



Carrie Dann

Great Basin Indian Archive

GBIA 019



Oral History Interview by

Norm Cavanaugh

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D: Well, first of all, I want to comment on the—I forgot something that I should do, always should. [**Prayer in Shoshone begins at 0:59, concludes at 1:12**]. Now we'll start. Raymond talked about the different things, and he talked about the ICC, the Indian Claims Commission. The way I look at the Indian Claims Commission, it was a law that was written by the attorneys, who eventually collected ten percent of so-called, their final decision as to how our lands was taken. We paid them to destroy us as a nation, or selling our land to United States of America. Who are they anyway? They're bunch of attorneys who's out there, that were just, to get money for themselves. It wasn't actually to represent the Shoshone people. I went to some of their meetings that they held in the Elko area. And I can tell you, from my own hearing and my own sight, how they lied to the Western Shoshone people. And I use the word "lie" because they sort of did lie. They told the Western Shoshone people the treaty was a treaty of cession, which is all bullshit as far as I'm concerned. [Applause] And, they told us that if we didn't accept that money, Congress don't have to pay us one penny. Which is a threat to the Western Shoshone people. And I look at these things, and I see some of the things they have said to us, which I think is, you know, it's total lies. If they, as our representatives, are representing the Western Shoshone people, they should protect our rights instead of giving it away. Which they didn't do. Then you also had the people from the Secretary of the Interior's office. Maybe BIA. And which is supposed to be—they *claim* to be our trustee. I don't think they're the trustees, because any time you have a trustee destroying you, destroying your rights, that is not a trustee. I can't claim them as a trustee, and nobody should. Unless they start sticking up for you. Today, in today's world, what do we see? They as a

trustee should see that all your health rights, your right to health should be protected. But no, every year they cut the Shoshone people down on their right to health. As a trustee, they're not supposed to do that. They're supposed to protect these rights for you. And then, of course, under this thing, we also have the Bureau of Land Management. The Bureau of Land Management is under the Department of Interior, who, again, is our trustee. Head trustee. The Bureau of Land Management brought a lawsuit against Mary and myself simply because we were out there using Western Shoshone lands. They have never proven to us, it has never been into the court systems of the United States— however, I don't believe in U.S. court system—but they have never proven in court how Western Shoshone lands were taken. Is “gradual encroachment” laws of United States? Is it a law of United States? And if it *is* a law of United States, where can we find it? Is it documented somewhere? Or is it one of the racist laws that we *have* seen so many times in the Indian country? It's made just for Indian people; to encroach upon your rights is taking away these rights. However, the Constitution of the United States also says that only United States can take land. Under the ICC ruling, it says our land was taken by white settlers and others. It did not mention United States. So, who are the others? Is the others United States? There's two things wrong. First of all, gradual encroachment, I don't believe is a law of United States of America. And Raymond said, you know, United States follow the rule of laws. Where is the rule of law that was taken? Where is the trustee that's supposed to take care of your rights for us, to look up our rights, called the Department of Interior? Where is it? It's not there. Department of Interior brought a lawsuit against Mary and myself. And which, you know, we've done really good—I thought, you know—as far as courtwise, we're doing good. We won mostly of what we

were standing for. We were actually to see who and how Western Shoshone land title was taken. And in the appeals court, the 9th Circuit Appeals in San Francisco, they always ruled in our favor. Am I right, Julie? But when we went to the Supreme Court, by that time, the trustee, supposedly, accepted 26 million dollars for Western Shoshone lands. Our trustee, now. We were going through this lawsuit. In the ICC proceedings, it also says that there's a bar action—which we never, reason why we never finished what we were doing, in the *U.S. v. Dann*, is because of the bar action. They barred us from the court system of United States. We never got to ask, how did Western Shoshone lands was taken by United States. Not by gradual encroachment, because gradual encroachment is not the law. But how was it taken? Because the Secretary of Interior, as a trustee, accepted that money for our lands, and it brought this bar. We could no longer address the title issue. So one thing I can say, is that Western Shoshone land title has never been argued before any court system of United States of America. *Any* court system. Never been argued before any court system. And when, you know, they treat us like trash. Worse than trash. I look at it as trash, what they have done to us is total trash. And then again, we have our own people. I have problem with some of our own people. I know they have problem with *me*. So, what's the difference? But anyway, I look at the land value of 26 million dollars. The biggest land theft in United States history in, let's see, it was accepted by the president in two thousand—president of United States—by 2004? I mean, that's a land theft. Twenty-six million dollars! We look at the gold mines that's out there. We know there's gold mines out there. We know there's petroleum out there. These are Western Shoshone resources. But they can never address that question. You know, how was Western Shoshone lands taken? Give us documentation! You think they

will give us a documentation how Western Shoshone lands were taken? No way. Why? Maybe because we're not demanding enough. Maybe because we're all splintered, all this way and that way. But, those are our resources. And what do we see today? We see the Water Grab from the Las Vegas area. We also see mining, which is pumping the water, destroying life. Because water is life. In traditional Western Shoshone way, water *is* life. And when these mining companies are pumping from anywhere from 20- to 70,000 gallons of water per minute, that's destroying life. And I think that's wrong. And contaminating many springs. Right now, I heard somebody say this morning that there's mercury contamination, and that you can only eat one fish a month. That's destroying life. Mercury contamination is destroying life as well. We also have other contaminations. We have the nuclear tests down in southern Nevada, we have now the nuclear dump, which I think they want to push through. But we got to get our own people against that, so we can stand straight and tall against the nuclear waste. They're talking about the nuclear train that's going to carry the nuclear waste to down to Yucca Mountain—I guess, if it's ever approved. But anybody that's been down to Yucca Mountain, they should see that there's lot of seismic activity that goes on down there. We don't have to be a scientist to see that, because you can see the ruggedness of the mountains. We can also see the ashes of volcanic eruptions in that area. I mean, there's a lot of things that we can see. There's lot of things that's happening in the Shoshone country. We have gold mines destroying our waters. We have gold mines that is polluting our air with mercury and other contaminants. You know, when I look at these things, and I look at the four of the most sacred things: the land, is being destroyed; the air, is being polluted; the water, is being contaminated, polluted; and then we have the beautiful sun,

which we would—you know, this morning, those of us that stood in the circle. They claim now that sun, through its ultraviolet rays, or whatever they call it, is giving our people, many people, cancer. Why? Is it because of the contaminants that's up high that we can't see? I believe that's what it is. Because the sun itself is life. We're doing all of these things to further the end of the human race. Not only the human race, but all life on this earth. That is what's happening today. We see that. They call it "global warming." We're losing the species of animals up in the north and south, at the poles. Why? Is it because of human activities? I often wonder if it's because of human activities. Well, I'll tell you one thing. My personal opinion—now, I want you to remember, this is my personal opinion. Those that walk on two legs, which we call ourselves "humans"—whether they're black, pink, polka-dotted, red, yellow—we all contribute to what's happening. America has what you call speed limit. Going up and down the byways, the interstates, whatever, highways or whatever roads there are. Each one of us want to get there fast. Fast as you can. And now they're talking about gasoline shortage. I wonder if each and every one of us, our families that's sitting over here, if they would reduce their speed to less than 60 miles an hour, how much petroleum could be saved. I mean, it's the humans themselves, because they want to get from here to there. I go from our place to Elko, as far as business. And I have noticed some people that's traveling the freeway have actually slowed down to some extent. And if we all slow down, we can save on gasoline, probably the gasoline. I'm not just saying those people that's here, but you know, people across the nation. If they would slow down, there would be no such thing as gasoline shortage. Because we would be saving gasoline every time we are traveling slower. Including diesel. And we talk about air and water contamination and all of these

things. We talk about, some of us that fly on the airplanes, we see all of these crazy things that's happening at the airports. [Laughter] We were talking about these, and things like that—but, if people would just slow down, they would save on petroleum products. And if we are environmentalist, I think that's where we should go. *I think. I don't know.* It's hard to resist, because when you step on that gas pedal, or set your speed limit, your foot gets heavy, pretty soon before you know it you're traveling 80 miles an hour, which, you know, it's, we're all guilty of that—including myself. But I try to, between Crescent Valley and Elko, I try to set my speed limit between 55 and 65. Shouldn't be more than 65, because I have to pay for the gasoline. And it's pretty damn expensive. So, I have to look at two things: environmentally, it's better for us to travel at lower speed; financially, it's even better for us because we burn less gasoline. So, I look at all of these things. I want to tell the group that's here, about a month ago, United States sent a collection, a private collection agency after me. Suppose after Raymond and all of us guys that supposedly owe United States money for trespassing. I'm worth now—I don't want to brag, this is nothing to brag about—I'm worth about six million dollars. [Cheering and applause] I don't think anybody can say their value, in six million dollars. But I can proudly say that it is Western Shoshone land, it will always be Western Shoshone lands, and as the people before us told us, it's only you Indians yourself—Western Shoshone people—that can destroy your own rights. The rights of the future generations. Nobody else can do it. Not United States—Congress of the United States, they can't do it. But it's up to the Indians of this area. If you're ready to destroy your rights—you can, I always look at it this way: You can destroy your own rights. But leave the rights of the future generation. But when you destroy your rights, you're also

destroying the rights of the future generation. And as indigenous peoples, the most important thing is our future generations. Our grandmother used to tell us, “This land don’t belong to you, it belongs to the future. It belongs to the future that’s coming up.” And we have a—those people that’s in leadership position, they have a duty to protect the next seven generations and beyond. Are the leaders ready to do that? Are you committed to that? If you’re not committed to do that, then I don’t think you’re much of a leader. I really think you’re not much of a leader.

[End of recording]