



Florence Steele & Lee Moon

Great Basin Indian Archive

GBIA 015



Oral History Interview by

Norm Cavanaugh
December 6, 2006
Ibapah, NV



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C: What do you guys recall about the Goshute Reservation—when it was first established, and how did it come about?

M: Let me go way back. When they first put the Indians on the land here, okay? This has been passed down from generation to generation. The Indians were first put here on this earth. This tribe here, Shoshone Tribe, neighbors, the Ute Tribe towards the east, some more Shoshones up north, Southern Paiutes down south, and other tribes way up and all kind of around them. They always using Coyote as a character in [__inaudible at 2:18__]. He was a—well, and his brother, had a big pot of all the different tribes in there. Told his brother Coyote, don't look in there, they're not ready yet. Take them over there. The Coyote was curious all the time. He got curious, and looked in there. And all the tribes scattered out.

S: He—a nice-looking girl came over here, **on this, kind of**. He was looking for Coyote's brother. He had a name—"white"-something. *Tosapitte*. He was looking for him. And she couldn't find him. And then that Coyote, *Itsappe*, when he—she asked him about this, the person she was looking for. And he said, "I've never heard of that name. Not in my life. I'm the only one who lives around here. I'm the only one." So. So she said, "I guess you will do. You will have to mind me. We're going a long ways from here. I want you to mind me, what I say. You listen to me." So, and they left. They left, and they walked for long ways. And she kept telling him, "Don't go running around." You know how a kid is; you know, they run around, and come back, and run. And that what he was doing. So, they came to a big water, edge of the water. And she told him, "We're going to go across this water. They said it was like a land. There was nothing you could see. As

far as you could see, there was water. So he kept running around on the edge of that ocean, or whatever it was—sea. So, she told him, “Let’s rest here for a while. And then we’ll go. We have to cross this water.” And he asked her, “How we going to cross this water?” She said, “You will know, but we’ll see tomorrow after we’re rested.” And they got up, and he made—her hand like this, and when she made a sign like this, and the water came to this way. Yeah, it came splashing this way, and this way. And there was a path where you could—she told him, “You run. You run fast as you can. And when you run, don’t look back. That water’s going to close. The road you just passed, it’s going to close right behind you. And you just keep right on running, don’t stop until you get to the edge of the water. There’ll be no more road. That road’s going to be closed.” And so that’s what he did. He was *so* tired once he got to the edge of the other side of the water. And that is why that lady told him, “You get rested. Don’t be running around. You’ll need your strength.” And he didn’t listen. That’s why he was very, very tired when he got to the edge of the water, because he was just running and running and running. And when they got to the edge of the water, she wasn’t there. And he said, “What am I going to do now?” He didn’t know what to do. He kept running around the edge of that water. “Shall I go this way, or shall I go *this* way?” But he didn’t know the land. And pretty soon, the lady came over, and came flying across the ocean as a duck. And she landed right by him, and it was that lady. She came over as a duck, she came flying. But Coyote didn’t know that. So they walked and walked. They walked, and they came to this little hut. And there was an old lady, when he got in there. She was weaving a basket, and the Coyote asked the lady, the girl, what the lady was doing, the old woman. And she wouldn’t tell him. So he just watch. And the the lady—the girl go away somewhere, but she didn’t know

where. In the evening, she will come back. And she told Coyote, “You can go ahead and go out, but don’t stray too far. You come back, or you gonna get lost. You come right back to this camp.” And he did. He was so curious why that lady was weaving a basket. The basket was getting bigger and bigger. And she—the young lady told the Coyote, she said, “You should go over and go see what the lady is doing. She will tell you what to do.” And she said, she told him, “You spend the night here with me, tonight. You’re not going back to her. You’re going to stay here with me.” And that night, the old lady told him, “You’re going to sleep with me.” And Coyote didn’t want to, because she was kind of old, and he’d rather go for the young one. But he stayed anyway, and they were in bed, and she told him to—you know, to—“Go ahead and have sex with me.” And Coyote wouldn’t do it. And I guess towards morning, he decided, “What is she up to, anyway?” And he did what he was asked, and then he went back. He went back to the young girl. And that young girl asked him, “What did you do?” And he told her. “Is that why she asked me to go over there and stay at her camp?” And she said, “Yes.” And she said, “You’re going to be doing that for several nights. You’ll be going over to her hut. And she’ll still”—she was weaving a basket, making bigger and bigger. And that old lady told him, “You’re going to try it. You’re going to do it with the young girl this time.” And he did. They stayed together that night, and when they were making their love, he wouldn’t do it. He wouldn’t do anything with her. She was too small, he couldn’t do anything. So he gave up on her. And he tried for a few nights. And he said, “What shall I do with her?” He said, “I can’t do anything with her. She’s too small.” And soon, he killed an antelope. And I don’t know if she saved the backbone or she saved the neck part of the bone. And when they were together, he went after that piece of bone he saved. He

came back with it, and then stuck that into the young girl. And the young girl cried and screamed so loud, her breath went out of her. And he took that bone out of her, and he did that to her. He made love to her. This time, he got her. And she was still unconscious. And the next night, she was all right. So, he slept with her for I don't know how many nights. And then, that old lady told the young lady, "I think we're ready. We're ready," she said. "Now, you tell that guy, whoever he is, that he's going to take this basket across the water, and take it on the other side of the water, ocean. So the young lady told the Coyote what the old lady asked of him. And he said, "Am I going to walk over that water?" "No," the young lady told him. "You're going to go through just like the way you did, but this time, you're not going to run. You're going to walk with this on your back." He wondered how he's going to get that on his back, because that basket was big! But anyway, that lady did the same thing to the water like she did before. And she told him, "You're going to go walk through this water road." And he did, to the edge of the water. But that girl was already at the other side. And she helped him pull the basket to the edge of the water. And when he looked back, there was no road. There was just water. Except when the water came back together, said it just splashed *real big*, like that. Like it was standing **into Heaven**, and it came back and settled again. And this scared the Coyote. So she told him to "Take this basket, and take it to a certain place—but don't fool around with that basket. Just keep on carrying it on your back until you get there." But Coyote was curious. It got heavier and heavier. And he said, "What did she put in this basket? She was weaving and weaving, and it got bigger. And then they wanted to have sex with me. Why?" He said, "I'm going to look in there." He took the lid off, and when he did that, he said that the—something pushed the lid. And he tried his best to put

the lid back, but something was forcing the lid back. There was people coming out of that basket. Coming—they were going this way, and this way. Trying his best to hold the lid back, but lot of them came out. And finally, he put the lid back on. But he would hear people in there then. At first he didn't hear anything. That's when he got curious and looked in there. There were people in there. Then he stood there for a while. And them people were—they were not all the same. They were all different people. And he named all the Indians now that are living in this United States. He said, "You're going to be there, and you're going to be called So-and-So." All those tribes, he named them all. "That's where you're going to stay. You stay, you'll be doing this and that." And then he took the basket again. He traveled for a long time, until he got very very tired and couldn't go on anymore. So he said, "We'll let the other people take the lid off and see how many is in there. Who's all in there?" And he did take the lid off. They said there was not that many people in that basket. But they went here and there, but not too many. And so he named them, too, the kind of people they were going to be. And the names. And I guess that's it. Those two duck ladies put those people in that basket. That was the Ducks' and the Coyote's children in that basket. And then they told him to take it to— must've been United States! [Laughter]

C: So, was the Goshute tribal members in there?

S: Yeah, the Goshutes, there were Goshute.

M: He was carrying the basket. He wasn't supposed to look in there.

S: Yeah.

M: Because—and he was told it wasn't ready!

S: Not to look in there.

M: Take the lid off yet, it wasn't time.

S: And see, if it was—his brother, that young girl was looking for, he wouldn't have looked in there. But, this Coyote did, because he was not the other guy.

C: Uh-huh. Was his brother the Wolf?

S: Yes, uh-huh. *Pia Isa*. He's the one that she was looking for.

M: The Wolf.

S: Mhm. And the Coyote said that, "There's no one by that name. I'm the only one person that lives around here." [Laughter]

M: That's why everybody leave. Because it wasn't the time to take the lid off and let them out. That's why other Indians aren't like the white people. Them scientists, they know everything. They're real smart. Maybe that's why the Indians are like that now. Because they weren't ready when they were let out. Other words, we would have been like them. All those scientists, they know everything now. Our Indian people would have been like that if they was ready when they take the lid off. But it wasn't time. I think that's what happened. That's why Indians are the way they are now; because we weren't ready!

S: It's the Coyote's fault! [Laughter]

C: So the Coyote was a trickster. He didn't listen, huh?

S: No. And we had a old guy by the name of **Commodore**. Indian. Used to live with us. He was blind, and very old. And he said, "It's been told that that basket and the lid is somewhere down there." He said, "There is a hill that formed around it. It turned into a rock. There's a water coming out of it." He said it's still there.

C: Where at?

S: He didn't know. He said it just down south. But he didn't know—he don't know the place, but it has been told that that basket is down south from here. And he said there's got a hill behind it, and it turned into a rock. And the lid is still by it. I know he said that the spring water coming out of it. But he didn't know where.

C: What is Goshute—"Goshute," is that an English word, or is that a Indian word, or what does that mean?

M: *Kusiotta*.

S: *Kosiutta*.

M: Like a "Goshute," **ash paint**.

S: There's a water down here at the lane, and there's a two big ditches. The one is coming this way, and one is coming this end, and they all go together alongside of the road. And in that one creek, there's an, it's always kind of gray. Like, when you would make a paste out of a flour, you dump that into the water, and then it'll be flowing white. That's how it is, that water. Always gray. Because there's a—somewhere, underneath that water, there's a form of white rock. It's somewhere down here. He said he's seen it. Where they used to get that powder, and they paint their faces with it. War paints.

M: *Aippin*.

S: *Aippin. Aippin.* And that kind of rock is underneath that water. That's where it's always flowing, and kind of grayish color.

M: *Aippinpah*.

S: *Aippinpah*, uh-huh.

C: *Aippinpah*, uh-huh.

S: Because that powder is called "*aippin*." And water is "*pah*."

C: So, what is the *aippin* used for?

S: That's what they use it for. To paint war paints, paint their faces. It comes off easy, just like a powder. Off of that rock. That's why they called it that. *Kosiutta*.

C: So is there other stories about the Goshute Tribe here, or culture, or customs, or games that you guys played as far as, you know, tribal activities, or cultural activities?

M: Basically, it's probably the same as the Shoshones and neighbors. Indians like to gamble. Handgame, and race—footrace, you know, that.

C: Did you have any famous runners that you could remember that were a racer or ran for the tribe?

S: No. But my aunt used to tell me that all these Goshutes, there was, when they form like a, they were dancing in the fall? She said "We never used to tell everybody around then. There was enough Indians to do the powwow themselves. There was a *lot* of Goshutes here." There was no other tribe among us. And she said, they went away somewhere. They were—the food was getting scarce. They have to go far away, and some of these people that live outside, they'll get into fights because of the food. They have to drive them back. And she say "I don't know what happened after that." Said it was told from time to time, but that's what she heard.

C: What kind of food was here at the time? Was there—what type of animals—?

S: Ooh. Oh, there was, I guess, deer and rabbits, and all that were kind of getting scarce because there was a lot of people. And seeds and berries. And that's when they started roaming out, because of the food, was scarce.

C: So, like, with the rabbits, and the deer, what did they use? Did they use any of their hides, or hair, for—?

S: Yes, they did.

M: They used everything, even the bones in needles and things like that. They didn't waste any of it.

C: What were some of the things or tools they made from it?

M: From the bones?

S: There are certain bones in the deer that they use.

C: And what did they make with it?

S: Oh, anything! They make a needle out of it. Then, the deer—it goes from the back of the deer—is it the tendon, or what is it? And they used that for thread. They'd dry it up, and they use it for thread. Because it started from here, and it runs clear down to the back.

[Goshute at 27:57] *Tukuintt'an entaampo.*

C: Ah. Like, the tendon.

S: The tendon, yes. That's what they used for—and then, to scrape the hair from the hide, they use the shoulder bone. They use the shoulder bone. This part of the leg, I think, or—it's kind of sharp. They use that to scrape the hair from the hide. And use the brain, and spread it on the hide until it's dry, and it'll soften it.

C: What did they use to scrape the hair off the hide?

S: That's what I said, they used the deer bone. Certain part of the bone. Shoulder blade and the leg, leg bone.

C: And how long does that take to do that?

S: To do what?

C: To scrape the hair off the hide.

S: It depends on how they have to [**Goshute at 29:27**] *ossoittai*. If they don't soften it the first time, then they put more brains on it. Then they have to do it the same thing all over again.

C: What are some of the crafts that the Goshute Tribe is known for? Make baskets, or—?

S: Make baskets.

M: Willows.

S: Out of willows. And some of those small—I don't know what it's called. But mostly, I think it was out of a willows.

C: How about for, like, medicine? What did the tribe use for medicine before healthcare came about, in regards to antibiotics and the stuff that we use nowadays?

M: I've forgotten lot of things that I was taught when I was a boy. At that time, you don't listen. Now you wish you would've listened! Yeah, there's some herbs there that could be used for certain illness and all that. And I have forgotten even what—the names, even. I guess they're still there, I guess.

S: I think that *totsa* is another one. I don't know what they use it for. Whatever you call the *totsa*. You got some in Elko, up in the hills, [__inaudible at 31:18__].

M: You know *totsa*?

C: Yeah, uh-huh.

M: And that's up on Adobe Summit last year.

C: Does it grow on the ground? You dig it out? Or how do you get it?

S: Yeah, it's like a potato. They were in the ground. Most of them were small. Some of them real big. To dig it out, you really had to use a stick **or what was available**.

C: So as far as the Goshute reservation here, what can you guys share with us today about what goes on here? What do people do nowadays for—?

S: Now? Well, there used to be ranchers, but now they're gone. The people that used to own these lands, they're all gone. The young ones just don't care to take care of them.

C: How big is the reservation? How big is the Goshute reservation?

M: You'll have to ask; I've forgotten just how many acres. How many acres is the Goshute reservation?

U1: Hundred and eighteen thousand.

C: Hundred and eighteen thousand acres? Uh-huh. What does—do you have elk here? Deer, antelope? I seen antelope today, coming in.

M: Elk?

C: I didn't see elk, but I seen antelope coming in today. So is elk native to this—

M: No, it was transplanted here in 1988, I believe. Done pretty good here. It multiplied pretty fast.

C: So is it that tribal members use the elk, do they hunt the elk to eat the meat, and do they work with the hide of the elk like they do the deer? Or is it harder to work with?

S: It's harder to work with, I heard. I guess they have to cut it in two to work it. Unless you take it to the tannery.

C: How about for wild turkeys? Do you guys raise wild turkeys here?

M: Yeah. They was also transplanted here not too long ago. Maybe ten years back.

C: Oh. How they doing?

M: I don't know how many there is now.

S: I've seen some here and there, through the summer. I just think they do survive the winter, because I've seen little chicks. So far, there was seven of them little chicks, over in Spring Creek. Rabbits. And cottontails.

C: Does anybody still make the rabbit blankets out here?

S: [Laughter] I don't think so!

C: No?

S: My mom used to make it. We do that, *lot* of the rabbit hide, to make a blanket.

C: Did you help her when she made those?

S: No, I didn't, I just watched her. [Laughter] And she made it wide enough for a single bed, and cover it with a blanket. Or she used a Levi's like this and cover it, make cover for it.

C: Do you remember how she put them together? Did she sew them together, or twist them together, or how did—

S: She made the—because, the way she made it, it was kind of a web. And she put a, she'll tie a stick about this long [indicates a stick roughly 10-12" long], so she could twist that—tie it to the end of the hide, I think. She stretched the hides, they're about this wide [indicates a few inches in width], and then she start twirling the stick, and it make a rope out of that hide. And she made a big line of the hide, and then make a ball out of it. And then, when she gets ready, then she'll tie them together with the old rags, just tie them together this far apart, I think. [Indicates a space of 2-3 inches] They were all this far apart, both ways. And keep on tying it, until she think it's big enough for blanket.

C: Were they pretty warm?

S: Yeah, they were pretty warm!

C: How do you use the pinenuts? Is there anything special made with pinenuts?

S: They just cook and eat it, and then they make a gravy out of it.

C: And how's the gravy made?

S: Well, they smash the—they cook the pinenuts, and they smash the shells, and make sure you don't break most of the nuts in there. And then you grind them up with charcoal. I guess, long time ago, they use that winnowing basket. You could put the nuts in there, and then put charcoal on top of it, and then start. There's a, you know, certain way to shake it so the charcoal don't touch the willow basket—winnowing basket. And you better do it quickly, too! Fast. That just to dry up the pinenuts, so it'll—it's a better to have it dry, and then they, whatever they have that those—ground rock and put the nuts on them and start the—

M: Grind.

S: Grinding. Oh, what do they call that? A *tusu*. Those little rocks. And then *poto*, the round thing. Round, flat rock about this [indicates a rock a few inches thick]. That's to make gravy out of it.

M: And it took a lot of skill to make a pinenut gravy.

S: Yeah.

M: Just had to have everything just right. Otherwise, gravy wouldn't come out right.

S: Or they'll make a stew out of it, like you would a beans? You have to cook it for a long time. And it's kind of gray, the nuts. And you boil it, and then pour the first one out, and then just boil it with the second water. And you put dry meat in there. I guess some people will dry deers—the ears—and they put that in there. And make pinenut stew.

M: You can bake in **ground**.

S: Probably can do a bake like the beans. [Laughter]

- C: Does the Senior Program here cook any of the Native foods for you guys?
- S: No. They don't know anything about Indian food. [Laughter]
- M: Wild onions, probably, that the people still use around here.
- S: Yeah.
- M: There's potatoes.
- S: Yeah, they still have wild carrots up in them canyons, and wild potatoes. They're not big, though. They're, potatoes are about this big, though. [Indicates about an inch.]
- C: So when's the best time to harvest those?
- S: In the—the potatoes, you see them in the spring, in the late spring. You start digging them before the leaves are drying up, because they dry up fast. Before the carrots. The carrots you dig around the end of summer, when they're about this tall. [Indicates roughly knee height.] And they have a clusters of white flowers.
- C: Of what? Of white flowers?
- S: White flowers, yeah. A cluster of them. That's how you can tell where they're growing. And they grow deep—about that deep [indicates somewhere between 8-12 inches]
- M: Going back to the pinenuts, the people long time ago knew when the pinenuts was ready by the rabbit brush. It will turn real bright orange or yellow if they're ready.
- S: Yeah, they'll watch that. They watch for it real closely. You call it rabbit brush—they call it, what was it? What is it?
- M: *Sipappin*.
- S: Yeah, *sipappin!* ***Tapashii*** [43:15].
- M: And the, how do you say that?
- S: Yeah!

M: Wild rose.

S: Yeah, well, it's the berries that were—

M: Had red berries. They get real ripe at about same time pinenuts are ready.

S: Ready to pick.

C: So the berries of the wild roses. Are they used for anything?

S: Mm, I don't think so. Never heard of anything.

C: So is there any ceremony that the tribal members do before picking the pinenuts, or how's that go?

M: Long time ago—when was the last time they had, like in those mountains? And pinenut dancing in the fall days, I think. **In them days, when I was going there.**

S: I think so.

C: So how, what kind of dance do they do for the Pinenut Dance?

S: Do round dance.

C: The round dance?

S: The round dance, yes.

M: Circle dance.

S: Circle dance.

M: This, and then Bear Dance come. And the Southern Paiutes, they come over here—

S: I think they come from the Ute, the Bear Dancing.

M: They had the Bear Dance songs that they—the Goshutes only had the circle dance songs.

S: Yeah.

C: Why do they call it the “Bear Dance?”

M: I don't—

S: It came from the Ute. That's where it came from.

C: Did they—

M: I guess it—

S: I heard here and there that the Utes say that they have a Bear Dance in the spring. That's when the bears come out of their den, or wherever they were staying all winter. And they go, they have a trees that grow on the mountain, I guess, and I guess they're laying in the den for so long, their hair start coming off, and I guess it itches. That's when the bears start rubbing their body on that tree, and I guess it makes a sound. A certain sound. So they have this Bear Dance, they have an old tub, and they put those—they have a stick about this long [about two feet], about this wide [an inch and a half in diameter]. And they did, they put notches in there. I don't know how many notches in there. And they rubbed that when they started singing the Bear Dance songs. Maybe that's how it sound like when the bears are rubbing their skin onto that trees. Makes a sound. That's why they dance to that music. They have a song for it, too. But not over here, that's what I've heard, that's what I've been told. Come from the Utes, out that way. Oh—there's another thing that Indians used to eat during the summer—when the chokecherries are red. And they'll take a lot of chokecherries, and they kind of squish it, and they make patties out of it. That's going to be the winter food, and that's how they dry the chokecherries. Make patties out of it.

C: Okay. Well, I want to thank you both for sharing today, these stories and the creation story. And this will be preserved. And once again, I want to say thank you to both of you.

[End of recording]