Etching by Elias M. Grossman, 1941.

SUN CHIEF

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A HOPI INDIAN

Edited by

LEO W. SIMMONS

Foreword by

ROBERT V. HINE

YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS
NEW HAVEN AND LONDON

HP1817

Copyright © 1942 by Yale University Press.
Copyright renewed © 1970 by Leo W. Simmons.
All rights reserved.
This book may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, in any form (beyond that copying permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law and except by reviewers for the public press), without written permission from the publishers.

Printed in the United States of America by BookCrafters, Inc., Fredericksburg, Virginia.

ISBN: 0-300-00949-6 clothbound
0-300-00227-0 paperbound

32 31 30 29 28 27 26 25 24

TO
ALBERT GALLOWAY KELLER

HP1818

throat and opened its belly to save the meat. It had a heart larger than that of a cow and full of yellowish water, but the meat was fine.

To make the herding day seem short, I often lay down for a nap, collected dry bushes for firewood, looked for the honey of wild bees in rat holes, chased coyotes on horseback, or hunted rabbits. It was common practice to go home with four or five cottontails tied to my saddle or slung over my shoulder. This was a pleasure, for any woman in Oraibi thanked me joyously for a rabbit. I taught my dog to hunt and to bring the game to me by praising him, and by squirting rabbit urine on his nose to improve his smell. While I herded, there was usually a stick in my hand or a grubbing hoe on my shoulder to dig out rabbits from prairie dog or rat holes. I also became skillful at twisting out rabbits with forked sticks. If the rabbit kicked and cried, I politely reminded it that the Hopi gods had placed it here for our food. Whenever I caught game, I trained myself to say, "Thanks to my Hopi gods."

My best friends in rabbit hunts were hawks. I watched for them and asked for their help. Whenever I saw a hawk dive and stay down, I ran to the spot, expecting to find a rabbit in its claws. Catching up the rabbit, I would say, "Thanks, Mr. Hawk; you have answered my prayer. I will make a paho for you at Soyal." If the same hawk killed three rabbits for me in one day, I let it keep the third; for I knew that they were placed here to feed our hawk relatives as well as ourselves. Once when my dog chased a cottontail, a hawk sat on a sage bush and paid no attention. As I drew near, the bird flew a short distance. There lay a jack rabbit, half eaten! "No wonder you won't help me," I exclaimed. "You have a feast already. I shall make a prayer feather for you, and it is my wish that you prove yourself a better friend next time."

Sheepshearing came in April. Irene and her mother went in a wagon to the sheep corral, where we butchered a goat and spent the night in a temporary shelter. Early next morning we placed dry earth on the corral floor to keep the wool clean, tied the legs of my animals, and clipped them. Irene helped with the shearing, but never did any other work in sheepherding, although a few Hopi women herd when their husbands are disabled. We had to be careful to see that the wool was dry, clean

of sand, and kept under a blanket so that the wind would not blow it away. We took it to the trading post and exchanged it for groceries, cloth, and other supplies. I had clipped my long-haired dog and mixed his wool with that of the herd, which the trader did not discover.

Farming was hardest for me. In March and April, on days that I did not herd, I cleared a field of stubble and bushes, secured some posts, and worked several days at road building for the Agency in exchange for barbed wire. I wanted a strong fence so that I would not hear it cried from a housetop that a certain man's burro was in my cornfield. Neither did I want to cut off the ear or tail of any animal in punishment for trespass. I decided that if I found a horse or burro in another man's field, I would drive it out and notify the owner, so that my name would be praised. I also took part in nearly all Katcina dances, and helped collect wild spinach to show that my heart was right. I knew that I was not dancing for pleasure, but to help with the crops. "Think of rain while you dance," the old men advised.

I had planted a patch of early sweet corn in April. We had to dig holes four inches deep and cover the grains two inches, leaving a shallow pit above the seeds which served as a pocket to catch the sun's rays. Mice and kangaroo rats scratched out much of the grain. We had many little brown mice which were newcomers to the desert, and the old people said the Christian devil brought them. I fitted little grass and twig windbreaks around each plant, or collected old tin cans, opened both ends, and set them over the seedlings. The cans were better, for they also protected the plants from mice and worms. I wanted this corn ripe for the Niman dance in July.

At the end of April we were told that the sun had risen at the right point on the horizon for the planting of melons, squash, and early beans. During May I planted muskmelons, more watermelons, and lima beans. By the twentieth of June we planted the main corn crop, hoping that it would be late enough to miss the hard winds and the worst sand drifts. Several men helped me for work in exchange. We planted 12 to 15 grains of corn in holes 6 to 9 inches deep and 15 feet apart, using greasewood planting sticks, for the old farmers warned that iron sticks were harmful to the ground. We planted the white, blue, and mixed corn in different sections of the field, and with wind blowing so

HP1819

that we had to set stakes to keep track of the rows. I became so hot, tired, and sore that I planted on my knees. When the plants were up, we packed the dirt around them with our feet to make it too hard for worms to enter. It was a good practice to run races by cornfields to encourage young plants to grow rapidly. And, of course, no farmer would have intercourse with a woman in a cornfield, for this would offend the Corn Maiden Spirits who protect the crop. We did not throw anything from one person to another, which would cause hail. Neither did any person who had touched a corpse work in a cornfield for four days. Many farmers had shrines in their fields, but I did not. Old men stood at the edge of their fields, scolded the clouds, and ordered them to bring rain, but I was not very successful at this.

Soon after corn planting, I rode my horse to my father's field at Batowe northeast of Oraibi, hoping to find some wild spinach. I failed to find any, and rode northward looking for young hawks. I found a nest in a big juniper tree, climbed it, and caught one hawk. Farther on I found two hawks in another tree and caught one. Later I spied three hawks in a tree, frightened two out, caught them, and lassoed the third on a limb. Making cradles out of juniper boughs, I wrapped my hawks in gunny-sacks and tied them to the cradles with yucca stems. Each hawk looked like a little papoose hanging from my saddle. Mounting, I rode homeward very gently, trying not to jolt my young birds. In my excitement I had left my rope at the last tree, and never thought of it until I had gone too far to return without discomfort to the hawks. I finally reached the field house of Masahongneoma, the son of my uncle. He was called Nice Man by everyone now, because a prostitute in Winslow had praised him highly for his very long penis and had called him a "nice man." He helped me unbind the birds from their cradles, tied them on the roof of his house to rest them, and kept me and my horse for the night.

I took the hawks to my mother next day so that she could wash their heads in yucca suds—like new-borne babes—and name them. I gave one hawk to my young brother Perry, one to Ira, and kept three. We tied them on the roof of our Sun Clan house and caught rats, mice, and grasshoppers for them.

In a few days my uncle, Talasquaptewa, killed a sheep, took his paho equipment, and went to the Sun Clan house to make

prayer sticks for the summer solstice. This was an important ceremony of our Sun Clan to insure good crops. We had a feast, the men smoked in prayer, and my uncle made pahos which were placed on the Sun shrine early next morning.

When the crops began to grow, I borrowed Frank's mules from Shipaulovi to cultivate my field once, and then chopped weeds day after day, alternating with herding to rest my arms and back. On very hot days I sang or whistled to revive my spirit, danced a little, or took a nap in the shade of a bush. I remembered my easy life at school and the money I had wasted on girls; but I worked on, for we needed food. I wanted a good-looking cornfield, and wished to buy a fancy shawl for my wife and some horses and ornaments for myself. Then, too, I needed to build up my reputation as a hard worker, so that my wife could hold her head high.

With plenty of rain and no wind, worms, or rats to destroy our crops, and no weeds to choke them, we would never need to work so hard. But whenever friendly clouds gathered overhead, hostile winds scattered them. The men looked tired and worried and passed each other on the road without comment, each knowing what was in the other's mind—discouragement and a wish for rain. I probably made twenty-five trips to my cornfield to replant, chop weeds, poison rats, set traps for rabbits, and spray my plants with a mixture of powdered rabbit intestines, dried roots, dog dung, and water. It took so much strength in herding and field work that I had to cut down on love-making from every other night to only once a week.

My melon patch was a trial. When the sun lifted itself from the "melon-planting point" in May, I had taken seeds to a sandy field, planted them five steps apart, and covered each hill with a thick sheet of paper to protect it from kangaroo rats. The paper was pegged down with tall sticks so that I could find it again under sand drifts, and remove it when the plants came up. In spite of this common precaution, the rats destroyed half the seeds. When I had replanted, an evil wind blew for four days, destroying many more hills. I uncovered a few seedlings and replanted a second time, but there came another windstorm. After I had dug out the plants and built twig windbreaks to protect them, a third wind beat many to threads and parched others. In five days there came a fourth sandstorm which made it neces-

HP1820

Havasupai had fine buckskins to bet on their horses against those of the Navahos. I had $1 in my pocket, made a bet on a Navaho horse, and won. I won bet after bet and by midafternoon I had $16. Every time I took a step, silver dollars jingled, making me feel like a millionaire. By late afternoon my pockets were so heavy that I went alone to a horse corral, sat down, and counted $38.85. A small fortune had grown up around $1. I tied up my cash in a rag, stuck it in my hip pocket, went to Frances' house and learned that my grandfather Roger had won $83 and was now a rich man.

While we were eating and talking about the horse races, my clan mother, Tuwanungsie, the wife of Talasvuyauoma the War Chief, came and said, "Son, your father wants you to come to our house. If you wish to go on the salt expedition, you had better come now." I found him with the War Chief and some Shipaulovi men. They were making prayer feathers so that they could fetch yellow clay from the canyon—a special clay always used in paho making. While Talasvuyauoma busied himself with a prayer feather, he said that no one seemed willing to join them, and asked me. I agreed to go. The War Chief showed me how to prepare my prayer feathers and told me how many. Each of us wrapped our feathers in separate paper bags and smoked the mountain tobacco, exchanging kinship terms. When I arose to go, my clan mother said, "Son, you have already made your prayer feathers for the salt expedition, so you must stay away from the girls tonight." That disappointed me, for I had a pocket full of money and wanted to see Polehongsie.

We saddled the burros in the early morning, packed the food, took some baked sweet corn meal with our prayer feathers, and departed, reminding our relatives to keep happy hearts and insure our safe return. Outside the village the War Chief sprinkled a corn-meal path, placed a prayer feather upon it with the breath line pointing westward, and said, "Let us travel with happy hearts." Each of us stepped upon the "road-marker," and the expedition was under way.

We came abreast a sacred spring, deposited a prayer feather opposite the spot, passed another spring with similar sacrifices, and arrived at the shrine of Mountain Sheep nine or ten miles from Moenkopi where our ancestors used to hunt. There were antelope tracks set in soft mud which the War Twins had turned

to stone. We placed prayer feathers upon these, prayed to the Mountain Sheep for success in hunting, and asked them to come back so that we could hunt them again.

Traveling a mile farther, we arrived at the shrine where Hopi salt gatherers carve their clan emblems on the rocks. Our ancestors had gathered salt for many generations, and there were hundreds of clan emblems cut into the rocky base of the shrine. Every traveler, on each successive trip, had carved another symbol to the left of his original one. My father had carved eleven sand dunes in the course of his life, and Talasvuyauoma had carved ten coyote heads. I selected a smooth surface near by and carved my Sun symbol, also tracing my initials on the emblem; but I kept this secret, fearing that my companions would object to it as something modern. When I had finished, I placed the breath line of a prayer feather at the mouth of my Sun symbol, pounded it with a stone until it stuck, sprinkled corn meal upon the face of the emblem, and prayed: "My uncle, the Sun god, please notice that I have carved my clan emblem upon the stone. Direct our steps to the Salt Canyon, and watch over us until we return safely. Make our path smooth and renew our strength, so that our burden may be light." I prayed earnestly, realizing that we were entering the land of spirits and would have to cope with strange powers.

We journeyed to a sacred spring, placed prayer offerings by it, and prayed to the spirits who live there to send rain upon our crops and gladness to the hearts of our relatives. From there we climbed a hill and came to the shrine where the Twin War gods played Hopi checkers. After a sacrifice of prayer feathers, we each played checkers with the invisible Twins, arranged the games to our advantage, and then prayed: "Well, War Twins, we have won. Our reward shall be rain, health, and long life. Watch over us, that no harm may befall us."

We followed an old river bed northwest through a gap, passed over a hill, and entered a narrow gorge. When we had climbed to the opposite shelf, the War Chief said, "My saddle is not right, I will tighten the band." But instead of tightening the cinch, to my surprise, he loosened it and took out a white wedding blanket. Glancing at me, he smiled and said, "This is the shrine of the Salt Woman. We will have intercourse with her." He stepped to a white, slightly elevated sandstone about two feet

HP1821