LACEE HARRIS, Ute
October 28, 1975
Salt Lake City, Utah

This transcript is one of a series of interviews with American Indian people throughout much of the United States by S. I. Myers of the History Department of St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley, St. Louis, Missouri, 63135.

The purpose of these interviews is to bring the Indian peoples' own comments to students in classrooms, and to foster greater understanding among the peoples of the United States by providing Indians the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions to a wider audience.

This transcript has been edited for clarity and ease of reading, but every effort has been made to preserve the original feeling. Conversations and opinions were encouraged on any subject of interest to interviewees; questions and responses do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the interviewer, the National Endowment for the Humanities, or St. Louis Community College.

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LISTENING TO INDIANS

NO. 91

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October 28, 1975

Salt Lake City, Utah

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1978
Sam Myers:
Today I'm in the Indian Center at the University of Utah, and I'm talking to the head man here. His name is Lacee Harris, and he is a Ute Indian. So, Lacee, what is your title, what is your job here?

Lacee Harris:
Well, my official title is Indian Education Advisor for the University of Utah, which is kind of a catch-all. I take care of the Indian students' housing, getting them financial aids, any personal problems, any academic problems, any, well, just any kind of problems that they have--I'm the man that takes care of the whole shebang.

SM: They can come to you and you help them?

LH: Right.

SM: And then you have the facilities of the whole university at your disposal to do that with?

LH: Right.

SM: That's a varied and demanding but interesting job.

LH: Oh, fantastically interesting. Every day is different. In fact, from hour to hour it's different, it really is.

SM: And then you have Indian students here from all over the country?

LH: Yeah, we have them from Alaska, we've got them from New York, we've got them from Arizona, we've got them from Montana, the Dakotas. We have 30 different tribes represented here at the university.

SM: About how many students have Indian background?
LH: About 170.

SM: Now this is a public school, this is a university of the state of Utah?

LH: Right.

SM: So you have no church affiliation like they do at Brigham Young University?

LH: No.

SM: So there will be somewhat different auspices behind the running of the institution?

LH: Right.

SM: You'd be the same as the University of Missouri, for example, in that respect.

LH: From what I hear, yeah.

SM: We would like to find out about you more. Were you born in this area?

LH: My reservation is about 150 miles east of Salt Lake, out in the Uinta Basin. I'm a member of the Uintah band of Utes. We have three bands on my reservation. Most of the western Plains Indians are divided more or less into bands. Most of the agricultural are divided into clans. The only difference is the spelling. The clan and the band. They're both, as far as the relationships, the family relationships, ties and everything, it's the same.

SM: Now the Utes then, do you think of them as Plains Indians?
LH: Plains influenced.

SM: We think of them as Indians in a mountainous area.

LH: Right. They were very influenced by what went on in the plains, but we are a mountain Indian.

SM: There were some cases of Indians from this part of the world, like the Comanches, who lived north of here and migrated slowly across down into the southern plains.

LH: Right.

SM: Are they related to the Utes?

LH: Yes, they speak the same language that we do. In fact, if you look back, the major language family is the Uto-Aztecan. The Utes and the Aztecs, the Comanches, the Shoshones, the Paiutes, the Walapai is . . . they've connected it now--they've now got it the Uto-Aztecan-Tanoan, so that some of the pueblos down in New Mexico, they've also hooked into the Aztecan language.

SM: There are similarities?

LH: Yes.

SM: Would it be an influence from Central America, this language?

LH: Well, according to the Aztec legends, they came from the north, which would be from this area, down south.

SM: And moved in on the civilization which had been developed?
LH: Right, so actually it kinda goes the other way.

SM: Then, were you born over on the reservation?

LH: Yes.

SM: In the Uinta Mountains over there?

LH: Right.

SM: That's a major east-west range.

LH: Right.

SM: And they're high mountains. Did you go to school there?

LH: Part of my life. My father worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and so I got to move around quite a bit. I went to school in Oregon with the Klamaths and the Modocks up there. I went to school down in California with some of the Agua Calientes that owned parts of Palm Springs, checkerboarded down in Palm Springs. I've been in Arizona with the Navajos. I lived in Oklahoma with the Creeks and the Cherokees. When I was in Kansas I think the closest ones were the Winnebagoes in Kansas City, and I lived in South Dakota with the Sioux. Then I finished out in Alaska with the Athabascans.

SM: The Athabascans are related to the Navajos and Apaches, aren't they?

LH: Um hm. Language-wise.

SM: You had a tremendous background then, for this kind of a job where the students are coming from these places.

LH: Yeah. In fact, it's really funny. I can sit and talk with most of
these kids about, like with Alaskan kids, I can sit and talk about Alaska. I've eaten the food up there. We have a couple Eskimo kids here, and I've gotten into some of their food, and when we sit and talk about eating seal meat or something like this it turns everybody off. We sit there and kind of drool.

SM: It makes them feel at home.

LH: It does, it really does.

SM: That's great. Did the administration choose you because of this background?

LH: Well, that may have been part of the reason, but the whole interviewing process was left pretty much up to the students.

SM: The students chose you?

LH: Um hm. Yeah.

SM: That's remarkably democratic.

LH: It is. Of course it kinda goes back to the old Indian form of government anyway.

SM: In most cases there were not absolute rulers?

LH: Right. This is one thing that always kind of bothers me about giving an interview like this. I've been asked to speak several times on television. I've been serving as a consultant for the state of Utah, in their culture awareness for the last three years, and it always kind of bothers me when I give interviews like this, to be asked to be a spokesman for Indian people. I have to clarify that I cannot
speak for Indian people.

SM: You speak for yourself.

LH: I can only speak for myself. Right.

SM: Well, good. That's what we want too, because that would be the kind of thing that would come across best as one person to other people, and the students will sit there listening as if they were talking to you.

LH: Good. Then let me throw this in too, just as a pitch. If I can be of any help to any students, after they hear the interview, and after they get through with class, or even during the time period of classes, if I can be of any help, I gave you my card so you have my address and everything, and if the students want, you know, just have them drop me a line or whatever, and I'll do whatever I can for them.

SM: I'm going to hold you to that. I'm going to read the whole thing right into the tape: Lacee A. Harris, Indian Education Advisor, University of Utah, 315 Union Building, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84112.

LH: Right.

SM: Now they know where to reach you.

LH: I hope they do.

SM: If you get swamped, it's your own fault. O.K. Back to the Uinta Mountains . . . you went to school there. Was it a BIA school?

LH: Yes.
SM: And this was before you moved around. Did you go to some other schools then?

LH: After I started movin' around, I got into the public school system, but I started out in the Bureau of Indian Affairs schools.

SM: Did you have any preference between the two?

LH: Well... as far as staying home with my parents and learning the Indian culture and Indian history, it's better that I went to the public school.

SM: Then you were home every night?

LH: Right. I could go home at night, and I could sit and listen to the stories and learn my culture just like any normal human being would.

SM: The BIA school was a boarding school where you left home?

LH: Pretty much.

SM: And then you're sort of exposed to the people running that school, whoever they may be?

LH: Right.

SM: Where did you finally graduate from high school?

LH: I finally graduated from Anchorage, Alaska. I was actually in Anchorage, Alaska. It kind of cracked me up a little bit. After I left, I think it was within four or five months after I left, is when they had that big earthquake up there. Back in '61 or '62, and half of my high school fell. It just completely cut off half of my high school. It fell about 30 feet.
SM: I saw the pictures, they were just staggering. I hope we never have to experience it. You had left?

LH: Yeah, I had left. We had a couple minor ones, though, while I was up there. It was quite an experience.

SM: It must be pretty frightening when the very earth under your feet is no longer stable.

LH: Oh yeah. What's really kind of frightening is right here in Utah. In fact, right along the street that's two blocks down, we have a major fault in Utah, the Wasatch Fault.

SM: Does that shake once in a while?

LH: Once in a while, yeah. Between this one and San Andreas, we might lose California, and parts of Nevada too.

SM: After high school, Lacee, did you go to college?

LH: Yes, I went to college at Brigham Young University, that institute that you already visited.

SM: Down the road here 45 miles?

LH: Right. When I first started there, there was only about 35 of us Indian students down there, so it's really grown. I was the vice-chairman of the Indian club down there one year, and I was also the chairman of their Indian Awareness Week that they had down there.

SM: Do you remember their performing group called The Lamanite Generation?

LH: They started that while I was down there, but I was one of the "bad"
Indians down there. I wanted to do things all traditionally, and they're more modern oriented, and I'm too steeped in my traditions.

SM: I watched their rehearsal and it is attractively done. In fact, they say it's partly contemporary dance.

LH: Yeah, I'm proud of those kids because they show a side of the Indian people that most people don't really take a look at. The fact that we can get out and do something on our own--that's all pretty much Indian done.

SM: They have a director.

LH: Yeah, Janie Thompson.

SM: But all the rest of them are, as they say, Lamanites, or Indians or Polynesians or Mexicans. It's really quite a group. I'd love to see them perform. I did watch them rehearse for three hours, but it was a rehearsal, and they were not in costume, but it was still very interesting.

LH: Beautiful costumes, kind of contemporary Indian type costumes.

SM: I hope they perform someplace where I can see them. BYU is a private school, they have entrance requirements?

LH: Yeah, uh huh. The reason I went down there is that they had a history program. I graduated in history, American History, but my main emphasis was on Indian history.

SM: Did you finish your college work at BYU?

LH: I got my bachelor's, started and finished a master's down there in
public administration. I'm studying another master's here in educational administration, and we had just had a phone call and are trying to start an Indian historian master's here at the University of Utah, and I'm probably going to go in and get that one too.

SM: Well, with your interest in history, and you've taken the standard type history courses to get your history major, so that would be a natural for you, because you could add all this on that you wanted to do anyway and were doing. Have you taught classes then in American history with the Indian content?

LH: I've taught Indian history, Indian culture kind of the same class that you are teaching now, and I taught this when I was down in California. I taught a year down there in a community college similar to yours, and most of my students, in fact, the first year I taught my class I had 45, and there was three who were non-Indians in the class.

SM: At our school the numbers would be reversed; but I'd like to find out how you got to this job.

LH: All rightee. I'd been working, I'd been doing this kind of work down at BYU for maybe three years before I graduated, and, in fact, John Maestas, I was his counselor. That was kind of an ironic thing, I was his his counselor while I was down there. I was the graduate, I was working as the liason between the great dean of graduate school down there and the Indian students in general.

SM: And John is the boss man now?

LH: I was teasing him about bein' his advisor.

SM: He's a pretty dynamic guy.

LH: Yeah, he's really good. I'm glad he got that job. And I got a job
down in California at Riverside Community College in Riverside, California, and then I got wind of this job here, and of course my home being here, my reservation anyway—reservation and home I use just intermixed—I came up and interviewed and, with my background, I had four, five years already, and like I say, I had enough variation that I could talk with just about all the kids that were interviewin' me. They were from areas that I previously knew.

SM: You sound like a natural. It would have been hard to turn you down, if anyone had a sincere interest in doing a good, selective job. Over there in northeastern Utah, around Duschene and Roosevelt, are those the towns near the reservation that have been in the news lately?

LH: Those are. Duschene is kind of outside the reservation, the present reservation, but, yeah, it's in that area.

SM: I've heard some interesting things and I haven't had a chance to get over there yet, so maybe you can take me over there vicariously.

LH: All rightee.

SM: That they are one of the more wealthy groups of Indians in the country? Is that true?

LH: Well, pretty much, considering their size, yah.

SM: It isn't a big group?

LH: No, there's only about 1,600. Now this is all three bands over there.

SM: Is that all that's left of the Ute people?
LH: No, there's four more bands of Utes down in southern Colorado, in Towaoc and Ignacio and down in that area.

SM: I see. I thought the Utes, though, were pretty much run out of Colorado back there when they had that trouble.

LH: Pretty much, except for that little corner right there, down by the four corners area.

SM: Was it Ouray who signed the treaty agreeing to move?

LH: Right.

SM: How does he stand now in the history of the Indian people?

LH: Well, more of a hero, I guess, yeah.

SM: 'Cause he did the best he could in unfortunate circumstances?

LH: Right.

SM: Then over there around Duschene and Roosevelt, you have some new modern resort facilities going up, don't you?

LH: Right. We just got, well, three years ago we just put up a motel-restaurant-recreation resort area. It's run by the tribe.

SM: Did you get a big land claim settlement from the government?

LH: This was some time ago, yeah.

SM: One of the biggest ever?

LH: Oh yeah, at that time, right.
SM: So the Utes have been sort of in the forefront leading some of these movements, haven't they?

LH: Well, as far as light industry, I'd say one of the leaders, yeah.

SM: And then building and succeeding with the claims.

LH: Right.

SM: They used that capital?

LH: Yeah.

SM: They built the resort complex, they've got light industry going, it sounds like real progress, if people want that kind of progress. Sometimes they do not.

LH: Most of the people out home are pretty much on the idea of getting that kind of progress.

SM: Now when you speak of being a traditional Indian, that doesn't conflict with your traditional point of view, does it?

LH: Well, yes and no. The idea being that we have to make some compromises somewhere, and because we are an adaptable people, we started adapting when the first Europeans gave us the metal pots, the iron needles and the metal tomahawks. And being adaptive people like that, we can still adapt and use all the techniques and tools and all the other technologies that we're learning and still keep a lot of our traditions.

SM: Most of the things you would tend to take on would be the technology, wouldn't it?
LH: Pretty much, yeah.

SM: And keep the more subtle nuances of the old culture for yourself if you want it?

LH: Right.

SM: That's a good way. Like one man who said that Indian people can do fine, if they keep their balance they can be just like any other people in the country for eight hours a day and then can go home and be just as Indian as they want until morning.

LH: Oh sure. Sure.

SM: And have the best of both.

LH: This is one of the things that a lot of people don't understand about some of the Indian movements that's going on. These are the kinds of things that we're asking for. They're so afraid we're gonna take back the country, but what would we do with the country? There's too few of us now. Our old way of life, except for some of the agricultural tribes, is pretty much lost. I mean, we can't go out and hunt buffalo like we used to any more. It's an impossibility. Not only that, we'd be run over going across the interstates and major highways we have.

SM: Well, that sounds like a good, sensible, practical, and still idealistic way to look at it. Something else was in the paper the other day, I hope you read it so you can enlighten me. . . .

LH: About our law and order codes?

SM: Yes. The tribe came up with this law and order code with full legal backing for their point of view?
LH: Right.

SM: And it's creating quite a furor. Will you explain it?

LH: Well, the old reservation takes and covers pretty much the whole Uinta Basin, of which Duschene, Roosevelt and Vernal, those would be the three major towns out there. These towns are all on the old reservation, and the tribe is saying, "We will enforce these law and order codes on the old reservation."

SM: And they'll enforce them against the Indian people and the white people alike?

LH: Right. On the reservation. And the non-Indians out there are saying, "No, you won't." They're saying, "Because of so and so land suits, you gave up all of this land." The tribe is saying, "No, we didn't give up that land. We gave up some rights in some areas, but we didn't give up the land." And so the people out there, the non-Indian people, the mayors in some of these towns, the county commissioners, are saying to the people who get tickets, "Don't pay them, just ignore it," but the tribe is saying, "You better pay it, or you'll get thrown in the slammer."

SM: You have Indian police on the roads, and if someone violates one of the laws they can be picked up and arrested, and it is legal?

LH: Right.

SM: And I think even some of the non-Indian people agree that it is, and that it's not such a bad idea, really.

LH: It's kind of funny, because the non-Indian people out there have had the Indian people under their laws, and we've complied, we've followed
the letter of the law, the spirit of the law, the whole thing. And yet when we try and put our law and order codes out there, they say it's illegal.

SM: Now by law and order code, because of the connotation of that term these last few years, it doesn't mean an unusually tough or difficult kind of thing. It simply means that you have laws and have always had them, but they have not been obeyed, and the people have decided they're now going to begin to enforce the laws which they were able to all the time.

LH: Right.

SM: One sheriff, or deputy sheriff, kind of blew his top and made it into a crisis situation, didn't he?

LH: Right. It's really funny how non-Indian people think, especially according to the way Indian people look at it. The idea being that Indian people have a special status with the federal government. In the Constitution of the United States, it says that treaties will be the law of the land--I'm paraphrasing a whole bunch in there--but most Indian tribes signed treaties with the federal government, which makes them, as far as their status above the states. And now the states are trying to say, you know, that the Indian people are below the states, and should be under state control, or even local, county control, or even get it more local, city or the town control. And so this is part of where the problem comes from, that most non-Indian people don't understand and recognize this special relationship that Indian people have with the federal.

SM: Well, this case over here is going to do a lot more than create a little excitement in those towns. It's going to show the whole country what can be done.
LH: Hopefully, yeah.

SM: The Uintah-Ouray situation could be sort of a guidepost?

LH: Yeah, I hope so.

SM: There are others. The Navajos have their own police force.

LH: They have their own law and order codes, they enforce their own laws and order on their reservation. Most of the reservations here in the West have their own law and order codes, and do have their own law enforcement, but, up here at Intermountain Indian School, which is about 50 miles north...

SM: At Brigham City?

LH: Right.

SM: It's a high school, isn't it?

LH: Yeah. They have an Indian law enforcement training school there. One of our police officers here on the University of Utah campus is a teacher up there, and he and I get together, and we just kinda crack up, because I know, out home, I used to know... my uncle used to be the chief of police out there.

SM: You knew his frustration?

LH: Um hm.

SM: When someone came on their land, they couldn't enforce their own laws on him. And some would abuse it pretty badly in some cases.

LH: Oh, it's been badly abused in a lot of cases.
SM: Which is not to say that there weren't some pretty decent people too, but some of them really were a problem.

LH: That's just what I was gonna say. And I don't think you could ever say the Indians were defeated. It's kinda the idea of, "Yeah, we lost some battles, but we haven't yet lost the war."

SM: And it looks like you're doing better now.

LH: We're learning a few tricks.

SM: Like someone said down in Arizona, "Indian people are like all other people, good, bad and indifferent, but they certainly deserve all the options anyone else deserves."

LH: That's all we're askin' for. In fact, I don't know. You said that you talked with some American Indian Movement people. Did you talk with Banks?

SM: No, not Banks yet, but some of his loyal supporters.

LH: You haven't talked with any of the Bellecourt brothers or any of those guys, have you?

SM: I have one tape from Vernon Bellecourt, one of my colleagues interviewed him.

LH: This is one of the things that they're tryin' to aim for too. Ouray, one of our Ute leaders, asked the government if they weren't strong enough to stand up to their own treaties, and this is more or less what the Indian people are asking for, that the federal government fulfill the treaty obligations that they outlined. They told us in some of the treaties that they would give us education. The treaty with the Navajos said that there would be one teacher for every 30
pupils on the reservation. The answer is to have Navajo kids come up here to Intermountain, 600 miles from the reservation, or to send them to Oklahoma, which is another 700 miles from the reservation. This is all Indian people are asking. The government said that they would give us clothes, food, seeds, farm implements, everything to completely start a new life. That's all we're asking for is for them to stand up on their two feet and say, "Yeah, we're gonna do this." I had to kinda laugh a couple of years ago when President Nixon was still President. He was talkin' about signing that treaty with Russia, and the big fervor, and all the --oh, oh, and Russia just can't be trusted, they've never kept a treaty yet, you know--the Indian people were just laughin', you know, rollin' around on the floor, because the United States hasn't kept any treaties yet either.

SM: Not with the Indians anyway. I think it's true, every one has been broken somewhere. This Broken Treaty of Battle Mountain, the movie. . . .

LH: Oh yeah, I've seen it several times.

SM: We saw it in class last spring. It was a film that shook you up.

LH: Yes, it really does, and I had to laugh. That one lady, that old lady in there, that's sittin' there with the pine cones, you know, breaking them up and asking, "Well, how come the white people say that these are theirs? They didn't bring them across on the Mayflower, or anything like this, you know." It's just cute, the way she says, "Damn those white people." And she kind of got embarrassed because she was swearin'.

SM: Day before yesterday was the first time I ever tasted pinion nuts. And they are delicious.

LH: Oh yes!
SM: I can see why they value them so highly.

LH: Right. I got my little girl here. And ever since I was her size, I've been eatin' them things, and I remember lot of times goin' out there and knockin' them trees down, you know, and pickin' up those things and eatin' 'em.

SM: They taste better than peanuts.

LH: Much better, oh yeah. They're gettin' expensive.

SM: I imagine they're loaded with nutrition.

LH: Oh, they are, oh yeah. Yeah, those Indians out in Nevada, they use 'em in soups, and they eat 'em like peanuts, just a whole lot of uses for 'em.

SM: I saw quite a few people eating them in the last few days, here and there.

LH: Oh yeah, they're really popular, and they're expensive now too.

SM: Can you buy them?

LH: Oh yeah.

SM: Where can you buy some?

LH: Down town. I'm not really sure, because I haven't seen 'em in the stores yet. Last year I saw 'em. They only come, like every other year. The crops come in every other year, so this year I haven't really seen that many, but usually if you go down to Safeways or some of these big markets down town you can usually find 'em.
SM: Pinion nuts here are like wild rice up north, I guess. It's grown to be a Navajo delicacy. Wild rice, in fact, has gotten so expensive no one could afford to eat it. I saw, believe it or not, at Itasca State Park in Minnesota, a little 11-ounce package, $7.50.

LH: Wow! Wow!

SM: It wasn't even a pound.

LH: I had a Chippewa student from back that way. He'd go back during the summers and bring back a couple hundred pounds.

SM: That's a fortune.

LH: He'd go out and gather it himself, and he'd bring it back for his family, and I was complaining 'cause he was selling me $2.00 a pound.

SM: At $2.00 a pound it was a bargain. But now we got so interested in all these other things.

LH: We're not gonna have too good of an interview here.

SM: It's going to be good all right. We were back at Duschene with the law and order code. They've got that pretty well set now?

LH: They're suing right now, the governor of the state, the mayor of Duschene, the mayor of Roosevelt, the county commissioners in Duschene for Duschene County, and, hopefully, this will settle the whole issue out there.

SM: If the courts go according to the law of the land, there's only one outcome.

LH: That's right.
SM: And I think they will, because this is one of the unique, good things about the country, that people can sue and can collect. Well, the Utes did.

LH: Yeah, but with Indian people, it seems to take so long. That's the only problem.

SM: A lot of young Indian students are going into law, because they figure this is the best way they can help, and they say they plan to go back and work with their people.

LH: Pretty much. Larry Echo Hawk, who you may see tomorrow, just got commissioned, authorized, or whatever, to help the Paiutes down in the southwestern part of the state get, what do you call it? They too were terminated like the Menominees were, to get their status back, so he's gonna be working with those, to help them.

SM: When they were terminated that didn't make quite as much news, it's a smaller group.

LH: Much smaller.

SM: And what was another . . . the Klamaths?

LH: Klamaths, right.

SM: And a couple of others simply disintegrated, disappeared from the face of the earth because they've been lost in the overall population. Are there other bands of Utes in the country?

LH: We've got a total of seven bands of Utes. Three of them are out in the Uinta Basin, the other four bands are down in the southwest corner of Colorado, on the Ute Mountain Reservation, and I can't
remember the other. But there's two little reservations right down
in that area.

SM: Are the Utes in Colorado doing well too?

LH: Not as well as the Indians out home.

SM: They don't have the resources?

LH: Not quite, no.

SM: You've got a beautiful country out there.

LH: Oh, it's really nice out there. It really is. Some of the best
hunting as far as pheasant, duck, deer, bear, elk, whatever, is out
in that corner of Utah.

SM: Do the Utes mind the non-Indian people coming in to go hunting?

LH: Well, it's like any state or any area that has really good hunting.
They want to keep it as best they can, and if there's too many hunters
in any one area they just completely hunt it out. Then it takes a
long time for it to build back up. They had it closed up until last
year, this year, in fact. They opened it this year.

SM: So they will control it for good game management?

LH: Oh yeah, as often as they can, yeah.

SM: Now then, back to you, Lacee, and your own experiences. How long
have you been here?

LH: Going on four years.
SM: You're getting used to it?

LH: You never get used to it.

SM: Tell me a little bit about the job.

LH: Well, like I say, I take care of the kids with their financial aids. Let's just look at financial aids for a minute. Now Indian students across United States are unique again in that they have the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which takes care of all the Indian affairs, to call upon for grants. Also their own tribal areas, they can call upon those for grants. I've got all the Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribal grants here in my office, so that if any of the students need them they can go in and fill them out and we send them out and we can get the kids some money. This is in addition to the Basic Education Opportunity grant, the Supplemental Education Opportunity grant, work-study, and all the other forms of financial aid that are available. So when it comes down to gettin' financial aids, the kids can come in, fill out the forms, I can help 'em work out a budget.

Having worked with the financial aids department here on campus, I can pretty much tell what they will give an average student—not just an Indian student, but an average student. So we can work out their budget, send it down to the tribes, and we get everything all squared around. If there's any problems, I can pick up the phone, call down to the tribes and raise all kinds of... we'll just leave it blank... with the scholarship offices on the reservation or in the particular area office, whichever area happens to be the problem at the moment, and then we get the students their financial aids. Then, like I say, I also take care of their academic problems, their personal problems. What's kind of exciting about this job, really, is when I get to work with the kids on some of their personal problems. Most of it's adjustment problems.

SM: Come from home to a big university?
LH: Right. And we have 24,000 on campus this year, and we only have 170 Indian students, so they're kind of lost, yeah.

SM: Overwhelmed by the size?

LH: Pretty much, yeah, that, and lot of times the kids are adjusting to this greater society. So we have everything from the so-called urban Indian to very traditional reservation Indians represented here, just at the University of Utah, so it covers a whole gamut of problems. And, like I say, most of them are adjustment problems.

SM: One young man said that he was a reservation Indian, and when he would run into some urban Indians sometimes they would sort of pick on him. Is that true?

LH: Well, yeah, to an extent. There's no such thing as an urban Indian, it's just the label. It's a label that comes in handy for Indians that are living in the urban areas. They don't understand completely the reservation way of life. Sometimes when the kids live on reservations they're speaking their own language first, as a primary language, and English is usually after age seven or eight. So they usually have an accent. Some of the kids, "they English come a funny." And so they have to talk like this. And to an urban Indian that's... you're kind of backwoods, you know. You talk funny, but anyone who's tryin' to learn another language other than his own will have an accent. And it's just small problems like this, you know. The idea being that the reservation Indian has to kinda take the urban Indian in hand, and kinda teach him that, yeah, he comes from a different area; maybe he speaks English a little bit funny, but when that urban Indian talks his native tongue, he talks a little bit funny too. So, you know, when they get together and find out that, yeah, they have a lot more in common than they do differences, then it's much easier for them to get along.
SM: So most of those problems are overcome?

LH: Oh yeah, uh huh. But sometimes it takes a little bit more work than others.

SM: That's one of the things that you cope with here in your office?

LH: Right. This is one of the reasons why I'm kinda glad that I've got this real varied background, because each tribe has its own special unique problems, in addition to the problems of coping with and tryin' to get used to this university and the major society in general.

SM: Even non-Indian kids, white kids from some small towns who come to a university like this, it snows them too.

LH: I get some of those in here, surprisingly enough. Oh yeah.

SM: They hear that they've got a good place to go and they come here.

LH: Oh yeah.

SM: Well, that must be gratifying.

LH: They get funny looks when they come in.

SM: Any other phases of the work here?

LH: Well, like I say, help 'em get housing, take care of any housing problems, I help 'em set up their classes, set up their majors. If they're having academic problems I help 'em get tutors, or I tutor some myself.

SM: Keeps you pretty busy.
LH: Oh yeah. They keep tryin' to. In addition, I'm on about four or five major boards here in Salt Lake, in the city. I'm on one that's the health council for two counties, Salt Lake County and Tooele County, which is just about 30 miles west of us. So if there's any new hospitals or new clinics or anything like this, I'm on the review committee in that particular council, so all the proposals for new hospitals or clinics or anything like this, I'm in on the review.

SM: You get a chance to have some input there.

LH: Right. I'm on the United Way Council here, and two of our Indian programs downtown depend on United Way funds, so I'm the liaison between those Indian organizations and the United Way board.

SM: You have various Indian people living here?

LH: Oh yeah, you'll find a lot. We've got, here in Salt Lake Valley, we've got about 60 major tribes represented. A couple that you might want to talk with . . . Thelma Pennecoose. She's Cheyenne and something, from Oklahoma, a good Ute name. She's the director of the alcoholism center. And another one who's a counselor down there is Irving Tail. He's a Sioux from South Dakota.

SM: O.K. good. Now then, I know your little girl is waiting for you. Your wife's in the hospital today?

LH: Yeah. She has been for a week and a half.

SM: She's coming along O.K.?

LH: Some strange non-Indian disease.

SM: I suppose you could categorize them, because a lot of them, they weren't here.
LH: That's right. Measles, small-pox. In fact, some of the first germ warfare was conducted against the Indian people.

SM: Yes, back in the Northeast. It has been claimed the British and the French both did it, I guess.

LH: Right.

SM: Small-pox was a horrible way to go.

LH: Wiped out a lot of them. Decimated them.

SM: I heard of another group and all they had was measles, in the Pacific Northwest.

LH: Oh, terrible up there.

SM: It wiped them out because they got a high fever and they did what they usually did when they had a fever, they went and sat in the cold stream to cool off. They all got pneumonia and died. The whole clan, wiped out.

LH: Oh yeah, there's a lot of them that way. This is one reason why the Pilgrims had it so easy when they landed. About five years before they landed that whole area was wiped out with small-pox. English sailors.

SM: And abandoned farms which the first Europeans used then. They didn't have to make a clearing.

LH: Right.

SM: Most of them didn't know how to swing an axe anyway.
LH: That's true. They were from urban areas.

SM: It was their sons and grandsons that became the pioneer types that survived. Can you think of anything else we should add here now?

LH: Well, there's really so many things, you know. We could sit here from now until two or three days from now. As far as my own personal . . . you've learned, I guess, pretty much about me, and as far as where I'm coming from, a traditional Indian who's kind of adopting. . . .

SM: You're very much in the swing of things here in the non-Indian world, too.

LY: Trying to be, yeah. 'Cause this is one way that we are going to get back our pride, our self-respect, our whole self-image, by getting in and showing that we can stand on our feet and operate, like we did before we were placed on reservations.

SM: People generally still want their reservations?

LH: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

SM: And increased, if possible. But they also want the opportunities that other people have so they can make a better life too?

LH: Sure. It's kinda like the idea that the people here in Utah are eligible for jobs in Colorado or Missouri or Mississippi, New York or California. Yet at the same time, they live here in Utah. It's the same way with the Indian tribes. We live on our reservations. We'd like to be eligible for jobs in San Antonio or Chicago or New York or L.A. or Seattle or some of these other areas too.

SM: One man said he came to Utah and he likes it here because he encounters
less prejudice here. Is that true?

LH: Well, from my experiences in all my moving around, it seems to be so. The Mormon faith, the predominant religion here, teaches about, you know, the Indian people, and they teach that the Mormon people are supposed to help the Indian people, so they're more favorable towards helping Indian people to develop. This is one reason why BYU has such a huge Indian program, because they're dedicated to this idea that Indian people need to be educated, they need all these tools. They have developed in the Navajo Reservation, several farms. The same way up in Canada. They developed several ranches and farms, all run, operated and worked by Indian people, but initially started out with funds from the Mormon Church.

SM: Yes. That's the attitude of the people, plus the prevalence of many successful and even prominent Indian people has much to do with this. Then you get into other areas like . . . some of these reservation border towns.

LH: Red-neck areas.

SM: And then into areas where nobody knows of Indians, then you get a different kind of thing again, where they're either curiosities and treated very special, or maybe made uncomfortable with dumb questions sometimes.

LH: Well, I think this is one thing. Dumb questions. I think it's not so much dumb as it's ignorance. Even though you see Indians on the T.V. and movies and everything like this, the things that they're portrayin' on there are so erroneous. Even Indian people, you know, just kind of give up and walk out. The only movies that I've seen of any real worth, as far as details, has been like Little Big Man, A Man Called Horse, and, what's this new one, Winterhawk.
SM: Winterhawk?

LH: It's a new movie that's just out. As far as the detail, and as far as the Indian portions, they've been pretty accurate.

SM: You did see all those?

LH: Oh yeah. Pretty good, considering. But, again, in a sense, they were also kind of degrading to the Indians, because A Man Called Horse, it was a true story. It happened to the Crow Indians, and in the movie it's happening to Sioux Indians. And a beautiful thing, though, is that the Sioux Indians are allowed to speak their tongue. Tepees and everything like this are pretty much Sioux tepees. They show some authentic events, but the events that they show are not in context with the tribe that it's supposed to be happening to.

SM: A little bit of the slipping of the gears there?

LH: Right.

SM: But otherwise the feeling is....

LH: Pretty good. Soldier Blue is another one, in the fact that it shows the Indian massacres, rather than the Indians going out and massacring, they are the massacrees this time. One of the few things that history doesn't always point out, that oft-times it was the Indians who were on the receiving end more times than it was the whites on the receiving end.

SM: At Washita they've got a monument built now, and they spell out quite honestly on the placard there what happened. It showed the site of the camp and the troops and how they moved and everything. I don't know if there's anything over at Sand Creek in eastern Colorado.
LH: I don't think there is. I know another one too, just real fast before the tape runs out. That Custer, he's always portrayed as a kind of hero, but he was attacking the Indians.

SM: Custer, among a lot of the people, in fact most of them that I know now, instead of the hero that he was 50 years ago, is a heel now.

LH: Good. Glad to hear that. I don't keep up on these.

SM: We have come down here close to the end now, Lacee, and it was interesting listening to you and talking with you, and we've learned a lot, one more contribution to understanding. Thank you very much, Lacee.

LH: Thank you.