

Nevada Test Site Oral History Project
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Interview with
Corbin Harney

August 4, 2005
Las Vegas, Nevada

Interview Conducted By
Suzanne Becker with Mary Palevsky

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Interview recorded on audio and video

[00:00:00] Begin Track 2, Disc 1.

Corbin Harney: Now is the time, is the best.

Suzanne Becker: *Now is?*

Now, when it's about 130 [degrees]. Yeah.

I think that would be good.

And next month is another one, another good month.

When it's only 120?

Well, it'd be 138 then.

[Laughter]

Joseph Granados [cameraman]: *My kind of weather.*

Corbin Harney: Yes, it is. It's nice. It limbers you right up. No bone aches or nothing.

[00:01:45] End Track 2, Disc 1.

[00:00:00] Begin Track 3, Disc 1.

[After pause, recording resumes mid-sentence.]

Corbin Harney: —beginning of my life what to do. You know. Some days I said no. Some days I go along with what they're saying. It all depends how it is when you get up in the mornings. Sometimes you roll out the wrong side, or you look the wrong way or whatever. You know, that's how we all are, I think. Sometimes it's pretty good to be getting up in the morning. Some days it's not.

Mary Palevsky: *Well, we're glad that you got up this morning and came to see us here. We're really glad and honored.*

Suzanne Becker: *Yes.*

Well, if it wasn't for him [Dominic Daileda], I don't think I'd be here.

Mary Palevsky: *Well, then we're glad for Dominic as well.*

Suzanne Becker: *We're glad you got up, too.*

I didn't want to get in the car but he told me I have to.

Well, we appreciate it.

OK, well, let's say a few words before we do, in my native tongue. We all got to stand up.

[Everyone stands.]

The reason why my people always say, say your prayer, asking for good things from nature, [is] because everything comes from our Mother. Upright. I don't care what it was. So those are the reasons why they say, energy comes from the bottom of your feet, from the Earth itself. That's the reason why my people didn't wear shoes at one time. But now we're modern, we have to have shoes. So it's pretty good, though, to have something like that. Otherwise I'd get tender-footed if I didn't have shoes, I guess. But I'm going to say a few things in my native tongue.

[00:02:18] [At this point, Mr. Harney begins to speak in his native Shoshone language.]

[00:05:00] [Interview resumes at this point]

Mary Palevsky: *Thank you.*

Suzanne Becker: *Thank you very much.*

Seems like that thing moves around when I move. [It's] following me around. [Referring to the microphone]

Mary Palevsky: *Suzanne, who is so very interested in the work you've been doing, has read your book [The Way It Is: One Water, One Air, One Mother Earth; Nevada City, CA. Blue Dolphin Publishing. 1995]. And she thought a lot about what you wrote and would like to just have a conversation with you about that. So, Suzanne?*

Suzanne Becker: *Well, again, thank you very much for coming down and sharing your time with us, starting out with your words.*

Remember, you're not talking my lingo at all. I don't understand what you're saying, but if you talk my lingo, then I can understand you. OK? Shoshone is my language.

I'll do my best. Maybe you could translate for me. Help me out.

[Laughter]

But no, like Mary said, I did read your book and I really liked it. I really liked what you had to say. And your story is, I think, amazing. There's quite a bit to talk about but we have a limited amount of time, if you wouldn't mind talking a little bit more about the path that you've taken to get to where you are and what that has involved.

Well, let me begin by saying, from the beginning of my life, when my grandparents were alive, they taught me a lot of things. Remember, we all remember our grandparents or our ancestors. They used to teach us a lot of things, point out to us what kind of plant is out there, what we use it for, and what we should be saying to it, because all the living things on this Mother Earth of ours was put here with us. In other words, they put us here, put those things here for us to survive on from the beginning of our life. Those are the reasons why they keep repeating that thing over and over, from one generation to the next. They're always teaching their young to respect all the living things on this planet of ours. Like I say, they were put here for us to use, and they can use us at the same time. The easiest way to explain it to you, be [it] an animal life, like a deer that we

survive on, rabbit, or groundhog, squirrels, ducks, sage hen, everything, they all said to us at one time, as I've been told, "if you take care of me, I'll take care of you." Or it's the other way around, "I'll take care of you if you take care of me." So those are the reasons why we, the native people, not only us, I think throughout the world, our grandparents and their life from the beginning of it, why they had to make sure that we appreciate them. We pray for them, we ask them [for] their life to continue, so that way they can continue their life. And I was told when I was young, like I say, anytime when you take a food or any kind of food that we survive on off the ground, you look at it first and you say a few things to it, and then you ask whatever it is to continue its life. "I'm taking your life, but make sure you continue." Just like us as a [00:10:00] people, from the beginning of our life, we had to ask, if we do pass on, that we already made up our mind we were told that, what you want to be when you return. Always make up your mind before it happens. Talk about it. Talk to somebody else about it. All the living things have done those things, but they all said to us from the beginning, "if you don't appreciate me, I can disappear." So we see that throughout the country, throughout the world. So everybody's been told that, not only the Indian people but throughout the world, I think all the living things were told that same thing over and over. And I think that's the reason why they say for us to follow the nature way of life. The nature is a very important part for us today. We have to really realize, why are we here? Why do we pray? And so forth. I don't care how we pray, long as we're asking the life of those things continue their life, to continue on. If we don't do those things, I was told, they are going to disappear, they are going to dry up on us, and so forth. See, everything's got a voice. I think we all hear that. I don't care what it is, whether if it's a stone, whether if it's a tree, or whether if it's a flower. So whatever we walk on, sometimes most of us can hear, maybe they'll say "ouch" when you walk on, step on a flower. Then you begin to think, well, gee, what

did I hear? What did I step on? Then you look back. What *did* you step on? So there's nothing there. Maybe you stepped on a little creature, you thought, but it's not. It's just the grass that coming from the earth that when you step on it, it makes a noise, and then you look back and see; what did you hear? So those are already explained to us. They got a life like we do. Everything. I don't care what it is. So those are the reasons why we were told to make sure you appreciate them, take care of them, because they're going to take care of you. Like the grass I talk about, we rely on grass, but we don't realize it. The things that we survive on come from the earth, it's the grass from the beginning, so the nature is the one that makes things grow on top of that soil and within the soil. I don't care what we do, it's that way. So my people is the native people here in this part of the continent, so whatever we do, we always sing songs or talk about it and so on and so forth. This is what we're trying to teach the young, from the beginning. Don't go over there and destroy things. Make sure you take care of them, because they appreciate their life just like we do. Don't try to destroy them because they enjoy you, you enjoy them. So that's what we do as a people today throughout the country. We all enjoy looking at flowers, we all enjoy looking at animals, the birds, and so forth. There are all different kinds of birds here at one time. They say those things are going to disappear, I think it's in 1990 they're going to disappear, but they are going to come back because some of you people already begin to miss them and then you talk about those things, and then they begin to say "Hey, we better go back and start showing the people that we were here one time." So we all see those things happening throughout the country, throughout the world. And I think that's the reason why today some people are saying, "I've seen something new that I've never seen before." So there are birds out there that are like us people today; we never have seen them, but now we begin to [00:15:00] see them. So they are coming back, because we're the one that's asking them to return, "Make sure that you be with us,

because you were put here on this earth with us, we appreciate you.” Those are the reasons why that we here in this part of the continent, and the other world the same thing, we have our ceremonies. People that came here from the other part of the world, they had their ceremonies like we do. Maybe they do it a little different from each other. [But] we all learn from our Mother, the nature. Everything is learned from the nature. Without the nature showing us, maybe we would’ve never known anything.

I’ll try to make my story as short as I can. I was told from the beginning of my life, your people are gifted and you’ve got that kind of blood in you, so you have to appreciate what you have and try to help a people that’s sickly. So I’ve been trying to do those things because I watched my grandma when she was alive, and my uncle. Ad my mother—I don’t even know my mother. I never have seen her because she passed on when I was two hours old, I’ve been told. I don’t even know where her resting place is today, but I got an idea but that’s about all I got. In the twenties, I know where the wagon trails used to be. I’ve been through that. But someday I am going to find out for sure, because it’s very important for me to know where my life begins.

So my dad was, his life was taken because he was a stubborn man, just like I am, I guess. When they were capturing the native people at one time, taking us from one fort to the other, and when they were going from one fort to the other, he was stubborn; he didn’t want to move along, and they keep pushing and pushing him, so they just—I’ve been told this; I don’t know how true it is. They just took his life, but I don’t know where. It’s between Nevada and I would say in Washington State. So that’s all I know about it.

Those are the things that I have seen and learned because when I was young, we all walked. We didn’t have automobiles or things like that. And horse we do have, but usually my grandma would say, Let’s not use the horses. Let’s walk. That’s what they give us our feet for, to walk on, and make sure you get the energy when you’re

walking. I think most of you people that ever walked this earth today, you feel better if you're walking on the earth. But somehow we got laziness, like myself, I got so lazy I can't do anything. I can't walk around too much. Because laziness is easy to get. It's like a disease, I guess. So this is what it's about.

When I used to walk around with my grandma, she used to point out things: this grass here, or this root, this whatever it is, this is for medicine that you could use for different things, and this other plant over here, you'll see, you could survive off of that by telling them you need to have energy from it. Like a lot of food that come from this Mother Earth at one time, it was put here by the nature itself. *All* different kinds of food. But you had to tell them before you take it out of the ground why you're taking its life, and make sure you tell them to continue its life. **[00:20:00]** And today, we miss those things. Today, *I* miss them. And I think we began to see the things that was here, oodles of it at one time, but they're not here anymore. Today, I have missed the sage hen that I loved to have, eat, and the chokecherries, currant berries, and so forth. But they're disappearing slowly. But some places where we've been praying together as a native people, we begin to see, those things are coming back where we were at that time. So what made them come back in certain areas where we've been?

I will say this, so you'll understand it. Why did they, when the Europeans first came here, why did they move us from one place to the other? Like in Florida, for one example, they found the turpentine tree, so they moved the Indians off of that land, and they moved them someplace else where there was nothing. And after a while, they found something underneath it, and then they moved them again. How many times did they move? Shoshone been moved six times, that *I* know of. So, every time they moved us someplace where there's useless ground, as they thought it was, they found something underneath it, every time. Why is it that nature put us there to begin

with, and why did somebody else come along and say, we got to move you and put you someplace else? So we been moved many, many times.

Things happening at that time, but I was told at that time, way back in the twenties, someday we are going to find the clean water where the Indian people used to pray together, and they want the nature to bring us back together and start having a clean water. I talked about clean water way back in the seventies. I guess you guys will remember when I used to say, someday we're going to be buying water. Nobody believed what I was saying at that time, but it's there. So, you know, things are happening, what I've been told from the beginning of my life, and I have seen it myself, so this is what we're doing today.

So those are the reasons why, from the beginning of my life. In 1947 [?], I think some of you people remember, the MX [missile experimental] missile was developed. Why did we develop MX missiles? To wipe the life of all living things, as they call it. When they tested that MX missile at the Utah proving grounds, remember how many people got sick from it? How many people it crippled? And when they shot that thing over the bunch of sheep at that time in Skull Valley, the sheep are out there right today that their lives have been taken, whether [from] the noise of it or whatever happened.

[Note: During WWII chemical warfare agents and weapons were tested at Utah's Dugway Proving Ground. In 1968, 6,400 sheep were found dead after grazing south of Skull Valley near Dugway, poisoned nerve gas. Ground and air launched missiles were also tested at Dugway. MX missile experiments and testing took place at the NTS. See also debates in Milford, UT about deploying MX there].

Why did the people in St. George, Utah get crippled by something like that when it happened, when they shot that—? I think you guys said it was some of your people seeing the

history of it where they used to be on the rail tracks [the missile] and you could move it around, back and forth, or whatever. But I think they found out that wasn't what they were looking for. And I was concerned about that right from the beginning. I've been through St. George, Utah at that time, and many, many people were crippled by radiation at that time.

And today, it's getting worse because that's the reason why at the Nevada Test Site [NTS], I didn't approve of what we were doing and I talked again [to] the nuclear energy department [Department of Energy, DOE], and I tried my best to unify my people together, because I was [00:25:00] thinking to myself, if the Shoshone people got a treaty agreement or promise from the United States government, that they are going to protect our land like they say they were going to do. [Treaty of Ruby Valley, 1863] They said, we're going to take care of your land for you. We're going to hold it under trust for your people. But we began to see, it didn't happen that way. I think we got to remember that we were all told at one time in 1948 by President Truman, we're going to set this aside. We're going to set it aside for military use. Didn't know what it was about, "military use." But then when they started testing a nuclear bomb, then we really didn't realize it at all, they was going to take most of our life. But that's what I've been told by the nature itself. This is a manmade thing. It's going to be very hard to do anything with.

So as Indian healers, we tried our best to do what we can. I've been told by the spirit of an animal, "this is a manmade thing," two things mixed together here: the radiation from the ground that we used one time, my people. But you have to tell them, why we are using the radiation that we find on the land? They're not all over, but they're here and there. You can cure things with that radiation, but when you mix something else with it, that [becomes] hard to do

anything with. And they were told at that time, nobody's going to cure that thing. It's going to continue to take your life.

So this is what took place from the beginning. The only reason why some of the people have been there for many, many years [is] because they got their own belief, they got their own power to work against something like this. Those are the reasons why some of the people live through those things, like in Kazakhstan, in Russia, when we're there, when we see those things happen. And some of them people live through them [the nuclear tests], even if they're right here. At the Nevada Test Site was the same thing.

So this is something that *we* have to—like I've been saying, *we* have to start telling our young people, the history, how did we survive on this Mother Earth of ours? By using our prayer to all the living things. You know, I've been talking about this for the last few years, I'd say. But now we begin to understand what I've been saying, I think, and then now they're coming around and asking questions about those things. This is something that we got to do. We got to go back to where our ancestors used to teach us. But we got away from that because the truth is hard to believe; the lie is easy to believe. So that's what we're doing today. Something that's easy, we can do. Somebody can tell you a lie, then you'll believe it quicker. Or you get lazy because, that's an easy thing to do, where you can say, well, I got some other thing. I seen so many of that throughout my part of the country. So anytime when we have a gathering throughout the country, our young people, our young girls, for one, when the dishes got to be done, then they say, well, I got to go out here to the outhouse or whatever you want to call it, and stay there until half-hour or so, until the dishes are done. Today, it's the same thing today, what I seen so far. So we're following something that's easy to do, but we don't realize that if we keep up with it, it's easier to [get] it done. But if we don't do it, then we say we'll do it tomorrow or the next day—never

done. A few days later, it's harder to do. We need to rise up, in other words. I have seen those things because [00:30:00] nobody teaches our young people today. I been at the gathering many, many times. I've asked young girls sometime to take care of the eggs. I remember not too long ago, very short years ago, I asked three women, three young ladies to take care of the eggs and, you know, clean it up and put it in the water so we could boil them. What they were trying to do is peel the shells off of that. You know, it's funny when you *think* about those things. Why haven't we been told that from the beginning of our life? So it's really something that we have to do.

So this is a very important part *today* when we start asking questions about a lot of different things. The only way I've been saying is through the eye of a camera or tape recorder in order to get it over the land. Without that, our mouthpiece, we don't believe each other anymore, today, because that's where our forefathers said, you can tell a lie quicker. So today, throughout the world, I say we're telling each other lies. I don't care what we do. Our leaders are all the same today. I don't care who they are. They're all telling each other lies. They're telling the people a lie. *Now* we begin to wake up to the problem. Now we start talking about it. Somewhere we're going to get away from that lie and then come back to the nature way, where it's going to be. The nature is a way for us to get out of this mess that we're in today. We *cannot* be doing what we're doing.

I think the nuclear weapon is something that it's going to be very dangerous today throughout the world. Everybody's going to be using that. Someday we *are* going to be seeing that right here in the United States. It's not too long from now, I'm afraid, because everything's beginning to show us that.

So today, it's something that we have to do. We got to start talking about it and getting together and start asking questions about those things. I know there's a lot of older people out there understand it more than we do as young. But we're going to have to start, [and] just not tell them, you guys are too old to talk about this, old-fashioned; there will be the old modern ways. They [are] our teacher to begin with. They understand it. But we, as a native people, been told, Oh, you guys don't know what you're talking about. So now they're coming back and asking a lot of questions about it.

Not too long ago, when I was over there in Albuquerque [New Mexico], NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] people asked me, What are we doing wrong? For the last thirty years we have done something. What are we doing wrong? What can you tell us?

First thing, I told them, quit sending all those missiles into the space up here, to begin with. All that's going to come down on us someday. It's already happening throughout the country. That's one thing you guys got to do.

Well, they said, Well, we're going to invite you to Washington, D.C. and let you talk about it, and we'll give you all the hours you want to talk about it.

I said, It might take me three days to talk about it from the beginning of it.

Well, they never have done that. So there's a lot of people at the Nevada Test Site, for one, or either Yucca Mountain, because that's another one, someday we are going to be witnessing those things. That's going to be interrupted by something. So the Yucca Mountain today, as I see it, because my people have told me from the beginning of my life, Yucca Mountain is a mountain, that's Snake Mountain, they call it. You can see it and you can tell;

there's a marking like a snake on the side of that mountain, all the way. It's going north. So we, as a native people, have been telling the nuclear energy department, if that mountain moves, it's because it's a snake. And why did they choose a place like Yucca Mountain to bury this nuclear rot? The only thing that we talk about it was that just because they said, You're a ward of the government. We're going to take care of your land for you under trust.

[00:35:00] And that's the reason why, I think, they chose Indian land throughout the country to do whatever bad thing they wanted to do.

So this is what it's about today. We have to start talking about it, like I say. I don't know how we're going to do it. The only way, [is] through an eye of a camera, a tape recorder. The more people hear about those things, the more people start thinking about it. Pretty soon, we're not going to be able to have water. We're not going to have clean air. We're not going to have clean food anymore, pretty quick. Because something happens. And nuclear energy don't realize that, that someday it might do something, the nature's going to have to do something. If it has, then what life do we have left after that? There's so many people today dying with cancer every day. So I hope that we can stop that nonsense by just going out there and doing the bad things to the other people.

I guess you guys understand what the United States has done to this part of the country. Seeing that beautiful land, beautiful minerals, and beautiful things, remember what life they took from the beginning. You may let me remind you, but the trappers took care of the life of the beavers; there were no more beavers after they got through. And what did they do before they left in their part of the country? Same thing. They're doing it today. Why are we taking lives, so many, many innocent people's life? We should never be doing those things. We should be protecting the world that we're living on today, I don't care what part. We're all on one world here. We don't have two different worlds. We're on one.

Suzanne Becker: *And this is a message that you've taken with you many places, many times, and out to the land that is now the test site. I'm wondering, when did you first make your way with this particular message out to the test site, and how did you end up going into that particular area?*

Well, I think we all know that we were concerned about it. I think we, the people throughout the country, know it was wrong to use nuclear power. Radiation is something that they don't know what to do with it. But they thought—all they got, in my mind, was to control the human being. So we see that today throughout the world. We're trying to control, dominate the world, and they tell us how to do it.

There's a lot of things I'd like to talk about, the law and so on and so forth, but the time goes fast. But I did talk about a lot of different things on my tapes. Some of the tapes maybe you haven't seen, but I talk about for two, three hours why the law was put there for the animal life to follow, the nature to follow, and so on and so forth. Why did the weasel, for one, turn different colors at certain times? Why did the snowshoe rabbit, their foot get bigger and they get red eyes, they turn white? Think about it. Why? And the same with the plant life. Some of the plant life get poison at certain times that you can't do anything with. But certain times of the year, like our food had to be harvested; certain times of the year we can take an animal because they're ready; they tell us when they're tender and got good energy, things that you can survive on. So it's really something that the nature has [00:40:00] shown us animal life, like the buffalo have shown us, and so forth.

And I think maybe you guys remember, not too long ago I've been saying, we have to have woman leaders throughout the country, because we see the nature, how the nature works. The nature works opposite from what we're looking at today. *Way* different from what it is. The

animal life, the female steps out first. Even if you feed—even today, out here, even out in the lawn, when you feed something out there, throw something out, the female steps up first; the male stands way back there. Animals, same way. Birds, same way. *Everything*. It's showing us what it is. Because I was told, the womanfolks used to have a council, thirteen womans in a council, in a circle, and twelve in the man council. The woman council tells the manfolks, Two of you will go north, two of you goes in a different direction. Eight of you going to come back and report to us what's out there that we can survive on, what's plentiful food, how long can we stay there? And so forth. So they come back and report to the woman council. The women sit and they talk about it and then they make the decision. Just like the buffalo roams. When you see the buffalo roam, the female takes the lead. Not too long ago, I was saying the birds used to migrate, like the geese were one—it's the easiest thing you can remember—geese used to go in the south in the fall of the year, in the V-shape. On the right-hand side is always a short one. Who's out there in the lead? The female. The short end of the birds on the right-hand side, that's your guidance from the nature itself. That gets the word from it, where is the food? And so forth. The female is the one that tells them. So it shows in all of that. Even today, over there where we're living, you can see a little cottontails out there, the little ones running around. Who steps up first? The female. The male sits way back there, then he finally comes out. The duck's the same way. *Everything* the same way.

So we're doing it backwards?

Who leads who there? Who teaches that from the beginning? Why are *we* here? If it wasn't for woman, we [wouldn't] be here. We won't be nothing here. Same with the plant life. Animal life. *Everything*. Have to have a woman bringing this all to the surface. So that's the reason why we have to take care of what we got. I hope someday we'll have a female leading us the right direction. We won't be in a position that we're in today because we already seen us, especially

us native people, they been here for six hundred years, in this part of the continent. What do they do? They destroyed everything, so far. If there was woman leaders, I don't think we'd go through that. I think a woman would look at it and start talking about it. But today, our male folks, they're not asking nobody, they're going ahead with it.

Well, I was just going to ask you, how we even go about beginning to make those changes and to help people see?

That's easy to do. A gathering like this, might be just a very few of us here today. If we have another meeting, the next time maybe be double of us. The more meetings we have, the more we discuss it, the more people who are going to listen to it. And today, when we talk about the truth, it's there. Might not believe it at first, but it's there when you look at it. There ain't no question **[00:45:00]** about that. But a lie is different. Lie, that we can believe quicker. But when you think about it, what they're telling us is a lie we already believe, then. We already see that. But we're going to have to come back to the truth, way of life. But like I say, there's a lot of things to talk about here, how things work. I like to talk about the beginning of things. But it takes time. So this is the reason why I think we're all concerned about why our nuclear energy department is not listening to us. And today we are already seeing our leader is not listening because he's a male. If it was a female, maybe he would've listened. What are we doing today? The United States wants to dominate the world, wants to tell us what to do. I don't think a woman will see it that way. There's more womanfolks can carry the message more than a man does, because a man is hard to believe, whatever he's saying, unless if you talk about it and see it, it's there.

Yeah, we've worked toward that, definitely.

So, OK, well, if you guys tell me, ask me whatever, then maybe I could talk about it a little bit more.

Suzanne Becker: *Well, I actually have a question, just from reading your book, and I think it is related to this but it goes back a bit because in the beginning of your book, you talked about having a gift, having a vision. I'm wondering if you could explain that to me a little bit.*

Well, I think you know yourself, you got a vision of your own.

Sure.

Yeah, you got a vision. And you know things beforehand, what's going to happen, what they going to say. So you got a gift, in other words, but nobody telling you how to use your gift, nobody teaching us that. It's not like the old people used to keep telling us those things. When you got a gift, you keep it in fresh. In other words, keep it from going. If you don't do it, you're going to lose it. So that's what's happening today, because we're not teaching one another nothing. All we're doing is what we're doing today. Read what's on the piece of paper. We're not talking the truth of what the nature has put us here for. So we all got a gift right from the beginning of our life. We all pray to one another. That's all—all of us got that kind of gift. Some of us stronger than the others, that's all.

But a piece of paper like this, I like to talk about something like this, a little bit about it, not much. A tree has said to us one time, from the beginning of its life, Nobody tells me before they take my life, why are they taking my life? I'm lost. I don't know what to do. So today when you see it throughout the country, this piece of paper like this, nobody believes it, because another paper can top this better than what's on here, somebody will write it better than what is—so there's no truth to it, in other words. If we told them right from the beginning of the tree, before we took its life, why we're taking your life, we want you to be true. And today I see it in the courthouses throughout the world; I see lawyers topping each other, same thing over and over, just like I say, they could change words in it and so forth. So it's not true what it is that's written on that paper. That's the reason why, because we never told the

tree, We're going to make something out of you and we want you to be, before we take your life, make sure you're true. But we never told them nothing. That's the reason why today it's not true at all.

[00:50:00] See, something like this is very, you know, but we should have been talking, we should be talking about those things, but we're not. So those are the reasons why I think most of us throughout the country still uses water, for one. We all pray to the water so it keeps it alive. In other words, the water's got its own strength. But we all hear water sing songs. We all hear it talk to us. *Everything's* got a voice. I don't care what it is. This table here had a voice at one time. But we made things out of it, so it's not true anymore, unless we come back and start using what the nature has put it here for. So *we're* the one is going to have to start talking about those things to each other, how we can learn from each other, like our forefathers.

I heard a little bit about our presidents from the beginning. Abraham Lincoln, I was told, was not an educated man. He didn't go to school. He only went to a certain grade of school. How did he become a president? How did he know all of those things? Because he's working with the nature. The nature tells him what to do. He's got his mind. He can see. We *all* got that kind of gift but we're not using our gift like we should. So this is the reason why.

It seems that we're very removed from that, a lot of us, a lot of people.

OK, we're all in here. Who's got a question? Good question.

Well, what's a good question?

Mary Palevsky: *May I ask a question?*

Suzanne Becker: *Absolutely.*

Mary Palevsky: *It's sort of related to what Suzanne said. I was just curious. Maybe this also has to do with you, Rosemary [Lynch], but one of the phrases in your [Corbin Harney's]*

book that I think is so interesting and wonderful, is when you say you decided to “step out from behind the bush,” is that right? And to build on what Suzanne was asking, when you decided for the first time to go out to the test site—I’m not from here—so the Shoshone people have your land and then this thing is happening in the center of your land, which is the test site, so you have a relationship with it. But then the government is there so you decide to go out and demonstrate. How did that begin for the Shoshone people, to be going out there and sort of relating to the land that is being used by the government? You’re relating to it in a different way than you are when you’re thinking of it as all of your land. Does that make any sense to you?

Well, no, it doesn’t, because right from the beginning of it, when the government said, We’re going to use a part of your land for a military base to protect the United States from an enemy, in other words, that’s what they’ve been told, not only us, *everybody’s* been told that. And the same with the treaty [Ruby Valley] that they signed with the native people. They said, This is something that we have to do, give you the right to roam this country, right to hunt, and so on and so forth. But they said, This land here, this is your land, and when we do use your land, we’re going to pay you for that. I remember when I was a young fellow, when I was young, I used to hear, The government’s going to pay the Shoshones, and I hear it from the horse’s mouth, in other words, in Washington, D.C. They said, We’re going to pay you a little bit of money for the damage that we have done on your land.

[00:55:00] Of course, we don’t own the land, to begin with. We talk about that. We don’t own it, because we’re put here to use it and live on it. To take care of it, in other words. Everybody’s been told that. If we own it, why aren’t the animals talking and saying we own it, because they were here before us. Or the creatures that was here *way* before, millions of years before us. If it

was right, they should be the one to own it, the trees, the rocks, the life on this earth of ours. They would've owned the land.

They were put here just like us, to take care of it and live on it and make sure. So when the government tells us, We're going to pay you for the damage that we have done to your land, I remember when our attorneys used to say, you know, We're going to fight for your land. We're going to get your land back. I remember talking to the attorneys from Salt Lake [City, Utah] at that time [and] they said, We're going to get your land back for you so you can do whatever you guys want to do with it. And I have always asked that question, where do we own it? Where is a paper saying that we own it? *You're* the one that said, We're going to make a treaty with you and you make sure that you own this part here, like this, and then draw the map that they mark. But according to the treaties that I have seen when I was young, we covered six different states, Shoshone people. Used to be the largest nation in this part of the continent at one time, Shoshone. That's the reason why they divided us into six different states, to divide and conquer, as they call it. They told one group a different story, another group a different story, and so on and so forth.

Not too long ago, when I talked about those things in Washington, D.C., I asked those questions: Why are you saying that you want to pay us when we don't even have title to it? *You* don't have title to it. *We* don't have title to it. Who *does* own it? And then say, You bought it from an Indian. Show me the paper. Where did you buy it from? Well, all they can tell me was that we traded some people in New York State—that's today, New York State. We gave them a sack of flour for a little tiny island. They [did] this throughout the country, and made a treaty, an agreement that's supposed to be the law of the land, they say. But they never have

followed through with it. So today that we the people, all of us, not just an Indian people in this part of the continent but throughout this world. Like you said, you're not from here, but you're still from this land that I'm on. I don't care where you come from. We've only got this one world that we're all living on.

Mary Palevsky: *Oh, I am from here. OK.*

[Laughter]

Yeah. But, you know.

Mary Palevsky: *I know what you mean.*

So what piece of paper that they made is not true to what they're saying like this, OK? So it's really important for us to realize that *we* are the people, that we're supposed to take care of the land, all of us, like our forefather[s] have done long ago. We used to share things together, help one another, and so forth, our forefathers did. But somehow we got away from it and now we're selfish, I guess. We don't want to help nobody. Somebody's dying out here, you want to walk by him and you don't want to heal a man. It's totally a different kind of life that we're living in today.

It's something that we have to talk about it, I think, longer than what it is. So it's something that. I like to talk about it. I like to talk to the womanfolks by theirself [01:00:00] and tell them what I know, what I hear, from my grandma. She used to talk about that. The older people used to talk about that. They're the leaders. They're the ones that put us here.

Everything's got a male and a female, tree, you name it, everything.

Mary Palevsky: *OK, we're going to stop right now because our tape is ending, but we're going to change it. We can take a little break. Thank you. And then we'll come back and Rosemary [Lynch] will come.*

Suzanne Becker: *Thank you so much.*

Do you understand what I'm saying, or is it—?

No, I understand what you're saying and I'm interested to talk to you about it.

Are you recording it?

Joseph Granados [cameraman]: *I have one question, though. In the Shoshone tradition, when you say we must talk to the animal, the plant, before they give up their life, so they can continue, do they feel—I mean do you feel that, for example, the animal or the plant, it's taken up in your life and given a different life, I mean it's assumed into your life?*

[This conversation takes place between Corbin Harney and Joe Granados] OK, let me ask you a question. How many animals you got? You got a dog, you got a cat, or whatever?

At this moment, I have nothing in my house, but outside I feed the rabbits, I feed the quail.

OK, that's the beginning of it. When you feed the animals, the birds, the quail, or whatever, they look at you?

Yes.

They smile at you.

They sure do. The rabbits do.

OK, well, that's the answer that you got from the animal.

Yes. [But], for example, I'm just thinking, when you kill an animal to eat it, does the tradition feel that when you take that animal, does that animal live inside of you in a higher form, I guess that's what I'm saying? Is it transformed?

That's the reason why they say, I'll take care of you if you take care of me.

Oh, I see. OK. I understand now.

So we survive off an animal, or we survive off a plant life. Whatever it is, we survive off of them.

And they survive within us.

Then they survive off of us.

Yes. Thank you. That makes it much clearer.

Your voice is a very important part. Remember, a long time ago, probably millions of years ago, everything had voice. Everything. I don't care what it was. Some of us can still hear a voice of whatever out there.

Yes.

[01:05:00] [People start returning to the room – conversation in background.]

So I don't know whether I'm making sense to you guys or not.

Mary Palevsky: *You are. Thank you so much. I'm learning a lot.*

Suzanne Becker: *Yes.*

What do you mean, learning? I think we heard that a long time ago, but we didn't keep it in our mind. I think that we always thought, figured that was just a story somebody's telling, but it's not.

Suzanne Becker: *And that's why it's good to hear you say it, for me.*

Mary Palevsky: *Rosemary, you want to come over and join Corbin and maybe you can talk?*

Yes, maybe you can talk, and I'll go to sleep.

[Laughter]

[01:07:04] End Track 3, Disc 1.

[End of interview]