THE WORLDS OF P'OTSUNU

The Life of Geronima Cruz Montoya

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From the earth, the animals, plants, and water emerged. So to the Indian people, it is Mother Earth. The Earth is our Mother. She is the greatest provider, so we treat her with love, respect, and much reverence.
--P'otsunu

Preface

At seventy-five, Geronima (Jerry) Cruz Montoya is a unique model for American Indian and Anglo women alike. She is a community leader in her own village of San Juan, in the Pueblo communities, and in the larger Southwestern multicultural community. She is an acclaimed artist and teacher whose vision and talent have contributed to the development of

and demand for Pueblo painting. She singlehandedly started one of the first artists' cooperatives in the Pueblos; it has flourished and served as a model for other villages and communities. She began an Adult Education program for the northern villages and the annual Eight Northern Pueblos Arts and Crafts Fair, which now draws thousands of national and international collectors. In addition to her responsibilities as the mother of three, now-adult sons and her full-time work as an art teacher, she was one of the first Pueblo Indians to pursue higher education, earning a Bachelor's degree. And yet she has maintained unbroken ties with the demanding religious and ceremonial life of her own and her husband's villages.

Such a life needs to be chronicled; we felt drawn to write about her life, and Jerry gave us permission. We, in turn, gave Jerry unconditional editorial rights. It was her story, to be told as she saw it. The lens through which we write is, therefore, atypical of many biographies. We report primarily what Jerry and her family have told us or given us, so that the result is perhaps more like an oral history than a formal biography -- less analytic and interpretive than descriptive in style and perspective. Wherever possible, we have included Jerry's recollections in her own words, and as far as we have understood them, Jerry's preferences in choice and presentation of content have been followed. Natural reticence, emotional reserve, and understatement of personal difficulties or achievements in the face of larger, more invisible forces characterize, to us, Pueblo conversation with Anglos. As authors, therefore, we have attempted to serve as chroniclers rather than interpretive biographers.

Corn In the House

"Where there is braided corn hanging in the home, you are never in need of food; there is life in the house."

Pueblo Saying

The Santa Fe air is still cool this August morning at six o'clock as more than 450 Indian craftspeople from Colorado, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico arrive to set up their displays on the Plaza. They are here for Indian Market, an annual event since 1922 and sponsored since 1961 by the Southwestern Association on Indian Affairs.

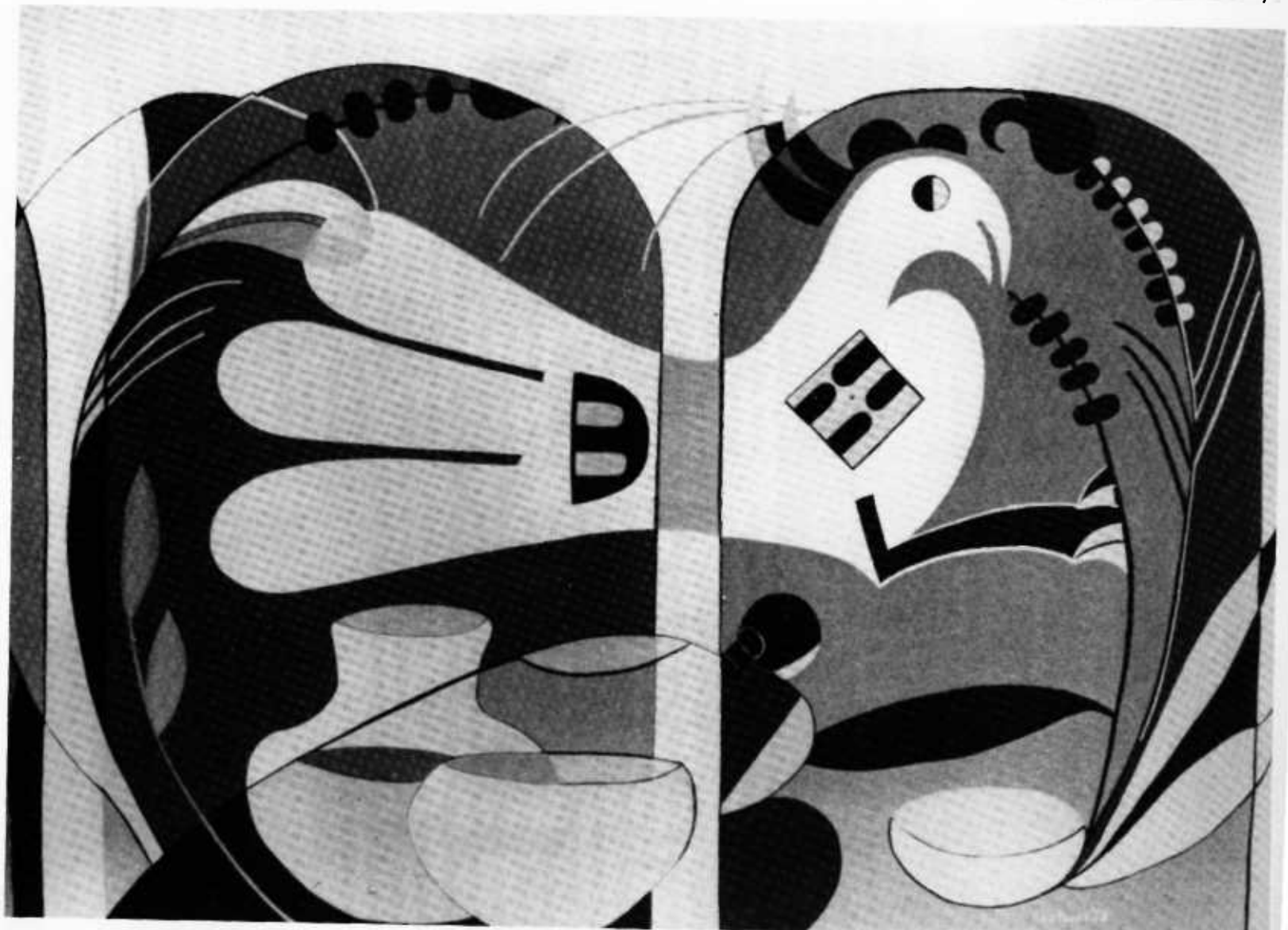
At the Plaza's north end stands the Palace of the Governors, on whose long porch the painters are gathering. Toward the center of the porch walks Geronoma Montoya, a small, straight woman wearing traditional San Juan village dress: navy cotton with high pleated collar and long cuffed sleeves, bound at the waist with a handwoven red sash. Her smooth, deep-olive skin and observant brown eyes are framed by bright white hair drawn carefully into a large bun. She carries a large portfolio. Juan Montoya walks quietly beside his wife, bringing the heavier display equipment.

Jerry's serious face opens into a warm smile as she looks up to see people waiting for her: collectors from New York and California, old friends and long-time admirers of her work, others merely curious about the crowd itself. As she and Juan begin to set up the booth, they are joined by their three sons, two of whom will also display their watercolors.

Geronima's village, San Juan Pueblo -- the largest Tewa-speaking village in the green and winding Rio Grande valley of northern New Mexico -- lies thirty-five miles north of Santa Fe, capital of the State. When the Conquistadores, under the leadership of Juan Onate, arrived here in 1598, the Pueblo had already been settled for at least two centuries. Onate declared Ok'e Oweenge, as San Juan was known among its native inhabitants, as the first capital of the territory.

On an afternoon in 1915, neither history nor the raging war in Europe had much significance for the people of this peaceful village surrounded by its sacred mountains. Geronima's father, Pablo Cruz, out tending his fields that clear afternoon, could see all four of the mountains sacred to his people: to the

Geronima Cruz Montoya



north, Conjilon Peak in Colorado; to the east, Truchas Peak in the Sangre de Cristo spur of the Rockies; to the south, Sandia Crest; and to the west, Chicoma (Tsikumu) Mountain. Preparing to harvest his corn and chile, Pablo was not at home when his fourth daughter was born in the old two-room house on the west side of the main plaza.

Two midwives helped Crucita with the birth of her fifth child. Her other daughters - Adelaide, now twelve, and Piedad, nine -- were away from the house; two children had died in infancy. Later, two more sisters, Ramoncita and Reycita would join the family.

At dawn, four days after the birth, Crucita and the two midwives took the infant out to greet the sun, which rose quickly above the 12,000-foot Truchas Mountains. Each of the midwives gave the young girl a name in Tewa, the language of the San Juan people. One called her Phoyeh Povi, "Autumn Flower," and the other called her P'otsunu, "White Shell." She was baptized some days later, on October 3, in the St. John the Baptist Church in the pueblo, following a tradition brought to the Pueblo by the Spanish Franciscans. She was there given the additional Spanish name suggested by her godparents, "Maria Geronima."

P'otsunu and her sisters spent most of their time playing outside the tiny two-room adobe home or helping "Yiya," their mother, with household tasks. In a large Pueblo family, even small children always had chores to do -- roasting chile, baking bread, gathering wood, getting water from the spring, washing the dishes with the water heated on the wood stove. Behind the family home were two hornos: the smaller adobe oven was used for roasting chile and the larger, for baking bread. Learning to bake bread was important, and Jerry, as she would later be called at the Indian School, learned well.

Every morning before breakfast, the sisters went south to the spring, past the priest's house and down by the willows. Fifty years later, Jerry would paint the spring at the Smithsonian painting demonstration; but then, when she was tiny, Adelaide, the oldest, used to carry her on her back in a pouch made with her shawl. "The older people used to carry water from the stream in ollas," Jerry comments. "But by the time we were of age, we had pumps."

For breakfast, the family usually ate mush of sa'kewe, water and corn meal made from the special blue corn grown by the Pueblo Indians. "We still eat it for breakfast," adds Jerry. "But we never drank milk. It doesn't agree with any of us. The doctor told me that we Indian people just can't digest lactose."

Pablo Cruz was a magnificent farmer. Neighbors from San Juan and nearby villages tried to get seeds from Pablo's chile for their own land. Pablo farmed on nine fields near Alcalde and used, in addition, three pastures. As children, all five sisters rose early to help with the farming. At three in the afternoon they stopped in the fields and sat on the back of the wagon or under a tree to eat lunch.

> *We had to get up at dawn to help with planting corn and chile or cutting wheat and hauling alfalfa. I was close to my dad. I guess because I was always working with him, or bringing him his lunch and eating with him.*
>
> *We took the noon meals out to Father and maybe midmorning and afternoon we took out a refreshment. We'd stay until he ate, and when he was through we'd leave. We usually took him stew and hot tortillas.*
>
> *We hardly saw him in summer. If we went out with him to the fields we'd come in for lunch, but if we were going to Alcalde, threemiles north of San Juan, we'd take lunch. We would eat lunch sitting on the back of the wagon. That field is mine now but hasn't been planted since Father died.*
>
> *We had to cut wheat with a sickle. There was so much to cut. People really helped, though, and didn't expect pay. When others helped we had to go home and cook for them!"*

When Pablo brought loads of chile and corn around the trade circuit of small villages north of San Juan, Jerry would go with him.

> *We used to travel together in the wagon to sell or trade. We'd have breakfast on the other side of Black Mesa near the Ojo Caliente River and get to Ojo Caliente by noon. We'd have corn and sacks of chili or apples, plums, and pottery. We sold a bucket of chili for 25 cents. By evening we'd get to La Madera and stay overnight. We always stayed with a*

Spanish family we knew. We slept in their home. And they would cook the most delicious hot tortillas, boiled milk with atole, and chili...They were the kindest people. They shared their food, home and everything!

When the Cruz family celebrated Christmas, their Spanish hosts and friends from these northern villages would come down to San Juan to attend Mass and see the Matachina dances. Like many Pueblo families, the Cruz household both sustained their traditional religion and were devout Christians. The sisters sang in the church choir and Pablo Cruz was sacristan at the Pueblo church for over twenty-seven years.

He served Mass all those years, and every day at six in the morning, and at noon. Then at six in the evening, he rang the bell for the Angelus. He did that for over twenty-seven years until he became blind and couldn't serve anymore. When he was out in the fields we would ring the bell for him.

My parents spoke Tewa of course. Mother understood English but didn't speak it. She went to St. Catherine's Indian boarding school in Santa Fe for a short time. Father spoke English and Spanish and could read and write. He had a very nice handwriting. He attended school in a small house behind the church. His prayerbooks are in Spanish and Latin, which he read daily. He knew all of the Church Latin, and he taught some of the younger men the Latin so they could serve Mass.

Pablo, like Crucita, was active in Indian religious activities and danced in the ceremonials. His uncle, Romaldo Cruz, was a cacique, one of two leaders of the indigenous religious groups. He owned and lived with Pablo's family in the small house on the plaza.

If Pablo was famous for his farming, Crucita was equally famous for her pottery, which she crafted in the traditional coil method. The slip, made from red clay, gave the distinctive San Juan red glaze. To fire her pots, Yiya and her two teenage daughters, Adelaide and Piedad, would carefully bundle the dried pottery in baskets, wrap them, and then carry them down behind the summer house. There they would build a fire of dry cow dung and bake the pottery, either red or black, depending on how they covered the pots with the dung.

Jerry would sometimes be allowed to help Crucita polish a pot to its high, smooth glaze, using her mother's precious polishing stone, a family legacy. When the pots were fired and properly polished, Jerry took her tiny sister, Ramoncita, to sell the pots by the side of the Taos road where it turns off to the village.

Original prices are still on some of the elegant pots which remain in the summer house. While prices were low, quality was high, as the Albuquerque Journal of October 19, 1941, reported: San Juan Pueblo Woman Wins $50 in Nationwide Pottery Exposition. Jerry remembers her mother receiving many other "firsts and seconds" at the Gallup Intertribal Ceremonial and at the Santa Fe Fiesta exhibit. For a time, Crucita had a contract with a pottery shop in Santa Fe. She continued to make pottery almost until her death in 1969.

The daughters' rigorous and loving education in the ways of the Pueblo world was paralleled by their equally rigorous but harsher education at the San Juan Day School, set up by the Federal Government. The one-room school covered the first four grades, and each of the five Cruz sisters attended, Jerry beginning at age seven.

The teachers were all good -- well, not all. We had one teacher who pounded my head with a ring to get me to learn math. And one day the whole class ran away from another cruel teacher -- all the teachers were Anglo then -- and we hid in the ditch for a day!

A Day In the Wagon

To travel from San Juan to Santa Fe and the Indian School meant a day's wagon journey. Jerry, like all the other children, was a boarding student; trips home were rare. She arrived at the school when she was eleven and remained there as a student for eight years.

Three years before her arrival in 1927, the U.S. Government had passed legislation recognizing Indians as U.S. citizens. Another twenty years would pass, however, before Jerry and her people and the other Indian tribes in New Mexico would be recognized as legal citizens of

Geronima Cruz Montoya

the State. The dominant social attitude that this failure reflected would color the treatment Jerry and other students received.

Neither of her older sisters was there to help Jerry make the transition from Pueblo to institutional world. Adelaide and Piedad had already finished eighth grade there -- the extent of education offered during their enrollment -- and had returned home, where they were needed to help with the chores.

> *I was in the fifth grade. I didn't know what I was doing. But I sure was homesick and I had hay fever so bad! Tears were running and I was sitting, I think, up in the front seat and the teacher seeing me, came over to comfort me. She put her arms around me and my home sickness and hay fever just seem to have disappeared.*

The most central place for New Mexico Indian children to get an education, the Santa Fe Indian School enrolled predominantly Pueblo children. Indian children were not yet permitted in the State's public schools. So if they were to have an education beyond the pueblo day schools, boarding school was the only choice.

The history of Indian education in the United States is a sorry one. By the 1880's,most Indian tribes had been forcibly relocated or herded into barren reservation areas. These tribes, as well as those of New Mexico, had been promised government schools. Promises were not kept until much later. The earliest schools were started by Christian denominations; reservations were parceled out by the government to various denominations.

Finally, a few government boarding schools were established, carefully located far from the children's homes so they could return only occasionally. The plan was to separate children from parents and native cultures so that they could become quickly assimilated into the dominant Anglo culture.

Stringent methods were often used to force the children to become "good" Anglos rather than "good" Americans or "good" Native Americans. Students were forbidden to speak their own languages; they were not permitted to wear any of their traditional clothing; and they were severely punished for any ceremonial observance. The objective was to force these homesick and lonely children to conform to a distant government's dream of what an average American school child should be and believe. For the rest of their lives, many of the Indian boarding school children retained, or fought, the feelings of shame at being Indian which had been forced upon them.

Jerry is reticent about her own feelings in connection with the stringent rules. She is more likely to talk about how boarding school opened new worlds for her.

> *Being there the first time was kind of strange. There were quite a lot of students from San Juan who were there, you know. The first time they sent us away to school, they brought us by bus. Other times, my parents would come visit us in the wagon -- at Christmas or when school was out, they came to take us home in the wagon. When we first came we had to stay the year 'round.*
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> *We ran away from school once and got as far as St. Catherine's Indian School. We went through Rosario cemetery which is next to the school. The nuns at the school took us in, but they immediately called our school and we were soon picked up and returned to the school. The next day we were punished. We had to scrub the administration building, inside as well as the outside. They punished us for two days.*
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> *It was like a military school. We slept in dormitories out on a long, glassed-in porch with forty to fifty girls. We were divided by "companies." "A" company would occupy a certain dorm and "B" company would occupy another dorm. We didn't have individual rooms. Our beds were just close together. In winter there was no heat and it was terribly cold. When it got cold we'd double up to keep warm, and then when we heard the officers coming we'd rush back into our beds until after they checked. If we got caught, we'd get punished -- punishment was kneeling in the hallway. Not saying prayers, just kneeling.*
>
> *We had to get up at five or so. They'd play reveille on the bugle. We dressed in uniform. Then we'd march over to the main office to salute the flag after roll had been called, and then we*

would march on the lawn. We had older students for officers. It seemed strange to us. We marched to everything -- to program, to the dining room, to the church!

I spoke some English, but not much. I learned as I went. They didn't allow us to speak Tewa. Our gathering place was the locker room, where we would talk Tewa and sometimes we would dance.

We used to bring trunks, those footlocker trunks, and they'd be filled more with food than they were with clothes. Chili and bread, boiled eggs -- things we couldn't get. And the trunk room would just smell like melons because everybody had them. The dining room meals were family-style serving. We had lots of turnips and parsnips -- to this day I still hate them! When we got to the dining room, the girls were all on one side and the boys were all on the other side -- on the dorm sides. We didn't mix beyond the dining room. By the time we got to high school we were allowed to stay out and mix and eat together.

We had uniforms -- skirts, high laced and tight black shoes, black stockings, red sweaters. We were all issued a uniform. We didn't have a different one for winter. We were tough, I guess, because all we had were sweaters. The boys wore uniforms, too.

When we were in the sixth or seventh grade, we were sent to the sewing room and we had to mend socks and socks and socks, laundry baskets full. You took one look at those baskets and wanted to die! This helped pay for our board and room, I guess.

In later years, we worked half-day and went to school half-day. They changed us around. "A" Company would go to school in the morning; "B" Company would go to school in the afternoon. I worked at the U.S. Indian Hospital near the gym and helped the nurse treat emergencies. Oh, she was a tough nurse. We spilled iodine one time and she made us clean it all up with ether. Boy, that place smelled! We were really careful after that. I also worked in the laundry, the sewing room, and the kitchen, but I enjoyed the hospital most. I appreciated it because I learned practical things. I almost went into nursing. I even sent for a nursing school catalogue. But along came arts and crafts and that was that.

Fortunately for Jerry, she encountered some extraordinary teachers during those years, teachers who believed in their students more than they did in Government policy. Mabel Morrow, a later authority on traditional weaving, worked to revive interest in traditional clothes design and embroidery. Dorothy Dunn, a later authority on Indian art, encouraged students to use motifs from their daily and ceremonial lives at home, including petroglyph, embroidery and pottery designs. Both teachers showed remarkable courage in defying the current Anglo regimen so that the talents and traditions of the young Indians could be nurtured.

Under Mabel Morrow I studied weaving and embroidery. I also spun my own cotton and wove a white manta in the Hopi style. The embroidery was on handwoven cloth and monk's cloth. Dying wools for weaving and embroidery with natural dyes was another subject I took. I also learned carding, spinning, and washing wool; beadwork; basketry; Indian games, songs, and dances for recreation and camp work. We learned how to select clay and sand, how to make pottery and fire it. I also served as an apprentice teacher with Miss Morrow. I went to San Juan, Nambe, Tesuque, and Santa Clara Pueblos and taught crafts there.

And under Dorothy Dunn, then Director of Fine and Applied Arts, I studied Indian painting in the true, tribal traditions. The media I used were watercolors, tempera, oils, and native earth colors. I also painted two murals. Dorothy purchased the one painted in earth colors.

In my senior year, the girls' advisor said I was in too many activities and wanted me to drop some of them and she even wrote to my parents and told them about it. I was active in P.E., archery and tennis, was a Girl Scout, president of the Happy Home Club, and helped with the senior year book. I was in the Glee Club, Dramatic Club, and Indian Club. She told them that I might have a nervous breakdown.

The first major recognition of Jerry's expert social skills, adaptability, and graceful self-reliance came in 1934, just as she was entering her senior year.

> *We used to have one month in the "practice cottage," where we took turns cooking and doing household chores. There were four of us at a time in the cottage. I'd cook one week, then I'd clean the house the next week. They had a surprise birthday party for me at the practice cottage, and that's when I was told I was to go to Georgia. I was so surprised and excited!*

She had been chosen to travel to the American Indian Exposition, Southeastern Fair, at Atlanta, Georgia; she was one of a small group of Indians from many different tribes invited at the special request of the U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, John Collier. Jerry's group included Maria and Julian Martinez, the already well-known potter and painter from nearby San Ildefonso Pueblo. The Indian artists travelled for nearly four weeks through sixteen states and the District of Columbia, in a cavalcade made up of three motor cars, a school bus, and a pickup truck.

At eighteen, Jerry graduated with honors from the Indian School, was valedictorian of the class of 1935, and received the Dendahl Award as outstanding student. She was the first in her family to become a high school graduate.

True Tribal Traditions

Indian art before World War II was somewhat like the town of Santa Fe itself: not easily accessible, remote from direct European influence, its source of life and inspiration derived from the high mountain desert. The small Anglo community contained many artists whose works would later be invaluable; in much the same way, the Indian School community included many young student painters whose work would later command the respect of collectors.

Into this ripening world, Jerry Cruz moved, as both a teacher and a practicing artist. Graduation from the Indian School transformed her from student to teacher, but she continued what has proved to be a lifelong practice of learning. That summer after graduation, Jerry took additional courses in health at the School, and in the fall began her teaching career, which was to last for thirty-eight years. Dorothy Dunn, who had long before recognized Jerry's leadership and artistic potential, placed her in charge of the earlier grades in the Studio -- the center of the fine and applied arts founded by Dunn when she first came to the School.

Jerry's excitement at this new opportunity was matched by her joy at her steadily deepening relationship with a young man from Sandia Pueblo, Juan Montoya, whom she would later marry. Now, however, in 1935, her teaching and studying duties consumed most of her time.

> *I taught Indian painting to beginners -- color, figure drawing, brush work, and charcoal. I received a salary of $840 a year under Miss Dunn's supervision. In 1935 and '36, I took two extension courses in Indian art from the University of New Mexico, given by Kenneth Chapman at the Laboratory of Anthropology.*

The Laboratory of Anthropology, founded by scholar Kenneth Chapman and other Santa Feans, and now part of the Museum of New Mexico, was, in the 1930's, a unique private teaching and research organization dedicated to study of Southwest Indian cultures and preservation of their art.

> *In 1937, Dorothy Dunn resigned and I was promoted to head of the Art Department and my salary was raised to $1200. My duties were the actual teaching of Indian art to students in grades seven through twelve.*
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> *Many a time students came to me for advice regarding their classes, studies, problems, further education, and markets for the art work. We used to discuss all angles of a particular problem and I would tell them what I would do and leave the final decision up to them. I never told them what to do. Knowing their parents, brothers and sisters, and their background, I felt I could talk freely to them and to the point.*
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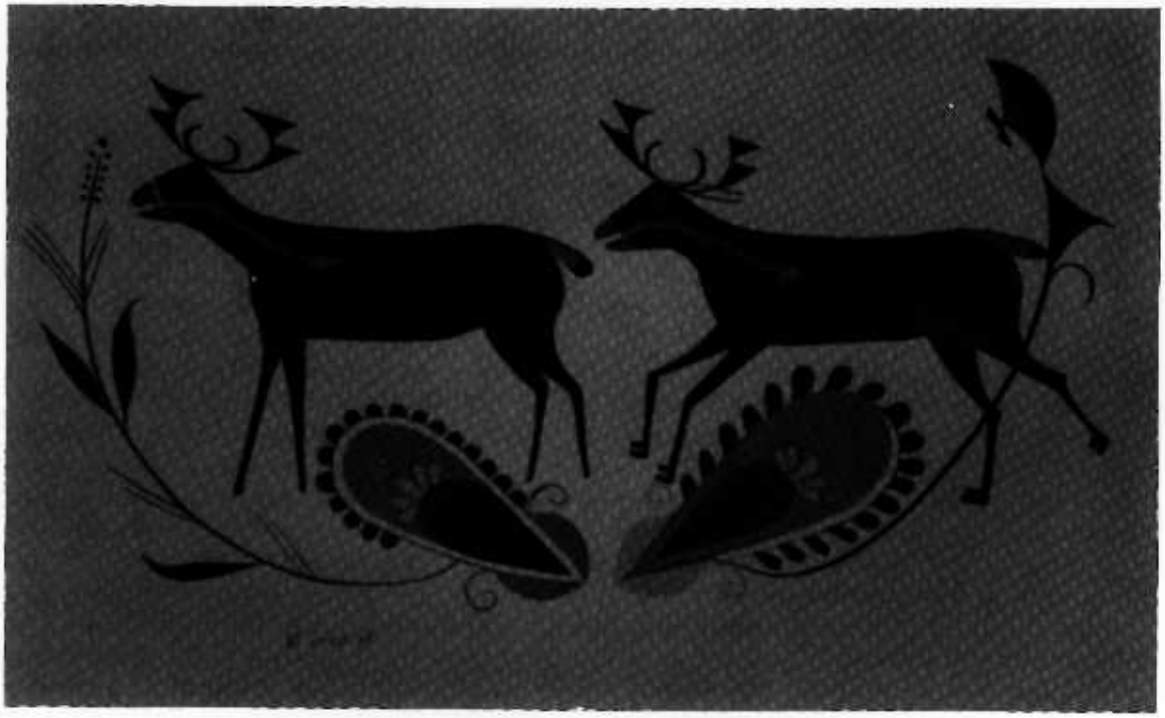
> *In October of that year, I was given my first formal invitation to lecture. I addressed the Art Section of the New Mexico*

Geronima Cruz Montoya



Educational Association. In addition to this regular art work, I selected paintings for exhibits. I had requests from leading art centers constantly and just couldn't meet the demand.

The following summer, when Jerry was only twenty-two years old, she took a school group to California to participate in the 1939 San Francisco World's Fair and Exposition, where a special Indian exhibit displayed the work of the Santa Fe Indian School.

Today, the list of Jerry's students reads like a "Who's Who" of twentieth century Indian painting: Quincy Tahoma, Narcisco Abeyta, Harrison Begay, Eva Mirabel, Joe H. Herrera, Ben Quintana, Wilson Dewey, and Theodore Suina, Popovi Da, Henry Gobin, Beatian Yazz, Pop Challee. The predominance of men in this list is probably due to the family and homemaking demands on women at that time. Also, there was a stronger cultural precedent for women to express their art in traditional milieux such as pottery, where materials were all available within the Pueblo.

By 1939, Jerry's experiences both as artist and as teacher were crystallizing into a philosophy of art.

As art teacher, I taught American Indian painting because I believe that Indian art has a distinct and an important place in the art world. I encouraged and developed true tribal traditions in the painting classes. Work was developed from memory and from research and authentic records. As students progressed, each developed his or her own style and went at his or her own speed, and I gave individual instruction.

Jerry was also building a fine reputation as a talented and skilled studio director, as Alfred Morang a respected Southwestern painter, was to note in a 1940 issue of El Palacio, a publication of the Museum of New Mexico:

Looking at the exhibition by students of the Indian school now on view at the Santa Fe Art Museum, we are constantly reminded of those experiments which have removed so much that was unimportant in contemporary painting...The sense of line is remarkably developed. In some of these pictures by Indian students, the matter of balance is breath-taking.

Jeronima [sic] Cruz Montoya, the teacher, has a rare grasp of the problems involved. She does not force the work into any preconceived pattern. She obviously allows the student to project his own ideas upon paper, and simply guides him into a more rounded development of his initial creative impulse...All in all, this is an exhibition well worth the most careful study. It should demonstrate what emotion guided into art can accomplish when it is not limited by academic standards.

Morang's critique is particularly noteworthy; he was himself a respected Southwestern painter.

Jerry's descriptions of her methods are more pragmatic and concrete:

In the art studio we worked in a democratic way. Students were free to get up when they were tired, to see what the other students were doing. Very often the older students helped the younger students. They were free to use any type of paper they chose.

Each student received individual instruction as my job was to bring out their talent and have them draw and paint in their individual way and style while still keeping it Indian. Each one did his own tribal life.

These children were trying to put their heritage down in a form which could not be distorted or misconstrued by outsiders. They were doing it for their own people as well as for others.

I had to prepare all the materials for my classes because there were no textbooks on Indian art. I had to do a lot of research work on various Indian tribes, Bureau of Ethnology reports, museum publications, photographs, and other material on home life, costumes and ceremonials, in order to be of help to students like Henry Gobin. At the same time, I gave the students proper guidance to keep originality in their work.

While many students like Gobin knew little about their own tribes, other students brought to

the studio an already developed understanding of and sensitivity toward their own cultural heritage. Certainly one of the most talented of these was Ben Quintana, from Cochiti Pueblo. His casein watercolor, along with work by ten other students, was entered by Jerry in the nationwide 1940 "American Magazine" Youth Forum Contest, sponsored by Crowell-Collier Publishers. Of 52,000 entries, Ben's painting, "What My Community Contributes to the Nation," won first prize. All of her students won awards from no less a jury than Norman Rockwell, Dr. Everett V. Meeks, the Dean of the Yale University School of Fine Arts, and Albert Lefcourte, Art Director of American Magazine. Ben's award was $1,000 and all-expense-paid trip to New York. As his teacher, Jerry also won the trip, along with $100.

Jerry now had a well-developed taste for travel, which she shared with students. One of the longest group trips was to St. Louis to take part in the National Folk Festival. But she also led field trips to art museums, the Laboratory of Anthropology, and the New Mexico Museum Hall of Ethnology to do research work.

Jerry now began incorporating into her courses instruction in sales and marketing methods.

> *When a picture was finished, I helped the student figure out the cost of materials that had gone into that particular painting and after everything had been figured out I priced the picture. When we had a group of paintings finished and priced, we had our own exhibit in the studio where we kept them for a while. Afterward, we sent them to the arts and crafts sales room. These exhibitions gave the students a chance to see what others had done and make comparisons and criticism and ask questions. I was in constant contact with people outside of our Indian Service. We had foreign visitors to the studio all the time, and I had to show what we did and how it was done. We mingled with artists, anthropologists, owners of art shops, and many, many people interested in Indian art.*

While she was teaching, Jerry also continued her own studies. During the summer of 1945 and again in the summer of 1948, she traveled to Claremont, California, to study with Alfredo Ramos Martinez, the renowned Mexican muralist and painter, and with Jean Ames of Claremont College, whose sense of design proved influential in Jerry's later paintings. Finally, in 1958, Jerry was awarded her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Albuquerque. Her major was Art; her minor, Education.

Pretty Rare Objects

For Jerry, priorities were clear: family, teaching, and her education. This left little time for her own art -- which she had always done for enjoyment rather than for recognition. What painting she did find time to do, however, was always highly acclaimed and promptly purchased.

Jerry's preferred media were -- and still are -- gouache, tempera, and occasionally pastel. She uses traditional water-and-brush techniques as well as drybrush, block print, and brayer. Her subjects are drawn from prehistoric Pueblo art, daily Pueblo life and ceremonial themes. She also uses Puebio symbols such as turkey, deer, lightning and rain. Her interpretations of these elements continue to be startlingly varied and differ significantly from work of her contemporaries. Her styles range from primitive representational to abstract geometric. Her use of color is equally eclectic: earth tones, vibrant primaries, and subtle monotonal contrasts.

Without exception, her paintings meditatively -- and sometimes humorously -- invoke an appreciation of timelessness, the individual's relationship to the environment, and the cycles of daily cultural and religious life. Her work is as sought after today as it was when she sold her first painting.

The earliest painting Jerry can remember selling was a casein watercolor, "A Woman at the Spring." it went for $3 to Helen Blumenschein, daughter of the famous Taos painter Ernest Blumenschein and herself an artist.

Soon Jerry's work began to be seen in exhibition, first in the Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of New Mexico, in Santa Fe; then at the Golden Gate International Exposition, San Francisco World's Fair; and in the annual Inter-Tribal Ceremonial in Gallup, New Mexico. Her growing reputation reached sufficient status by

1946 that the School of American Research invited her to be included in a list of Indian artists for the Museum's Who's Who in NewMexico Art.

O. B. Jacobson, then director of the University of Oklahoma Department of Art, also wrote to Jerry that year, with a request for her biography on grounds that he needed it to accompany her work in his collection. Her paintings, he said, "seem to be pretty rare objects." Jacobson did not mention that his plan was to issue a private edition of Indian paintings. In 1950, C. Szwedzicki, the leading art publisher of France, announced a "forthcoming portfolio" called Indian Painters of America: Watercolor Paintings in Color with Introduction and Notes by Oscar Brousse Jacobson and Jeanne D'Ucel. Sale was to take place by private subscription, in a limited edition of 750 copies, for $42 a volume. The price of both volumes was $76. Today, the portfolio is a much-treasured item for collectors. None of the artists whose works were included received any royalties.

Jacobson's accompanying biographical note about Jerry is remarkable for its condescension and inaccuracy:

> *Painting No. 48, A Matachina Dance, Christmas, by Geronima Cruz-Montoya.*
>
> *...The little lady has had an interesting career and has been a fine influence in the renaissance of Indian art in the southwest...Teaching is an exacting and exhausting profession. It leaves little time for creative work. Most of Geronima's time has been devoted to her talented pupils. Her production is therefore rather small and her works are rare. We had to search a long time to secure a suitable example for our University art collection and Geronima, being an Indian, gave us no help whatsoever, in locating or showing any of her work...*

Jacobson never offered to Jerry a courtesy copy of this premium publication. In fact, like most of the artists included, she did not know of its existence until thirty years later. It was this sort of cavalier treatment which made many Indian artists wary of Anglo interest in their work.

Shrugging off these and similar experiences, Jerry continued her full time teaching of junior and senior art students, painting when she could find time. Eventually the prizes began to come -- first in New mexico at the 1954 Inter-Tribal Ceremonial at Gallup, where her mother had earlier received a blue ribbon.

Jerry's reputation as an artist gradually began to spread throughout the country. In December, 1954, the DeYoung Museum in San Francisco exhibited a painting by Jerry, "San Juan Pueblo," purchased by a prominent San Francisco family for presentation to the Museum. By now, Jerry had already exhibited in the Brooklyn Museum, in Detroit, and in Chicago, as well as in the West. In 1955 she was awarded the purchase prize by the Indian Defense Association of Central and Northern California, San Francisco, for her tempera painting, "Cutting Wheat." This painting, too, was donated to the DeYoung. For the award and its honor, Jerry received a check for $22.50.

At this point, Jerry was exhibiting regularly in shows at the Museum of New Mexico. As a result, she received in March, 1957, her first offer of a one-person show at the Paul Schuster Gallery of Art in Cambridge, Massachusetts, but she was unable to accept. In a letter to Schuster she explained:

> *At present, I can't seem to see my way clear to prepare an exhibit for May. My classes are such that I am kept busy all day long and of course my evenings are taken up with my family. On Saturdays I go to school in Albuquerque. Last Christmas I took leave with the hopes of painting but I was sick all during my leave so I got only one painting out. I have a few small paintings. If you wish to see them I'll send them to you...*

Jerry's work was absent from the 1958 juried exhibit of Indian art at the Museum of New Mexico; she had not had time in the preceding months to do any painting. But her influence was very much present: eighteen of the forty students who placed in the exhibit were Jerry's. Of those, five won prizes.

By 1959, Jerry was able at last to mount a one-woman show in the Hall of Ethnology, Santa Fe. The show opened on August 10 and ran for about a month.

In 1961, Jerry again placed in the annual Indian arts exhibit of the Museum with "Long Hair Kachina." Who's Who in American Art, 1962, has a long entry for Jerry, who is the only

Indian artist included in that year's edition. The article lists a New Mexico Museum 1961 purchase prize, apparently for the same "Long Hair Kachina," now in the permanent collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe. The same article also reveals that Jerry won a special award for "Indian Art, New Mexico State Fair 1960."

Similarly, Jerry was the only woman award winner in a large field of artists accepted for entry in the 1962 Seventeenth Annual American Indian Artists exhibit at the Philbrook Art Center, Tulsa. She received a second award of $75 for "Hunter's Dream."

The Philbrook competition had more than one reward for Jerry. In May, she received a letter addressed to "Mr. Geronima Montoya" from the U.S. Department of the Interior, informing her that two of her paintings had been selected for purchase by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Her growing success as an artist never diminished Jerry's primary focus on teaching. Among the students whose careers flourished under Jerry's tutelage was Henry Gobin, the Snohomish boy Jerry had guided not only in his art work but in becoming acquainted with his own cultural background. Ironically, her position on the faculty of the Indian School, to which she had been so dedicated for a quarter of a century, was about to be phased out. The School was to be changed into the Institute of American Arts, and the man who became, for a time, head of the Art Department was Henry Gobin.

A Moveable Feast

In Pueblo tradition -- particularly in this close Cruz family -- important events such as births, baptisms, First Holy Communions, marriages, deaths, and religious ceremonials are celebrated with communal feasting. Each family brings food to share at the home of the celebrants. The women help serve the many guests. All are welcome on a Feast Day or on a ceremonial day, while usually only family members and close friends are invited to special celebrations.

When Geronima Cruz and Juan Montoya were married on August 26, 1939, the entire village of San Juan Pueblo was invited to share in the feasting. By then, Jerry had already been teaching for four years at the Indian School, and Juan had done construction work on the Kicarilla Apache Reservation in northern New Mexico for two years.

The wedding took place, as Jerry wished, close to her childhood home, in the small chapel of the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes at San Juan Pueblo in front of the traditional Tewa shrine marking the center of the world. Juan's parents and brothers had journeyed two days by wagon, ninety miles northward along the Rio Grande, to be there. A few days later, Jerry and Juan returned to the Indian School where both would remain on the faculty for the next twenty-three years.

During the first years of their marriage and teaching, Jerry maintained constant and close contact with her sisters, all of whom, except Adelaide, were living with growing families in Santa Fe. The Montoyas saved their gas rationing coupons so they could drive to San Juan to visit Pablo and Crucita, who delighted in watching their grandchildren. Pablo and Crucita, Jerry and her sisters, and some of the children, would speak Tewa; the five sisters spoke English with their husbands. A little Spanish sometimes helped bridge the gaps. But the sharing of food was the common denominator among these people from different language groups.

In March, 1947, Jerry gave birth to Robert; three years later, to Paul; and in 1954, to Eugene. All were taken to San Juan to be named in Tewa by Jerry's mother. Crucita named her last three grandchildren carefully and with love: Fog Mountain; Marked Flower; and Morning Dew. Catholic baptism took place at St. Francis Cathedral in Santa Fe.

By this time, Jerry had started part-time study for the Bachelor of Science degree at St. Joseph's College, later the University of Albuquerque. Her sister Ramoncita helped with the young boys as Jerry had once helped her.

> *School took forever! There was the Teacher's College in Albuquerque and then it was St. Joseph's and then the BIA had summer sessions for teachers. I went to night classes, Saturday classes, summer classes, just whenever I could get in. Juan was so good with the kids. They'd take me down and if anything was going on in Sandia they would stop and spend*

the day with the folks. And they loved to go up to the petroglyphs or on the West Mesa, or just go on into Albuquerqe and watch the Coliseum being built while I went to class.

People accepted my doing the studying but I guess they though it was.. unusual. Juan, I guess, was pretty unusual. He helped at the house. The other kids would say, I wish my Daddy would do that!. And he'd cook. He'd fix what he called "Bachelor's Delight" -- stew!

When the time came for each of the three boys to go to school, Jerry and Juan had a difficult decision to make. Where should the boys go? The Santa Fe Indian School was not for children of S.F.I.S. employees. They were not allowed to attend school there.

Juan and I had found out how important education was. We knew the boys would need real fine teachers to make their way in the world. We finally decided to send them to parochial and private Catholic school. Only one of the boys ever learned Tewa -- Juan and I couldn't understand each other's language, so we always spoke English to each other.

Their decision about their boys' education was well-founded. Bob became a talented architect, specializing in Pueblo architectural design; Paul became a criminal investigator with the BIA Police; Eugene majored in Social Work and Business at New Mexico State and is now a Juvenile Probation Officer with the State.

Jerry and Juan were not only busy helping their sons with homework, pursuing their teaching careers, studying, and participating in their wider family life. They also had serious obligations in each of their home villages' ceremonial calendars. Juan held a life position as Hunt Chief at Sandia, and Jerry danced regularly both at San Juan and at Sandia. Obligations at the two villages were never-ending. When the Montoyas were not dancing, there were still feasts to be prepared. And friends, students, and colleagues expected the Montoyas to attend dances at other villages.

I think Indian religion is hard to understand. The Catholic way -- that's easier to understand. It's hard to be an Indian. It really is, because you have to do what they do in the Pueblo and...it's just hard. You have to sacrifice a lot and you have to work hard. There's a lot of work involved in these ceremonies. So much of it is secret, too -- and rightly so. It is for Indian people and no one else.

I like to go to all the Indian dances in all the Pueblos. Many of the dances are religious ceremonies and are very special and beautiful. I enjoy them so much that I could stay all day and watch. The Hopi dances in Arizona are pretty special too and important for us. All religious ceremonials in our Pueblos and Hopi villages have special meaning for me. It gives me peace of mind and a spiritual lift.

Ceremonial dances really move you spiritually. They do something for you. There's something about attending the dances. You just forget about all your worries and troubles and you just have...peace. I hate going to a dance where people are constantly jabbering. You go there for a purpose. To see, enjoy the dance and the singing. I wish that spectators would show more respect. I think that as I got older, I appreciated the Indian religion more than when I was a teenager. At home, we just took our Indian way of life for granted. Mr. Faris, at the School, helped us to realize the beauty of our own culture. Even so, there are things I don't fully understand about Indian religion and probably never will. I'm just a lay person in my pueblo.

At San Juan the ceremonial calendar starts around September 15. The Winter group is in charge until February 15. Even for the Harvest Dance in September, they still sing the Summer Cacique's (priest's) song first. Whoever is leading that season has to be the first.

When I take part in the Harvest Dance, I don't have to learn anything new because they are the same songs that have been sung for years -- how long ago, no one knows, but they are certainly beautiful songs -- beautiful words as well as beautiful melody. For Harvest Dance, we wear flowers in our hair and the men wear floral wreathes in addition to our usual ceremonial dress. The purpose of the

dance is in thanksgiving for the crops -- corn, melon, chili, and all -- and to feed Mother Earth at the shrine, the Nansipu-pinge, with the fruits of the harvest. Either the Head Clown requests Harvest Dance or someone asks the Head Clown to hold it. We dance in four plazas. It's more ceremonial than it appears.

On Christmas Eve there's the Matachina Dance in the afternoon and in the evening before midnight Mass. That's done again Christmas day. On the evening of Christmas day, there is the Slow Dance, then on December 26, the Turtle Dance. I don't think I could spend Christmas any place but San Juan. It's the only place I ever want to be for Christmas.

On the first of January the officers of the pueblo are appointed, and on January 6, King's Day, they are installed and there is feasting and dancing.

Then in January the War Captain selects his dance, either Basket Dance or Cloud Dance. For the Basket Dance, the women must cut bangs as part of their hairdos, because it is a ceremonial dance related to the katchinas. It's a very sacred dance. We wear embroidered mantas or the black and the white Hopi mantas -- we don't wear any silver jewelry because that was originally Mexican, and it can't be used in a dance that has to do with kachinas. All of our dances are done for good and long life.

June 24 is the regular feast day for San Juan, when they have Comanche and Buffalo Dances. Ramoncita and I often dance Comanche. When Adelaide was sick, we did it as a prayer towards her getting well.

The Comanche Dance resembles those of the Plains tribes and is thought to commemorate an early Pueblo victory over the Comanches. The women's costumes have not varied since Jerry first began to dance in her teenage years. The hair is allowed to flow free; Jerry's has always fallen well below her waist. The dancing continues throughout the day.

Jerry would always return to the family house to feast during the break between dances, and to spend some time with the many guests who came to the house to be fed by those of the family not in the dance. No one leaves without being given some of the special loaves of bread or fruit pies to take home with them.

I think we counted over two hundred people who ate at the house one year. We were so pleased that there was enough bread!

After June 24, there's nothing again until September.

In San Juan we have the Winter and Summer moieties. I belong to the Winter group. There are societies in each group, although a number of them have died out. There are both men and women in these societies.

I listen to tapes of Indian songs when I am painting. The beautiful Tewa words seem to give me ideas for my pictures. The Harvest Dance especially has wonderful words of nature, the stars, the clouds; all are what I would like to capture, but they don't quite come out the way I picture them.

Just as the ceremonial calendar, ceremonial feasts, and religious celebrations marked the changes of the seasons for Jerry and Juan and their sons, so the calendar also marked the rapid changes over the years in the family itself.

After Harvest Dance and before Thanksgiving in 1963, Stuka their beloved nephew, was killed in a car accident and was buried with full military honors in the National Cemetery. Grief overwhelmed the family that year. Three days after Stuka's death, President Kennedy was assassinated. So distraught were they all that for the first time in their lives the sisters and their families did not celebrate Thanksgiving at San Juan.

It was difficult, in fact, to find much to celebrate that year. Jerry and Juan had been forced out of their longstanding teaching positions with the takeover of the Indian School the year before, and were struggling to adapt to new, unchosen jobs while still supporting their sons. The following year, Pablo Cruz, suffering from blindness and grief, died.

The Talent That Was There

The story of the 1962 changeover from the Santa Fe Indian School, founded in 1890, to

the Institute of American Indian Arts is complicated. Many Indian people, particularly older Pueblo people, believed that certain young and ambitious Indian artists wanted the Institute -- envisioned as an arts and crafts college -- as a show place for their own work, and believed that they had maneuvered the change for this reason. Certainly, the art work from the old boarding school had been of the highest order during Jerry's tenure. It was a natural place for an art school college to be launched. However, the dismemberment of the faculty at the time of the changeover and the forcible release of teachers who had influenced the lives of hundreds of young Indians resulted in severe loss of teaching talent. Today, the Institute has changed back again to a high school for young Indian people, controlled completely by the All-Indian Pueblo Council instead of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

For Jerry and Juan, that spring of 1962 was especially difficult. There was one meeting after another in an affort to find employment for the many teachers who had to be "reassigned." Neither Jerry nor Juan had taken the Civil Service examination; it had never occurred to them. They were, after all, working for the BIA and had "preferred status" as Indians teaching Indians. Had they taken that examination, they would have had the right to reinstatement in an available job for which they qualified, and selection without competition from the public. The Commission did, at least, attempt to reassign all of the employees rather than resort to what they called "reduction in force."

The Montoyas faced an even more difficult situation. They both worked in the same school. While Juan was retained for the Institute -- no longer as a teacher but as director of maintenance and grounds -- Jerry was not. The new superintendent, Dr.Boyce, wanted to place less traditional artists in the new institution and told Jerry, as he told all of the arts and crafts staff, that he had no place for them in his Institute.

Since Juan was remaining at the Institute, Jerry naturally needed to be somewhere in the vicinity. The Civil Service suggested as an alternative that they move together to the Navajo Reservation, where they might be given teaching positions in isolated Greasewood. But neither of them wanted to leave their home, their friends and family, nor did they want to try to start their lives over again in such an isolated and unfamiliar place. Besides, the boys -- eight, twelve, and fifteen -- were firmly established in Sante Fe and in their schools. Moreover, Jerry had been under a doctor's care for the past year and needed to keep the same physician.

The school year closed with no resolution to the problem of the Montoyas' future. Shortly after the School's doors were closed, a letter on Jerry's behalf to the Institute from the State Department of Education, resulted in her being allowed to teach at the Institute for several more months. During the changeover, however, she was demoted to general elementary teacher of fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. Morale among the new faculty and students who survived the closing and affiliated with the Institute was low. Jerry describes the period as "a waste of time both for me and for my students."

While the school year of 1962-1963 was unhappy and transitional for Jerry's teaching career, it was seminal for her painting and community activities. In March, two of her paintings, "Kosa in the Pueblo" and "Harvest Dance, San Juan Pueblo," were hung in the exhibit hall of the Department of State in a show of contemporary American Indian art. In the second Scottsdale Invitational, also in March, three of her works were accepted: "Basket Dance," "Long Hair Kachina," and "Drought." The first two were purchased by the Museum of New Mexico. The work of some of her students was also exhibited.

Out of yet another invitational exhibit that year at the Symbol Gallery of Arts in the Old Town section of Albuquerque came an international show. Jerry was invited by the U.S. State Department to display twenty paintings in Amerika Haus in Nuremburg, Germany. Amerika Haus, a cultural center supported by the U.S. Foreign Service, then sent the paintings on a six-month tour of Munich and other European cities. This exhibit was followed by one in the German American Institute at Regensburg, and by an exhibit of two paintings, "After the Rain," and "At Dawn" in the Indian show at the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe.

One artistic success followed another; it is impossible to list all her achievements here. Yet, despite her widening reputation as an artist, Jerry was subjected to indignities and injustices of institutional policies. Eventually, both the Civil Service and Jerry would win.

They chased me out of the Institute

-- well, they might as well have, because it amounted to that. They kept saying, 'Don't you want to retire?' And I said, 'At what?' And they said, 'Oh, you'd be getting $250,' and I said, 'Gee, that's a lot of money!' Then I said, 'No thank you.' And I didn't want to go out to Tuba City or Greasewood -- they had Juan going to one place and I was supposed to be going to another place! They would call us into a meeting and say, 'Well, do you want to go to Tuba City?' 'No.' And they would call us in again and say, 'Do you want to go here?' And I would say 'No.' So finally they called me in and said, 'Well, how about Adult Education?' And I said, 'Where?' And they said 'San Juan Pueblo,' and I said, 'Well, I wouldn't mind that!'

After the Rain

Jerry's new assignment as adult education teacher for the Northern Pueblos Agency of the BIA required her to work eight hours a day. But it had no fixed hours, no fixed curriculum, and, in fact, no fixed pueblo. It was the cleanest slate Jerry had ever had to write on. While she spent most of her time at San Juan at the request of the Governor of the Pueblo she was also expected to work in the other seven northern villages.

San Juan classes were held in the old day school building where Jerry had tried to fail fourth grade. The present Geronima was to be available to teach whatever her students wanted to learn: Some wanted to improve arithmetic, spelling, and reading; others learned weaving from an expert; some began to teach other women pottery. Younger working people took evening classes which gradually grew into a High School Completion and General Education program. Jerry often covered more than four hundred miles in five days.

We were supposed to go to Taos, too, but the Council didn't want it; the people wanted it. We mainly taught at San Juan, but we went to Nambe and to Picuris. We taught whatever they wanted to learn. I was supposed to be the Adult Educator for all the Northern Pueblos so I had to come in and attend meetings with all other department heads -- realty, tribal operations, police.

Jerry was grateful for the opportunity the job gave her to spend more time with her parents; her father died that year.

The rest of the winter she spent at San Juan and preparing for a one person show at Yonemoto's Fine Arts Gallery in Albuquerque. Yonemoto himself noticed new developments in her work that year, and declared the show one of the most exciting the gallery had ever had.

Now began a rapid succession of shows -- the special Philbrook exhibition honoring Jerry and her former students, shows of work produced in the Adult Education classes, and in 1967 another local one-artist show. Jerry's paintings from this period showed great versatility, some of them traditional in subject and style, others highly formalized, still others symbolic abstractions. A few were executed in a primitive style chosen to reflect their origins in the pictographs. A great pleasure for Jerry in this show was not simply the exhibit and sale of her own work, but the inclusion for the first time of pottery pieces by her mother, Crucita, and fine examples of Pueblo embroidery by Ramoncita, her younger sister.

By 1968, Jerry's Adult Education program at San Juan had grown from five beginning students to more than sixty regular participants. The program was becoming a center where the San Juan craftspeople could exchange techniques and ideas. Out of this experience grew the idea of organizing a cooperative, the first in any of the nineteen pueblos of New Mexico. Under Jerry's leadership, the new San Juan Crafts Cooperative elected officers and incorporated. It was launched with a total treasury of $67 and a membership of twenty-seven men and women ranging in age from twenty to seventy.

Jerry knew that if the Coop was to survive, they needed outside professional help and service. She enlisted the aid of her young friend Alfonso Ortiz, now an eminent anthropologist on the faculty of Princeton University, but once a boy she had watched growing up in San Juan Pueblo. With Dr. Ortiz's help, Jerry and the Coop obtained grants from Federal and private sources to help the Coop begin operations.

Soon Jerry, the director, and the members of the group decided to call their venture "O'ke

Oweenge Arts and Crafts Cooperative," using two Tewa words, O'ke, the Tewa name for San Juan, and Oweenge, meaning village. The Coop was an immediate success. In its first year, it earned $19,000; the second year, they tripled their intake. Works are sold on consignment at the Coop, each craftsperson receiving 80% of the sale price, with the remainder going to the Coop itself to cover costs and to purchase materials for members.

In the same year that the Coop was established, Jerry and Juan's oldest son Robert married Eva Oyeque from San Juan, his mother's pueblo; their first grandchild was born; and Crucita, Jerry's mother, died. Now, when Jerry walked over to the family house to visit on her teaching and Coop days at the village, only her sister Adelaide was there to greet her. As the two sisters sat over lunch in the kitchen, its window looking out to the "horn" of the Truchas Mountains, they could still sense the presence of Pablo, out on the back porch in the shade of the cottonwood trees, and Crucita carefully bringing in pots from the fire.

During this period, Jerry received an invitation to participate in a conference sponsored by the Oregon College of Adult Education. It was an invitation she felt she could not turn down, as the purpose of the conference was to acquaint adult basic education teachers with "characteristic and motivational patterns of traditional American Indian culture and its relationship to the dominant Anglo society." Her participation at this conference was so impressive that she was invited to become a working member at the follow-up conference in Phoenix in February, 1971.

With much of her time and energy going to her painting and civic and pueblo commitments, Jerry still managed to give equal attention to family and ceremonial life. Each year, she and her sisters would either dance or prepare the feast for San Juan Day, and she and Juan were active in the Corn Dance at Sandia. Jerry performed the Yellow Corn Dance and the Harvest Dance. She and Juan attended special dances and closed ceremonials at pueblos into which different members of the family had married. Sometimes they would attend other dances simply for their beauty and peace.

Then one March day in 1972, as Jerry was returning from teaching at Picuris, a severe allergy attack -- Jerry was allergic to dust -- made her decide to seek medical relief at the clinic at San Juan. By chance, the physician was there that day, and responded not only to her need for relief from the allergy but also to her request for a physical examination for pain which had been bothering her for some months. She was hospitalized the next day, and the day after that, underwent a mastectomy.

By the time Jerry recovered from surgery, the Coop, which had more than proved its viability, was about to move into new quarters financed by matching funds from the Federal Economic Development Administration. The building was designed in the half-moon shape of an ancient Pueblo communal dwelling, with a rounded kiva shape forming the back -- much like those unearthed in remote Chaco Canyon, probable ancestral home of the O'ke Oweenge people. As she recovered, Jerry welcomed visitors to the open house for the elegant new building, filled with San Juan craftspeople and their fine work. She was amused to reflect that this successful venture had its genesis in the termination of her twenty-seven years of teaching at the Indian School.

San Juan was not the only pueblo to benefit from Jerry's creative organizational powers. While the Indian Market provided a much-needed two-day sales outlet for qualifying Indian craftspeople, most had a few certain sales outlets for their work, and no other cooperatives had yet been established. Concerned about this severe limitation, Jerry took responsibility for initiating an arts and crafts show, to be sponsored by the Eight Northern Pueblos.

Participants were not confined to the northern pueblos. Craftspeople from all nineteen pueblos and from the Navajo nation gathered to take part. The first show was so nationally successful that it is now a known event held every July, with each pueblo taking turns as host village. Now a traditional part of the calendar, the show features generous prizes donated by friends and tradespeople, and social dances presented by different pueblos during the event.

Busy as she was organizing the opening of the new cooperative and initiating the Eight Northern Pueblos Arts and Crafts Fair, Jerry still accepted an invitation to deliver an address at the convocation of the Oregon College of Education, where she had earlier participated in the workshop on American Indian Culture.

By the end of 1973, Jerry had worked for the Bureau of Indian Affairs for thirty-eight years. Now, at fifty-eight, she decided to retire,

taking advantage of special benefits. "I thought of waiting until I was sixty, but then I decided, 'Why wait?'" Juan also retired the same year and was doing occasional construction and carpentry work. Occasionally, he would even work on a construction project with son Bob, then a partner in Mimbres Associates, a Santa Fe architectural firm he had co-founded.

Jerry did not view retirement as a time of leisure, however. She became even more active in community affairs. In 1974, she accepted an invitation from the Albuquerque Area Bureau of Indian Affairs to speak to an adult education workshop. Representatives of twenty-four tribes were present. Jerry's address concluded by spotlighting the development of the O'ke Oweenge Cooperative:

> *From the start we worked to have all members, most of whom are middle-aged women with limited education, understand how and why the Coop operates as it does. Members come from all sections of the village and range in age from the early twenties to the late seventies, with the common denominator being skill in making high-quality craft objects.*
>
> *With business as it is now, we are beginning to make work schedules to make sure that the store is handled properly with enough clerks to handle sales and visitors. We are receiving many foreign visitors, as well as other Pueblo people and Chicanos that are interested in starting coops, so we are serving others as well as our own.*
>
> *Book learning isn't everything!*

That summer proved to be a time of family developments. Just a few days before her address, Jerry's second grandchild, Catherine, was born. By now, Bob had begun to paint, and he took his first blue ribbon that year. Paul was soon to become the third painter in the family. Although all three would use Pueblo themes and experience, their styles differed as widely as their personalities.

Like so many other years in Jerry's life, 1976 brought sorrow along with honors. Adelaide, now the matriarch, had surgery and began chemotherapy for cancer. That summer, Jerry and Ramoncita danced for "Oyigi" -- Adelaide -- on San Juan Feast Day.

August brought another trip for Jerry; although she was not happy about leaving her sister, Alfonso Ortiz had made it possible for ten members of the Coop to be invited to Washington, D.C., to the Tenth Annual Festival of American Folklife, co-sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution and the National Park Service. While she was there Jerry painted a scene of the willows, with the San Juan men and women fetching water at the spring -- the very spring to which Adelaide had carried her in her shawl when Jerry was a child. Adelaide died in April of the following year. The family was changing. All three of her sons were now out of the house and working. Jerry found the house quiet -- almost too quiet; yet she liked to be alone to paint.

> *I lose track of time. I like to just sit by myself and paint. Though I didn't mind Juan being there. He'd just sit quietly. Sometimes I turn on the recorder and play Indian music I have recorded.*
>
> *When I paint, first I sketch and I sketch and I sketch. And then I have pages and pages of sketches! Then I will go back and paint the ones I like. I have to be in the mood to paint. A painting mood. You just feel like you want to do something.*
>
> *With all those brushes, you have to have one pet brush. I have one I like especially. I use an 8 or 10. I paint the solid areas before I paint the fine lines. Sometimes I use a different brush for different colors and other times I use a different brush because I don't want to dirty the water.*
>
> *I always use casein tempera. It's not the transparent water color, but it's a water-based paint. Bob uses the same thing. The only other thing I use is the brayer method, and when I use that I use printing ink, which has an oil base. I enjoy doing the brayer -- seing what I can get out of that big roller, trying to get fine lines...*

Yet even when she was alone painting, she could not escape the telephone. "Sometimes when I would go to answer, Juan would say 'No more committees!'" Juan felt he had good reason. His wife served for a year on the Arts and Crafts Task Force of the National Endowment for the Arts, and traveled to North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Mississippi. She

continues to be a member of the board of the Southwestern Association on Indian Affairs, and although no longer a board member, usually serves as a judge for the Eight Northern Pueblos Arts and Crafts Fair. Her responsibilities to the O'ke Oweenge Cooperative continue to take her there for one day a week, and often more, for meetings and classes. The Coop members elected her a lifetime member and lifetime chairperson of the Coop board of directors. She is also a member of the board of trustees of Santa Fe's Wheelwright Museum, a private museum dedicated to the display and preservation of Indian arts.

The winter of 1982 was to bring more grief for Jerry. Juan, her husband, Hunt Chief of Sandia Pueblo, was found dead at the wheel of the family pickup. He had gone to cut down the family Christmas tree when his heart gave out. Jerry and her family's grief was deep and private.

Now approaching her 75th birthday, Jerry continues to paint and to exhibit her work; to volunteer at San Juan Coop and as an advisory member for the new Museum of Indian Arts and Culture; and to make a home in Santa Fe for sons Paul and Eugene. You might catch a glimpse of her across the Plaza on Feast Day at Zia or Sandia or San Juan. And if you should arrive at eight in the morning at Santa Fe's annual Indian Market you will find P'otsunu among her large extended family under the portale, visiting with old friends and selling her new paintings.

> *I'm just a down-to-earth person, very traditional. I enjoy classical music and Gregorian chants and Indian music. At an Indian dance, someone said to me one day, 'Why, you're just pure Indian!' 'Well,' I said, 'I hope so!'*

Acknowledgements

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This essay is excerpted from a book-length biography.

For the Mythbearers

Pueblo Country, New Mexico

Here in thinner air we move
more easily through deep canyon,
myth, and mountain.
Here the earth stirs at our walking,
amber streams rise from our heels.
The veins of the hills open
and flow at dusk
ribs curve dry and brittle.
Hearts beat drums.

Messengers come plaintive and panting
from lower hibernating lands,
hump on their backs
our sloughed-off skins
and curl upon themselves.
In the winds circling the moon
they dance, licking their limbs
into old forgotten fever.

We emerge into a new world
carrying in brown hands
feathers from ancient selves.
Yet must we singly
weave new cloud new earth new sky
spin from silent eye
new webs to hold
across a windy dawn.

JILL MELLICK