

KEYNOTE SPEECH

by

Clifford Duncan

First of all I would like to thank Skip Webb for the fine introduction. I think that she overworked that a little bit. It is an honor to be here this morning and to share with you some of my experiences. And also I would like to give an overview, an historical overview, as to where the Ute Indian people were and where they are today. In doing so I will talk about the culture, the traditions that we still maintain today. And also I will be touching on what rock art means to us as Indian people. I'll try not to make it too long.

This spring I had a chance to talk to a group of White kids mixed with Indian kids, It was a high school queen contest. They ask me to be a keynote speaker. And this reminded me of that. I barely got on I was there for five minutes. Somebody from behind the curtain tugged on me and said it was over with. I didn't even sing anything really so I hope that doesn't happen here. Now talking about rock art. In the Salt Lake Tribune, Thursday September the 3rd, 1992 there was a write-up which was brought to my attention. "College Professor, Sons Fined For Defacing Rock Art. On April 25th, about fifty people from Brigham Young University and Ricks College were touring the remote parts of Canyonlands Park, renown for its world class American Indian Rock Art. 'The group of professors and their families seemed unlikely to contain vandals' said National Park Service archaeologist Nancy Cobb. 'We usually think of vandals as ignorant people, but two teenage boys used charcoal and rocks to draw and scratch on a rock panel known as the El Cove site in Horseshoe Canyon while the father, a professor at Ricks College, Rexburg, Idaho looked on and failed to intervene' ". Then it goes on. I guess we are dealing with people. And yo Indian people we do not pay too much attention to what is going on until something like this happens, or it is printed in the paper or we hear about it on the news, radio, television. And we talk about it. We talk about the differences, how we get things, and it goes on and on and on and we eventually forget about it again. So that is why I think that it is interesting having a group like this that is interested in preserving or studying what rock art is. That is why it is a pleasure to be here with you this morning. And I think it is really up to all of us to try and do something about it.

I will start with a story. Many years ago there was an incident in San Francisco. I was at the cemetery. Everyday there would be people coming in and paying their respect to their relations and friends who were buried there. It was a mixed cemetery where there were orientals, white, you name it. So one day there was this Chinese fellow. He had come to pay respect to his wife. He had a bowl of rice and put that by the headstone. It so happened there was a non-Indian or non-Chinese or White, call him White. He brought his wife flowers. Flowers and rice. Jokingly the White person said to the Chinese "When is your wife going to come up to eat the rice?". The Chinese answered back "At the same time that your wife comes up to smell the flowers". So there is a difference.

Before I start into this talk this morning I would like to sing a song. Usually at home when I talk to people I sing a song and it helps me and it helps the crowd or those that are there, the spirits. There are spirits here and everything will come together. Then we can go on from that point. So I have one song that I am going to start off with. The song itself to me, it reaches out. It is an invitation song. I am inviting all spirits that are out there to come here, into here and be with us. It is like a Sweat Ceremony. When we have Sweat Ceremonies we always start off with a song. The song is asking for the spirits to come in and do the ceremony with us and from, there we will proceed.

.....song.....

I was born on April 4th, 1933. It was during a year of the so called depression, the depression years. My father worked at the boarding school in Whiterocks. Whiterocks is located in the upper part of the Uintah Basin north of Roosevelt about fifteen miles. Near where I grew up was a small area which people referred to as the site where Fort Robidoux existed. It is about a quarter of a mile from where we lived. In 1933 the power lines were few. There was no electricity. There was no running water. Everything that we did had to be acquired from out here, the real world. I grew up learning and understanding the Ute language first. It is a little different so you had to either learn it or get left out, because mother and my father, that was all they spoke, Ute, spoken Ute language. So I had to learn all of that. That was my everyday language. Later I had a chance to go to school and it was about a couple of miles from where we lived that we had a boarding school, an Indian boarding school. The boarding school had staff members that were strict. This was in the earlier years of my life when you couldn't speak Ute on the grounds. In the classrooms it was the same. English had to be spoken. We were punished if we were caught speaking Ute. It was kind of difficult as we used the Ute language also in the way that we think. We think in Indian and learning English, then I had to learn to think in English too. There are two different ways that you do that. Language itself is an instrument because if I use an Indian interpretation for what I hear out here, it would not come out the same. That is the way I understood the language after making the comparison with the two. Some of the customs that we were involved with at that time were a little different too. Like today, I classify today's way of life a little different and it is more on the modern way of doing things. We find a lot of Indian people on the reservation today that have changed. They do not believe in the old ways anymore. Those that are away from the reservation, they have broken off. Their ties are split.

I went to a funeral when I was about five years old. It was one of my great uncles. He was one of our spiritual leaders, the true spiritual leaders. And also he could be classified as a medicine man. These were the doctors that were recognized by the tribe. Today we have a lot of spiritual people and a lot of doctors that aren't recognized. A little while ago there was an introduction made where I was perhaps a spiritual leader which is true in a way, but I am not like how the others were. I am merely an instrument today. In the old days they lived that, day in and day out, but today we don't. If I were like the others in the old days I would not be up here. And that is the difference between us. And comparing who is

a true spiritual leader. They had a white horse at the gravesite and when they were working with the grave there was some man that had a special assignment to kill that horse there by the grave. And they would hang the horse there on a cedar. The horse is the one this person is going to ride in heaven. And they painted the man red. There were red markings on him. The ochre, it was ochre that we use, we call that Indian paint. And then I noticed too, around there, there were dishes, broken dishes, pottery and things like that. And my mother and father explained to us that these things belonged to the people buried there. You do not bother those. You do not touch those because they used to belong to those that are buried. The horse, you do not touch that anymore. Anything of the past, the old you do not touch that. You stay away from that. If you are a person that has special permission given to you, then you have the right to touch that. So that is the way I was brought up. So life went on.

Several years later my father took me to a place up in the northern part of the Basin, up in the Farm Creek area. It is close to Whiterocks Canyon. There is a big boulder sitting out in the field and he took me out there. There were markings on the rock and he pointed it out and said "this is a rock belonging to the Moqui. It belongs to the Moqui. The symbols that you see on there is what they put on there for a purpose so don't bother it. So people of that area, Indian people that were brought up that way understood that. Because that was part of our life. What is on the rocks will carry over into our ceremonies. We are going to be doing the same thing. As you go on into this life then you are going to be taking part of this and you incorporate that into how you are going to be in this world. Someday maybe you will understand this rock art". That is what he told me. So life went on.

I really didn't pay too much attention to it at the time. It was during my high school years that a group of kids went out to visit one of these sites. I think it was in the Nine Mile area. We went out there. We ran all over the hill and climbed the rock and didn't pay any attention to what was going on. Just an outing that the school goes on every spring. And later I went back again by myself. And all the time I am growing up in this Indian ceremonial ways. I am part of that all the way through. On the reservation at the present time we have what they call the Yuipi Ceremony. This is an all night ceremony. And we have the Sun Dance, which is a fasting ceremony which takes place twice a year, in July and in August. When you are about twelve you are eligible to go into a Sun Dance. These are for men only. You can make a vow to do four. You do four dances. After four you complete your vow. That would take care of you for the rest of your life. Or if you go over four you can go for twelve. So you go for twelve. Some, when they get to twelve they go on. And they tell you that when you go beyond twelve thirteen, fourteen, quit counting because you can go on. The rest of your life you are going to be part of that. I started in 1955. Coming out of the service I decided to go to the Sun Dance. I am still at it today. I was at the Sun Dance in August. Mainly the reason that I stay with it is because I learn. And I learn in ceremonies, in the Sun Dance itself and in the Yuipi Ceremonies.

When you go to the rock art, when you are out in the field you will find that these things begin to move. They are actually there, put by someone there not for themselves alone but for generations to come. You have to understand what is going on. What you are looking at. So these things begin to tie in. They tie in for instance, like today, if time would permit, I would go sit before rock art. I will let the sun go down while I am sitting there. I will sit there for two hours and I will watch it. It is how it is going to come to me,

how it is going to talk to me. And then I am going to relate to it too. That is what I am looking for. What you see. What you hear from that is not going to last too long. What you are looking for is maybe within a fifteen minute period because it begins to move. That is the way I look at it. The reason that I am explaining it to you that way is that I am looking at it from my point of view. Then you begin to find that some of those pictographs, petroglyphs are really not the type that I am looking for. Some of them are symbols and you find directional drawings, paintings and also maps. They are talking about migrations. They are talking about maybe a good hunting place. Maybe they are talking about water holes. Maybe certain clans moved through there. The clan markers are there. They are going in a certain direction. They are going to come back through the same way again and you are going to find the same thing but in the opposite direction. Sometimes you are going to find several clans going through. Sometimes you are going to find maybe a symbol that is referring to what most people call kachinas. We all know that the Hopis have kachinas. We all know that there are a lot of kachinas. But going so many hundreds of years into old original stories or tales that they talk about, that have been passed on, you are going to find that there are only four or three. These are the main ones. Within this immediate area, a radius of fifty miles, there are four kachinas on a wall. People that were looking for spiritual messages went to those places and they would sit there and these things would come to life. This is how we look at it. So we don't talk about it too much and when we bring it out, we bring it out with the idea that when you see those, treat them with respect. That is the reason why we talk about it or we want to bring it out. I find it quite interesting because you can go on with it. Like for instance, the other day I never did really think about this or give it a thought. They were talking about burials, burials in Iowa. There are some graves that have been disturbed. And they have found in certain graves there are bodies that do not have a head, or an arm, or feet, just a body. The reason for that is that these people had gotten into an area that was forbidden. And that is how they buried them when they died. They buried them that way. So when you go out into these areas and you find the rock art maybe it is telling us that certain areas are forbidden. Because you are going to find certain ones that are holding up a head. Something there is sacred. Maybe you go to another place and that is going to be a little different. Maybe it is going to tell you that these are separation places, separation from this world into another world. Like for instance, south of Ouray, Utah, there is a panel there. I myself think that it may be part of what they call the Water Clan of the old days. When I put my arm across the midsection of that, there is a reflection. The top part is shown on the bottom. Then I'll tell another person to do the same and let me go watch it from over there. And I see that this reflection is water and whoever did that is part of that.

So you have an interesting subject to study. Rock art is interesting to me. On the reservation at the present time we have about three thousand Uintaats members. The southern part of the reservation is up here, about twenty miles from here. That is the southern tip of the Uintaats reservation. Most of the southern area is a rangeland so we don't come to the bottoms too much.

Originally the Utes were covering the entire state of no I will take that back ... half of Colorado, the western half of Colorado; the eastern half of Utah; part of Wyoming; a small area of New Mexico; and that is about it. The Utes are part of what they call the Uto-

Aztec speaking group. And you can find traces of that same language group in Guatemala, El Salvador, Old Mexico, then as we move north up into the southern part of California. Death Valley would seem to have been the place where the migration started with the Shoshonean branch of that one group. Breaking into small tribes they touched on what is now California, all of Nevada, Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, the entire state of Utah. These were the Great Basin people. You can break them into smaller groups like tribes. We have the Bannocks from Idaho, the Northern Paiute from Oregon, the Western Shoshonis from Nevada, the Eastern Shoshonis from Wyoming, the small bands which make up the Ute tribe from Colorado and part of Utah and also the Comanches as part of one family. So they refer to us as the Numic speaking people. The Comanches broke off. They went east down into the plains of Texas and Old Mexico. They are the same as the Shoshoni. They speak the same language. I can understand Comanche more clearly than I can understand Shoshoni. Comanches were between the Utes, the Yampareke, the Yampareke Utes from the northwestern part of Colorado and the Shoshonis. I break my band into small groups or my families, the tribal families. We have the Yupaska and we have the Unkaparanoochi and we have the Uintanoochi, Pagoanoochi. But it is in the spelling that they changed. So they refer to us as White River, Uncompahgres and Uinta. Uinta is really pronounced Yoovte. So those are the ones on the reservation. And we have other reservations, or two others that are located on Colorado. Those are the Moache and the Wiminuche coming from the same groups yet they were separate.

The Sun Dance person, a person that is involved in spiritual work in Sun Dance ceremonies, is after a certain type of power spiritual power that he could use in doctoring others. He went on a vision quest. There are certain areas that we consider to be a kind of tabernacle... not a tabernacle but it is an alter itself, a pictograph or an alter. That is where they do their spiritual work. A vision quest may be spending six, seven days in a small hut. You cover that with canvas and you stay there. You do not come out. And that is how they acquire their spiritual relationships, you might say, with this world and the world beyond. There is going to be nobody around. You are going to be all by yourself up in the mountains on the highest point. There will be no food. There will be no water. That is how you are going to spend your seven, eight days. So the relationship that you have with rock art is somewhat on the spiritual side. We are using that and it is part of our way. We consider them as our older brothers. The Utes call the Fremont, the earlier period people, as the older brothers because the migration started from the south, moving north. We followed after so many hundred years. One of our stories, mythology stories, about how the animals talked at one time, talks about how the coyote started from the south. He had a little bag and into the little bag he broke little pieces of stick. He put them all in there and he moved north. Somehow the bag began to wear and created a big hole and these little sticks fell as they went off. A man was carrying the bag. As they were going north these little things that fell out became tribes. Until they came to this area, up in the northern area, and there were only two or three sticks in the there and these would be the Utes. That is where we came from. Actually the coyote is the one who brought us here. In the stories of our brothers to the south, the Pueblo Indians, the Hopi, we have these stories about the kokopelli. There are two types of kokopelli. One type you find here. He was the symbol of reproduction. So as he went along he did the same thing. There is a similarity in the story. The way they tell

the story, they are associated with that flute player. The way we tell the story, we are associated with the coyote yet it is the same thing. So these stories bring us together. The whole thing is back into the bag again. I guess we look at Indians as being Indians. We do not divide them up into tribes or the Anasazi or Fremont. There is no division. They were Indians. I am related to this person that is in the museum, If it is a Fremont remains, Anasazi remains, that is one of our relations. We do not look at things as being separate or separated. Customs change, cultures change but we are the same. So when we talk about our past we say "Our brothers were here". In the future it may change. Maybe this is the end of the line. We do not know. Today it is getting to the point where it is sad to think about it one way, yet on the other hand it is all right. We are losing our traditional ways. We are losing our language. That is what is happening. It is not coming from the outside. It is coming from the inside. We do not have the family structure like it was say when I was a kid, when I was a boy. It is not the same. The world was my playground. I had no television to watch on Saturday mornings. There was no radio. So I used nature. That was my playground in those days. But today it is different. So that is where the changes come in onto the reservations.

I think one thing too. In closing I would like to bring out another point. If it was at all possible for me to go back to how these people lived, I think the first thing I would want to learn is the language. If it is a Fremont group or a group from here in our basin, if I learned the language, the rest would be easy for me. I think that I would have it. That is the way I look at it. Because the language itself would tell me. Like for instance, in my language when I say certain things, it fits. I can see beyond that. We all believe up to a certain point that there is a God. There is no color. There is no figure. There it is. Just that it is there. Some say that it is different than this one. And how can it be different when he can't see it? Indian people believe that the one that made this world is inside of each one of you. The way the I open myself to him is only from one door. There is one door knob. It opens from the inside, not the outside. That is how I reach out. So that being the case, if I can get into the spiritual world that is out here, then I would know a lot of things because I opened it myself. There is no one else other than myself that is going to do that. So I guess what I am saying is this, That a group such as yours here is a beginning. Or maybe some of you have advanced to the point where you begin to understand that there is a difference between these things that we are talking about. We are all different, yet it is all the same.

I have been working with some with some archaeologists in Colorado, both in the upper and the lower central part, in hopes that maybe several year down the road I can take a group of Indian kids there and visit these sites. And as I am going through the sites I will explain to them what actually happened. I think if you go to the area and stand there you can see it better. You can understand it better. Like if you see the rock art on the wall it is not like what we see on the screen. When you are there you see everything. The screen is only this way but your life is this way too. So we can experience that way and hopefully to go back to teach the Indian kids that this is what we had before. So that is one of my I guess, pet projects type of a thing. Hoping that we have got to go back again. Pictographs are interesting in a way that, each one that sat there had to be different from the next one that was there. You go to a mall, a shopping mall. You can sit in the center as people are moving back and forth. They all look the same. They are all there for one purpose, to buy

something. They are going so fast that they do not notice each other. There are all types. You do not know how they think. You do not know what is going on. They look at you and away they go. So if you could stop one here and one here and start talking to them, you are going to find out that there is a lot of difference in those two. So whoever did these works, they had to be different too, between these two and so that is the way I look at it.

I want to say thanks again, but before I close I would like to play a tune. And I believe also that the people that lived many years ago used the flute. So we still have that with us today. So I would like to play a tune if you don't mind. Just another few minutes.

..... flute song