

White Mountain and Cibecue people never made full-scale war with the Americans. Happenstance helped: their territory lay beyond Anglo pioneering and mineral strikes, and the White Mountain and Cibecue continued their life of hunting, farming, and "living right" longer than other Apaches, who early on were forced to defend their lands.

As the reservation system took over their lives, the Western Apache adapted to that, too, mostly peacefully. In 1863, they did not resist the founding of the military post that became Fort Apache. The Army restricted hunting, and with the resulting decrease in available buckskins, tipi use ended; women began making flounced "camp dresses" from bolts of cloth, emulating the peasant-style Mexican dresses they knew from their travels or the gowns of army officers' wives and daughters.

Many men joined Crook's scouts, encouraged by the White Mountain chief Alchesay to sign on for wages even though it meant campaigning with the army against their cousins, the Tontos and Chiricahuas. Alchesay himself won the Congressional Medal of Honor for his bravery as a scout in the Tonto campaign of 1872-73. He lived until 1928, continuing to urge his people toward peace and education in the face of BIA authoritarianism.

A century has passed since the battles ended. Whiteriver became the dominant settlement on the reservation after Fort Apache was decommissioned in 1922 (a small Apache scout unit remained on duty until 1943). The United States government has done its best to force assimilation; Keith Basso summarizes the current results: "Contemporary Western Apaches remain marginal to national American society and retain a cultural system that is distinctly Apachean and entirely their own."

Though new communities have split bands and disrupted the rules against intermarriage, newly united clans (once dispersed among isolated groups) now are primary definers of identity. Apaches still work fiercely to promote the welfare of their kin. "Our tribe is still overprotective of our family," says Edgar Perry. "Politics and jealousy come from our loving our relatives. During the political time, everybody is like a mean dog ready to bite each other." Wesley Bonito told me how he must approach these factions, these "new combinations" of people that in the old days may not have spoken to each other: "Gently." Nonetheless, for most of the 1980s and early 1990s, chairman Ronnie Lupe has presided over a relatively stable tribal government.

Women still form the strongest thread in the fabric of Fort Apache society. They are the trunk of the family tree, their children its branches, their husbands sometimes described as leaves. The Apaches say: "The leaves may drop off, but the trunk and the branches never break." Nuclear families have replaced the family cluster and local group in primary allegiance, but clan relatives are still crucial, particularly when girls reach the time to become Changing Woman for the four days of their *nai'es*.

Fort Apache has achieved enviable economic progress since the Depression of the 1930s, when the People survived by eating as many wild foods as any Indians in the lower forty-eight states. The last Anglo grazing lease expired in 1932; cattle and timber have both become integral to the community economy.

Misty spruce and fir forest and fragrant ponderosa pines cover half of the Fort Apache Reservation's 1.6 million acres, and the tribe owns a sawmill that generates 100 million board feet of lumber and \$30 million annually, and keeps 450 people employed year-round — 90 percent of them Apache. The tribal Recreation Enterprise, begun in 1954, has blossomed into Sunrise Ski Area and summer resort, with seven lifts and \$9 million in revenues per year. Unemployment among the 8,500 resident Fort Apache tribal members hovers at about 20 percent; less than a third of families received public assistance in 1989.

Additional money comes from summer cabin leases and from camping, fishing, and hunting permits. This did not happen easily. To build Hawley Lake in the late 1950s, the tribe blockaded the construction site with armed guards and completed the dam in ten round-the-clock days — to circumvent the threat of legal action intended to stop them.

Wesley Bonito, tribal education director, says: "Timber, wildlife, mining, agriculture, tourists, cattle — we have a gold mine in resources in each one, but we have to develop the resources that go with it — the people, the human resources." Those human resources remain undeveloped. Alcoholism follows, to "downgrade our people real bad, downgrade the culture, downgrade the health, as well," as Edgar Perry laments.

In the old days, sharing fermented *tulapai* made "people feel good about each other and what they were doing together," as an older Apache told Keith Basso. Today, alcohol provides an anesthetic against demoralization. In one recent analysis, over 85 percent of the major crimes at both Fort Apache and San Carlos involved drinking.

The key to progress against these obstacles, say the Apaches, is education. In the 1890s, assimilationist government and mission schools came to Apacheria; by 1952, 80 percent of Arizona Apaches spoke English. Today, public schools at both Fort Apache and San Carlos have bilingual/bicultural programs, most extensive in the elementary grades.

I hear the same refrain from everyone I speak with: "We've got to teach our people to be a manager of a shopping center, forestry (all the way from choker to trucker to sawmill), geology, game and fish, cattle, ski industry, restaurant, motel — computers, too." So Edgar Perry lists the needs at Fort Apache. Wesley Bonito says: "We have a dream that each one of these will some day be managed by our own tribal professional experts."

Tribal leaders want Apache culture remembered, as well. Says educator Bonito:

"We really want Apaches to share their culture and teach the children. If a medicine man dies without passing on what he knows, it's gone forever. If what he knew was made from metal, he could pass it on. But it's up here in his head, and if he doesn't share it, it's gone.

"If Apaches are going to be here in two hundred years — and be Apache — they're going to need to maintain both worlds, cross the bridge by day and come back safe by night. Go out in the dominant society and work 8 to 5 and wear a necktie — what's wrong with that? — but then come home and spend their evenings in their own culture, speaking Apache, going to Indian dances.

"If they don't, the world will just absorb us."

The Jicarilla

Hascin, the Creator, gave to the Jicarilla sacred lands between four rivers: the Arkansas, Canadian, Rio Grande, and Pecos. The People camped between modern Albuquerque and Colorado Springs, from Chama, New Mexico, in the west, to Oklahoma on the east. Unfortunately for the Jicarilla, this was coveted country, and they had a difficult time holding their homeland. Today, they live outside this sanctified ground.

Of the two modern Jicarilla bands, the Ollero are the Jicarilla proper, longtime residents in the eastern Sangre de Cristo Range, where they lived almost like Pueblo people — in adobe houses with fields nearby. (Indeed, Navajos and Mescaleros still call the Jicarilla the *kinya-inde*, "the people who reside in houses.") Proximity to Picuris, Pecos, and, particularly, Taos pueblos exposed the Jicarilla to many useful things, from pottery making (*ollero* means pot maker in Spanish) and the Pueblo scheme of social relations to ritual and song, all incorporated into Jicarilla culture with typical Apache creativity.

The Llanero once were Plains buffalo hunters (*llanero* means plainsman in Spanish) who farmed only seasonally. The Llanero today include the Apaches who once held the southern Colorado mountains and the plains of Colorado, Kansas, and Nebraska, as well as eastern New Mexico. During their years in buffalo country, this Jicarilla band picked up traits from the Plains tribes: tipis, travois, parfleches. These blended with the Pueblo influences of the Ollero to evolve into the distinctive Apache complex called Jicarilla.

The Spaniards applied a bewildering variety of names to these Apaches. Even "Jicarilla," often translated as "little basket," is tricky. The first thing Tom Vigil said to me about his people was that he found that translation "almost nauseating."



*Jicarilla Apache camp, circa 1935. The modern Jicarilla formed from two bands: the Ollero ("pot makers") brought Pueblo traits from their neighbors at Picuris, Pecos, and Taos; the Llanero ("plainsmen") brought traits from the Plains tribes — tipis, travois, parfleches.
Photo by T. Harmon Parkhurst. (Courtesy Museum of New Mexico, neg. no. 2089)*

Vigil went on: "The person that originated that probably got it from some lady that didn't speak Spanish. 'Xicarilla' had something to do with chocolate [in fact, in Mexico, jicara is a calabash-tree gourd with chocolate or other liquids in it]; our pitched baskets and micaceous pots looked sort of like chocolate. And so I think Jicarilla means something like 'chocolate pot, chocolate basket.' But that doesn't stop us from making 'little baskets' to sell to the tourists who ask for them!"

A pivotal event for the Jicarilla came in 1841. Pushed into the mountains by the formidable Comanche, the Jicarilla were left virtually landless when, without consultation with the Apaches, the government of Mexico granted 1.7 million acres of Jicarilla land to two citizens of its northern frontier, Carlos Beaubien and Guadalupe Miranda. By the time the United States took over in New Mexico — and, in Tom Vigil's words, "all of a sudden things went chaotic" — Lucien Maxwell had inherited the grant from Beaubien, his father-in-law.

An 1851 peace treaty with the Jicarilla stipulated that they remain fifty miles from all settlements. For a people dependent on trade with Pueblo and Hispanic villages, this was impossible. Misunderstanding, raiding, and retaliation characterized the next few years of Jicarilla-Anglo relations. The Ollero attempted to settle beyond the conflict-ridden frontier. The Llanero resisted, for their stronghold was Cimarron, the center of the Jicarilla world — unfortunately, well within the enormous Maxwell Land Grant.

Drought hit, and starving Jicarilla farmers began raiding for meat. A full-scale campaign in 1854–55 (which consisted of little more than the army pursuing the beleaguered Jicarilla through their rough mountain home without decisive action) led to another treaty, and the U.S. government set up agencies at Abiquiu, Taos, and, later, at Cimarron — each "a feeding station just like you would for animals," in Vigil's words. To reach the agencies for ration day, Jicarilla families were forced to raid along the way to survive. Vigil shakes his head: "It's hard to accept the fact that your ancestors just sat around the agency begging for food." But in reality the homeless Jicarilla had little choice.

The tribe avoided internment at Bosque Redondo during the 1860s only because the concentration camp failed before the army could gather the Jicarilla along with the Navajo and Mescalero. By 1873, the Jicarilla were the only New Mexico tribe without a reservation or land grant. Gold strikes in the Cimarron country compounded their problems.

During the 1870s, Ollero and Llanero band leaders began consulting with each other before negotiations, for the first time creating a tribal consciousness. A joint delegation of chiefs traveled to Washington, D.C., to plead the Jicarilla case, though some factionalism remained. The whites wanted to move the Jicarilla south to the Mescalero Reservation; the People resisted. Two executive-order Jicarilla reservations in northwestern New Mexico came and went on paper, stymied by cries of whites intent on settling and mining any proposed Apache reserves and by the fears of the Jicarilla themselves of moving into new country. In 1883, the 721 Jicarillas finally were marched south to Mescalero.

Once again, concentration simply did not work. The Mescaleros had already

taken the best lands, and the Jicarillas had little chance of supporting themselves. Jicarilla leaders, especially the Ollero chiefs, continually pushed the authorities for a solution, even suggesting that they take up homesteads and give up their rights to federal benefits (benefits that looked pretty meager just then). Jicarillas began to escape northward in groups, reclaiming their children from Mescalero boarding school dormitories under cover of nighttime snowstorms, seeking refuge with their friends at San Juan and San Ildefonso pueblos.

Finally, with the help of honest army and agency officials, including General Miles (fresh from the Geronimo campaign), the withdrawn 1880 executive-order reservation, with new boundaries gerrymandered to meet the demands of mining interests, was restored in 1887. Homesteaders and squatters had taken the best land and springs, and their abundant herds had nearly stripped the land of vegetation; land claims would be a continuing problem. Nevertheless, Jicarilla historian Veronica Tiller calls the land restoration won by the leaders of her people "the most important act of self-determination" in the tribe's history.

This Jicarilla Reservation along the continental divide turned out to be high, dry, rugged, and with a painfully short growing season — a poor place for Apaches to resume farming. The government refused to buy out resident Hispanic ranchers. Allotment confusions complicated efforts to begin tribal livestock and timber enterprises, and financial control by the BIA and Congress further slowed economic progress.

Initially, each Jicarilla leader set up a separate group camp on the reservation. Those families with livestock (who tended to be Ollero) quickly became the wealthier class; those without struggled to farm, dependent on government rations. Employment opportunities were few. Ollero headmen tended to be more "progressive," pushing for education; Llaneros developed a reputation as conservatives, the guardians of tradition.

Strong Jicarilla leaders continued to speak clearly on behalf of their people: Augustine Vigil and Garfield Velarde for the 350 Olleros, Santiago Largo and Juan Julian for the five hundred Llaneros. Their situation nonetheless deteriorated; Veronica Tiller calls the first two decades of the twentieth century "the twilight years." Poor and malnourished, 90 percent of the Jicarillas had tuberculosis by 1914. Their numbers dropped from over eight hundred in 1900 to less than six hundred in 1920. They did not again reach eight hundred until after World War II. Tom Vigil says, "Almost everybody remembers people with TB."

No schools operated on Jicarilla land until 1903. Once established, the boarding school, and later, several day schools, unfortunately served as distribution centers for tuberculosis bacteria. In Tiller's words, "school became an accessory to misery." Eventually, the Dulce Boarding School was converted to a sanatorium and the Dutch

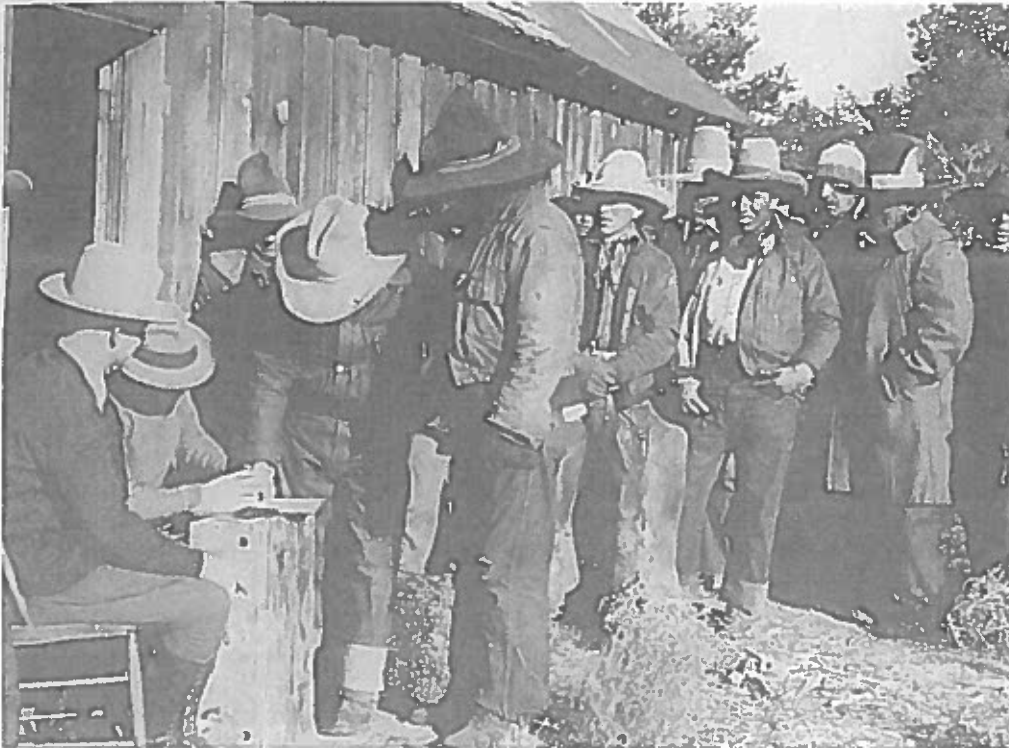


Little sister Julia tags along as Dan and Alice Vigil pick up their son, Wallace, from the Dutch Reformed Mission School in Dulce, Jicarilla Reservation, 1939. The Vigils left their older child at the mission for the full school year while they tended sheep elsewhere on the reservation. Photo by Hendrina Hospers. (All rights reserved, Photo Archives, Denver Museum of Natural History)

Reformed Mission School took over education (most Jicarilla Christians still belong to this denomination).

Gradually, the Jicarilla began to forge a new life. A major 1907 reservation addition to the south gave them acreage with a milder climate – winter range for sheep herds started in the 1920s. This brought the reservation to almost three-quarters of a million acres, stretching along the eastern rim of the Colorado Plateau south almost to Cuba, New Mexico.

In the twenties, sheep made a profit for their owners; in 1932, 70 percent of the herds died in a bad winter. By 1940, the Jicarilla had rebuilt their herds; in the same year, the Apaches were sufficiently healthy to warrant closing the sanatorium. With increased income, families could once again afford ceremonial feasts like the girl's puberty ceremony and the Jicarilla Bear Dance (a healing ceremony). The 1937 Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) constitution chartered a tribal government whose initial act



After the devastating winter of 1929–30, the federal government purchased 12,000 sheep to compensate for Jicarilla losses. Here, Apache ranchers sign up for small replacement herds. By 1940, the Jicarilla had rebuilt their economy. Photo by E. K. Edwards and Son. (Courtesy Colorado Historical Society)

was to buy out the agency trader, who had wielded absolute economic power over the People for fifty years and dictated agency decisions as well.

That first elected council revealed the tenacity of Jicarilla culture in the face of long struggle. Five of the eighteen men were traditional leaders from chiefs' families; ten were medicine men or spiritual leaders; the five wealthiest men on the reservation served on the council — resonant with the old Apache value of success in raiding bestowing importance.

The council moved quickly to buy out most non-Indian holdings within the reservation and to return allotted land to the tribe (valuing allottees' share in tribal assets according to the size of their former allotments). Tribal income went up; after World War II, it skyrocketed with oil and gas development in the southern reservation. Individual income paradoxically did not keep pace.

Drought hit the stockmen hard. By the end of the 1950s, with little reason to live

on isolated ranches, 90 percent of Jicarillas lived in the vicinity of the agency town of Dulce. Per capita payments began in 1952, with the hope that funneling tribal income back to the People would revitalize the economy.

The per capita payments and tribal funds for scholarships and assistance to minors kept families going until jobs in Dulce became more abundant. Federal programs exploded in the sixties, and twenty-five years of testimony on Jicarilla land claims came to fruition in 1970 with a judgment of close to \$10 million.

Today, the tribe's oil and gas, livestock range, timber, and big game for recreational hunting have the potential to support the People. The wildlife management program has become a model for New Mexico, complete with aerial surveys and radio telemetry. Steve Martinez, law enforcement director for the Department of Natural Resources, says that the reservation has the best deer hunting of any comparable-sized area — anywhere. A trophy elk license costs \$3,500 (Fort Apache collects up to \$10,000 for similar permits); regular customers come every year from as far away as Germany and Mexico.

The Jicarillas received about \$25 million in oil and gas revenues in 1986 — some 85 percent of the tribal budget, which supported a wide range of social programs. To avoid having constantly to audit the energy companies, the Jicarillas take much of their royalty payments as a share of oil and gas, which they then market themselves. They also have moved toward ownership of as many wells as possible. In 1987, the tribe made one-fourth of its energy-related income from the 2 percent of the wells in which it shared ownership.

The Jicarilla decision to impose a severance tax on energy extractors led to a crucial United States Supreme Court decision in 1982, affirming the right to tax as "an essential attribute of Indian sovereignty." Unfortunately, taxation by both state and tribe has scared some energy companies away. That fact, combined with the early-1990s recession, sent Jicarilla royalties down to a projected \$11 million in 1992.

Jicarilla economic planner Richard TeCube says: "We should be able to leverage our natural resource money. We should, we shall, we must. But do we have the will?"

As the economy has become a tribal affair, so has the allegiance of individual Jicarilla families shifted from extended family group and band to the tribe. Only during the annual relay race do Olleros and Llaneros once again separate into rival groups. This two-day holiday, when virtually the entire tribe moves out to Stone Lake, is more than simple recreation; some 70 percent of Jicarillas still practice their Apache religion.

The race also marks the time to pick band chiefs for the coming year; now, in Tom Vigil's words, little more than "chief for a day." The runners sprint in sneakers, ribbons trailing from their headdresses, their bodies painted with clay and blessed



Jicarilla runner refreshed by a wet cottonwood branch, Stone Lake, 1987. Only during this annual relay race do the two Jicarilla clans, the Olleros and Llaneros, separate into rival groups, each team trying to lap the other twice for victory — and resulting prosperity for the year.

with eagle-down feathers, each team trying to lap the other twice for victory — and resulting prosperity for the year. Cheered on by their families and friends, they run into the Jicarilla future, carrying with them their past.

What survives from that past grows more and more fragile. In 1978, half the reservation residents spoke Jicarilla, and one-third of the households used the language regularly. Few younger people today learn to speak Jicarilla, however, according to Wilma Phone, language and culture director for the Jicarilla Education Department. "I feel bad about it, but if young people aren't interested, you can't force them." The elders who can teach them are hard to understand, according to Phone: "You have to have good ears." She believes that there are few elders — no more than ten people in their eighties — because "we lost a lot of people when they were young. Only about six or seven sit at the Senior Citizens Center. I wonder how they feel about the TV."

Phone knows how she feels about television. "When TV came, we started losing communication with our family life. You can all sit in the room together, but you don't talk to each other, you don't tell stories. That's family life now. You lose contact and then you wonder why you have problems at home."

Wilma Phone's sister, Lydia Pesata, also has chosen to fight "a one-person campaign against the odds." She taught herself basketry and pottery making beginning in 1971 and now teaches others the old skills. She talked with me in the Cultural Resources Center, the simply furnished frame building she uses for her classes: "The language dying out isn't my problem; the crafts are my problem. Pottery completely died out in the fifties, and now we have pottery. Dye plants completely died out, and I brought that back."

Pesata and her students make coiled willow and sumac baskets like the "professional ladies" down the street at the tribal arts and crafts museum, but Pesata's group uses natural plant dyes instead of brilliant chemical dyes. She says: "Some say the colors are too dull, but to me, they're beautiful." Her soft reddish browns, tans, yellows, mauves, and blacks come from mahogany root, alder bark, squaw apple, chokecherries, and sumac — using recipes concocted through trial and error. Pesata says: "It's not my art only, it's to share with other people. It's my lifework, to continue for the future."

Several Jicarillas spoke with me about the loss of medicine men, how "white people think you can learn from recordings" of their songs, but that the Jicarillas know better. You have to be there in person, whenever the medicine man wants to teach. "When he feels you have it, he gives it to you, and you accept it." Such a commitment must be the focus of your life, and Jicarilla people who want to learn but could not make that commitment speak sadly of their decision.

"Dulce is an Indian community, but it's not that different from any other rural community," says Richard TeCube, whose perspective reflects a decade living off-reservation, including time with the Peace Corps in India. He goes on: "You don't have to be poor to be Indian. The state will take us to court on taxation issues and then issue a brochure showing us in feathers, saying, 'Come visit Indian Country.' It causes people wonderment to find us not living in shacks."

The Best Western Jicarilla Inn is cause for some wonderment, too. This motel is Tom Vigil's creation. After a twenty-year "whirlwind tour" on the outside, with jobs as diverse as advisor to southern California city governments and working in Washington, D.C., on the Indian Self-Determination Act, Vigil came home in 1982. He had been saying to himself, "How long am I going to go around the world trying to prove myself? I want to be home in my peak professional years."

When he returned, the tribe was considering building a high-quality motel for the oil and gas executives who were parking their planes in Dulce and "walking around in the mud in suits." Vigil said to the tribe: "Lease me the land. I'll build it, you guarantee the loan. And I'll build it for a third the cost per square foot projected by the

BIA." Vigil's entrepreneurial drive made good his pledge, and (with 80 percent of his capital from the tribe, the rest from the BIA) his top-of-the-line family operation now is making a profit — a national model for Indian-owned business.

Vigil believes his motel can trigger "a multiplier effect" in the community's economy. His goal: to make the motel an "information center." Tourists, he told me, "come in with interests and guilt. They are puzzled, and want conversations like this one I'm having with you more than dances. I just want to be honest with them."

More and more, the Jicarillas have become part of the regional economy. The school district, incorporated in 1959 with the surrounding Hispanic towns, had a 1989 board that included four Jicarilla members, including TeCube and tribal newspaper editor Mary Polanco, board president. In 1988, it was chosen New Mexico School District of the Year. Some college classes are taught in Dulce through Northern New Mexico Community College.

Polanco, editor of the *Jicarilla Chieftain* for twenty years, says: "When I was young, you needed to know how to brand cattle, how to mend fence, how to milk a cow. If someone had told me that I would have learned how to run a computer, I would have laughed my head off."

She goes on: "People my age went to boarding school because we had to. We were not close to our homeland, culture, parents. There is a new emphasis on education, but at the same time there has been a rebirth of the quest for personal knowledge. Children now are beginning to say, 'Hey, I'm Jicarilla, it's important.' We are so few, we have to protect ourselves. I hope we never can cope with the outside world, for if we do, we will have lost our identity."

Few outsiders hear much about the Jicarillas. TeCube shakes his head about this: "It's a dichotomy. We're not well known, yet we're known as progressive, too." Mary Polanco dismisses outsiders' ignorance of her people. "Being invisible is their problem, not ours. We've been here forever and ever."

The Jicarilla, and all Apache people, see themselves still moving in the flow of their history and culture, but they do not depend for their identity on any one facet of that culture — not the techniques for roasting mescal, not the language, not the success of a young man on a raid. Tom Vigil says: "Our attachment to the land is more than just being Indian. At one time we lost our land; down deep inside our animalness, we still care." Steve Martinez explains his desire to stay in Dulce: "There's not much money here, but there is seclusion and serenity."

Dulce seems particularly serene in fall, when each family collects its winter supply of firewood, the ready-to-split rounds of ponderosa and piñon stacked in yards.

296 Magpies flap across deep blue skies, yellow rabbitbrush blossoms along the roads, scrub oak deepens to burnt gold in late afternoon light.

*In the Dry
Mountains*

Richard TeCube speaks of the predicaments of his people: "We are a people. We want to keep the link; it's oral — there is a core. I think there will always be traditional culture with tribes. But our repository of tradition and culture is dying out with the elders. No tribe is as traditional as they were twenty-five years ago. It's a sobering thought to think about those lost opportunities. And yet, who am I to judge what should or shouldn't be? It's so difficult to do things right."

Indeed it is.