

# I. "WE LITTLE ONES SUFFERED A LOT AT SANTA FE"

## LEAVING HOME



**D**uring the harvest season in 1915, a Pueblo girl, her mother, and grandparents were tying chile peppers into long strings to dry for the winter. The girl's father had died of tuberculosis, and she was living with her relatives at San Juan. She was startled when a Pueblo man from Santa Fe Indian School appeared at the house with a white woman. They were looking for her older brother, who was out herding cows. The Indian School people had come to take him away to boarding school. But the young boy was badly needed at home, protested his grandfather:

"'If you'll excuse him this year, at least until next year, then he'll go,' my grandfather said. And so this lady told in English to Mr. Cata, 'Well, we have to take somebody. What about her (pointing at the five-year-old girl)?'

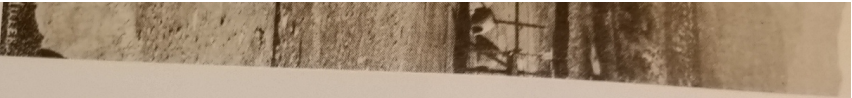
"I was a little girl. I remember it was in October and we had a pile of red chile and we were tying chile into fours. And then my grandfather was putting them onto a longer string. We were doing that when they came in to get me. Then right away my grandma and my mother started to cry, 'Her? She's just a little girl! She's just a little girl, you can't take her.'

"But we have to take somebody. We can't take your grandson, so we have to take your granddaughter. So you have her ready.' In those days, you had to obey the government. 'You have her ready tomorrow morning and we'll come with the mailman and pick her up around nine o'clock.'

"The next day my mother sent me to the ditch to bathe. It was still warm, and in those days we used to bathe in the canal. She sent me there and then she sent me to the relatives' houses to be blessed, where they always send us when we are leaving our village. They used to send us to relatives to be blessed so that the Creator can take care of us while we are away from our families.

"Here come the mailman. He had a buggy. There was a front seat there and he was sitting there with this woman, white lady, I was all ready and my grandmother and mother were crying. I can still see my mother and my grandmother just crying their hearts out, wiping with their sleeves. They used to have full sleeves on their dresses that they made, and they were crying.

"My mother put her best shawl on me. It was getting a little chilly. It was late. Pretty soon the train whistled around the bend near the Rio Grande, and it came. I was already five years old, but my grandpa was holding me on his lap, loving me. So when



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"My mother put her best shawl on me. It was getting a little chilly. It was late. Pretty soon the train whistled around the bend near the Rio Grande, and it came. I was already five years old, but my grandpa was holding me on his lap, loving me. So when the train came, I got in. I saw the tears coming out of that brave man, my grandpa, who was so brave and strong.

"I still picture my folks to this day, just standing there crying, and I was missing them. My grandfather, tears coming out of his eyes. I got on the train and I don't even know who was in the train because my mind was so full of unhappiness and sadness that I just don't know who was on that train at all (San Juan, 1915)."

*\*Note: Each quote is followed by the speaker's tribe and the year he or she came to the school as a student or employee.*

ONE  
HOUSE,  
ONE  
VOICE,  
ONE  
HEART

NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION  
AT THE SANTA FE INDIAN SCHOOL

BY SALLY HYER

*With an Introduction by Joseph Abeyta  
and an Essay by Dr. Margaret Connell Szasz*

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