

Chance Encounter Sparks Friendship, New Interest

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A chance encounter on a Navaho Indian reservation 20 years ago has grown into a deep and abiding friendship which bridges both distance and cultures for Hazel Ulrich, Lititz.

Recently honored by Lancaster Toastmasters Speakers Bureau for giving the most number of speeches during 1983, Hazel says she is asked most often to relate the experiences of her family in meeting and getting to know an Indian couple, Minnie and Cuyler

Hoskie.

On a camping trip to the Grand Canyon 20 years ago, Hazel, her late husband Leon and their two teenaged children decided they wanted to travel through an Indian Reservation and see life firsthand. Their experience, coupled with a very short twilight, found them traveling through "very dark" country. They stopped at the first light, a trading post, and camped there for the night after meeting Cuyler. This trading post was about 60 miles north of Gallop.

The next day they spoke with Cuyler some more, and Hazel relates, "He must have liked us because he was friendly to us." As they talked, Hazel remarked that she would like to have one of the full skirts typical of the Navaho. Cuyler replied that his wife Minnie made the skirts and soon he offered to take the Ulrichs to his home and arrangements were made for his wife to make a skirt and send it to Hazel.

Hazel still has the skirt, plus a panne velvet top which Minnie made for her. She learned later that the Ulrichs were the first white people who had ever been to the Hoskie home.

Hazel maintained a correspondence with the family and two years later returned to visit them. This pattern continued over the years, with Hazel now having visited them nine times. Hazel said she and her husband frequently took Minnie and Cuyler with them as they visited local sites, most of which the Hoskies had never visited.

In addition to making the traditional long skirts of the Indians, Minnie also weaves traditional Navaho rugs, masterpieces of skill and beauty.

For the wool for the rugs, Hazel notes that they raise their own sheep and Minnie cleans, cards and spins the wool before weaving them with a hand loom. Minnie's loom is metal instead of the earlier wooden version, and Minnie sits before it crosslegged on the floor as she weaves. "They weave and measure and use no patterns," Hazel says. "The patterns are all in their minds. They weave 100 threads per inch."

Minnie weaves in the "Two Grey Hills" style of rug, meaning that the wools are all natural. They have brown, tan, black and white sheep, and to achieve the gray color, Minnie actually cards the white and black wool together.

These rugs are difficult to



Hazel, garbed in a Seminole Indian skirt with turquoise jewelry, holds one of the weaving dolls. The doll is seated at a wooden loom used to make rugs in the traditional patterns.

weave, but Minnie's skill won her first prize in 1981 at the Gallop Ceremonials, after it was entered by the owner of a trading post through whom Minnie markets her work.

The Ulrich's decided to order one of Minnie's rug tapestries, and left some money there as a down payment. They requested that Minnie and Cuyler deliver it to Pennsylvania. Hazel was, of course, thrilled when the Huskies decided to come, and she held an open house for all their local friends to meet their Indian friends. "Since I had told the story everybody felt they already knew them," Hazel relates.

Meeting so many people was not

easy for Minnie who was extremely shy. However, Hazel says, "They appreciated that our friends wanted to meet them." During their visit, Minnie made "Navaho fried bread," a favorite of Hazel's.

Cuyler now works full time in maintenance for the local school board and Minnie works in the trading post, after serving as head cook in the local school. Both had attended Indian boarding schools as children.

"Because of our friendship, we started buying Indian dolls," Hazel relates. Some of her favorites are the Hopi Kachino dolls. The Hopi Indians live in the middle of the Navaho reservation, and the

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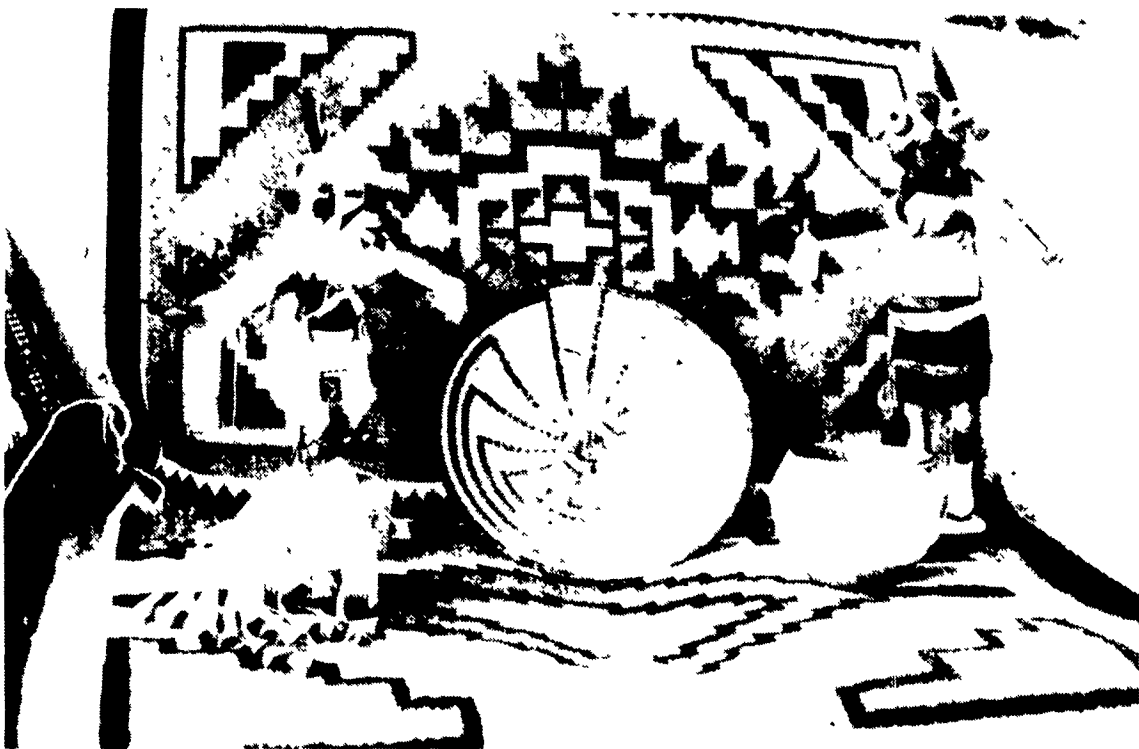
Homestead Notes



Standing in front of sand paintings and other items she has received as gifts from her Navaho friends, Hazel holds a pair of traditionally dressed Navaho dolls. The dolls are part of her collection of Indians dolls from all parts of the country.



Hazel demonstrates the use of a spindle employed by Minnie Hoskie when she works with the wool before weaving the rugs and tapestries which are typical of the Navaho Indians. Hazel said Minnie spins and re-spins as they talk and visit.



In the background are two of the rug tapestries created by Navaho Indian Minnie Hoskie, and other artifacts in the front include an eagle dancer kachina (left), a mud head Kachina, zia pottery and papago, and Apache basket. These represent some of the items Hazel takes with her when presenting programs on the Indians.