

Patricia Egan

Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Anne-Mary Lutzick

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Anne-Mary Lutzick My name is Anne-Mary Lutzick, and I'm the director of the Old Trails Museum in Winslow, Arizona. Today's date is January 26, 2011, and I'm conducting an interview with Pat Egan of Winslow, Arizona, E-g-a-n, for the Capturing Arizona's Stories Project, which is a centennial project of the Arizona State Library. This particular interview is part of the Navajo County Library District's collection that will be part of the Arizona Memory Project. So let's begin.

Pat, thank you so much for doing this interview today.

Patricia Egan You're welcome. My pleasure.

Lutzick We will first just start on background-type questions. What is the name of your father?

Egan My father was Joseph O'Malley [phonetic].

Lutzick And where was he born?

Egan In Chicago, Illinois.

Lutzick Did he grow up in Chicago?

Egan Um-hm [yes].

Lutzick What kind of work did he do?

Egan He was a butcher.

Lutzick And what was your mother's name?

Egan Alice King O'Malley.

Lutzick Where was she from?

Egan She was also from Chicago.

Lutzick And how did they meet?

Egan I really don't know.

Lutzick That's okay. Did she work outside of the home while you were growing up?

Egan Yes, she did. During the war years she worked at Carnegie Steel Mills in Chicago.

Lutzick And where were *you* born?

Egan In Chicago.

Lutzick Did you grow up there?

Egan Yes, I did.

Lutzick And how old were you when you left Chicago?

Egan I was fifty-five.

Lutzick I'll back up a little bit. Did you have brothers and sisters?

Egan Yes, one sister and two brothers.

Lutzick And where are you in the family order?

Egan I'm third.

Lutzick So tell me a little bit about growing up in Chicago, what kinds of things do you remember most about your childhood?—like what you did for fun and what you did for chores.

Egan Well, I think we had a typical childhood of that time, playing outside in the alleys, racing, running around, making noise—just typical kids. I was always fascinated with the horses. At that time, the milkmen and

the icemen had horse-drawn vehicles, and I was very fascinated with the horses, so I spent time at the dairy currying the horses whenever I could. That was one of the things that got me out this way.

Lutzick So what school did you attend when you were growing up in Chicago?

Egan I went to Catholic school, Holy Cross School in the Woodlawn District of Chicago. And then Loretto Academy for high school.

Lutzick And what did you do after you finished going to school?

Egan I got married, proceeded to have nine children within twelve years. (laughs) And after the children were fairly well launched, I started back to school myself.

Lutzick And what did you study at school?

Egan I did a general studies program, and then I focused in on elementary education—decided that’s what I would like to do.

Lutzick So you went back to college for an undergraduate degree?

Egan Uh-huh [yes].

Lutzick Where was that, that you went to college?

Egan Prairie State College in Chicago Heights, Illinois. And then Governors State University in Illinois.

Lutzick And graduated with a bachelor’s degree?

Egan A bachelor’s in elementary ed.

Lutzick And did you get work in that field right after you went to school?

Egan Yes I did, because I was researching the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the library at school, and I saw an opportunity to maybe get myself out to Arizona through that route. The bureau was offering to write off your

student loans if you would teach on an Indian reservation. So I thought, "Hm, kids are grown, let's do it?" So I applied.

Lutzick So how old were you when you graduated from college with this degree in education?

Egan (laughs) I was fifty-five.

Lutzick And what year was that?

Egan Nineteen eighty-nine [1989].

Lutzick I neglected to ask you the date you were born, earlier. So in 1989 you were fifty-five.

Egan Yeah. I was born in '33.

Lutzick And you signed up for this program with the BIA?

Egan I applied, and they do a very thorough background check, and then they offered me the position at Dilkon School. So I accepted and made plans to get out here.

Lutzick So you moved to Dilkon in—

Egan In August of '89.

Lutzick Was your husband with you at that time?

Egan No. I am at this time single.

Lutzick So describe your first impressions of Dilkon. Actually, maybe tell us a little bit about where Dilkon is situated.

Egan Okay. Dilkon is north of Winslow—north and slightly east of Winslow. It's considered a border community, close enough to get back and forth to Winslow very easily. It's about thirty-five, forty miles. And it's set up, would remind you of a little army base. There

was housing right on campus. A very nice, neat, well-kept-up campus. And I liked the things that were going on in the school. They were doing the same kinds of things that I had been trained in: whole language, which works beautifully with kids that may be struggling a bit with language. So it was tremendously exciting to pull off the interstate and move on up into the reservation and find the school and find my apartment and get going. It was great.

Lutzick Did you have the ability to request where you were going to end up with the BIA?

Egan They offer you a specific position at a certain school, so that's the one that was offered to me, and I took it.

Lutzick You could have refused and they would have offered you somewhere else maybe?

Egan Yeah.

Lutzick You were interested in Arizona. Had you had any trips to Arizona before that?

Egan I'd never been to Arizona, but I always wanted to come to Arizona.

Lutzick And why was that, what intrigued you about Arizona when you were growing up or (unintelligible)?

Egan When I was in—and I remember it very clearly—third grade, a geography book with a map of the U.S. Here's Illinois, here's Arizona. It's not that far away. (laughs) But I was very intrigued with it because there were cowboys, Indians, and horses out here. And in my eight-year-old mind that was very, very attractive. The opportunity did not

come along until much later, to actually get here, so when I sought the opportunity and it was there, I grabbed it. I thought, How many people this age have another whole world opening up to them?

Lutzick Did that eight-year-old impression, did anything build on that when you were an adult as far as impressions of Arizona?

Egan Well, I had only seen pictures, and of course read a little bit about it, but no, there was just this pull. I really wanted to come here. I had never made a drive like that on my own in my life. I thought, I'm gonna do it! And I did. And it was *well* worth it.

Lutzick That's very adventurous.

Egan That was a very, very rich experience, and I'm still here, because I'm not ready to give it up yet.

Lutzick So what were your first impressions when you pulled into Dilkon, or even when you pulled into Arizona, as the landscape started to change?

Egan Oh, when I pulled into—it starts in New Mexico, and you see the landscape change, and you can hardly concentrate on driving, it's almost impossible. You have to pull off the road and look around and say, "Yes, that's *real*," and carry on. But just to get out—. On the drive up to Dilkon, you see the buttes in the distance. You're going uphill, heading toward what's called the Hopi Buttes. And you pass Little Painted Desert, and it's just like wow, you can hardly believe it, coming from Illinois to be surrounded with all this. It's just, "Wow, this is amazing!" And it was everything I had pictured it to be, and way more. And driving into the school, onto the grounds, the buildings

were all pale-colored adobe and very attractive—plain but very attractive in their own way. Going through the school I was very impressed with everything in the school. It was right up to date. We had an excellent assistant principal who had been there for a long time and really ran a tight ship. We had little computers that were just beginning to move into classrooms and other places, and I was very surprised that we had them. I kind of had the idea that maybe it would be a little bit backward, a little bit behind—not at all, right up to date.

Lutzick What was the name of the principal?

Egan Carolyn Pecotte. She had been there for a number of years.

Lutzick And just for the benefit of anybody listening, what is the spelling of her name?

Egan P-e-c-o-t-t-e. She had been assistant principal for quite a while—I can't say exactly how long—but really had good management skills.

Lutzick And who was really running the school? Was it the BIA?

Egan It was the bureau, yeah.

Lutzick And were they contracted with a tribal entity of some sort to do that?

Egan Well, the bureau ran all the schools on the reservation until things began to change about ten, twelve years ago, and schools began to come out from under the bureau. But the bureau ran all the schools, except for maybe some religious schools.

Lutzick And do you know how long that was the case, from how early to ten or twelve years ago?

Egan Oh boy, from *very* early on, from after the reservations were set up, the bureau started running all the schools—built and ran the schools.

Lutzick Was Dilkon a day school or a boarding school?

Egan We had both students boarding and day also. Some students *had* to board, they lived at too great a distance to be bused back and forth. So we had probably one-third boarding, two-thirds day students.

Lutzick And they were coming from—I guess I’m trying to ask how many students would a particular school serve; how many schools were there?

Egan I never took a count of how many schools there actually were on the Navajo Reservation. Right at the southwestern corner of the reservation, there’s Dilkon, Seba Dalkai, and Greasewood. Those are the ones that I would have had some occasion to go visit or have any contact with the teachers at those schools. Other schools were at a greater distance, so I can’t give you a number on them.

Lutzick Did it serve kindergarten through twelve, or—?

Egan No, kindergarten through eighth.

Lutzick So high schools were a different entity?

Egan Yes, kids came to town for high school. The dorm in town here accommodated—.

Lutzick Oh, they came to Winslow for high school?

Egan Yeah, some took Holbrook. I think they had a choice where they wanted to go. A lot of our students came to Winslow.

Lutzick So you're there in Dilkon, 1989. What was your specific job, who were your charges?

Egan I was teaching second grade, and when I came into the room I was delighted to find I had a classroom aide, and I had all kinds of really nice materials to use with the kids. After working with the kids for a couple of weeks, I looked around at the class and I thought, They're just like my own kids. There's absolutely no distinction—kids are kids. Some have more experience behind them, some come from more literate families, some come from troubled families, but you have the same range of kids. And after that two- or three-week period, somebody would always forget and call me “Mom” or “Grandma.” (laughs) And I thought, Yeah, we've jelled. But the kids are just beautiful, like kids are.

Lutzick How many did you have in your classroom?

Egan It varied. I think starting off I had eighteen. So it was a nice way to start for a first-year teacher. And I found that my training at the university fit perfectly with the way things were being done in the bureau schools, so I was real fortunate that way. But the room was comfortable, each room had a little bathroom for the lower grades, and as I said, all the materials. And we had two of the little Apple II-E computers, which was amazing. Of course that was a magnet for the kids, you know. I did not know, going in, what the school looked like, or how conditions were in that school, so I was very pleasantly surprised.

Lutzick You mentioned a language program, if you could talk more about that.

Were they getting bilingual education at that time?

Egan No, this was what was at that time called whole language, which was very, very effective with kids at that level. They wrote messages in journals, and we journaled back and forth—I answered. We did language activities where we used the whole language, we didn't chop it up. And it's very effective with young kids. One of our language activities was one of the first things in the morning, kids would all be sitting on the rug. I had this big tablet, and I would say, "Tell me something that you did on the weekend." And almost always it was, "We went to Winslow." So what they said, I would write, and then we'd read it, We went to Winslow. "And what did you do in Winslow?" "We went to Walmart." Almost everybody did! I would write it, and then we'd get all done with that, and we'd read it all back together. Now they've said it, they've seen it in writing, "Now it's time to sit down and write in your journal. Do you need some words? They're there. They're your own words." So it was beautiful the way it worked, and kids picked up really fast. So it was a really *good* and a comfortable way for kids to learn. It was a very natural way to learn.

Lutzick Did a lot of those kids speak Navajo already?

Egan Yes, most of them did at that time. I think it's probably a little less now, because a lot of the kids lived in homes where the grandparents were there, or close by, and the grandparents and the kids would speak Navajo. In many cases the parents would be maybe working in

Flagstaff or working in Phoenix. So a lot of the kids had Navajo, a lot of the kids had English with a really strong Navajo influence that you needed to kind of sort that out and get 'em so that they would have an English they could use in the greater surrounding communities.

Lutzick

Did they still speak Navajo when they were on campus?

Egan

Not unless—well, there were cases, for instance, this one fifth-grader was teaching his teacher Navajo words, and she was very aptly learning them and following them and using them, and then she found out that all the words he taught her were cuss words. (laughs) But the second-graders weren't like that. They didn't know about playing tricks on you. And I had some really nice materials, books with Navajo on one side of the page, and English on the other. And I could read—I had studied the Navajo language for a couple of years—I could read the Navajo, and the kids would correct me—the accent was wrong, they would correct me. So we used that as a really good bridge, I think, for learning.

Lutzick

So it wasn't part of your charge to do bilingual education, but you found it worked with the whole language concept?

Egan

Yeah. And I was not teaching them Navajo, I was just using it.

Lutzick

So they weren't discouraged from speaking Navajo, or encouraged?

Egan

No.

Lutzick

It was sort of neutral.

Egan

Yeah. And it was good to have. I was very happy that I had studied it for a while, because some of the grandparents didn't speak English, so

if a grandparent was there, we could at least do a little communicating with that. I found it really useful to study that language and use that.

Lutzick

You mentioned that the kids were kids, like many kids. Was there anything specific to the Navajo culture, however, that affected the education, or you saw reflected in the classroom?

Egan

We tried to bring a lot of the culture into the classroom because in the early days that had not been done. And I felt like that wasn't fair, and it wasn't right. And I think the bureau changed their thinking on that too, so that you could use both. There was a way to use both, without being really proficient in Navajo. There were things that you could use it for. I was more aware of the taboo things that you did *not* want to talk about, such as I had bought this little piece of pottery with an owl on it, and I brought it into the classroom, and the classroom aide said, (in a hushed tone) "You don't do that. An owl is taboo. You do not make any fuss over owls. They bring death." And you need to know some of these things if you're going to be there for a while. You need to be able to absorb some of the culture. So I was happy to do that.

Lutzick

What are some other examples of the taboos—or opposite, of things that you might want to emphasize because they resonate?

Egan

We brought in some games. After I was there for a few years, we had a teacher who that was her job, to go to the different classrooms with culture. There were some games that were typical to the Navajos, and I didn't know anything about them, but she taught us, and I learned with the kids. That kind of cross-cultural thing makes the kids more

comfortable with the Anglo teachers, and it makes the Anglo teachers more a part of the whole culture there—still outside of it, but you’re at least familiar with it, so that you understand some of the do’s and don’ts. And some of the people in the dining room knew that I was studying the language, and I would try a few words with them. And some of them would give me the wrong information, and then I’d say it, and they’d all laugh. It was really funny! It was just all in fun, but they appreciated me making the effort, and it was a real good way to connect with them.

Lutzick So all the people that worked at the school were Navajo, except for *some* of the teachers, or (unintelligible).

Egan Most of the teachers were Anglo. There were some Navajo teachers, and the emphasis at that time was if you could fill the positions with Navajo teachers, that was a good thing to do. But there weren’t enough, so there hadn’t been enough that had gotten through the university. Some of the Anglo teachers had been there a while, but there was a really good spirit in that school. I didn’t sense any jealousy or anything because I was from someplace else. Only one time, a gentleman said to me, “Why are you really here?” And I said, “Well, I came to teach school.” And he said, “Yeah, but why are you *really* here?” like there was a very understandable element of mistrust there. But for the most part, I didn’t pick up any of that from anybody else.

Lutzick For the most part you felt welcome?

Egan Um-hm [yes].

Lutzick

You felt welcomed, more than treated like an outsider?

Egan

After three years—I would put the date at three years—after that time, I felt very much a part of the community. The first three years was kind of, Let's take a good look at this woman and see what she's after. (chuckles) You know, just that “new person—”. And you don't know anything about the culture when you walk in, you're perfectly green—unless you've done some reading. And I hadn't done that, I just plopped myself right in. But after three years, and I had been invited to song-and-dance, and I had been invited to some ceremonies, I was delighted to go and be included in that. In fact, one of the first times I went to song-and-dance—and this was run by the grandfather of one of my students—he introduced me to the group, and he gave me the microphone and he said, “Introduce yourself in Navajo.” This was after I had studied. So I did that, and people applauded! Great! It really was an icebreaker.

Lutzick

What is song-and-dance?

Egan

It's a really nice social evening where there's a drum group playing and singing. Usually they're done as fundraisers, or if somebody needs to take a medical trip to Phoenix or something. It's a fundraiser for a special purpose. But it's a really nice social evening. And as the drum group plays, it's not like a line dance, but it's almost like a round dance, and I really enjoyed it. It was really good exercise and a great way to connect with people. I bought myself a really pretty Navajo outfit (chuckles) and it was fun. It was a lot of fun.

Lutzick And what were some of the other social or fun things that you did while you were there?

Egan Let's see, some of the ceremonies were really, really impressive. I'm trying to recall what this one was called. Oh, *yei'ii bichai* dance, held at night, outside, and in the winter. And the dancing and the singing, there's something really soulful about it. It just rings true. And there are fires burning, and you can sit around the fire and warm up. But I'm at this *yei'ii bichai* dance really watching the dancers—and this is a healing ceremony, so there's a patient in the hogan, and the dancing is outside. And listening to that beat and the singing, I'm thinking, This has been going on, this is the same ceremony that's gone on for centuries. And these people that are sitting here, they probably first heard this before they were born. And just the continuity of it and the sincerity of it, you just listen to it and you think, Oh man, I'm so glad to be here and be a part of this and know about this. I never would have known about it. But it's very impressive. And you don't get invited to that right away. You have to be there a while, and you have to be pretty much accepted. I felt very honored to be there.

Lutzick So did you live in Dilkon as well?

Egan Yes, lived at school.

Lutzick Oh, they had places for the Anglo teachers to live?

Egan Yeah, we had quarters right on the school grounds.

Lutzick And what were those like?

Egan Very nice. Not fancy, but very comfortable, and furnished. If something went wrong, put in a work order, and one of the maintenance people would come and take care of it for you. So it was real easy living. The rent was deducted from my paycheck. And I was within fifty feet of the school, so it was very easy to get back and forth.

Lutzick And how long did you live and teach in Dilkon?

Egan Ten years.

Lutzick Are there any other specific stories or experiences you had during those ten years that you'd like to talk about?

Egan Well, I could tell you something that relates to that. I teach part-time at the college now, and this semester, as in previous semesters, one of my former second-graders is in my class. So I like that a lot. I like to see the kids grown up. Her mother came in and we had a reunion after all those years. So I like the continuity of that too, and I like to see the kids moving on up and doing things, positive things.

I had a great time with some of my students. Two of my little boy students were teaching me how to throw a rope. (laughs) I wasn't very good at it, but we had a lot of fun with it. I thought, That's great, for *them* to be teaching *me* something.

Lutzick And when you say throw a rope, you mean to rope a horse?

Egan Rope something—yeah, rope an animal. Yeah, they were way better at it than I was. But I had a mare with me. I'd brought a mare out from the Chicago area, so I had my horse to ride, and I think that was a big bridge too. People out there understand why you have a horse, or why

you would want to have a horse. I think that was something that we shared. I kept her in a corral with one of the eighth-grade teacher's horses—Navajo teacher. We have many more things in common, I think, than maybe somebody else would have had. I think it was one of the most satisfying experiences of my life, being there.

Lutzick

Can you put into words why that might be? Like what were the things about it that make you feel that way?

Egan

Something about being in a totally new setting where you are the minority, you're no longer the big shot, you are the minority, you are the one that's looked at with a little skepticism, maybe a little suspicion. And you're given this great trust. Here are these children. I have all the influence over these beautiful little kids. I felt like everything in my life leading up to that time prepared me for that. And I felt a real kinship with the people, especially the grandparents, many of whom were taking care of the kids. But we just seemed to have an understanding, even with limited language, but there was an understanding, and I felt very honored by that trust. I learned a lot from that experience. And I felt badly for people that go and give it a year and then leave. They never know how rich it can be. You have to be there a while. Then you see first-hand, too, some of the problems that people live with and deal with, and some of the conditions that people live in that you would never, *ever* expect, coming from a city. You don't expect people to be living without electricity, without running water. And these people maintain, they do it. It's not right,

but people live without those things that we take for granted. It just is not right, and that should be remedied somehow. But I have a great deal of respect for the people.

I don't know, maybe you go out later in life as I did, and you see more, you see it from a different angle. I used to value education above everything—I still do—but there's more than one kind of education. I see people who maybe only went to seventh or eighth grade, but they can keep a truck running using found items or whatever they can get ahold of; they can maintain their animals. Education is great, but life skills is what I saw at a level that we don't ever have to deal with. And it made me appreciate the advantages *I* had coming out here. I had the ability to go from there to here. Some people don't have that. I have the ability to get to a school that was close enough to get to. A student who lives on the reservation who wants to come down to college now has to travel that great distance every day. I didn't have to do that. You can do that if your truck's running, if you have gas money. If you don't have those things, you don't get there. So people say, "Why won't they come to school?" Well, there are *reasons* why. I really wish there was some way to create jobs—*meaningful* jobs—on the reservation—not casino jobs—meaningful jobs for the dignity that would impart to people, for the ability to earn enough money so that you *could* have electricity and running water. Marginalized is the correct word: people are marginalized. You don't see 'em, and you don't think about 'em, you don't think about the conditions. And I think it's

amazing now that more people are beginning to finish college, so that they *can* come back and teach, because that's the way it *should* be. Things are improving, but very, very slowly.

Lutzick

What kind of jobs *do* exist that you saw, besides service industry?

Egan

Jobs at the schools—maintenance jobs, and jobs in the kitchens—good jobs, the bureau paid well, like they should. But there's such vast distances out there, and if you don't have the means to get—there's a job over on the *other* side of the reservation—if you can't get from here to there, you don't get that job. And there's a great competition for the school jobs, they're valuable. But all the problems that go along with poverty are there: the unemployment and the alcoholism. And you'll find the same problems in poorer sections of the cities, same thing, same conditions, the same problems. But I admire the people who can just keep on—and it's the grandparents, I have a lot of respect for them—they keep on goin' under really tough circumstances.

Lutzick

And you mentioned that the schools had changed ten or twelve years ago. So you were there '89 to '99.

Egan

Uh-huh [yes].

Lutzick

Why did you leave?

Egan

I left because I was sixty-six years old and I was getting tired!

Lutzick

You retired?

Egan

Yeah.

Lutzick

But not because the administration was changing in the schools?

Egan No, they did that after I left. Then they came out from under the bureau umbrella and the whole system changed. But it was time for me to go. I had done ten years and I was tired, and I wanted to make a change.

Lutzick And so now is it run by the tribe, the schools?

Egan It's more under the tribe. I think the bureau has some kind of oversight, but I'm not sure. But it's much more local control, which is what people wanted.

Lutzick And do you know if it's gone to bilingual instruction—

Egan I don't think so.

Lutzick —or what kind of changes there are?

Egan I don't think so. I don't see why they would want to do that, unless you just want to live and work on the reservation. But most young people want to leave, they want to find a job, and they want to leave the reservation, and so they have to have good English skills to do that. But there's a real two-way tug, and I see it in my students now at the college. I teach writing, reading, and math. And in their writings, there's this tug, "I have to live in town with my auntie because I want to go to school, but I miss my animals." It's really heartbreaking. You think, What a choice to have to make. But some of them are doing that. And then *those* are the ones I hope will continue on with their education, go back and teach.

Lutzick Do many of them talk about going back?

Egan They're giving me what's happening right now in their lives, in their writings. But I think yeah, there's a real strong feeling of going back. They give up a lot when they leave. They give up that *huge* family, everybody knows their place in that tribe, and it's a huge family, and they have to step outside of that. And I think for some it's very hard to do that, and there's always that pull to come back.

Lutzick And just to clarify, you're teaching at Northland Pioneer College, which is the community college in Navajo and Apache Counties.

Egan Yes.

Lutzick And you teach at the Winslow campus?

Egan Yes.

Lutzick Now I know they do have some satellite places to teach north of I-40, like Whiteriver, but you don't want to teach there?

Egan I did that.

Lutzick Oh you did. Okay.

Egan Yeah, I did that for about five years. I started doing adult classes through NPC while I was still teaching elementary. And then after I retired, I continued that. I went up two afternoons a week and taught at Dilkon School—the adults.

Lutzick So they have adult education classes at the same campus?

Egan They did, and then they changed it, now they're doing it at Lower Greasewood School, so there are certain schools. There's also satellite at Hopi. But I did that for five years, and then I decided I really don't want to do the traveling anymore, so I'm just on campus here.

Lutzick And are there a lot of people, or people from families that you knew, at NPC?

Egan Uh-huh [yes].

Lutzick Or just a few?

Egan Well, there are *some*. There are some.

Lutzick So after you retired, you moved to Winslow and continued to do adult ed for five years, and then changed over to the NPC campus.

I wanted to follow up on your love of horses that partially drew you out here as well. You said you brought a horse with you from Chicago and had that there.

Lutzick Yes, I did.

Lutzick So is that something that you did in your off time when you were there at Dilkon, was ride horses?

Egan Oh yes.

Lutzick What other kinds of things did you do?

Egan Best recreation in the world! Come home from school, change clothes, drop the books, go out, brush the horse, saddle the horse, and take a ride. I was fascinated with the terrain, because it's so different from anything I knew. And I *really* enjoyed just riding around and exploring. That was a lot of fun. And it was also something that the Navajos understood and I understood, so something that we shared. But going to the fair up at Dilkon every year, and watching the rodeo and all that, that was just great fun. And I met some really, really fine people.

Lutzick Did you ever have any adventures or mishaps on these rides out on the reservation, these horseback rides?

Egan Only one. If you come too close to somebody's sheepdog and they don't know who you are, they will bark a *lot*. They don't want you there. So I would just turn tail and go back. Rode out one day, and I found myself in a prairie dog town. I hadn't seen it, coming up to it, but once I got there, I'm seeing all these prairie dog holes. It's a great way for a horse to break an ankle. So we just very quietly backed out of it.

And I came upon a small cemetery up there—very small, but graves marked, and I felt like that was just something—. I don't know, it just was very moving to see. Most of the graves were very young people, short dating.

Went to squaw dances out there too, which is a really interesting social event in the summertime. They're held outdoors and it's singing and dancing, much like song-and-dance only this is outdoors. The difference with squaw dance is the woman asks somebody to dance with [her], so it was pretty different too. Just a lot of people having a good time.

Lutzick Did they have coming-of-age ceremonies?

Egan Yes.

Lutzick Were they different for girls or boys, and did you go to any of those?

Egan Yes, I went to a *canalda* [phonetic], it's called, for a young girl, and that's very interesting too. That's two or three days. And there are symbolic

things that the girl does: she mixes cornmeal, and she creates some little cakes and feeds people, and she runs. I can't tell you the exact order of things, because I don't remember it all that clearly, but that's what it was, it was her coming-of-age. And I don't know about the boys. One of my students was writing about that. She's a Hopi girl, too, and she was describing *her* coming-of-age, and it sounded pretty awful because she had to cook for all these people, she had to do the whole thing. But it's just really nice to have that peek into people's lives, and learn what's important to them, and what's meaningful, and how they live.

I went to a wedding, which was really interesting too. The groom comes riding in with a group of his friends all on horseback, and he drops his saddle by the girl's hogan, and that is the sign that's his home now too. But that was very interesting. Everybody sits around in the hogan, and there's a lot of talking about different things, and a lot of it is in Navajo, so I missed a whole lot of it. I'd catch a word here or there, but I really couldn't follow it. But just to be there was really fun. I knew somebody related to the bride, so it was fun to take part in it. But I found too—my forebearers were Irish, and saw a lot of parallels between the Irish and the Navajo—the sheep, and unfortunately the alcohol use, but also a spirit, a kind of a fun, happy spirit, that seemed very similar to me. So I really felt very close.

Lutzick

So since you've been retired, and besides teaching the adult ed in various locations, what have been the connections that you've had to

your time in Dilkon since you've been living in Winslow and retired—
sort of.

Egan Sort of. Well, I spend a lot of time at the senior center in town, and I'm the bingo manager two afternoons a week. And a lot of our bingo players are Navajo. So some that I know, and some that know of me from school, so it's just always fun to see them.

Lutzick So you've maintained some friendships and things that you had established back then?

Egan Oh yeah. Yes. And the great meeting place here in town on a weekend is Walmart, so I always run into people that I've met on the reservation, at Walmart. It's the great equalizer. (laughs) It's really fun to run into one of the kids all grown up, because I remember them this high. Now I'm looking up at them, but it's this face lighting up, saying, "Mrs. Egan!" It's that recognition that's a lot of fun. And then we catch up for a while, talk and visit about what's going on, and just catch up with each other. So yeah, I value those friendships a lot.

Lutzick Well, we have spent almost an hour of wonderful interview, but before we close, I wanted to ask if you had any thoughts you'd like to say about the lessons you've learned about your experience, the most important things you've learned, or the most important things you'd like people to know—anything along those lines?

Egan The one thing that I believe I take from that whole experience is that children are children across the board. They all need the same things. They all respond, you know, in various ways, but you could pretty well

predict how they're going to respond to some of the things that go on in school. And you could extend that to people are people—same basic needs. Pretty much people respond in the same way: if they're treated warmly and treated with friendliness, that's how they respond. And I've learned [if] that's what you give out, that's what you get back, across the board. And it's an experience that I'm *very*, very glad that I had what it took to grab the opportunity and run with it. I had thought when the time came to make the move, How many more adventures am I going to have at this age and beyond? Do it! (laughs) And it was very rich, very rewarding—and it still is, which is why I'm still here. So I learned a great deal from it.

Lutzick

And so those connections, is that one of the reasons why you want to stay in Winslow, or haven't left Winslow?

Egan

I just like—. There's a whole different spirit out here than I think there is in big cities. There's more of an openness and a friendliness. Nobody's embarrassed by being friendly, and people aren't guarded. In the cities, everybody's sort of got their guard up. You don't make eye contact easily. And out here, that's different. I'm not sure why, but it's noticeably different. My kids love to come out here and visit, and they know why I'm still here.

Lutzick

Do they live in Chicago?

Egan

They live in South Carolina, Oregon, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana.

(laughs)

Lutzick

But in bigger cities than Winslow?

Egan

Yes. But they love to come out here. They love to come out for the “Standin’ on the Corner.” They love to come out and go to La Posada. We have real routines when they come out, and it always includes at least one or two dinners at La Posada, and looking around there, and just absorbing the history that you absorb when you’re in that building. That really kind of epitomizes the spirit. Everybody there is very friendly. I just notice that when I go back to visit, which I do twice a year. I go back to Chicago. And *my* family is great, but it’s a different spirit, different way of dealing with people and the general public.

Lutzick

Well, on that note about the uniqueness of Winslow and Arizona, we’ll close our interview. Pat Egan, I really want to thank you for just a wonderful experience.

Egan

Thank *you!* Thank you very much.