

This is an interview with William Y. Adams for the Society For Applied Anthropology Oral History Project at the University of Kentucky Libraries. The interview was conducted by John Van Willigen on December 5, 2001 in Lexington, Kentucky.

[An interview with William Adams]

VAN WILLIGEN: I'm trying to get some ideas of the sound level . . .

ADAMS: Yeah. Okay.

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . and . . .

ADAMS: So, we sit talking back and forth in a normal voice to see what . . . you're your reading is.

VAN WILLIGEN: I'm . . . I'm getting the . . . a response on the vu meter and I actually got it to go into the red, so . . . this is a . . . I'll just proceed from this point on.

ADAMS: Okay. Great.

VAN WILLIGEN: This is December 5th. I'm John Van Willigen and I'm talking to William Y. Adams and when we talked prior to this you mentioned the importance of your Navajo experience in your development as an anthropologist without necessarily worrying about . . . when you were thinking about becoming an anthropologist but reflecting on that early experience, what are . . . what are some of the things that come to mind that you want to share?

ADAMS: Well, can I . . . can I . . . can I take you back to the sort of apotheosis that [chuckle] launched me into anthropology?

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh, that . . . yes, that . . . that's the kind of . . . the kind of thing that I'm really interested in.

ADAMS: Oh see, a lot of people had one of these at one time or another of course . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Right.

ADAMS: . . . and was sort of born again as anthropologists and . . . and in my case just . . . just to back up briefly to the beginning, I was born in Los Angeles where my father was a professor at UCLA. He died when I was seven and immediately thereafter my mother got a job with the Indian Service and moved to the southwest and my brother and I who had been in school in California then came and joined her initially in Albuquerque where her first job was . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Your . . . your brother also had an academic career?

ADAMS: My brother went on to an academic career in philosophy as a professor of Philosophy of Science, that's right. Uh-huh. But we both, as a result of that . . . of . . . of her moving to the southwest, grew up in . . . in Indian country and mainly among Indian Service people but it was the southwestern scenery that particularly turned me on to start with and because I'd never seen anything like it and . . . and my apotheosis actually came on a Sunday afternoon when we'd been up to Frijoles Canyon [Bandelier National Monument] outside of Santa Fe which in those days was pretty remote, it was just a dirt road and there was a great thundershower while we were there and that was terribly dramatic to me. I had never seen . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Cla . . . classic southwest stuff?

ADAMS: Absolutely right. And coming up out of the canyon – once . . . once we had to wait for the road to dry out a little bit – coming up out of the canyon after the thundershower and then topping out of the canyon was that great sweeping vista across the upper San . . . the upper S . . . Rio Grande Valley with the Sangre de Christo Mountains, the towering clouds of thunder rumbling away in the distance but above all the smell of wet sagebrush all around and I thought, man, I've got to be part of this! [chuckle]

VAN WILLIGEN: I'd say so and how . . . how old were you at . . . at that point?

ADAMS: Eight or nine.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see. So, you were . . . you were . . .

ADAMS: Well, I knew that somehow or other the southwest was going to be very central to me. Beyond that I very soon, of course, got introduced both to ruins because they're all over the place in northern New Mexico but also live Indians and so . . . and I was equally interested in both. And I guess basically I decided, okay, Indians are going to be my bag and of course Indians meant anthropology . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Sure.

ADAMS: . . . in those days, academically, to everybody, in fact, and so I knew that . . . that . . . that Indians were . . . were going to be my bag and I would . . . I was quite determined from oh, age ten or eleven on when in fact, that that was the route I was going to take although it hadn't defined itself in any very specific way. Then we moved to Window Rock, which was the newly established administrative capital of the Navajo reservation, then a tiny little town of 300 people.

VAN WILLIGEN: A . . . about . . . about what year was that?

ADAMS: 1936. Window Rock then was about twenty-five miles from the nearest paved road and thirty-five miles from the nearest town and it was . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: The BIA had . . . had picked that as a . . .

ADAMS: BIA . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: It was like a sub agency?

ADAMS: Well, with . . . no, it was a central agency. The background of this if you like is this . . . there were six separate . . . separately administered Navajo reservations until the Collier administration . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh, I see.

ADAMS: . . . when they were consolidated and Window Rock was the Washington, D.C. of the Navajo. You see, the site was chosen from scratch and the town was built . . . there was nothing there before the town was built there from scratch to be the administrative capital of the Navajo reservation. And so there were . . . of course, all kinds of exciting programs going on through the Collier years of new developments on the reservation. Roads were being built and my mother was in charge of the newly consolidated school system for all the Navajo reservations as well as Hopi and Ute and the revolution I think there was, the Collier program was day schools because the Indians had always gone to boarding schools before that time and Collier was, of course, with the advice of anthropologists . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: So, so, she . . . she was the person in charge . . . the chief of the educational branch, I imagine they call it something like that?

ADAMS: Director of Education was her title . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Right.

ADAMS: . . . that's right.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see

ADAMS: Yes. Uh-huh. And the . . . basically all those roads were built on the reservation by . . . they were terribly bad . . . bad roads but they nevertheless they were passable for cars because they were essential for the day school programs . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: . . . see, to bring the kids in by bus to the fifty schools that were built. And so, of course, exploring the reservation over these newly developed roads and going up on top of the Lukachukais and all that kind of stuff was just the cat's pyjamas, you know [chuckle] and so . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: So, you'd go with your mother?

ADAMS: Yeah. We'd go . . . well, with other government people because they, you know, there were . . . Window Rock was a young people's town. For one thing there was no school beyond the grade school so for that reason alone it . . . it had very few older people. So, it was very much a young people's town and some how or other we were thrown very much together in a place like Window Rock and the kids got integrated in things we were doing. When people go out to an irrigation project or something like that they'd take us along. And so we . . . we got to . . . and . . . and exploring the reservation got to be the great . . . the great thing to do, you know. Now, you know, this is kind of an aside but I was thinking the other day that . . . that most kids of course grow up with a strong sense of orientation of a particular state like Kentucky or Wisconsin and so, I also thought of the Navajo reservation as my home, not Arizona or New Mexico or Utah but just the reservation . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: . . . as my home. So, I wasn't state oriented. It just . . . the res was there and it was mine [chuckle] and I felt that way ever since in fact. I felt like the reservation is my basic home.

VAN WILLIGEN: So, you never had strong feelings of being an outsider while you were there?

ADAMS: Oh, not . . . well, yes and no as a matter of fact. Of course because . . . because Window Rock was as . . . as removed from the daily life of the Navajos as the Washington, D.C. is from America . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: It was a administrative capital. It was . . . it was an all-white town, its just . . . the Navajos were all in just very low insolated positions. No Navajo was spoken around the place and so, I . . . I had . . . I think the fact is we were a typical colonial administrative group like . . . like other colonialists everywhere. In fact . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Well, where was your . . . where was your house in Window Rock and what was it like?

ADAMS: Well, all the houses in Window Rock except the superintendent's house were alike because it was a government, you see, project and they were all government built. They were built a . . . a beautiful... built of . . . of stonemasonry with pueblo style vega. . . vega roofs . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: And it was . . . it was a two-bedroom house. [chuckle] The . . . the superintendent's house had three bedrooms, that's the only one in town that had. It had two bedrooms.

VAN WILLIGEN: It's kind of WPA stuff.

ADAMS: Well, you could say that in fact, yeah, except that . . . that . . . because there was some really superb stonemasons available, so, it's real high-class . . . by the way, all of those building are in the National Register of Historic Places now . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh. They . . . so, they're still there?

ADAMS: Yeah, they . . . oh, yeah, they're very much still there.

VAN WILLIGEN: As an aside, I spent a few days on the . . . there is this place on the Papago Reservation that I would go to . . .

ADAMS: Sells . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . that was . . . yeah, in . . . in Sells but it was at the foot of Baboquivari . . .

ADAMS: Oh . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . where there was a . . . a stonemasonry building built that was like a house of it and I . . . I think it was used as a kind of a campsite or . . . in a place there were people from of the Indian Service would go to . . . and it probably dates from the same period.

ADAMS: I would imagine it does.

VAN WILLIGEN: Because it had a lot of those features, not the big . . . vegas . . .

ADAMS: Yeah . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . but it was this magnificent stonemasonry building.

ADAMS: Well, I think, again, you know, so much of that reflect the Collier ethos because Collier felt that the . . . the building should be appropriate to the culture and the land and the surroundings. But Window Rock was an absolutely typical agency town. I've been in a lot of them since then on . . . on . . . the sub agencies on the Navajo reservation and on lots of other reservations . . . they are really all of a piece in a way, you know, I mean you have a certain administrative cadre there and it is a very much a colonial type of regime and . . . and the people have, whether they realize it or not, there is . . . there is . . . the thread of paternalism runs through the whole . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Umhmm.

ADAMS: . . . the whole thing and we're here for their good.

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: And that's the way . . . but of course, for us kids, gosh, you talk about a Huck Finn type of boyhood, well, we loved the reservation. We were just the freest spirits, you know, because there was . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Absolutely safe?

ADAMS: Oh, absolutely safe [chuckle]. We were in danger from was ourselves. I shudder to think of what an unregulated militia we were because we all had guns [chuckle] . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: So, like a .22s?

ADAMS: Yeah, mostly .22s. A couple of kids even had a short guns, several of the kids including us had horses and we could go out and ride, you know, there wasn't a fence anywhere on the reservation. You could just ride on the damn thing. My pal Fred Crockson and I used to ride up to the Fort Defiance to buy bubblegum because [chuckle] the nearest trading post to Window Rock was seven miles away at Fort Defiance [laughs] and we loved bubblegum, so, we used to go up there and buy it.

VAN WILLIGEN: On your . . . on your horse . . . on the horse?

ADAMS: Yeah, but it was an enchanting . . . and it has left his imprint on the kids that were there from that day to this because I know some of them and I kept in contact with them. They've said that was a golden year . . . age for all of us, really indeed.

VAN WILLIGEN: Who . . . who are some of the people that you maintained contact with?

ADAMS: Well, there's . . . most importantly Fred Crockson who was the same age as me and he and I were the eight-grade [chuckle] more or less in the school. He's been city magistrate in Flagstaff for years and years . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh, I see.

ADAMS: . . . and I see him almost every summer and he . . . he was here last year, in fact. Another girl who was in our school is down in Silver City, Marian Bentley, she was in . . . I . . . I don't keep personal contact with . . . with the others but Fred does and he keeps me sort of in .

. . . informed about them because there is . . . there's a real strong sense of . . . and yet it was a very short experience for all of us because when we graduated from the eight-grade that was it. We all scattered . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh, I see.

ADAMS: . . . you see, because we had to go off to high school and then it wasn't very long after that before World War I started . . . II started . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Right.

ADAMS: . . . and then almost all the people of Window Rock went off into other kinds of . . . the . . . the place was practically put in a sort of deepfreeze for the duration.

VAN WILLIGEN: So, there was this . . . the school and that sounded like there were hardly any students there.

ADAMS: Well, there were forty-eight kids in the school . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: . . . and there were thirty-two in the lower four grades and sixteen in the upper four grades. There were two sch . . . there were two teachers, one for the lower four and one for the other four.

VAN WILLIGEN: And you . . . and this . . . this school for BIA kids or was a BIA school that . . .

ADAMS: No, it was a state school for anybody resident . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Ah.

ADAMS: . . . and it was not a BIA school because, of course, the BIA is not in the business for providing education [chuckle] . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: That was . . .

ADAMS: . . . for white . . . for white kids and so and so, it was a state school but . . . but the building was built by the BIA. It was a BIA building but the teachers were state teachers, so, it had that kind . . . so, for that reason, of course, there were no Navajo students in it.

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: There were . . . some of the BIA employees were part Oklahoma Indian and one was a New Mexico Pueblo, so, there kids were in the school but there weren't any Navajo kids in the school so it was strictly Anglophone. And, of course, the . . . the nature of our . . . our sort of insulated community was that none of us would learn any Navajo. Our contact with Navajos was mainly going out to dances, you know, if there was news of a squaw dance we would go out to . . . out to dances.

VAN WILLIGEN: And how . . . where . . . where would one of those been?

ADAMS: Well, if there's going to be a . . . a Navajo dance, of course, is always a curing ceremony of two, three, five, or nine nights and always at a different place each night but . . . but the . . . the people who are putting it on, who are the . . . the family of the patient so to speak they have to pick a place that's big enough so a lot of people can come and park the wagons to camp and so on and so, it's always out in the country, out in the open some place.

VAN WILLIGEN: So, at that point people would have mostly wagons?

ADAMS: Yes, there were very few motor vehicles then, very few indeed, in fact. And most of them in those days still were covered with the hoops over the top. You didn't see that much after the war.

VAN WILLIGEN: Where are those wagons from, you have any idea?

ADAMS: Yes, they were made by either the Owensboro Wagon Company here in Kentucky or the Indiana Wagon Company in . . . in some place in Indiana [Ed. Lafayette].

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh. Do you suppose any of those places that are still in business?

ADAMS: I doubt that very much. Indeed, they still were when I was trading at Shonto [Ed: Shonto is a Navaho locality. Adams worked at the Shonto Trading Post.] in 1953 to '5 because we sold Indiana wagon parts . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Ah.

ADAMS: . . . including a wagon itself but we had spare wheels and boxings and journals and trees and all that stuff, in fact. And they . . . they came from the Indiana Wagon Company.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see. That's really something. And so, then you would . . . you would . . . you . . . you were quite young at this point . . .

ADAMS: Yeah, very . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . and you would be going to these dances and you would like walk there or take your . . .

ADAMS: Oh, no, we'd go with . . . we'd go with . . . with adults . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: . . . and, you know, and again, you know, if anybody got . . . it . . . it was a very tight knit neighborhood and all the families knew each other and if the Crocksons or the Bentleys or somebody was about to go, "Hey, we're going out to a squaw dance, you want to go along?" You see and be there sort of thing. And the other thing is that while we were living there, there was instigated . . . my mother had a large part to do with this instigation, the Navajo Tribal Fair which had . . . had constructed fairgrounds close to Window Rock, you might've seen them in fact. And . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I don't think I've ever been in Window Rock . . .

ADAMS: Well, you missed something [chuckle] a very scenic place.

VAN WILLIGEN: I've been in Shonto as you know.

ADAMS: Okay. Well, the . . . the fairgrounds were constructed so one side was from . . . basically for *bilagaana*, for white people, but also any Navajos who wanted to but the other side where no admission was charged, where people could camp, was just all for Navajos. Well, we . . . us kids used to go down there and go into the Navajo area [chuckle] because it didn't cost anything and . . . and, you know, we . . . we'd sit in there and the Navajos always really friendly toward kids, you know, so, they kind of got a kick out of . . . out of having us there. Now, the feature . . . one of the features of the squaw dance which properly should be called an "enemy way" because it's a part of an original war dance, you know, is that women dance around in a circle and then they grab men and drag them into the circle and then you have to dance around with them and at a certain point why, you have to pay them to let you go [chuckle] so to speak and, of course, they loved to grab the white kids because they figured we had some [laughs] pocket change, you see. So, we got . . . danced around quite a bit and, of course, by . . . by young Navajo ladies all dressed in, you know, in . . . in . . . in finery so to speak . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I bet . . . I bet it was great to . . . to see it.

ADAMS: Yeah. Right. And they . . . very seldom could the kids speak English, so, you know, you danced around [chuckle] without talking to anybody but . . . oh, it was fun. Yeah, it was fun. Of course, the great crackling juniper fire in the middle it was fun. It was . . . it was just an enchanted time for all of us and it really burned deep in, I think, to most of us in fact. And not many of the kids went on to Indian Service careers or anything like that and . . . and yet, it still means something to them, you know, as a matter of speaking. But, of course, then came . . . I'm getting ahead of the story a little bit but . . . but . . . but just . . . just . . . just talking about us collectively, you see, and of course, then came World War II which was a colossal change of

focus and shifting of gears, the shifting of America's interest overseas and sense of crisis and everything and somehow or other the whole reservation became a . . . a chapter of ancient history so to speak because we were thrust into a new world where there was rationing and all these things connected with war and the war effort . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: So, so, so, where were you living when the war happened?

ADAMS: Well, okay, what really happened [chuckle] I had a very, very checkered high school career. First of all, when I graduated from Window Rock – this was 1939, my . . . my mother was still there – I was sent off to live with an uncle and aunt in . . . in Marin County, California, to go to high school for a year which I . . . and you can imagine what . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: So, this would be when you're a freshman in high school . . .

ADAMS: Right. You can imagine what a . . . what . . . what a wrench that was for a kid going to high school . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I imagine.

ADAMS: I was like, well, then that same summer then my mother got a tremendous promotion to a . . . a . . . central Indian Bureau job in Washington where she was going to be head of some new development programs for the whole Indian Service over the whole country . . . of course, this was regarded as a great step up. Now, we're talking 1941 and so we moved to Washington and were prepared and I thought . . . I wasn't very happy about growing up the rest of my life in the East so to speak but we were no sooner well implanted in Washington and started high school there, so bang, the Japanese bombed Pearl Har [chuckle] . . . Pearl Harbor. That was the end of any Indian Service programs for the duration.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: And in fact, the Indian Bureau lock, stock, and barrel was packed off to Chicago for the duration, because the In . . . Interior De . . . Department building . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh, they needed the space . . .

ADAMS: . . . they needed the space, right, because the . . . the . . . the war . . . war production board, I think, was housed in the Indian Department, or one of those wartime agencies . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: In the . . . in the Department of Interior building . . .

ADAMS: That's right, in Washington . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: . . .the kind of megalithic . . .

ADAMS: Yeah. Right. A very typical kind sort of Stalinist, 1930s building . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Yeah.

ADAMS: But anyway, of course, my mother being the sort of activist she is was not about to sit and do nothing in Chicago. So, she immediately . . . well, my mother is a . . . a woman, you know, a women with tremendous organizational ability and she had a reputation all through government service for her ability to take hold of a new program and . . . and get it going and so, when the Japanese relocation was announced on the West Coast, why, they immediately offered her a position and so, she took a job in . . . in San Francisco almost right away leaving my brother and me to finish our high school on our own [chuckle] in Washington.

VAN WILLIGEN: In Washington.

ADAMS: That's right.

VAN WILLIGEN: Where were . . . where did you go to high school in Washington?

ADAMS: Woodrow Wilson High School which is in the western part of the town.

VAN WILLIGEN: I imagine there's still a Woodrow Wilson . . .

ADAMS: I think it probably is, yes. I was in . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: And so, that's where you graduated from?

ADAMS: Oh, no-no. That was only in my sopho . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see, I'm sorry.

ADAMS: I'm . . . no, I never graduated from high school at all. I still haven't.

VAN WILLIGEN: I sort of remember that story.

ADAMS: No, see, then . . . then . . . okay, after that year then we came back. My mother was still in . . . in San Francisco area, so we went back to Marin County where by that time she was renting a house and went back to that same high school again in Marin County as a . . . as the start of the junior year but then as soon as the camps were set up for the Japanese, why, she moved to the Manzanar Camp in . . . in Eastern California which was the . . . was for the Japanese relocation . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: So, but . . . but you . . . you were living . . . she was working at the War Relocation Program . . .

ADAMS: That's right. Uh-huh.

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . in San Francisco, now, was that the headquarters of the . . .

ADAMS: That was the headquarters for the relo . . . while the people were being relocated . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: . . . while the people were being relocated. Right. Yeah. Once the relocation was in place – I think it was administered out of Washington if I'm not mistaken but, of course, there were twelve camps and one of them Manzanar where . . . where we were. Well, John, just a second, I'll get you . . . get you something that's relevant here. [recording suspended] You could go to Manzanar the War Relocation Authority was not [chuckle] the best for providing education. So, I was shipped off to live with another uncle and aunt in Austin, Texas, and that was my . . . my second half of my junior year and then I . . . I came back and, of course, and spent the summer at Manzanar. Well, then . . . then that fell through because . . . because that uncle who was in the service got transferred some place and back and beyond . . . it may be overseas for all I know, and so there seemed to be no other solution what to do with me . . . my brother and me but to get us into Stanford [chuckle] and so, we both entered Stanford without ever graduating from high school.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see and how did that . . . how did that work?

ADAMS: Well, Stanford was so short of males and it was still a very largely male institution – in those days there was a quota on women, no more than a quarter then –

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: . . . and because of the war, you know, and . . . and Stanford did not have a major military training program like some of the other schools did. They simply decided that they were going to let kids in at the end of their junior year if they had completed all the college prep courses.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: So, I had. And so, theoretically you were supposed to be completing your last semester, your last year of . . . of high school and first year of college at the same time. It was a . . . it was a . . . it was an oddball arrangement. So, anyway, I ended up going to Stanford, you see at . . . at the . . . at the you see having just turned sixteen years old and never graduating from high school. By this time . . . of course, a long way from the reservation and anything about it and, of course, we got very interested in the . . . in the relocation experience in a way. But we . . . the Manzanar . . . as you can see in some of those pictures it was right at the foot of the highest part of the sierras and my brother and I spent all summer up in the sierras hiking and fishing in fact. And during the war there was nobody else there so that was just [chuckle] . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: My en . . . my encounter with the . . . with the camps was of course spending time at Gila River when they still had . . . Pimas . . . were still living

ADAMS: in the old Poston camps . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: in the . . . the camps that were kind of . . . they . . . it's like . . . seemed like they were cutting the hunks . . .

ADAMS: Yeah. Yeah, they were . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . they carted . . . carted around . . . see, you'd find them at different locations.

ADAMS: Oh, I see, right. Yeah. Yeah. It could easily . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: There are probably some still there.

ADAMS: Yeah, there probably are.

VAN WILLIGEN: And then I also visited the remnants . . . I think it was the high school gym of . . . of a camp that was . . . I want to call it . . . it was on the Colorado River at Parker . . .

ADAMS: Oh, yeah.

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . does that make . . . that make sense?

ADAMS: Yeah, sure, that was part . . . there were three camps on the Mojave . . . on the . . . on the . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: So, I don't know . . . as I remember . . . in fact, looking at this Ansel Adam's book there is this photograph of a . . . a monument . . .

ADAMS: Yeah.

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . and I remember something like that . . .

ADAMS: That's . . . right.

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . not that, of course, because it was a different camp but something that was sort of . . . it had people's names on it . . .

ADAMS: Uh-huh. Right. Well, they had a cemetery of course and then they had to have, you know, burial monuments anyway. The . . . all of this is of course taking me a long way from [chuckle] the story in a manner of speaking. Well, I had a couple of years at Stanford doing whether you believe it or not, I actually became sports editor of the *Stanford Daily* at the age of seventeen. [chuckle]

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: The I was involved in that was A, Stanford had dropped athletics for the war, so, all I was re . . . recording was intramurals. Secondly, the *Stanford Daily* came out three times a week [both laughing]. So, it wasn't as much of a drag as it . . . but I had been interested in journalism and I wrote for the high school papers both in . . .

in Marin County and in . . . in Austin, Texas.

VAN WILLIGEN: Do you still have any of your stories from . . .

ADAMS: I'm . . . there's somewhere . . . there's a scrapbook where they . . . but I'd be damned if I knew where they are.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: Yes. Uh-huh.

VAN WILLIGEN: And so . . . so befo . . . in this period before you . . . before you started at Stanford did you have any awareness of anthropology as such?

ADAMS: Oh.

VAN WILLIGEN: There is this kind of general commitment to Indian country and . . .

ADAMS: Well, I was certainly aware of anthropology as anthropology for the simple reason there were so many anthropologists in the Indian Service . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: . . . and so many of my mother's friends were anthropologists.

VAN WILLIGEN: Who were some of these . . .

ADAMS: Well, W. W. Hill is a name that might be familiar.

VAN WILLIGEN: Yeah, I've heard of him.

ADAMS: Gladys Reichard was someone that was . . . she was around the reservation a lot . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Yes. That's right.

ADAMS: She's an authority on Navajo. Uhm, uh, Frederica de Laguna was in the . . . in agriculture [Ed: She was employed as a soil conservationist on the Pima Reservation] then . . . Ruth Underhill was another anthropologist we knew well. Morris Opler . . . Morris Opler by the way was the camp anthropologist at Manzanar . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: . . . just as Ned [Edward H.] Spicer . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I've read some of his things that were about . . . where relocation had already been . . . but I . . . I really forgotten but he was at that particular camp.

ADAMS: Yeah. So, we actually knew quite a lot of . . . of anthropologists, you see. And they were actually . . . if I stop and think about it I could probably dredge up the name of some others. I didn't know Clyde Kluckhohn at the time. I got to know him . . . him later but I certainly I knew a lot of the biggies at that time. So, anthropology was always kind of in my mind, as what I wanted to do but I was awfully far removed from it except for having Morris over there at . . . at Manzanar and I do remember talking some things about it.

VAN WILLIGEN: Did you . . . trying to place yourself back there think about what you . . . how you perceived what he was doing at that time?

ADAMS: No, I really . . . I really can't in fact.

VAN WILLIGEN: And he was like within your mother's social circle so to speak?

ADAMS: Well, there was a tiny social circle and we were called "Caucs" in those days, short for Caucasians [chuckle] but there was one part of the camp which had whitewashed wooden buildings instead of the tarpapered shacks and that's where all the administrative personnel . . . it was very small because the administrative staff . . . because most of the administrative people were Japanese living in the things and so, yeah, we all knew each other and so on and . . . but . . . but my understanding was that this . . . Opler was sort of studying the social system of the . . . of the camp and I didn't . . . I didn't go very much for that because quite honestly to me in those days anthropology was Indianology and this was a . . . this was a sidetrack so to speak.

VAN WILLIGEN: I recall that there was some . . . because of Spicer's experience in that he . . . there was some notion of that these anthropologists were community analysts.

ADAMS: I think that's absolutely correct.

VAN WILLIGEN: And he . . . he . . . when dealing with [telephone] . . .

ADAMS: Excuse me.

VAN WILLIGEN: I was interested in Opler . . .

ADAMS: Yeah. Right.

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh, the . . . I . . . I was mentioning about community a . . . analysts and the . . . the . . . Spicer had a project he did in the Yaqui community, Old Pascua in the . . . I got . . . that would've been in the late '60s he . . . they hired anthropologists and then called them community analysts.

ADAMS: Uh-huh.

VAN WILLIGEN: It's interesting.

ADAMS: When you stop thinking about it now, of course, they had a really interesting challenge in the way taking . . . gi . . . giving the . . . the personnel that made up the population of the camp, was only about 10,000 people, and they were a very diverse background because, of course, there were the Issei [Ed: born in Japan.] and some of them didn't have much English and then Nisei [Born in America] . . . and even the Sansei [Born to Nisei.] they didn't have any Japanese in making a community . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Right.

ADAMS: And, you know, try to see who was . . . who emerges as leaders . . . in fact though I . . . from what I understand about it I think the community organization was largely imposed just as . . . as Navajo . . . as Indian tribal councils are in a certain sense, it was created for administrative convenience. Of course, the Japanese being as adaptive as they are they . . . they just, you know, really fell in and then adapted and accepted. That's the thing about the Japanese, of course, is they accepted and . . . and some of the things they did in the . . . in that community [chuckle] were quite remarkable.

VAN WILLIGEN: Yeah. Would . . .

ADAMS: Well, the . . . the . . . the . . . the communities . . . you can see in some of the pictures there are all organized in these blocks with wide fire breaks in between which were nothing but sagebrush desert but gosh, they turned some of them into little bonsai gardens with miniature bridges and all kinds of stuff [chuckle] and, of course, they had a lot of time on their hands.

VAN WILLIGEN: Sure. So, and then you . . . you . . . you were able to kind of walk through all of that?

ADAMS: Oh, yes, sure. Yeah, in any place you wanted to go. We had some Japanese friends here and there. And my brother and I when we came back from fishing, from . . . and we always brought back a extra fish because the fishing was just tremendous during the war [chuckle] – nobody else was out there – and we'd give them away to the Japanese who love fish [chuckle], you see. And so, that . . . that made us kind of popular. Well, I should certainly condense a little bit. After the . . . after I had been at Stanford for one year and I went back to Manzanar . . . three different summers I went back to Manzanar and spent time there but then right after that third summer the war was winding down and my mother took a job overseas with the War Relocation Aut . . . Author . . . Authority . . . I'm sorry, the UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration] you know, resettling of refugees and displaced persons and she went off in '44 and I didn't see her again until '47 because she was . . . she was working first in Germany and then for two years in Hungary. Meanwhile . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: So, where did you live then?

ADAMS: I . . . I . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I mean you were at college.

ADAMS: . . . I was at Stanford . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Yeah.

ADAMS: . . . and so, I stayed . . . I lived . . . and my grandfather was in Los . . . was in . . . my grand . . . my mother's father lived in Los Angeles and I went down and spent with him when I had time to spend. But immediately after my sophomore year I was going to turn 18 and I'm going to get drafted and so I joined the Navy in fact. And then I . . . I went off to boot camp and the war ended while I was still in training in fact. So, I had one year in the Navy all after the war basically and I was assigned a small craft and then we . . . a rusty old landing craft and we brought it around from San Pedro Harbor to . . . to New Orleans through the Panama Canal

[chuckle]. That was the total of my sea experience and then I spent about three months in New Orleans just waiting till my time was up and got discharged. Then I came back to California and . . . okay, here is . . . here . . . here . . . here was a real turning point for me, John. I had read at Stanford Edgar Lee Hewett's books and . . . do you know his name at all well?

VAN WILLIGEN: No.

ADAMS: He was kind of a pioneer southwestern anthropologist but he wrote these wildly romantic books . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Edgar Lee Hewett?

ADAMS: Yeah, he was head of the department in New Mexico for years and years, he wasn't a bad excavator but he was a great self-promoter but the point is that he wrote these popular books that were just noble red men to the chore, about ancient life . . . the American Southwest, the ancient life . . . ancient Indian life and boy, those things just hit me where I lived at my age, in fact. And so, I determined I am going to study New Mexico with Hewett you see.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see. Now . . . now where did you hear about these books?

ADAMS: Uh, actually as . . . as a sophomore at Stanford I was assigned to read his book *Ancient Andean Life* of course on . . . on South American history I think.

VAN WILLIGEN: Ah-hah. Oh, I see.

ADAMS: And so that's how I happened to run across him in fact. And once I . . . once I became aware of it then I . . . then I went in search of his other books and read them, you see, and I thought, okay, this is the man for me. So, I wrote to New Mexic . . . I was still in the Navy in . . . in New Orleans and I wrote to New Mexico and said I like to apply and they sent me all the material and application forms and so on and I was all ready to go and then been accepted and everything and I got out and I guess that either just before I was discharged or just afterward there came a letter from New Mexico saying they were sorry that they were going to have to cancel all out-of-state enrollments because of the flood of veterans.

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: Now, this happened all over the country and that's an interesting story how utterly unprepared the American universities were for . . . for the GI Bill because somehow college was thought of as such an elitist experience that . . . that all . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: They just didn't imagine everybody was going to . . .

ADAMS: No, they thought only the people that would've gone anyway are the ones that will do this, you know. They just had no idea [chuckle] what [inaudible] there was. So, anyway there I was in a lurch, you see, and so I went then – my mother was still overseas – I went to California where my grandfather was . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: But at this point you had a Stanford . . .

ADAMS: I . . . I had two years at Stanford.

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh, I see.

ADAMS: Yeah, two years at Stanford.

VAN WILLIGEN: So, you were like a . . . like a junior.

ADAMS: Yeah. Yes. Right. Uh-huh. And for want of anything else to do I thought, well, I'll wait for New Mexico. In the meantime I accepted a job teaching Spanish and I was going to teaching Spanish in a private school in . . . in California which is actually the school I went to my first four years.

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: And . . . but then I went up to the Bay area with my brother who was . . . had . . . had flunked out of Stanford and was trying to get back in [chuckle] and I went with him and I do

not know why we went to Berkeley. I cannot remember but we did and I picked up a catalogue and I saw all this great anthropology. I had never heard of Lowie or any of these guys but I saw this list of course offerings, said, "Ma-an!" you know, this just looks tremendous and so I was in the . . . was in the administration building at the time and I walked up to the registration window and I said, "Are you still taking applicants?" And she said, "Are you a resident?" Well, I was because I had been at Stanford, you see, and she said, "Are you a veteran?" And I said, "Yes, I am." And she said, "You're in." [chuckle] And so that's how I got to the University of California, you see.

VAN WILLIGEN: Huh.

ADAMS: Was just this very spur of the moment, you see, because of the fact that New Mexico having sort of dumped me in a manner of speaking and looking for a place because I wanted to go on with it.

VAN WILLIGEN: Yeah. And . . . and where you were at that point in your mind in anthropology . . .

ADAMS: Definitely on my way. That's right, as an anthropology major . . . now, I couldn't major in anthropology at Stanford because they didn't have any . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: Stanford had only one anthropologist and he was teaching a small group of GIs that were on the campus and so there were no anthro . . . of course, and so at . . . at Stanford I was a Latin America Studies major but I always knew that I wasn't going back to Stanford, you see.

A. It was too expensive and I had to work my ass off to . . . to . . . to stay in Stanford, hashing and so on. And B. because I wanted to study anthropology but then I thought . . . I saw this list of courses and boy, and it was just like having a delicious feast.

VAN WILLIGEN: All these people you . . . you already had heard of?

ADAMS: No, I hadn't heard of most of them actually.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: I . . . I hadn't because I was not well acquainted with the literature outside of Indianology . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. And then . . .

ADAMS: . . . outside of the southwest.

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . and then who were some of the . . .

ADAMS: Well, the chairman was [Robert H.] Lowie and under Lowie were a . . . a couple of old-timers holdovers from the Kroeber era, Ronald [L.] Olson who was . . . had then a very promising ethnol . . . well an all round anthropologist had been in an alcoholic haze for years. Edward W. Gifford was the head of the museum and he was . . . he had done some archeological and ethnographic work in . . . in Oceania but also among California Indians. The . . . the newly hired archeologist was Robert [F.] Heizer whose name you probably do know.

VAN WILLIGEN: Yes.

ADAMS: The . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I've . . . I've met him.

ADAMS: . . . the physical anthropologist was Theodore [D.] McCown who made quite a . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I've heard of him . . .

ADAMS: Yeah . . . quite a reputation and that was really just about it. There was only about a five or six-man faculty . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: . . . which was typical for the time.

VAN WILLIGEN: And a very four fieldy is . . . I mean . . .

ADAMS: Very four fieldy, indeed, absolutely. Now, while I was there some other people who . . . who became to be well known, John [H.] Rowe for example became there . . . David [G.] Mandelbaum and . . . and . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh so you knew . . . you . . . you . . . encountered Mandelbaum . . .

ADAMS: I was actually Mandelbaum's advisee when I shifted over to ethnographic interest .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see. Just as a sidebar I studied Hindi at Berkeley . . .

ADAMS: Uh-huh.

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . one summer . . .

ADAMS: Oh, you did? Uh-huh.

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . and let's see . . . that was part of the . . . I was a National Defense Foreign Language Fellow.

ADAMS: Oh, yeah.

VAN WILLIGEN: That's right. And I took . . . I sat in . . . I . . . I think . . . I may have actually audited it. I sat in the course that Mandelbaum taught on South Asia.

ADAMS: Did you? Uh-huh.

VAN WILLIGEN: So, I went to, I'd say probably half the lectures. He's a . . . it was s a very positive experience .

ADAMS: Yeah.

VAN WILLIGEN: I . . . I didn't really get to know him.

“”

ADAMS: Personable sort of guy, yes.

ADAMS: And he didn't fit in terribly well with Berkeley partly because of the fact that he came out of the psychological anthropology background and Berkeley was . . . was rather hide bound in terms of the Boasian kind of . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Sorry, but he was your adviser?

ADAMS: Yeah, later on not . . . because he didn't even come until I was a graduate student.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: My adviser . . . my . . . I think my adviser was Heizer the first couple of years I was there but . . . but . . . but I had . . . having had no previous work in anthropology . . . I mean I was just taking, you know, filling up on basics but man, talk about a feast! Those two years . . . those . . . my . . . my . . . my first three years at Berkeley was certainly the most intellectually exciting that I've ever had because outside the Southwest Indians I knew nothing about anthropology. See, and it was all spread out for me on the table and I loved it. I loved everything about it in fact and . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: What are some of the . . . the books I'd say, the things that you read.

ADAMS: Well, books were not very important believe it or not because the . . . mostly it . . . the content was carried . . . there weren't that many textbooks and mostly the content was carried in the lecture course. Now, I loved Lowie's lectures. Lowie was a fascinatingly entertaining lecturer in fact there was a . . . there was a style about the man that I just dearly loved. And I realize now that [chuckle] the content of his lectures was all not entirely profound. I took World Ethnography from him, I took Ethnography of Europe from him, I took History of Ethnological Theory with him and a couple of others in fact but in . . . in the case of History of Ethnological Theory his . . . the textbook was his book, *A History of Ethnology*. The other books didn't have any textbook, they were just assigned readings.

VAN WILLIGEN: And you'd go to the library?

ADAMS: In the library. That's right. Uh-huh. In North American Archeology there was a newly published book by [Paul S.] Martin, [George I.] Quimby and [Donald] Collier called *Indians Before Columbus* which was . . . it was the first attempt that anybody made for . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: It still is . . .

ADAMS: . . . synthesis and we had that for textbook but I can't . . . and later on when . . . later on when I took the Nature of Culture from Mandelbaum he assigned me Linton's *The Study of Man* which, of course, I found tremendously in . . . influential work or . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Yeah, it's a . . . I . . . I recall reading it . . . that particular book it's like that became the . . . that was a representation of the value of anthropological thinking . . .

ADAMS: Yeah. Yeah.

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . It's very important.

ADAMS: It's not . . . it . . . it's not really powerful for the level of theory but Linton was a great concept giver . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Yeah.

ADAMS: . . . and that book is more full of usable concepts than any other book I know.

VAN WILLIGEN: Linton was frequently cited by people in other disciplines . . .

ADAMS: Yeah, sociologists especially because the whole area of role theory hangs on a peg that basically comes out of Linton in fact.

VAN WILLIGEN: That's right.

ADAMS: That's right. But anyway, the thing . . . of course, by and large what you study . . . for example, you just study your lecture notes, you know, there just wasn't that much assigned reading, just bits and pieces here and there but, of course, it's also true in those days there was no Xerox machines as you know. You went to the library and you wrote notes [chuckle] and carried them away from there and you read up on those. But those were very, very exciting years and my mother was still in Hungary at that time and so I was sort of on loose ends in the . . . in the summertime and I guess that I went . . . I went hiking in the sierras again quite a bit the first summer and . . . and the second summer . . . well, my mother came back the second summer. But then here's where . . . [chuckle] here's where the "replunge" takes place as a manner of speaking because she came back with the idea that she wanted to retire from the government service and right, having been out of the country for three years and also of course, living almost entirely on government expense as one does in those overseas posts she had saved quite a bit of money [chuckle] and utterly forgot how much it costs to live in this . . . in this country and she came back and she lived with my grandfather – her father in L.A. – for about three months and could see this was not going to work and she got a job at Window Rock again and . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Goodness.

ADAMS: . . . and she was . . . the Indian Service came after her again, you see, and offered her . . . again there were setting up a new program to try to foster . . . have opportunities for off-reservation employment because of the . . . of the . . . by that time obvious recognition in reservation resources would never going to . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Is this anything like the relocation program?

ADAMS: Relocation was part of it but that wasn't the big part of it . . . yeah, the biggest part of it was trying to arrange seasonal off-reservation employment in the summertime . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: . . . for, you see, summer . . . summers is the slack season for Navajos in the traditional round of life and there was a lot of . . . there had been a lot of catch-as-catch-can

recruitment on the reservation before this especially by . . . by . . . by growers who wanted agricultural . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Umhmm.

ADAMS: . . . labor and some groups of Navajos went over there but their experiences were often, you know, pretty bad in those circumstances and then the railroad started . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: So, it's basically rail . . . railroad work and agricultural work?

ADAMS: That's right. Well, before very long railroad work absolutely became the tail wagging the dog. And you know, when I was trading in Shonto the railroad income was . . . contributed 52 percent of that community's income.

VAN WILLIGEN: Goodness!

ADAMS: And that was the combination of summer track . . . track labor and then the unemployment compensation all winter long under this very old-fashioned system . . . the Railroad Retirement Board . . . of course, the background to that is that the western railroads just got beat to hell during the war because of the enormous traffic and they all needed rebuilding . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: . . . after the war and that has to be done by and large by track gangs in the summertime and it's one of the few jobs where you don't have to be able to speak English. And they could come down to the reservation recruiting Navajos and they could work in all-Navajo gangs. So, they liked it.

VAN WILLIGEN: Right. And then there were these gangs would have like twenty guys in it or something like that?

ADAMS: Yeah, they varied quite a lot in size.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see. And then . . . and then there might be a . . . a kind above . . . a lead worker that was a Navajo?

ADAMS: Yes. And quite a lot of the time there . . . there were section gan . . . there were section foremen who were very frequently Mexicans and . . . and as a result of that a lot of the Navajos picked up a lot of sort of a coyote Spanish that they talk along the border, you know [chuckle] . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: . . . that . . . from working with these guys. Now, all the . . . you know, the whole business of railroad – I don't know whether it is still true – but the whole business of the way the railroad works was under tremendous old-fashion government regulation and all labor was . . . was . . . was handled through the Railroad Retirement Board out of Washington, so the railroads did not recruit themselves. They recruited through the Railroad Retirement Board and the Railroad Retirement Board would then go out and get the people this is because the Railroad Retirement Board was responsible for paying the . . . you see, the . . . the . . . the unemployment compensation afterward and so they needed to be able to keep track of who was working. And it was done strictly on a seniority ba . . . well, that's another story. It . . . it got to be quite a big part of the job trading at Shonto just supplying continuous Navajo laborers when they asked for them.

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: But we was . . . we acted as unofficial . . . unofficial agents for the Railroad Retirement Board. I mean their . . . their office was in . . . was in Holbrook and they contacted us, you see, and then we'd have to find the people and get them to Holbrook. But . . . but in any case that was . . . arranging and . . . and bringing some system in order into the . . . into the off-

reservation employment business partly in terms of making Navajos aware of the possibilities, seeing that transport was available but at the same time looking . . . maintaining some degree of . . . of monitoring over the employment situations.

VAN WILLIGEN: Just . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Begin of Tape 1, Side 2]

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . we're . . . we're back in business.

ADAMS: My . . . my mother had an enormous talent for picking good people and . . . and creating good staff. Now, to this day I don't know how she did it but she's . . . she had a team of twelve Navajos working with her . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: . . . who were just really, really fine guys and they became some of my very best friends. They were dedicated and their job was partly to go around the reservations spreading the word, getting information out, holding community meetings and stuff like that. Then also serving off-reservation sites that were . . . were a possibility but also visiting camps and so and to because . . . monitoring conditions especially in the agricultural camps as part of their job. So, they were a very mobile bunch of guys . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Is to see if that the people were . . . healthy conditions were . . .

ADAMS: Yeah. Right. And then getting on the employers' backs if they were not . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: . . . living up to what they had promised in a certain sense because the Indian Service was helping to provide for these people . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Sure.

ADAMS: . . . and so they had to make some promises in terms of housing, toilets, and all . . . all the rest of it. You know, the . . . this is an interesting cultural aside. One of the complaints that the growers always made was that the Navajos were not using the privies, they'd always go around behind them.

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: And if you stop and think about it, of course, it all has to do with their toilet training because they're brought up not to go indoors . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Umhmm.

ADAMS: . . . under cover, you see, just as you and I . . . if we're ever in the hospital we have us all the time using a bedpan because the way we were, you know, toilet training you don't go in bed, well, they're trained not to go indoors. And so, they just wouldn't use it, they'd go around behind, you see [chuckle]. And these other employers kind of complained about that [chuckle] but I think it's an interesting cultural reflection. They wouldn't do it. Now, the advantage of the agricultural work is that they could go off as families and the men and women worked together. They liked that. But on the other hand, of course, the disadvantage of it was it . . . A it's stoop work and pretty hard work and . . . and miserable housing conditions and so on. So, it had . . . and very poorly paid and so, it had its . . . its advantages and disadvantages. Well, in addition to that she was also made . . . put in charge of the . . . of the welfare program at the time when for the first time the state had rec . . . accepted from the federal government the responsibility of providing old-age assistance and aid to dependent children and disability

insurance for Indians through the state agencies and so she was . . . she had charge of that. But she didn't give that a lot of her attention because it seemed very cut-and-dry administratively speaking and . . . and, you know, sort of bound by regulations in fact and then there was state claims agents who went around and . . . and case agents I should say. So, she gave most of the time to the . . . to that program. Anyway, the consequence of this is, back we went to the reservation, back we went to Window Rock and, of course, all the old magic [chuckle], you see, was there again.

VAN WILLIGEN: So, would . . . you would have had some work at Stanford at this point?

ADAMS: I had two years in Stanford . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Two . . . two years in Stanford . . .

ADAMS: Yeah. And . . . and two years at Cal.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: . . . I'm a graduate.

VAN WILLIGEN: So . . . so you . . . your B.A. and . . .

ADAMS: And I have a B. A. in Anthropology. At Cal I took practically nothing but . . . but Anthropology in fact . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: . . . until [chuckle] till the last semester of my senior year or when I was informed by the . . . by the administration because of not having . . . having graduated from high school I was deficient in Freshman English credits [chuckle] and . . . and also Language credits and so, I took Freshman English as a . . . as a . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: As a Foreign Language? Oh, well . . .

ADAMS: . . . [inaudible]. But I also took German because of the fact that it was still the case . . . as long as Lowie was there you took German for the Ph. D., there was no substitute for. And so, I . . . I . . . I took a year of German in the expectation that I would stay in Cal that that rule would still be . . . be on the books. And that's the only German I ever had. That was . . . that was that one year. But I . . . it . . . it stood me in good stead because I have to read a lot of German now. And apart . . . apart from those courses and I took two or three courses in . . . in Geography including one from . . . two from Carl Sauer I think . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see. What was that like?

ADAMS: Oh, he was a really dynamic person, a very dynamic, full of . . . of energy and enthusiasm for a subject and so, he was a . . . the sort of person I'm sure Kroeber was. Now, I never got to know Kroeber. Kroeber had retired and left just before I got there . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: I met him once when he came back and visited the museum when I was working there.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: But I got to know Lowie quite well and became very fond of him just as a person as well as a teacher. And some years later – Nettie can remember this – we bumped into Lowie in the American Express Office in Copenhagen and he was there for the . . . the Americanists . . . International Association of Americanists and so were we and I'd been gone for some years but he not only remembered me he greeted me like a long, long lost friend and we walked across Copenhagen together and he was chattering away about Paul Rivet and all these other people just as if I was a dear colleague, you know.

VAN WILLIGEN: This is a . . .

ADAMS: Is a great guy. He really was a great guy.

VAN WILLIGEN: So, he wasn't very formal?

ADAMS: Well, the students thought he was because he had this old-world sort of courtly manner that they didn't know how to relate to. In fact, if you could get through that I didn't think he was. He was . . . he was enough like my grandfather so he was kind of a grandfather figure to me, I guess you could say. But of course, the . . . the . . . the other students, the Heizers and the McCowns and so on had this kind of rough and tumble, you know, field oriented . . . and Lowie was not really a field worker and so they didn't relate to him or he to them . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Certainly your . . . your appreciation of theory . . .

ADAMS: Well, my appreciation of theories, I just absorbed Boasian anthropology which is really classificatory anthropology. In fact, you know, cultural area theory, cultural type theory, all of the linguistic classifications. Man! I . . . I . . . I've never regretted it. I think I got a tremendous background in classificatory anthropology and that . . . that . . . that's what I suppose the objective was in a certain sense of that point to me, that the level of theory was to make everything fit into classificatory . . . descriptive pigeon holes. It was a very, very descriptive orientation. I got at . . . introduced to some extent to psychological anthropology when Mandelbaum came but somehow it rather just ran off me like water off the ducks back but I wasn't ready for it because the lack of . . . of . . . of . . . of first-hand experience.

VAN WILLIGEN: Well that was kind of a new wave, was it?

ADAMS: It was, indeed so. Yeah.

VAN WILLIGEN: I mean it was the . . . the . . . the thing that came next.

ADAMS: Right. Uh-huh. There wasn't anybody representing the Chicago School in Social Anthropology at all at Berkeley. That wasn't until Arizona that I got exposed to that.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see. Did they . . . the . . . the people at Berkeley talk about that at all?

ADAMS: No, they were very insular in fact. That was one of the big deficiencies of that department . . . is very in . . . inbred. You see, Heizer and McCown were both Kroeber Ph. Ds. Olson had his Ph. D. I think Mandelbaum represented the first effort to bring in somebody from outside.

VAN WILLIGEN: I don't know where he . . . do you know where he . . .

ADAMS: I could look it up but I don't know . . . don't know it right offhand, you know.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

MRS. ADAMS: Do you want an iced drink or a hot drink?

ADAMS: What do you want?

MRS. ADAMS: Well, it's so warm I wondered if you all wanted some . . . we have some ginger ale or some . . .

ADAMS: What do you prefer, John?

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh . . .

MRS. ADAMS: . . . some . . .

ADAMS: You can have some tea if you like.

VAN WILLIGEN: Tea . . . tea is sort of what . . .

ADAMS: Okay. We'll have tea at this time in the afternoon. Yeah. Let us know when it is ready, we'll go outside. Well, those were the golden years in terms of . . . of just basics, learning basics, you know. And the first year of graduate school was in a certain sense more of the same. It just went right on and . . . and I started taking seminars then and then at the end of my . . . maybe even halfway through my grad . . . first graduate year – I can . . . sorry, I can't remember which – but . . . but one of my fellow students was Dick Shutler who had been previously on a dig at . . . near Flagstaff . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Shut . . . Shutler?

ADAMS: Yeah. S-H-U-T-L-E-R. He's been at . . . he's been at Simon Frazier for years and years and years now.

VAN WILLIGEN: He's mo . . . an archeologist?

ADAMS: An archeologist. That's right. He's done a lot of work since and . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Did you ever . . . you know, there . . . you've done a lot of different kinds of things, do you think of yourself as an archeologist then at all?

ADAMS: In those days I thought of myself in terms of field work as an archeologist but not certainly . . . I thought of myself as an Indianologist.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: I mean I was still thinking in those terms and . . . and archeology is what you could do with an Indianologist in . . . in that because the . . . most of the ethnology had been done by Kroeber. I went on digs as a student in the . . . in the Sacramento Valley . . . in California bur . . . archeology is all burial archeology and so that's all you do, there's no . . . there's no methodology to it. And subsequently because I needed . . . my . . . once my GI Bill started running a little thin I needed to supplement my income, so, I . . . I also worked as a . . . as a foreman . . . a paid foreman on student digs in the Sacramento Valley. But it . . . it . . . like I say it . . . it was never anything that I thought I was going to pursue in that area in that way. And . . . but I . . . I just really thought of myself still at this point as an Indianologist because, see, I thought I was going to . . . I was going to be a teacher of four field anthropology . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: . . . and that I might do archeology and ethnology, you see . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: So, the teaching component of it was . . . figured prominently?

ADAMS: Oh, absolutely so because what else . . . an . . . an anthropologist had first and foremost to teach and then do . . . do fieldwork incidentally. The idea that . . . that there were careers outside of teaching was . . . was practically . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Right. And then Lo . . . think . . . reflecting back on the . . . the teachers that you had it sounds as if Lowie was a model for it.

ADAMS: Oh, in a certain way he was. Absolutely right. Yeah, in a certain way he was and just as in . . . in another way Spicer was . . . was . . . Spicer was a teacher too, of course. But I . . . well, of course, you ought to remember also that my father and grandfather were teachers and although I was not sort of brought up to think of that because my . . . my grandfather died when I was a year old and my father when I was seven but even so, it sort of is in the blood as a manner of speaking. And you see my bro . . . brother became a professor also [chuckle], you see.

VAN WILLIGEN: Right.

ADAMS: We sort of had that as an objective I suppose without really concentrating on it but teaching was definitely . . . the main thing was to fill yourself up in data to be able to teach any of the kind of different courses because everybody had to do that in those days.

VAN WILLIGEN: Right.

ADAMS: And of course that's the attitude that I still brought to Kentucky and why I taught all these different courses.

VAN WILLIGEN: So . . . and so filling yourself up with data was the foundation for teaching rather than learning by teaching techniques?

ADAMS: No-no-no! Nothing like that. [chuckle] No way! Those who . . . there was a . . . there was an idea then that those who know can somehow communicate. We know now that this is not always the case. [both laughing] But anyway, I . . . I . . . I . . . it was my or . . . very

Baconian orientations which I've always had, I feel like first of all you got to know and . . . and . . . and I was just . . . just loading up this, you know, and having all this categorical pigeonholes made because you know I've a very good well organized mind anyway, to . . . to put in all these data. But Dick Shutler had been . . . had been approached by Dr. [Herald S.] Colton the head of the museum in Northern Arizona asking if he would like to do a little field job the following spring and summer in . . . in . . . in Central Arizona and . . . and just with a little bit of money and bring one assistant with him. And so, he asked me if I'd join him. Now, the reason was that almost all of the known archeology in . . . in . . . in the Flagstaff area, in the Verde Valley was . . . all dated from what's called the Pueblo III Period between about 11 and 1300 but Dr. Colton had found a few sites in surface surveys that he thought were maybe older and so, he wanted to have those checked out with small-scale tests . . . digs, you see . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: . . . and that's why he . . . it was . . . it wasn't done with his own money but he recruited Dick Shutler and Dick . . . Dick recruited me. Well, by this time, you see, my mother was back at Window Rock so I was keen to get back to the Southwest anyway. And so we did . . . well, we . . . we did actually dig a preceramic-lithic site in the Verde Valley, you know, south of Flagstaff, south of Oak Creek Canyon which is not very interesting but then the other sites that Dr. Colton thought he had identified didn't pan out at all.

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: And so, we were sort of left on loose ends and so, we just tried to find some sites and dug them [chuckle] and one of them was way high up on a ledge, on a big rock that overlooks an area south of Sedona. In fact, we . . . we were just . . . I don't know why we were scrambling around but we followed this trail of potsherds up to cranny up on this ledge, here was this site we said hell let's this dig one . . . [chuckle] I think there were three rooms or something like that. And then . . . then we dug another room in the canyon out of . . . of . . . of some . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Where did all that stuff end up?

ADAMS: All ended up in the Museum of Northern Arizona.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: And . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: And this is the . . . yeah, they had this . . . the . . . this lifelong relationship with the museum . . .

ADAMS: Starting there . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Yeah.

ADAMS: . . . starting there, that's right. Uh-huh. And so, so, that really got me into Southwestern archeology in a manner of speaking but then I came back to Berkeley. In the meanwhile though I had gotten very much interested in what my mother was doing and my . . . my natural inclination to be more interested in living people than dead ones . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: [chuckle] Oh . . .

ADAMS: . . . I started to take over . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: . . . and so she . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: So, it was kind of a turning point at that point?

ADAMS: It . . . it was . . . it was meant . . . it was going to be a turning . . . it was in a way . . . it was and it wasn't . . . yes, in a certain . . . in terms of my interests it certainly was. But she said, "Well, do you think you could get a grant . . . a little grant to study the collect data on the

impact that off-reservation employment is having by interviewing people that have had it,” she said, “because I don’t have the staff to do that. My staff is too busy.”

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: And so, I did . . . I got a little grant from Berkeley and then . . . then she scrounged up a beat-up old government car for me and an interpreter . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: This is a . . . this is your first . . .

ADAMS: This is my first . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . encounter in applied anthropology?

ADAMS: Well, exactly right. Exactly right.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: And I spent the whole summer . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: So, your . . . just to kind of lay . . . lay the foundation for us. You . . . you had a B . . . a B. A. in . . . in Anthropology . . .

ADAMS: That’s correct.

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . and she was . . . she had gotten this concern out of her own . . . the fact that she was dealing with this administrative problem . . .

ADAMS: Yeah. Well, you know, the bottom line we’re not getting any feedback . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: . . . in terms of the . . . of the off-reservation . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see. So, it was her attempt as the . . . the head of that program to . . .

ADAMS: Uh-huh.

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . to achieve some sort of an evaluation?

ADAMS: That’s right. Yes. Uh-huh. Now, my mother . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Did you . . . did you talk about it as evaluation at all? I mean did you use that . . .

ADAMS: Well, I just thought of it in terms of data collection . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Yeah.

ADAMS: . . . you see, and then . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: But you didn’t say, “I’m doing this evaluation project”?

ADAMS: No-no. Not at all. I’m just doing pure and simple data collection and so, now, my mother was . . . was always a great one for keeping jobs in the family if she could and so rather than go out in the market and hire [chuckle] and anthropologist she offered it to me.

VAN WILLIGEN: Well . . .

ADAMS: . . . she always did this . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Yeah.

ADAMS: . . . sort of thing.

VAN WILLIGEN: That . . . that makes sense.

ADAMS: But . . . and did this project have a name?

ADAMS: I’m not sure but it did actually. I . . . I picked one particular district of the reservation, the District Eight as it was called which is the area in the far northern reservation around the . . . around Kayenta and it extended north into Utah. See, the . . . the district . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: District Eight?

ADAMS: Yeah.

VAN WILLIGEN: And it’s near Kayenta?

ADAMS: Kayenta is . . . was the center for it. Yeah. It also included Rough Rock, Chilchinbito, and Oljato and . . . Dennehotso and then also other . . . other trading posts in the

area. Now, and . . . and . . . and Monument Valley was in it. Now, in those days this was the most remote part of the . . . of the whole reservation in terms of . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Umhmm. And what . . . what was the reason why you selected the most remote?

ADAMS: Well, we . . . mainly I think to try to measure the impact in there where there had never been anymore . . . any previous off-reservation employment. So, it was a whole new experience in fact . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: . . . and where people's . . . people's information wouldn't be colored what other people . . . by what other people had told them about where they might have worked previously . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh. And then what year was this to be?

ADAMS: Summer of 19 and 52 I think . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: . . . I think.

VAN WILLIGEN: Okay. That's the time.

ADAMS: And . . . yes, it was '52. That's right. And I had this interpreter . . . see, we had a questionnaire and we went around and we . . . we talked . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: So, you had a . . . you had a questionnaire and was it something you developed or something . . .

ADAMS: No, I developed it. It was very open-ended, of course . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Sure.

ADAMS: . . . because we invited people to say what they wanted but there were certain categories of information. We definitely . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: And can you remember what some of the categories were?

ADAMS: Well, of course, the obvious ones like length of employment. How did you get there? Remuneration. What did you bring home from it? What was your attitude toward it? And those . . . those were the sorts of things adequately and . . . and did you enjoy it so to speak . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: . . . and . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Was there any . . . were there any questions about how would you think the program should be changed or anything?

ADAMS: No, we didn't ask those kinds of questions at all. If . . . a . . . ag . . . again it was just a question of . . . of sort of collecting basic data, see, that . . . that was the way I was . . . I think I'm . . . I'm still like that [chuckle] . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: No-no . . .

ADAMS: . . . what I think anthropology is about. Now, I ran into a certain amount of resistance when I first got up to the area and I . . . I realized that there was a rumor going around – because there's always rumors on the Navajo Reservation – somehow or other that people were going to . . . I was collecting data and people were going to forcibly relocated off the reservation. There was a lot of paranoia about that. And . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: So, you . . . you were the only one that was doing the interviews?

ADAMS: Well, actually my brother was with me part of the time just for the hell of it and he'd spell off during the summer . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh, a team?

ADAMS: But . . . no, we were not a team. That's all, it was just me. But there was an interesting turning point in that. And I've had . . . I've had two or three of these in my life and this is interesting because I . . . I was always interested in going to places where I could . . . I could find a lot of Navajos in one place which was usually the trading post mainly. But there was a squaw dance and I . . . at the suggestion of one of my mother's assistants – I was not working with him but he told me where the dance was – and he said, "Why don't you go over there in the afternoon because a lot of people will be there." And so I started talking to some people . . . well, then presently this . . . who was conducting this thing came out of the hogan and came over to talk to me and he asked me about . . . so, I explained in detail what we were doing and why and then it was meant to try to improve the conditions and improve the income from off-reservation employment and for that we needed the data. And he became sufficiently convinced so he asked me to make a speech at this squaw dance that night . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: Now, this is one of the things that happens at a squaw dance. Prior to the dancing is that if there are certain public announcements or anything, why, people can make speeches.

VAN WILLIGEN: And you'd . . . you'd already done some of the interviews but this is . . .

ADAMS: I had already . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . you . . . you had kind of gone over there to hope for opportunities . . .

ADAMS: That's right. Yeah.

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . to . . . for more interviews?

ADAMS: But I did then . . . I made speech at the . . . at the squaw dance . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: And that . . . what . . . tell . . . tell me more about the . . . the circumstance of that . . . you might even be able to visualize that.

ADAMS: Well, sure. Of course, for instance, there's a great blazing fire in the middle and then where the dance is going to take place and people are standing around respectfully in a circle all around the fire at a distance where they'll be able to keep slightly warm but without getting burned and so on. And then one . . . somebody simply addresses them at some point from around the edge and Navajos typically when they're listening to something they . . . they . . . they look down, they don't . . . they don't make eye contact and they . . . they sort of never disturb. They are very quiet and so on but there was a disturbance at the other side of the circle. When I was talking people started to spreading and what happens, there was a little rattlesnake was making its way through [chuckle]. Well, one of the local headmen from Kayenta . . . they collared it and took it away. I talked for maybe ten or fifteen minutes and I explained about the program and why and how it was important having the data. I kind . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Are . . . were there questions?

ADAMS: Oh, no, nothing like that. No, I . . . I . . . but I think I had kind of applause at the end of it, believe it or not.

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh. I see.

ADAMS: And boy, did that ever opened the gates. I had no trouble getting informants from then on and . . . and no trouble at all. And actually my brother and I a couple of times we tried to take a day off and there we went down to the San Juan River one time to go swimming and there was a guy down there who says, "Hey, you didn't get mine yet." And so [laughs] . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: So, how many . . . how many . . . do you recall how many people . . .

ADAMS: About sixty is the number that I remember . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh, and that . . . was that kind of the target given the project or is this . . .

ADAMS: No, there was no target whatever. It was just a . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: It was just whatever . . . whatever you could get . . .

ADAMS: What you could get. That's exactly right. Now, I did . . . I . . . I . . . in a certain sense . . . now, the thing . . . the . . . my project in the fall then was to visit areas where . . . where Navajos were working but . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh, and so this . . . this is . . . this is . . . what you talk . . . told me about so far was interviewing people on the reservation?

ADAMS: Yeah, very much so.

VAN WILLIGEN: And the people had come back from this . . .

ADAMS: Had come back from work. That's right.

VAN WILLIGEN: Do you remember any of the . . . any conclusions from that?

ADAMS: Well . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: And what are . . . what are the kinds of things that you learned?

ADAMS: Well, just . . . of course, the things that I learned by and large is that . . . that they were looking at this experience, of course, completely through Navajo eyes and in terms of A. How can we fit it into our round of life so that it doesn't disrupt it in any way and How can we maintain a . . . a degree of community while we're . . . while we're away from the reservation. Apart from that the same sorts of reactions that you get from anybody in terms of complaints about . . . about conditions, complaints about inadequate . . . inadequate pay and that sort of thing. But . . . but also a . . . some of the guys who worked on the railroads really enjoyed it [chuckle] and they . . . they talked to us. There was a certain camaraderie that . . . that, you know, developed among these gangs, you know.

VAN WILLIGEN: The railroad guys liked it better?

ADAMS: Oh, yes, absolutely so even though . . . now they . . . of course, they got to go to whorehouses to some extent and they talked about that [chuckle]. You know, believe it or not the Navajo . . . all the whorehouses that Navajos can go to were black and so, there was a . . . a sort of a standard joke that black women are whores among . . . among the Navajos.

MRS. ADAMS: Our tea is . . .

ADAMS: Oh, okay, let's . . . let's . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: The thing that I may have . . . turned it on . . . I think the last thing I may have referred to is what kind of . . . what . . . you talked about the kind of a summary of the findings . . .

ADAMS: Yeah. I wrote . . . I wrote a basically . . . a synthesis . . . this is relatively brief really for the Indian Service as a report on the project . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Right.

ADAMS: Now, I was going to work it up at Berkeley into something more professional because my grant had come from there but in fact I never did.

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: I'm not quite sure quite why in fact, except when I got back to Berkeley and back into school I got involved in a lot of other things and so on. The second half of that project then consisted of visiting work sites where Navajos were working in the fall and I went to potato fields in Idaho and . . . and Colorado and a mine in Colorado . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh, that's a whole lot more traveling than I would have thought . . .

ADAMS: Oh, yes! A great deal more traveling, is right.

VAN WILLIGEN: You did this by car or by train?

ADAMS: Oh, I had this beat-up old . . . it was a . . . it was a Dodge pickup of the same kind as this one that I have out here in the back . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: . . . except that the back fenders had fallen off of it [chuckle].

VAN WILLIGEN: So, that's when you imprinted . . .

ADAMS: [laughs] That's exactly right. But the fact is that nothing much came out of that because of the fact that all I could really do was observe, there wasn't a change to interview people. They were working and they wanted to work . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh.

ADAMS: . . . to work. So, all I could do was look at and can . . . and get a visual impression of . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: So, well, you couldn't interview them because they were working?

ADAMS: That's right. Yeah. Uh-huh. Right. And so, all I could do is get a visual impression of what they had been telling me about. So, that didn't really feed very much into . . . into the project and it mainly was the . . . what I reported on was just a summary, the findings of what people said. And I think it was broken down by railroad labor, mine labor, agricultural labor and sort of miscellaneous and so on. And I can't really remember very . . . much more about it. I don't think I said anything that wasn't rather obvious in fact. [chuckle]

VAN WILLIGEN: Did . . . did that . . . does . . . is that on your vita?

ADAMS: No because it was never published.

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: My vita is pretty heavily loaded with published stuff [chuckle].

VAN WILLIGEN: Sure. Sure. But, you know sometimes the . . . the . . .

ADAMS: Yeah. I don't know . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . an unpublished report . . .

ADAMS: . . . what's happened to it in fact. I don't even think I have a copy myself. Now, the . . . a lot of the data in a certain way got fed into my report on Shonto.

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh.

ADAMS: And just in terms of understanding the whole context of railroad work and is . . . is so . . . that especially. So, it . . . it . . . it wasn't wholly lost in that respect so to speak . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Right.

ADAMS: It . . . and I . . . I . . . I think I might even have those interviews some place.

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh. So . . . so, this was a . . . a number of months basically? It was a . . .

ADAMS: Yeah. Right. Well . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: . . . the summer and the fall?

ADAMS: Three months in the summer and three months in the fall, that's right.

VAN WILLIGEN: And your . . . and then you were paid by this grant.

ADAMS: I had this grant. That's right. And then the . . . the . . . the Indian Service provided me with the . . . with the pickup and also . . . also an interpreter during the summer but not in the fall. He was a school kid and . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Right. And then . . . and they perceived it as a . . . somehow a BIA project?

ADAMS: Yeah. Right. In a certain sense. Right. It probably was done for the B . . . yeah, sort of a contract thing you might say.

VAN WILLIGEN: Sure.

ADAMS: Right. Uh-huh. Now, of course one reason that I couldn't do much interviewing in the fall also, see, was because I didn't have an interpreter . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: . . . then and I did not speak any amount of Navajo at all then and I . . . I picked up my Navajo later. And then I got back to Berkeley, you see, and I got . . . of course, reinvolved with the university but the big problem from then on in my time in Berkeley was I ran out of the GI Bill. And I just had quite a struggle to . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: And so that . . . that may have explained the . . . the fact that you didn't necessarily do much more with this?

ADAMS: Yeah, there were several cont . . . there were several contributing factors, one of which quite honestly was I was burned out.

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: And there was . . . well, you know, you see it among our own graduate students enough at the time . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Sure.

ADAMS: I . . . I just had been so heavily involved and so close to it for so long I was really just . . . just kind of burned out on academic anthropology. And so that semester when I was back was really kind of a bust. I can't . . . I don't think I even got very good grades. In fact, been getting all As but . . . but I . . . one thing and another . . . well, of course . . . of course, the . . . the problem is I . . . I started going working to work as an auto mechanic, you see, to support myself [laughs] and . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: . . . and this is not a good thing to do while you're trying to go to college [chuckle]. You take the wrong problems to bed with you so to speak.

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: And I . . . during that year and also the following year then I worked . . . I had various jobs as an auto mechanic, as a crankshaft grinder, and as a [chuckle] as an wrought metal worker. But . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Worked there in Berkeley?

ADAMS: In . . . in Oakland, actually it was, yeah. But anyway, it . . . it was . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: It's warmer.

ADAMS: I was trying to go to college at the same time.

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh, goodness, is more of a crankshaft sort of thing?

ADAMS: Yeah. Well, okay, I was contacted then by the . . . in the spring by Walter Taylor, you know, who is the archeologist doing [inaudible] you know . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Yeah. Archeology as anthropology. . . .

ADAMS: Yeah. Right. And so . . . and who was a colossal fraud between you and me but anyway he had gotten a grant from the Smithsonian to try to put into practice some of his ideas about, what the heck was it called, conjunctive archeology, I think but he . . . he . . . being able to operationalize that depended on finding cliff dwellings with trash filled rooms. Well, this is not going to be any of the familiar ones because they've all be turned into national monuments and dug out. So, he wanted to hire me to explore some of the back canyons, really remote canyons in the northern part of the reservation to see if I could find any cliff dwellings with trash-filled rooms. And of course, given my sort of romantic soul and my love for the reservation and everything – even though it was a step back into archeology – it was a job that enormously appealed to me and that was really when I . . . that . . . that was a step toward the Glen Canyon project in one sense, it was when I really got to know some of that area that was subsequently flooded because I did working out first of Navajo Mountain and subsequently some

other areas. I really . . . and . . . and using some Navajo whom I knew as . . . as guides. I really did get into some very remote canyons. I found quite a few cliff dwellings that aren't . . . aren't on record anywhere but I did not find any trash-filled rooms. [chuckle] In fact, the . . . the . . . the thing about it is honestly that what is much now better understood now than it was then that . . . that most cliff dwellings were not really occupied for very long and you don't get this . . . this . . . this filling up of . . . now, you're getting in big open sites that would, you know, like Pecos that was published quite . . . occupied for a long period of time but not in a . . . And so, anyway, I worked during the summer on that project for Walter Taylor and he just paid me an absolute pittance. It was such barely enough to live on and the damage to my pickup was such [chuckle] that it cost me more than I made often. But . . . but it was exciting. And then bingo comes the turning point in a way because on my way back to go back to school in the fall I stopped off at Shonto Trading Post because I'd gotten and I'd been working in and out of there and you've heard this story before because that's when the owner asked me, "How do you like to earn 500 dollars?" And I said, "Well, tell me more." And he said, "Well, I want you to meet the trail boss on the . . . on the sheep driving and oversee the trailing of the livestock."

VAN WILLIGEN: U . . . usually the trail boss was a white guy?

ADAMS: Yeah. Uh-huh. You know and because it is just . . . basically it's a little over three weeks trailing the sheep from Shonto down to the siding on the railroad.

VAN WILLIGEN: You'd be riding a horse?

ADAMS: No, I was in my pickup actually and . . . and following the . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: The second phase of the imprinting process it.

ADAMS: [chuckle] Right. No, I . . . yeah, I guess I was in the . . . in the . . . no, no, we had a wagon driver along and he carried the guys bedrolls and also the fencing stuff and so because we put up a corral every night to fence and pen them up. My job mainly besides keeping an eye on the operation was to scout the route every day for water and feed and sort of layout . . . layout the line and so on. But it . . . so it . . . well, of course, it was great fun for me just three weeks out in the range with these six old great all longhaired Navajos non smoking, it was just a wonderful bunch of guys. I really dearly loved them and eating nothing but fried bread [chuckle] and coffee so to speak. But anyway, I did that and that was the start of my association with Shonto. It was a very successful drive because we had . . . we actually put weight on them which is . . . it . . . because it never done before and we were lucky to have very, very few dead losses because there are usually some of them getting into poisonous feed or something and so it . . . it was very successful. And so Ruben was always anxious for me to do . . . to run the sheep drive [chuckle] after that. And . . . and of course that's when I really got my first taste or interacting with Navajos and I mean very traditional Navajos these guys. They were wonderful guys and did they ever know sheep, you know! But I went back to Berkeley and it was just a struggle. I trying to go to school and supporting myself . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Because of the . . . the . . . other work?

ADAMS: Because of the I was doing, yeah. And so I . . . I . . . I got very poor grades and I . . . I . . . by that time Lowie was gone, most of the . . . well, the fact is that the department had fallen on . . . on bad times in the way that departments so often do for one reason or another. There was no effective leadership after . . . after Lowie left and these various guys who had been Kroeber protégées in a certain sense were all doing their own thing and not bring anybody else in. There was a wholesale departure of grad students in fact that scattered out to other . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Who were some of these people?

ADAMS: Well, Catherine McClellan was one if you know her name for instance. She is . . . she is well known for arch . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Yeah. I know. Is she . . . I took a course from . . .

ADAMS: Yeah, Kitty McClellan she was there and she left and went to Washington.

VAN WILLIGEN: Kitty, she was a . . . as a senior undergraduate at Wisconsin I took a course from her.

ADAMS: Dick Shutler was another one, he went to Arizona. Albert Moore was a good friend of mine. He went to Wisconsin but it would've been well before your time.

VAN WILLIGEN: Yeah.

ADAMS: Oh, if I thought back I could name several others in fact who . . . who just . . . just scattered out . . . because of . . . of just disillusionment with the program and the fact that it was so hard to . . . of making any kind of progress in that circumstance. And I was thoroughly disillusioned.

VAN WILLIGEN: Do you recall the . . . the key faculty there? Maybe that's the wrong way to express that.

ADAMS: There weren't any key faculty because that was the whole thing . . . in fact Heiser liked to think he was the kingpin but he was resented by Macown who liked to think he was the kingpin. John Rowe who in a way, I think, was perhaps a more reputable scholar than either one of them had been brought in but he was . . . he is a very quiet sort of guy and he didn't try to assert himself. Mandelbaum was, I think, getting increasingly marginalized which was why he stepped off into administration . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: Oh, I see.

ADAMS: . . . which is what he did for all his years . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I didn't hear . . . I didn't know about that.

ADAMS: Yeah. He became . . . he became a dean. And so it . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: But . . . also with this Indian interest that . . . that was not necessarily . . .

ADAMS: No, it was . . . it was . . . but there was no focus in the department of any kind. The thing is the Indianology thing had just gone off everywhere. And of course, Indianology was kind of dying out as the major focus in anthropology anyhow.

VAN WILLIGEN: Right.

ADAMS: And Boasian paradigm was . . . was kind of coming apart. So, for various reasons that was kind of a lost year for me. And then I went back to the . . . now, how did this come about? Oh, yes, of course, Ruben asked me to run . . . to come back and run the sheep drive again the next year which I did. And then he said, "Well, I like you to go to work in the trading post.

VAN WILLIGEN: Uh-huh.

ADAMS: And so, I . . . my stuff . . . all my stuff was in California because I had just gone out for the drive. I said, "Well, let . . . let me go back and collect all my stuff." And so, that's when I . . . that's when I . . . I started trading at Shonto . . .

VAN WILLIGEN: I see.

ADAMS: . . . in . . . in '53.

[End of interview]