



There is a tall Hopi basket with a single figure woven into it which might be a Grasshopper or a Hummingbird Man. Inside the basket are hundreds of photographs taken since the 1890's around Laguna. My grandpa Hank first had a camera when he returned from Indian School, and years later, my father learned photography in the Army.

Photographs have always had special significance with the people of my family and the people at Laguna. A photograph is serious business and many people still do not trust just anyone to take their picture.

It wasn't until I began this book that I realized that the photographs in the Hopi basket have a special relationship to the stories as I remember them. The photographs are here because they are part of many of the stories and because many of the stories can be traced in the photographs.





I always called her Aunt Susie  
because she was my father's aunt  
and that's what he called her.

She was married to Walter K. Marmon,  
my grandpa Hank's brother.  
Her family was the Reyes family from Paguete  
the village north of Old Laguna.  
Around 1896  
when she was a young woman  
she had been sent away to Carlisle Indian School  
in Pennsylvania.  
After she finished at the Indian School  
she attended Dickinson College in Carlisle.

When she returned to Laguna  
she continued her studies  
particularly of history  
even as she raised her family  
and helped Uncle Walter run their small cattle ranch.  
In the 1920's she taught school  
in a one-room building at Old Laguna

where my father remembers he misbehaved  
while Aunt Susie had her back turned.

From the time that I can remember her  
she worked on her kitchen table  
with her books and papers spread over the oil cloth.  
She wrote beautiful long hand script  
but her eyesight was not good  
and so she wrote very slowly.

She was already in her mid-sixties  
when I discovered that she would listen to me  
to all my questions and speculations.  
I was only seven or eight years old then  
but I remember she would put down her fountain pen  
and lift her glasses to wipe her eyes with her handkerchief  
before she spoke.

It seems extraordinary now  
that she took time from her studies and writing  
to answer my questions  
and to tell me all that she knew on a subject,  
but she did.

She had come to believe very much in books  
and in schooling.  
She was of a generation,  
the last generation here at Laguna,



that passed down an entire culture  
by word of mouth  
an entire history  
an entire vision of the world  
which depended upon memory  
and retelling by subsequent generations.

She must have realized  
that the atmosphere and conditions  
which had maintained this oral tradition in Laguna culture  
had been irrevocably altered by the European intrusion—  
principally by the practice of taking the children  
away from Laguna to Indian schools,  
taking the children away from the tellers who had  
in all past generations  
told the children  
an entire culture, an entire identity of a people.

And yet her writing went painfully slow  
because of her failing eyesight  
and because of her considerable family duties.  
What she is leaving with us—  
the stories and remembered accounts—  
is primarily what she was able to tell  
and what we are able to remember.

As with any generation  
the oral tradition depends upon each person

listening and remembering a portion  
and it is together—  
all of us remembering what we have heard together—  
that creates the whole story  
the long story of the people.

I remember only a small part.  
But this is what I remember.



This is the way Aunt Susie told the story.  
She had certain phrases, certain distinctive words  
she used in her telling.  
I write when I still hear  
her voice as she tells the story.  
People are sometimes surprised  
at her vocabulary, but she was  
a brilliant woman, a scholar  
of her own making  
who has cherished the Laguna stories  
all her life.  
This is the way I remember  
she told this one story  
about the little girl who ran away.

The scene is laid partly in old Acoma, and Laguna.  
Waithea was a little girl living in Acoma and  
one day she said

“Mother, I would like to have  
some *yashtoah* to eat.”

*“Yashtoah” is the hardened crust on corn meal mush  
that curls up.*

*The very name “yashtoah” means  
it’s sort of curled-up, you know, dried,  
just as mush dries on top.*

She said

“I would like to have some *yashtoah*,”

and her mother said

“My dear little girl,  
I can’t make you any *yashtoah*  
because we haven’t any wood,  
but if you will go down off the mesa  
down below  
and pick up some pieces of wood  
bring them home  
and I will make you some *yashtoah*.”

So Waithea was glad and ran down the precipitous cliff  
of Acoma mesa.

Down below

just as her mother had told her  
there were pieces of wood,  
some curled, some crooked in shape,  
that she was to pick up and take home.

*She found just such wood as these.*

She went home  
and she had them  
in a little wicker basket-like bag.

First she called her mother  
as she got home.

She said

“Nayah, deeni!  
mother, upstairs!”

*The pueblo people always called “upstairs”  
because long ago their homes were two, three stories high  
and that was their entrance  
from the top.*

She said

“Deeni!  
UPSTAIRS!”

and her mother came.

The little girl said

“I have brought the wood  
you wanted me to bring.”

And she opened  
her little wicker basket  
and laid them out  
and here they were snakes  
instead of the crooked sticks of wood.

And her mother says

“Oh my dear child,  
you have brought snakes instead!”

She says

“Go take them back and put them back  
just where you got them.”

And the little girl

ran down the mesa again  
down below in the flats  
and she put those sticks back  
just where she got them.  
They were snakes instead  
and she was very much hurt about this  
and so she said

“I’m not going home.  
I’m going to *Kawaik*,  
the beautiful lake place, *Kawaik*  
and drown myself  
in that lake, *bun’yah’nah*.

*That means the “west lake.”*

I’ll go there and drown myself.”

So she started off,  
and as she came by the Enchanted Mesa  
near Acoma  
she met an old man very aged  
and he saw her running and he says

“My dear child,  
where are you going?”

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She says

"I'm going to *Kawaik*  
and jump into the lake there."

"Why?"

"Well, because,"

she says

"my mother didn't want to make any *yashtoah*  
for me."

The old man said "Oh no!

You must not go my child.

Come with me

and I will take you home."

He tried to catch her  
but she was very light  
and skipped along.

And everytime he would try  
to grab her  
she would skip faster  
away from him.

So he was coming home with some wood  
on his back,  
strapped to his back  
and tied with yucca thongs.

*That's the way they did  
in those days, with a strap  
across their forehead.*

And so he just took that strap  
and let the wood drop.

He went as fast as he could

up the cliff  
to the little girl's home.  
When he got to the place  
where she lived  
he called to her mother

"Deeni!"

"Come on up!"

And he says

"I can't.

I just came to bring you a message.

Your little daughter is running away,  
she's going to *Kawaik* to drown herself  
in the lake there."

"Oh my dear little girl!"

the mother said.

So she busied herself around  
and made the *yashtoah* for her  
which she liked so much.

*Corn mush curled at the top.*

*She must have found enough wood  
to boil the corn meal  
to make the "yashtoah"*

And while the mush was cooling off  
she got the little girl's clothing  
she got her little *manta* dress,  
*you know,*

and all her other garments,  
her little buckskin moccasins that she had

and put them in a bundle too,  
*probably a yucca bag,*  
and started down as fast as she could on the east side of Acoma.  
*There used to be a trail there, you know, it is gone now, but*  
*it was accessible in those days.*

And she followed  
and she saw her way at a distance,  
saw the daughter way at a distance.  
She kept calling

“*Stsamaku!* My daughter! Come back!  
I’ve got your *yashtoah* for you.”

But the girl would not turn  
she kept on ahead and she cried

“My mother, my mother.  
She didn’t want me to have any *yashtoah*  
so now I’m going to *Kawaik*  
and drown myself.”

Her mother heard her cry  
and says

“My little daughter  
come back here!”

No, she kept a distance away from her  
and they came nearer and nearer  
to the lake that was here.  
And she could see her daughter now  
very plain.

“Come back my daughter!  
I have your *yashtoah!*”

And no  
she kept on  
and finally she reached the lake  
and she stood on the edge.

She had carried a little feather  
which is traditional.

*In death they put this feather  
on the dead in the hair.*

She carried a feather  
the little girl did  
and she tied it in her hair  
with a little piece of string  
right on top of her head  
she put the feather.

Just as her mother was about  
to reach her  
she jumped  
into the lake.

The little feather was whirling  
around and around in the depths below.

*Of course the mother was very sad.*

She went, grieved back to Acoma  
and climbed her mesa home.

And the little clothing,  
the little moccasins  
that she's brought

and the *yashtoah*,  
she stood on the edge  
of the high mesa  
and scattered them out.  
She scattered them to the east  
                  to the west  
to the north and to the south—  
in all directions—  
and here every one of the little clothing—  
                  the little *manta* dresses and shawls  
                  the moccasins and the *yashtoah*—  
                  they all turned into butterflies—  
                  all colors of butterflies.

*And today they say that acoma has more beautiful butterflies—  
red ones, white ones, blue ones, yellow ones.  
They came  
from this little girl's clothing.*

Aunt Susie always spoke the words of the mother to her daughter  
with great tenderness, with great feeling  
as if Aunt Susie herself were the mother  
addressing her little child. I remember there was something mournful  
in her voice too as she repeated the words of the old man  
something in her voice that implied the tragedy to come.  
But when Aunt Susie came to the place  
where the little girl's clothes turned into butterflies  
then her voice would change and I could hear the excitement and wonder  
and the story wasn't sad any longer.



My great-grandmother was Marie Anaya  
from Pagate village north of Old Laguna.  
She had married my great-grandfather, Robert G. Marmon,  
after her sister, who had been married to him,  
died. There were two small children then,  
and she married him so the children would have a mother.  
She had been sent East  
to the Indian school at Carlisle  
and she later made a trip  
with the children to Ohio  
where my great-grandpa's relatives, the Marmons, lived.  
My great-grandpa didn't go with them and  
he never seemed much interested in returning to Ohio.  
He had learned to speak Laguna  
and Grandpa Hank said when great-grandpa went away from Laguna  
white people who knew  
sometimes called him "Squaw Man."

Grandpa Hank and his brother Kenneth  
were just little boys  
when my great-grandfather took them  
on one of his trips to Albuquerque.

