JOHN MAESTAS, Nambe - San Ildefonso

October 27, 1975

Provo, 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.

This transcript series was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and by support from St. Louis Community College.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

LISTENING TO INDIANS

NO. 85

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Glen Rock, New Jersey
Microfilming Corporation of America
1978
Sam Myers:
I'm talking with Mr. John R. Maestas, and you are the chairman of the Indian Education Division here at Brigham Young University?

John Maestas:
It's a department, Indian Education Department.

SM: Is a division another level?

JM: We don't have a division. It's a university, and, of course, a university has several colleges, and we're housed in the College of General Studies, and we're a full-fledged, bona fide department. Our structure is just a little different. I think you may have noticed in your visit here that our whole college is structured a little differently. It's a full service college. We have the Indian Education Department, we have the honors program here, we have the ROTC programs, both the Air Force and Army, Universities Studies program with a bachelor of Universities Studies program, Career Education and the Philosophy Department. That seems like quite a collage of departments, but we consider ourselves all service departments, rather than strong academic departments. We like it better that way. In our department we have no major in Indian education or Indian studies. I think we've structured ourselves this way for a very special reason, and it gives us a real advantage. It gives us an opportunity to exercise our philosophy of education. We believe that in order for an Indian student to really compete, he has to be just as confident as the next man. By coming into an Indian studies program, he finds himself many times too limited in what he can do. The Indian studies program may have authority to teach about Indians and teach about Indian studies. It may not be able to help a student who wants to come in to become an accountant. As a matter of fact, it may become even harder for an Indian studies faculty member to go in and encourage the Accounting Department to help a student
enroll in the courses and become a major in that area. But with us, we've structured our program this way. We're an Indian Education Department, we bring our students in, and what we teach are the basic general education requirements—the history, English, math, science, and so on—they're basic courses. They take general education just like any other student, and not only do we service our Indian students, but our faculty services most of the students who come to the university without a declared major and enroll in the College of General Studies. That's about 6,000 students a year. So our classes are about half Indians and half non-Indians, and once they've completed the general education requirements, then they have to select a major outside of our department. At that point they become tied in with some other department for an academic major. Now we have made arrangements to have several faculty members in our college in our department who then have dual appointments with many of these other colleges and departments, and so many times our own faculty members can serve as advisors in those other colleges and departments, and if not, then we have arrangements made with every department on this campus to provide an advisor to our Indian students so that we can transfer them academically without too much difficulty. Now we'll maintain some of our other services throughout the four years—our financial services, our personal services, counseling, and so on—we'll provide those on an on-going basis all the time they're here, so they maintain a partial tie to our department throughout the whole university experience, but it's not the academic tie—they have to get that some place else, and we just become facilitators for that.

SM: So you have the usual courses and colleges of most universities, plus this Indian Education Department.

JM: Right.

SM: John, I think your background will be very interesting. You came from
over in the Santa Fe area, didn't you? I'd like to know about your family background.

JM: All right. If you don't mind me telling just a little more than most. My family moved in from Azcatecas, Mexico, in 1680. A man by the name of Mr. Vilhille, Montez Vilhille, was a member of the Mexican Army when they came into Santa Fe. He and his wife moved into Santa Fe, and a few years later moved out to San Ildefonso, where their son was born. He married a girl from San Ildefonso, and his name was Montez Vilhille Santeanna, who in turn married a girl from Nambe, who had a son who married a girl from Santa Clara. So we've been in San Ildefonso, Santa Clara, Nambe and Pojoaque pueblos of the northern Rio Grande, northern New Mexico, for about 200 and some years. My family was raised around that area. My dad, as a child, lived in Colorado, moved just north of the New Mexico line in Colorado, and I was raised there. I am a Tewa Pueblo Indian from San Ildefonso Pueblo basically, but basically most of the northern Indian pueblos I can claim. My dad's family comes from Nambe, and my mother's family comes from the Taos area, which is over the hill about 60 miles or so.

SM: The family kind of knits them all together.

JM: Kind of knits them all together, pulls them all together over a couple of hundred years. So that's where my family comes from. I was actually raised in southern Colorado, went to school at Adams State College, a little four-year normal school in Alamosa, received a Bachelor of Arts degree, and went to Wyoming and taught school for a couple of years, and moved to Arizona and taught there in Page, Arizona. I worked in Page as a high school teacher, and worked summers as a park ranger at old Lake Powell. Then I had an opportunity to come pick up my master's degree at BYU, and came here as an assistant debate coach at the time. I worked in Page as a high school teacher, and worked summers as a park ranger at old Lake Powell. Then I had an opportunity to come pick up my master's degree at BYU, and came here as an assistant debate coach at the time. We came, spent a couple of years getting a master's degree, and then had an opportunity to come to work for the Indian Education Department,
and since then I've been working on my doctorate. I'm just down to my last course this semester, and I start writing the old dissertation next semester, and hope to graduate at the end of the summer with a doctorate in education.

SM: Kind of helps keep you with a little sympathy for the students when you're struggling with it yourself, doesn't it? Even though you're heading up the department.

JM: It certainly does. One of the things I have to be careful of is that I don't lose track of our students.

SM: When they graduate?

JM: Well, I mean, just get myself locked up in this office and losing touch.

SM: Do you teach any courses now?

JM: Yes. I don't teach full time every semester, most of it's administration for right now. I have taught the education courses, educational values. I've been involved in tutoring and workshop for teachers involved basically in teacher-training preparation. I've also worked for the Speech Department and taught their debate course. I also have a new course we're teaching this next year on native American public address, studying the native American speakers, so I'll be teaching that, and they also asked me to teach a course called the Indian Oral Tradition. We'll be talking about . . . .

SM: When you get the native American speakers organized, I would love to have a copy of any outlines or bibliographies you might work up.

JM: I'll do better than that. I'm writing a textbook we're using for the course, and we'll send you one and bill you later.
SM: That's great, because you know there is much great oratory among the Indian peoples, and they haven't been given sufficient attention.

JM: And it really hasn't been documented. I found it extremely difficult to find good speeches we could study in a course like that, so I've attempted to put together a textbook this year, and I've had great response from many tribal leaders around the country, and so on. Next week I'll be in Oklahoma City for a convention, and we'll be visiting with several people there about submitting their speeches for inclusion in this first text.

SM: Does this go back in history a little bit too?

JM: What we're going to try to do is work on contemporary native American address. We'll maybe take a few historical speeches over the last five or ten years, but we don't want to get any earlier than that.

SM: You aren't going back to hear what Sitting Bull might have said?

JM: No. That we can study in an oratory class, and those are available. You get pretty fair collections of old oratory, but they really haven't done much in the area of contemporary address, and I figure with a course in contemporary address you could then take a follow-up course which would compare the two—see how oratory has changed from the old Sitting Bull-type orators to a new Peter McDonald, for example.

SM: I wanted to hear Peter McDonald last May over at Tahlequah. Were you there?

JM: No. I have several speeches of his though. I've heard him several times, and I've had an opportunity to host him here several times with our students. See we have about 260 of our 500 Indian students
from the Navajo Reservation. About half.

SM: You've done other things too. You're a very active man. You've been involved in television and radio, haven't you?

JM: Yes. I'm on the board of directors of the Native American Public Broadcasting Consortium. This is designed to bring more Indians into the business, and to try to promote programming for and about American Indians, and also to encourage programming by American Indians. We found that there're very few of us in the business, and the whole idea is to encourage more of our youth to get into the field. We must have had 75 public broadcasting stations who were eager to get native American programming, and were eager to hire native Americans, and I think at our first convention we found about seven of us there, and we could go 75 different places, but we're trying to encourage more of our kids to get into that.

SM: There's a lot of talent here, right on your own campus.

JM: Yes. We have our own radio station; we have our own television station here. I am involved in two things for right now. We have a 13-part television series that you might be interested in. It will probably be a year and a half before it's completed, but we're doing a 13-part series called, The Wisdom of the First Americans.

SM: Will this be on public television?

JM: It will be on public television, and we don't know for sure that the whole series is going to be shown on the public broadcasting network. It's hoped that they will buy the thing and show it all over the network, but we're doing this 13-part series. . . .

SM: Is the university doing it?
JM: Well, it's in cooperation with the Indian Education Department and KBYU, our television station, with some grants-in-aids, and a grant from what we hope, the Public Broadcasting System, the corporation for public broadcasting. So we're involved in that, and I just got back from Central and South America; I spent six weeks down there with our performing group, The Lamanite Generation.

SM: They're really great.

JM: A great group. We took them down there; we performed about every major country in South America.

SM: One of the girls said all of them but two.

JM: A couple of them we couldn't get into--the revolutions were on. We missed a couple. We were in Ecuador, just peaceful and serene, and we moved out, and two weeks later the country was in an uproar, and so on. We did the same thing in Peru. We had a great opportunity to go down there, and we took a film crew with us. I went down as executive producer of a film that we're doing entitled, Songs of Our Fathers, and it tracks the Lamanite Generation through Central and South America. You know, many of the Indian groups have been alluding to the fact that the North American Indian is related to the South American Indian, and it's become a very common thing in the last few years. We at Brigham Young University have always believed that. You know one of the basic tenets of our religion, in our church which sponsors Brigham Young, is based upon the Book of Mormon, which is a history of the people who lived on this continent, and that, of course, is the Indian people.

SM: Some of the Indian students have said, "That book tells our story."
JM: Yes, that's what it's all about. So what we went down to do was take our culture to them, and get their culture, have them perform for us, and we had a great interchange. We have some excellent footage. I don't know how we're going to trim it down to a 30-minute episode.

SM: It must run a couple of hours, doesn't it?

JM: Well, right now we have about 12 hours of material--great stuff. I don't know how to cut it.

SM: You have everything the performers do, plus all these other countries?

JM: Yes.

SM: Oh, the editing job, I'd hate to have that.

JM: It will be quite a task. We're really excited about it, and hope to release that the first of February.

SM: The Lamanite Generation has performed in Europe and Canada and throughout the United States too, hasn't it?

JM: Right.

SM: I have promises from two or three of your students to let me know if you ever come near St. Louis, so I can tell people about it and make sure not to miss it myself. How are things going generally? It's the old problem, of course, of working out the budget and the funds. This is not a public institution like some of the state schools and colleges, is it?

JM: No, it's a private institution. Just a few things that you might not know about Brigham Young. It's the largest private institution in
the country. We have right at 25,000 full-time, daytime students, and that makes us the largest university in the country, private university in the country. And we have the largest Indian education program--we have a little over 500 students. That's not a real measure of success. The real measure comes, I think, in what you can do with the students. You know that the graduation rate for Indians nationally is about 4%. Actually it is only 3.4%. At Brigham Young we've been at about 20%. We're hitting that consistently. We had one summer program we ran a few years ago--brought our students in a few weeks early, gave them a pre-college orientation, and we found that we graduated 26% of them, and we're running 20% to 26% or five to six times the national average.

SM: That's a great result.

JM: We're quite excited about it.

SM: Do you have plans to even improve that?

JM: Yes. We're trying to move in two directions now. One of them is that we want to increase our enrollment from 500 to 800. We feel that we can do that without too much difficulty. We've always had more students apply than we could really accept.

SM: They do have to apply and pass an admittance test of some kind?

JM: Yes.

SM: And they come from many states, don't they?

JM: Yes. They come from 38 different states; they represent 77 different tribes and tribal blends. Like I said, our biggest group is the Navajo. That's understandable, we're closer to the Navajo
Reservation than any other, but we do get many students from around the country. We also have about 12 Canadian students. Right now Brigham Young University is the only university that Canadian Indian Affairs will approve their students to attend in the United States.

SM: I talked with two of them. That's great. It's a great record.

JM: And I think, as I said before, we have a real advantage, maybe we have two or three advantages. One of them is that—I hate to say this this bluntly—but I think we find we get a better caliber of student at BYU. You know that one of the biggest problems our Indian students have had nationally is the trouble with alcohol. We have some pretty strict standards at BYU, standards of dress and morality and personal decency. We do not approve of smoking and drinking, and so on. And so our students know that they have to live up to that, so consequently we don't have the big loss to alcohol. Most of the kids who come are pretty serious students; they want to do something with their lives, so just by that fact, I think we get a higher percentage of them graduating. Then I think the other one is that we hire some of the finest faculty members at this university to work in our department, and they have to be totally committed to our program. It's not uncommon for faculty members all over the United States to teach 12 hours a week, for example, and the rest of the time doing some of their own pet research. We require our faculty members to be available 40 hours a week, but we still expect them to do research on top of that, and most people think we demand way too much of our faculty members, but you won't find a single one that complains about it. They're totally committed first of all, primarily, to teaching, and secondarily to research, whereas in most universities, the teachers are committed in their hearts first to research, but tolerating teaching so they can do the research.

SM: That's one of the things we have in our community college is the
accent more on teaching than research, so I think we sometimes do
help some people more than the typical university does.

JM: Well, I think in that case we're more similar to a community college,
because we have that kind of emphasis. I know that at any university
you have people who are very research oriented. It's kind of a thorn
in their side at times for us to put that kind of emphasis on teaching,
but we feel that that's our role, that's what we're expected to do.
We can't really assume any other. And even at that we've had some
darn good research come out of the department.

SM: You do have some excellent research, and then you put that to use in
the field of Indian affairs too in your Indian Services Department.

JM: Right.

SM: Is it a department also?

JM: Well, it's an area. We have about three separate areas within the
department. One of personal services, the other academic services,
and then the other is financial aids or financial services. And
you're right. What we've found is that research for research's sake
is not enough. A pet little project is great, but, gosh, if you're
going to do research, it ought to be something that you can reapply
to your teaching process.

SM: And then you also apply it to helping people build a better life out
there by growing corn better or raising livestock better--you have
research back of this, plus the work in the fields.

JM: We have a very extensive off-campus program. We've been involved
all over the country, up in Canada, even down into Mexico, working
with agricultural programs. We've got a grant of $550,000 from
Kellogg to do some agricultural work. We've been involved in such things as... oh, I think last year in South Dakota alone we had about 1,000 families involved in a home gardening program. We're going down into Canyon deChelly and try to put in several thousand fruit trees. Do you remember when Kit Carson came through and finally subjugated the Navajos? The only way they could do it was to go into Canyon deChelly and cut down their fruit trees. Well, we're going back in there now and try to replant those.

SM: People haven't replanted those peach trees yet?

JM: No. There's a few, a few old apple trees, but it's hard to get trees, it's hard to get them in there and planted and so on.

SM: Maybe they were kind of turned off psychologically after that disastrous experience.

JM: I think so. So we're involved in that. We tried a project, for example, on the Navajo Reservation. Raised several acres of wheat. The Navajo Tribe thought they'd never have wheat on that reservation. If you've ever seen it it's one of the most desolate places you'll ever see, but we had a fine wheat crop there. So we're trying some things like that—irrigation projects, beef projects, potatoes and beets and so on.

SM: Do you run into any of these protest groups that try to make their way into your college campus here?

JM: Yes, we're not immune from them. We get them occasionally, not very often. A couple of things have happened. First of all, we have never had a riot on this campus. I guess I'd better knock on wood, but our kids are pretty serious about education. We don't have the rioting. We've been approached several times by the American Indian Movement, for example.
SM: Do you know some of those people?

JM: Yes. We've brought a few of them on campus and let them talk to our kids. It was really interesting. We invited Dennis Banks here twice to visit with our kids. He was very quiet. Of course some of our girls took him on the minute he disagreed with them, and it was interesting. But he wasn't very militant at all. We had another situation where Vern Bellecourt came to Utah, and we got into a pretty heated discussion. He was indicting the LDS Church and the Education Department. He takes pot shots at us occasionally. We're not enemies, we're certainly not on very friendly terms, and that's because we don't agree with what he's doing. It makes it extremely tough. I feel the same kind of frustration that things need to be done, but I can't agree with the way they're doing things. I don't see how you can ever force your way in some place. I think what you need to do is learn to work with the system. You can very subtly put the squeeze on a company if they're openly discriminating. There are ways to handle it with the system, without having to create havoc. There are ways of building students so that they really feel good about themselves, and want to get out and compete and do well, and lead their people, without having to tear things down. I think frustration and militant action is the direct result of the fact that people don't know what they're doing, and they get frustrated to the point they just have to do something. What we're trying to do here is provide for that avenue. We're saying, "If you need a cause, gee, look at your brothers and sisters and your mom and dad. There are several people who need you back home. If you have the moxie, come on to school, let's help get you through, let's get you a good job where you'll be in a position to really help. But if you're a drain on them, if you're not working, if you're at home, you're living off Mom and Dad, and all you're doing is raising cain, you're no help. If you're not part of the solution, brother, you're part of the problem." And what we're trying to do is to get people to assume that they're part of the solution, that they have a responsibility to
help change things.

SM: Did AIM ever ask you for money like they did some of the other church groups?

JM: They asked us for $10,000,000. $1,000,000 a year for the next ten years. And of course we had to say "no." I laughed. I could tell they hadn't done their homework. If they had investigated the LDS Church they would have found that the church was already spending about $3,500,000 a year on Indian-related projects.

SM: Three and a half times more than they were asking.

JM: Sure. So I chuckled. I thought, you know, the church'd be smart, I guess, to take up his offer, to cut their budget by 1/3. But they're already a world leader in Indian affairs, not only in the United States. They're also heavily involved in schools in Mexico, down in Bolivia, places like this, the islands of the Pacific.

SM: I met one of your people who came from Honolulu, over in the placement service.

JM: We have several schools there. See, we believe that the North American Indian, the Latins, and the Polynesians are all related, so we extend our services a little further than just the North American Indian, although in this department it's basically Indian education.

SM: What you just said is practically a definition of this group of young singers and dancers, the Lamanite Generation. That's what they are, these people from these groups, and they're out there performing, singing, dancing, and doing it beautifully.

JM: We have a real good time. We did the half-time show at the Utah
Stars season opener at the Salt Palace.

SM: Yes, I do hope if they ever get back our way we'll get a chance to see them.

JM: There's a possibility that they might be through St. Louis next summer. They've been invited to be part of the Nation's Bicentennial celebration at Philadelphia on the 4th of July next year. I don't know what they have planned for an eastern tour. I know last year or the year before they took a tour down through the southern states and up the eastern coast, and up into New York and back through Chicago and across the Plains and back. It took about six or seven weeks.

SM: Were you with them on that?

JM: No, I didn't take the whole tour with them. I had to be here so we sent someone else. On the South American tour, I really hadn't planned to go on that one either. I just couldn't see how I could afford six weeks out of the office, but then we started doing the film and several other things, and the president just got a little nervous about it, so he said, "No, you'd better be there." So I was down as liason between the university and the South American countries. A great experience!

SM: You could have worked hard here for six weeks, but that you couldn't duplicate.

JM: Yes. I worked hard there too. Everybody teased me about being on vacation, but you're up at 5:00 o'clock in the morning to catch an early flight, you move three tons of equipment and 36 bodies to the next country, go through customs and all, get everything moved into the theatre, get set up, do two shows, you know, hop from country to
country. We were busy.

SM: That must have been quite an experience, and for the kids too, of course. What are some of the other programs that you've got in the works here that we should know about?

JM: Of course we're always looking for ways to make our programs better and to get more and more kids in on the program, or through the program. I think there's half a dozen things you might be interested in. One of them is that we've adopted a new trimester system. We have three full semesters a year. It's usually been referred to as the no-nonsense school calendar. And it really is that. You have no time at all. You go from one semester to the other. We're trying to encourage our students to go to school for ten months instead of the traditional nine, and in ten months they can pick up two and a half semesters. By doing that it still gives them time to have a nice summer vacation, gives them time to work, have a little time off, and then hit the books again, and they can graduate a little earlier. They can pick up, I guess, the equivalent of a year or better, per ten months.

SM: So they would take the two regular semesters plus another month or two?

JM: Half a semester, which is two months.

SM: During summer school?

JM: Well, it's almost like summer school. See, our first semester starts in September through December, January through April; April 19 we're through; the 21st, 22nd we're in school again, and go until June 19th, so by June the 19th they can be out.
SM: Now that's your tri-semester, or does the tri-semester go all the way through the summer?

JM: The tri-semester will go all the way through the summer. In other words the third semester will be divided up into two terms, from April to June 15th, June 19th to August 15th. That four-month period is a full semester, so it just gives our kids an opportunity to do a little more work during the year, and that's worked out very nicely. I think the big advantage we're going to gain from that is going to be that we can bring our freshmen students in two months earlier, give them a good solid academic experience during summer school when it's nice and quiet--pressure isn't on--they can be settled into the program. There are very few of them here. By the time the rest of the students hit this campus they're old pros; they feel comfortable about being here. I think that program is going to bring us real, decided advantages. I told you that we brought some kids in like this before, and we were able to graduate 26% of them. I think that by doing it this way we may be able to get as high as 30% of our students to graduate.

SM: That would be a good accomplishment.

JM: We have a program called Indian Development in Action. It's a youth program, designed to bring students in between the ages of 14 and 17. They come from all over the country. They're here for about three weeks in the summer for a workshop. In that we get them involved in many, many things that they just didn't expect that they could do. We have a survival experience. We take them out in the desert, we take them out rappelling off a cliff. These kids, the first time they see that cliff they're ready to go home, but everybody comes down off the cliff, including these 98-pound little girls. We've had that, and we get them involved in a karate class. We have a young man who is a Black Belt. Gee, in two weeks we had a 98-pound girl breaking bricks.
It's just amazing, these kids, that they can do the kinds of things they're doing. They get in and they write and they sing and they dance, they develop their talents. It's a fun exercise for about three weeks, designed to reinforce their good behavior. It's designed to teach them that there's really nothing they can't do if they put their mind to it, and by structuring some things, they have good, success experiences. What we do with our kids is, they have to be 14 to 17, and they cannot have graduated from high school. They have to be students who are going back to high school. They can be freshmen, sophomores, juniors, but they have to go back to high school. It is designed for them to go back with some new leadership qualities about themselves. They not only succeed themselves, but can be an inspiration to their classmates.

SM: Have you been able to follow up on that to see how it works?

JM: Yes. After our first workshop we sent four kids up to the Yakima area, and within three months the tribal leader was here on campus asking me if we could run a workshop for them alone for next summer. They wanted all of their kids in that leadership workshop. We are quite excited about it. I think it has real potential for our kids, and for high school kids. We've been involved with a couple other programs I think are very beneficial. One of them is a structured tutoring program. We piloted a program here in the community from a little federal grant we received from the public schools. We took 30 of our college Indian students and trained them in a structured tutoring model, and gave them some pretty solid principles of tutoring, and then had them go out and tutor 150 students in the public schools. It worked out very nicely. The school district since then picked up the whole program of tutoring, and we're hoping now to take our students down to the Navajo Reservation this summer, have them tutor kids during the first summer. Then we'll take them back the second summer and have them train mothers how to do the tutoring. And then the third summer have them train supervisors who can then in turn
train mothers, who can in turn do the tutoring. At the end of the three years they won't even need us. They'll have supervisors, they'll have tutors and they'll have people who can do it. It's basically a lay tutoring program, and it's had phenomenal success. We're very excited about it; I think we can do some great things with it.

SM: At the same time you're doing this, you're helping the kids to preserve their own culture too.

JM: Oh sure. When our kids go out, they tutor, but they also sing and they dance, they get the kids involved in many activities, and so on.

SM: Would some of the traditionals start out being a little bit leery of this thing, for fear that it might take away the old way?

JM: There's no worry about losing some of our culture. I think one of the things we're going to have to understand as Indians is that there's just no way that we're going to get away from not losing part of it. For example, when you bring electricity on the reservation, the old lamps go out. When you bring electric stoves, the bonfire has gone. When we have paved roads and pick-ups, you know, the old buggies and the horses go. Now there's things we can maintain—the legends, the stories, the songs, some of the old customs, the sayings, these kind of things.

SM: The ceremonies?

JM: Yeah, they can still be carried out without too much difficulty. It's a question of knowing how to balance your life with a little of both, so that you're not so afraid of progress that you constantly hurt your people, but not being so eager to get rid of everything that's old, as if everything that's old and ancient or traditional was bad. Try to maintain those really good parts. I think the
mark of a truly fine, modern Indian is one who has learned how to balance his life with both of those, and has been able to internalize the best of both cultures, because he really is a product of both, and needs to be able to work effectively in both cultures.

SM: Some people seem to have made a beautiful adjustment, taking the best of both cultures and putting them together into a happy life.

JM: I think one of the problems you have is that, to begin with, people are so afraid to shrug off anything that they've had, or to let anything in for fear that they'll lose something. I see some of our kids who come in very leery of the white man's culture, for fear that they're going to not be Indian any more. They've heard people say, you know, "If you go to that school, you're supposed to cut your hair. How can you be an Indian?" And so, for a while, some of them will seem to reject anything that's the white man's, and try to hold on to everything that was Indian. And they almost become romantic. I think this is where the American Indian Movement is, you know. They think that it's still possible for us to jump on our horse and go out in the woods and live off the land and shoot a deer and tan our own hides. Let's face it. As great and as romantic as the movies have made that, it just isn't possible for us to do that any more. We don't want to. You know, I think it's a great, romantic period, or was a great, romantic period, but I take a look at my wife, and I'd hate like heck to have her chewing hides to tan them, dying at 30, when it's possible for her to have a good life; still, teach our children about our customs and our ways, and solid family principles, and live to be 60 or more, and have that opportunity. And I think we need to be careful that we not get in the way of that kind of progress. I'll always be leery of particularly non-Indians who come to me and say, "Oh, how dare you! Aren't you afraid you're going to lose that culture? It's such a great thing. We'd like to see them stay like that." You know, it's great for them because they want to maintain
our culture in a situation, so they can periodically come in and have a look at what it was like, at our expense. And I'm saying, "I'm sorry. I can't afford to deny my people the right to an education, the right to that kind of life." I don't think that we have to shrug off everything that is old, because there are some beautiful parts of the culture that are a crime if we ever let them go, and I don't think we will.

SM: I don't either. You have other programs besides these, too, don't you?

JM: We're trying a couple. One of them is a teacher training program we have out with the Ute Tribe. The Ute Reservation has quite a few kids—they must represent 40% to 50% of the student body in elementary school, and yet, they were only graduating two or three a year out of the high school. Just a phenomenal drop-out rate. They've never had Ute teachers out there, so we've been involved in a project to try to get some of the Ute girls through a program so they can teach. We have 11 girls in the program now, all of them are working as teacher aides in the school part of the day. Part of the day they're released to study, and they're training as teachers. All 11 are pretty well-liked, there'll be contracts for them there in those public schools right on the Ute Reservation.

SM: What reservation is that?

JM: This is the Ute, out in eastern Utah. So we'll have ten or eleven teachers out there in the next two or three years. We think that's going to make a real difference in keeping these kids in school.

SM: Do they have an economic base out there that's viable?

JM: Pretty sound. I suppose that of any tribe in the country, except for
one little tribe down in Palm Springs, you know, where a dozen people own all that land down there, they're in pretty good shape. They have a good, sound land base. They have a real fine claim against the federal government, the Indian Claims Commission. As a matter of fact, they hold a record for the largest claim ever made against the federal government, and so they have money, they have land, and they have good people. Right now they just need to get them educated, and get them functioning for them.

SM: Are these the people out near Roosevelt and Duchesne?

JM: Yes, Fort Duchesne.

SM: They came on with a new law and order code of their own. Have you heard about that?

JM: Well, they just tried to enforce the law. What's happened, they have people, non-Indian people there, who live in the communities, but have never been subject to the law of the tribe if they lived on the reservation. And they should be. And so the tribe announced they had taken it back to the Secretary of the Interior and found out that they do have legal authority to prosecute people who are guilty of crimes on the reservation. What happens is you have a federal code operative on the reservation, and you also have a state code operative there, in the towns of Fort Duchesne and Roosevelt. And what the Ute Tribe announced was that those who were guilty of crimes there would be tried whether they were Indian or not. Before, they had said that the Indians could try the Indians, but they could not try non-Indians. They find out that they can, and so they've announced that they can and they will. The non-Indians in and around Roosevelt, well a few of them were upset. I think they understand that it's only right. I think the funny part of it is that the deputy sheriff there is the one that's just up in arms, and I'm
sure sees it as a very personal affront to his authority, and seems to be the one who's mostly opposed to the thing. He's been very, very verbal.

SM: But some of the other people, some of the non-Indian people there, did say it was a good thing, maybe. It's only fair.

JM: I thought it was a little immature of him to make the comments he made. I think the first day it was announced he said, "We're not gonna do it, and if they think they can, let 'em come try to get me," and I thought that was very irresponsible of a deputy sheriff to talk like that. He should be one to at least try to maintain law and order, keep the emotional level down, and try to work within the system, and for him to take that kind of an approach seemed very irresponsible.

SM: Sort of firing up the situation, or adding something to it?

JM: Right.

SM: Are there any other programs that we should touch on?

JM: Let me just mention one last one. We have our own newspaper, called the Eagle's Eye.

SM: I've seen it, it looks very good.

JM: I think it's going to become one of the finer Indian newspapers in the country. Two years ago--and this is a quick little side-light story--we were at the National Indian Press Association conference, it was held in Oklahoma City, just before the National Congress of American Indians had theirs. Very interesting. We took papers, and, gee, the one session we were to, a young lady from New York was making
a presentation, very dull and dry, and she hadn't prepared, and she
was ho-ing and hum-ing around, and you could tell she wasn't ready,
but most of the kids had tuned her out, and started reading the news-
paper. I laughed. I thought I wished I had brought my camera to take
a picture of that, because you could see all of these newspapers out,
and all of them said, Eagle's Eye. She just didn't see it, but it was
really interesting that we got such good coverage of that newspaper.

SM: She was helping you, anyway.

JM: Helped us. But I think the whole project is designed to let our
students write, gives them a creative outlet. They design it, they
put together all the materials, they take it to press, they distribute
it, they sell subscriptions, and it's pretty well self-operative.
They gather local news, regional news and some national news, and I
think they have a nice little paper. The whole idea behind that
Eagle's Eye and the Tribe of Many Feathers, which is our student
organization, is designed to give the students good, positive, self-
image-building projects, programs, that they themselves want to run.
We try to help them with funding if we can. Sometimes we help them
generate their own funding, and so on, but the whole idea is to give
them the opportunity to get their hands on, to design programs, to
work the programs, to see them through to completion, to plan them
properly, to exercise themselves, and to learn from themselves. And,
gosh, we've had some great experiences with that.

SM: Even the pictures are sharp. It's off-set, isn't it?

JM: Yes.

SM: Do they print that here on campus?

JM: Our own press.
SM: A press here at the university. You also make movies here?

JM: Yes, we have our own motion picture studio, we have our own radio stations, television stations. So we've produced several movies. Have just been involved in a project providing ten filmstrips on Indian alcoholism we're going to try to distribute. They're done by Indians and have Indian voices, and we translated them into Navajo, for example, and some of the other languages that the people use. We take them and make them a little more useful down on the reservation, and so we do get quite involved.

SM: You do make them for both kinds of dissemination, purchase or rental?

JM: Sure.

SM: Do they send them out for preview sometimes?

JM: Yes, they'll send them out for preview. You should get hold of those people in the motion picture studio. They have a brochure on Indian films, and look at them.

SM: I'll get it. You know, in just the last few years these films on Indians have been coming into their own. Before that they were pretty much . . . high schoolish and so on, and some that I've showed to my students, they said, "W-e-l-l no, not good." And others they're very much impressed with.

JM: One of the things we've been concerned with on this Native American Public Broadcasting Consortium is that there have been a lot of people who wanted to do things on Indians, but really didn't know how, and so just took a stab, and many times just missed it completely. We evaluated several films, and had a hard time finding any that weren't so slanted that they just really weren't very effective. So the whole
idea behind the consortium is to try to promote better broadcasting, better programming about Indians. Some of the latter films to come out have been much better.

SM: You're on that board, aren't you?

JM: Yes.

SM: So that now you have the experience of learning of the university here, plus your own contact with all this. It should produce a pretty good result.

JM: Well, I've had some experience producing several shows. I did a radio show in Colorado, worked in radio in Wyoming and Arizona, and I did a show here on campus. I've been involved in television shows for the last couple of years. I'm hosting a television show now, so I've had some fair experience. I've produced a couple of shows on the Miss Indian America pageant. I worked once as an associate director, and the other time as staff writer on the program. So we've been involved enough to know what we're doing, at least committed enough to know how to do it.

SM: And you have all these Indian people right here on campus, not only yourself, but the students too. They must have some effect on it. You almost have to try a little harder.

JM: Absolutely, absolutely. Well, our whole philosophy is we just can't do anything second class. We can't be sloppy at anything. We have to do it right, and we're criticized occasionally, because we don't do things like most other universities, and we're different, and we figure that's fine, we don't mind. We're different because we think it's better.

SM: This has been a very valuable experience talking to you, and I want to tell you how much we appreciate your help. Thanks again, John.