reports that Stokes Carson shares Walter's opinions: "Stokes, like most traders, had no great regard for government bureaucracy, though he might like an individual agent. Too much paperwork was involved, with too little apparent result. The BIA staff came and went and seemed to know more about typing reports than about the Navajos" (1987:160).

2. Refer to chapter four, this dissertation, for Walter's story about his responsibilities in obtaining social security checks for his Dennehotso Navajos.

3. Adams discusses welfare checks (Public Assistance from the Arizona State Department of Public Welfare and General Assistance from the BIA) in detail in his section on "Welfare" (1963:136-141). He also states that because the various welfare checks were "paid to households with necessarily low mobility and because it [welfare] is required to be spent exclusively for subsistence needs, welfare is considered the most secure of all credit bases at Shonto Trading Post" (136). Similar to Walter's practice at Dennehotso, credit limits were equal to the amounts of monthly unemployment and welfare checks, and accounts were payable when the individual Navajos received their checks. See also Adams's table defining the distribution of cash, merchandise and credit transactions at Shonto (109), noting in particular percentage amounts drawn on credit. He shows that 90% of all unemployment compensation and 99% of welfare checks were "normally drawn on credit."

4. Walter explained that it was "typical of the Navajo" to say that he hadn't received a check if there were a chance he might get another. "If they can screw the white man, that's fine. It doesn't make any difference" (9 November, 1991).

5. The Delmonte "want book" (and the KC baking powder book) were a type of note book, advertising a specific product on the cover and filled with blank sheets of paper, that Walter used to get from the various wholesale houses. "We'd buy that product and ask for the book" (20 November, 1991). He used the books for a variety of record-keeping purposes, from recording thumbprints to the receipt of government checks.

6. The "Thrifty Way" and "7 to 11" are examples of the convenience stores that have cropped up throughout the reservation, all of which sell a limited inventory and gasoline. Roberts reports that their "prices are no lower and often higher than those of trading posts, and they give no credit or service" (1987:185).

7. Adams mentions that uranium development in the Navaho country up to the year 1955 had been mostly north and east of Kayenta, where several paying mines were in operation, "providing a source of steady employment
for over 100 families in the surrounding [Monument Valley and Dennehotso] area. No Navajos from the Shonto region are employed in them, and up to the present there has been a marked tendency on the part of the Monument Valley Navahos to resent the intrusion of outsiders into the mining industry in their area" (1963:52).

8. Because he still maintained a residence on the family ranch (which he also farmed) in Kirtland, where Flora could live with the children during the school year, Walter was a bona fide resident of New Mexico's San Juan County.

9. In his history of the Indian Arts and Crafts Board, Schrader reports that the traders did not officially organize until August 1931 when they responded to the challenge of Herbert J. Hagerman, special commissioner to the Navajos, and formed the United Indian Traders Association to "raise the standard of Indian goods, to educate the public, and to protect the public from factory-made goods as opposed to the genuine Indian handcrafts"—the latter being its principal objective as machine-manufactured Indian jewelry was "adding to the financial problems the traders faced as part of the national economic crisis in 1931" (1983:n7, 308-309).

   Amsden, on the other hand, wrote in 1934 that the association was indeed organized "for the protection of their Indian merchandise," but the "principal item was the Navaho rug" (1974:203). He continued with his presentation of the still new organization, mentioning that the "most promising" undertaking to date was the "labeling of every Indian object sold with a tag or sticker bearing both the Association's guaranty of authenticity and the dealer's Association member number" (204).

   Walter claims that he "started with the association" and went to "the first meeting they had in Gallup in 1933 when I was sixteen. My brother forced me to go as he wouldn't talk, but I'd say anything" (19 October, 1991). This date differs with that provided by Amsden who said that first meeting in Gallup took place in 1931 (203).

10. Roberts, in her depiction of the latter years of Stokes Carson's trading career, provides an excellent, step-by-step summary of events over those years in her chapters 15, 16, and 17. To reproduce those events in their entirety would be redundant; hence, specific events as they relate to Walter's career will be discussed in this dissertation. For greater detail, refer to Roberts.


12. The old road, or "main drag" used to go "right in front of the store until they paved it and moved it half a mile away" (2 November, 1991).

13. Walter reports that "we only paid state sales tax on white trade, not Navajo trade and that only amounted to about $2.00 a month. We
didn't have much ["white" trade]; and if we had any, we tried to get rid of it" (2 November, 1991).

14. Allen, temporary caretaker for Ganado Mission in the mid-1950s, writes sarcastically in his memoirs that "Navahos are still being 'helped' on this very day by traders who pocket a big bite out of a government check as a fee for running the risk of cashing it" (1963:208). Allen's bias against traders, obviously based upon limited knowledge, is prevalent throughout his book and is exemplified by the following passage:

In general, the white people who have gone into the Reservation have gone for profit or for propaganda. Cultural exchanges between white traders and Navahos have been precluded by high fences and aloof traders' wives. This, of course, is a generalization and is for that reason partially false. By and large, however, the traders and their families have had nothing to do with their customers on a common level of cultural exchange. The two or three exceptions have been widely publicized in print, in vegetalbe dye rugs, and in dolls and jewelry (140).

15. Roberts supports Walter's perception: "The DNA was clearly against the trader, and its staff of young attorneys, most of whom were not from the area (and thus, in a Southwesterner's eyes, not familiar with the conditions of life), succeeded in putting the traders on the defensive. Never very close to their fellow Anglo-Americans, traders retreated behind their counters, unwilling to talk or to trust either Anglos or Navajos who asked questions" (1987:165).

16. The problems of credit and its many negative ramifications would probably not have been any less had the traders themselves been Navajos. Terry and Don Allen said frankly, "It takes a white man to succeed as a trader on the Reservation. A Navaho must, both because of his own conscience and because of social pressure, extend credit to all his family and friends without regard to their credit rating" (1963:132). Trader's wife, Elizabeth Hegemann had this to say about native-owned posts: "Navvies have tried it but many were put out of business by their own huge family and clan relationships. These demanded credit which was, and is, the crux of the problem. It has been surmounted by some intelligent Navahos who operate posts owned, or backed, by a Belecana trader or wholesaler. In this way, the Navaho trader has had a valid excuse for refusing unrealistic credit" (1963:346).

Roberts shed further light on the difficulties faced by Navajo traders with respect to credit:
One problem was the stress on cooperation and generosity in a Navajo community. Business decisions ran counter to community values....An Anglo trader could refuse credit or request payment of accounts without incurring disapproval. It was the character of the Anglo, as perceived by the Navajo, to be mean...For a Navajo trader, however, a refusal of credit or request for payment from local residents or family members, however remote, was not always condoned, and he faced either
heavy criticism or bankruptcy. Furthermore, success brought
the possibility of witchcraft aimed at the accumulation of

This is not to say that Navajos cannot successfully own and operate
trading posts. Artist Carl Gorman's father was a long-time trader who
owned and operated his own post. Chief Yellowhorse does very well at
his prominent "roadside post" on the highway a few miles outside of the
main entrance to Grand Canyon. The Navajo Arts and Crafts enterprise in
Window Rock faced bankruptcy in 1983, but is presently solvent,
extremely successful, and reported $2.5 million in gross sales in 1988.

17. For details regarding the suit, see Roberts (1987:162).

18. Roberts cites a letter from the commissioner of Indian Affairs to a
member of the FTC, dated April 7, 1972.


20. Walter gave his favorite example of the "profit-barter-and-pawn
system: "You take one, $1.50 basket, sell it fifty times a year and
make fifty cents each time—as each time it is sold on the book or with
pawn. Eventually you turn it into cash some way" (2 November, 1991).


22. "Of course we had a captive trade," explained Walter, implying that
this was necessary in order to do business. "But if all those bad
things they [the FTC] were saying were really true, then why do all
those Navajos want me to come back? Every time I go out to Dennehotso,
they're always asking me to come back and run the store" (2 November,

23. Roberts devotes an entire chapter to the "Aftermath" of the FTC

24. Walter scoffed at all the "fancy" new regulations, saying he just
couldn't understand the "fuss." "Look, anybody could always get a
peddler's license for only $5.00. He could go to squaw dances and sell
stuff. And there were always lots of complaints" (2 November, 1991).

Often using the words "license" and "lease" interchangeably
(because he simply "paid up and paid no attention to it"), Walter tried
to explain the details:
The lease was good for twenty-five years. In the early years,
for only three years. They just sent out new leases that the
BIA granted; you didn't have to apply. My last 25-year lease
got to the Tribe. Then there were also two bonds: one to the
BIA for $1,000 and one to the Tribe for $10,000. I had a
bonding company (Woods Insurance) that automatically sent in
the bond money every year and just billed me—$15 or $25, I
think. If the trader screwed up, they collected.
Then I paid one and one half percent of my gross sales for my license. When we done the books at the end of the year, they got their percentage. The Tribe never had anything to do with it. The real money was in license fees (2 November, 1991).

Roberts spells out the new regulations regarding the trader's license: "a trader was still required to obtain a license from the Indian commissioner costing between $50 and $300 depending upon gross receipts, and to post a bond of $10,000. The new provisions provided insurance on the value of buildings and average inventory" (1987:180).


26. When asked to clarify just who really did "stop pawn," the government (FTC) or the trader, Walter insisted that "the traders stopped pawn because we thought the Navajo would raise enough hell that it would help us. But before anyone knew it, the off-reservation stores took over and the Navajos lost their pawn because those traders sold it" (20 November, 1991).
Chapter ten:

1. See chapter seven, this dissertation, for Walter's anecdote about local Dennehotso movie star, John Stanley.

2. Walter tells about the tourist who saw a partially-completed pictorial weaving ("lots of rodeo figures on it") on the loom of a Dennehotso weaver. She told the weaver she was willing to pay "really big money" for it, $1,000 when finished. The weaver refused to sell her rug to the tourist. "When it was done," said Walter, "I paid that weaver $5,000 for the same rug. That was in the 1970s" (21 March, 1989).

3. Acoma pueblo, an hour's drive from Albuquerque, has greatly altered their tourist protocol in the past year, as an effort to control the "curiosity" of their visitors. Where the visiting public formerly was allowed to park their cars at the visitors' center and walk up to the mesa top to join a guided tour, all are now required to purchase tickets and ride on vans with an escort. "It's not only because we can make money from the tourists," explained an Acoma spokeswoman. "But it's really because the tourists would wander around up there and just open doors and walk right into our homes, like it was a Disneyland or something. They need to have a guide so they won't do rude things like that" (11 October, 1991).

4. Houck Trading Post is south of Window Rock, Arizona, not far from Gallup, New Mexico.

5. Reuben Heflin (trader and husband of one of Stokes Carson's daughters) built the Wetherill Inn—one of the first regular motels in the interior of the reservation—in Kayenta, Arizona, in the early 1960s, to provide accommodations for visitors to Monument Valley and the Tsegi Canyon ruins. When the new highway was built, Heflin applied to the Navajo tribe for a permit to build an eighty-unit motel in a key tourist location. The Monument Valley Inn was opened in 1965 in a ceremony attended by Navajo officials and the commissioner of Indian Affairs. See Roberts (1987:153, 157).

6. Navajo National Monument was created by executive order in 1907 and the Wetherill trading family "built a lively tourist business" guiding visitors to the nearby ruins. Twenty years later a "road" was built into the area and the National Park Service became official custodians of the Monument under an agreement with the Navajo Tribe. See Adams (1963:43).

7. For an interesting discussion regarding "Trader Behavior," in particular the way traders deal with tourists (i.e. "on their own terms"), and the tourists' attitude that "traders are Indian lovers," see Adams (1963:210-212).
Conclusion:

1. An example of Navajo-sponsored programs to acquaint weavers with requirements of modern-day production and marketing techniques is the Navajo Weavers and Sheep Growers Awareness Conference, organized by the Navajo Education Center and conducted entirely in Navajo on September 19, 1987.

2. See Adams (1963:294) for further discussion.

3. Modernization of the old trading post facilities was among the recommendations urged by the FTC after the 1972 hearings and investigation.

4. Roberts emphasized that this prized friendship had to be earned, since the traders did represent the dominant Anglo society, whether they wished to or not. "Beyond that, they earned respect from the Navajo (if they earned it—many did not) on personal grounds. Only the Navajo decided which traders they liked and why, and their attitudes colored their trading patterns and behavior" (1987:156).
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