

Sangre de Cristo Mountains. There, where I was raised, our large family had far less financial, social and educational opportunities than the Taos Indians have today. Most of our neighbors were Spanish Americans, now considered a minority group, struggling for an existence. But at that time, we so called Anglos were definitely the minority group, and we were called Gringos.

Ranch-raised, I obtained only a High School education, then worked as a professional guide and hunter. I entered the United States Forest Service in 1909, and became Supervisor of the Carson National Forest, where the lands in question are situated, in 1915. I served in that capacity until 1919.

After that I ranched for eleven years, then for one year I had charge of wildlife management on a huge Ranch-Game Preserve, Vermejo Park, not far from the Taos Indian Pueblo. Next, I was State Game Warden of New Mexico (Director, Dept. of Game and Fish) for twenty-two years, retiring in 1953. During that period we had considerable dealings with the Taos Indians. Since retiring I have been active with local, State and National Conservation organizations, for which I am proud to have received many State and National citations and awards.

I believe I understand and can look at the Taos Indians' land claims fairly and without bias.

At the outset, Mr. Chairman, I wish to clarify the Blue Lake Religious Shrine situation. It is quite true that traditionally the Taos Pueblo Indians have used the area, consisting of about 3,000 acres in the basin surrounding Blue Lake, the source of the Rio Pecos de Taos, as a rendezvous spot for certain of their religious ceremonies for three or four days late in August each year. While I was Supervisor during the ceremonies they guarded the basin with men armed with rifles. But anyway, we all respected their desire for privacy, and seldom, if ever, did anyone attempt to intrude.

There was no objection then, nor is there any now, to the Indians having privacy for their annual three-day ceremonies. The fact is that the U.S. Forest Service cooperates to the fullest extent in providing a ten-day period for them to enjoy absolute, exclusive use of the Blue Lake Basin. They have not asked for more.

A change in the status of the 3,000 acres of land immediately surrounding Blue Lake in order to provide the Taos Indians with privacy for their ceremonials is wholly unnecessary. Yet I, and I believe the public generally, would make no serious objection to giving the Indians that specific tract of about 3,000 acres embracing the Blue Lake Basin; Provided that access to the Wheeler Peak Wilderness Area from the east be not cut off, except during the three-day ceremonial. However, make no mistake about it, it certainly would create a troublesome problem as a precedent.

While I readily concede that the Indians consider the Blue Lake Basin as a religious shrine, it would be absurd to go along with their claim that the whole 48,000 or 50,000 acres they are seeking to acquire is sacred religious grounds. Or that it has traditionally been used as a Church. That is a pure and simple subterfuge to get the land for ulterior purposes, even as white Americans have many times staked out mining claims to get the timber or other surface resources rather than the mineral.

Actually most Indians consider all land sacred, and they and some of their supporters are using that argument to bring pressure on the Congress to give them the whole tract of land. But do not we American White men, as well as the American Red men, consider all American lands sacred? If the revered words of our National Anthem, America and America the Beautiful have meaning then we certainly do. Anyone who desires to do so is entitled to go into that wilderness type area to commune with God, but the Indians would most likely not permit it if they had complete control.

Mr. Chairman, I must challenge the statement of my good friend, Honorable Stewart L. Udall, Secretary of the Interior, made at the House of Representatives Committee hearings. He said he could see no possibility of the transfer of these lands to the Indians setting a bad precedent. Any such assumption is to completely ignore Indian nature which, in this respect, is no different from human nature in general, to cry "ME TOO," in such circumstances.

It is common knowledge that other Pueblos have their claims in the making if this Bill is passed. Let's not deceive ourselves on that score. It undoubtedly would set a most troublesome and dangerous precedent. If, indeed, the Government owes the Taos Indians anything they should be paid in cash, not in National Forest lands. Since when is land our legal tender? Unless we are ready