

1 Harlan Featherhat, Cedar City, Utah

INTERVIEW WITH: Harlan Featherhat
INTERVIEWER: Marsha Holland
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SUBJECT OF INTERVIEW: Paiute interaction and perspective before Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument designation.
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Interview begins in mid conversation with Harlan regarding the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument (GSENM) and the Paiute involvement with the designation pre-or post GSENM.

HF: Craig Norman, I did a lot of surveys with him. The tribe had just got started, reinstated, we were terminated in the 1940s. The U.S. government went and terminated us. They did not recognize the tribe and the tribe did not get any assistance from the government, [you were] on your own, basically a white man. So we were terminated. And in 1987 or maybe 1985, we got reinstated after a long battle with the State Senator*, and a senator from back east. And to this day we still do not know why we were terminated, maybe by just one senator up in Salt Lake that did it. He did not ask anyone, didn't tell anyone why he wanted to terminate the Paiute people. The only thing I could think of, they probably thought the Church would take care of us, the Mormon Church. It never really did take care of us, they took care of our kids by taking them away, putting them in white homes. That was their solution. That was still going on with the Navajo Tribe down south into the 80s, Phoenix and Tucson.

(*Harlan is referring to "one important person behind termination in the late 1940s and early 1950s, was Senator Arthur Watkins of Utah. Termination was one of the government's poorly conceived policies to acculturate and assimilate the Indians." See end notes)

MH: To be taken care of by the Mormon Church means that you are part of the Church?

HF: Yes, I guess.

MH: So, in the eighties, that was happening, and the tribe is recognized by the Federal Government.

HF: That is where it all took off. At the time they were trying to get The People into positions in each Band; cultural representatives, into the health program, into the education program. Basically they said here is the money, start your programs, like tutor programs, whatever you need, get them going.

MH: So, there are five bands we are talking about, in this town this is the Cedar Band?

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HF: The majority of the Koosharem Band is down here working, the main office is here. A lot of the Shivwits Band work up here too. Shivwits is from down by St. George. Moccasin, that is totally a different group, although we are all related.

MH: And now we have the establishment of the tribe, may we step back a bit and get some other information. If first you could please introduce yourself, full name?

HF: My name is Harlan Featherhat, I am with the Shivwits Band of Paiutes, St. George, Utah. I met my wife in Richfield, she is part of the Koosharem Band. Around the time when all of this happened (the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument) I was elected to be the cultural representative for the Koosharem Band. I did it for ten or fifteen years. We started right in 1989- maybe 1988.

MH: And would you please tell me when you were born and where?

HF: I was born in St. George, August 1957.

MH: Did you have any affiliation regarding the Grand Staircase or were you always affiliated with the Band as the cultural representative before/after the destination of the Monument?

HF: It was the same battle we are having right now, with the Bear Ears. In Navajo it means shesh pa wah. They are trying to make the Bear Ears into a National Monument, it is basically the same. When we started looking at the Grand Staircase, there was mainly people that abused the trails, they made their own trails. The ranchers did not care if it was over grazed. The roads they built into the forests was going right through our native land, our writings, up through the Canyons. We had historic sites that the ranchers had to go through. What the sportsmen figured was, if the rancher has the right, then they have the right to go up in there.

It all started with an old man down there, below Sufco Mining, they were trying to annex his land, trying to kick him out, he was just an old man. His son worked at the power plant. Every chance he had he would go out and cut hay with his dad, try to maintain the homestead, the farm has been there for hundreds of years since it was settled. They wanted to build a road down through the canyon, the coal mine would have a short cut taking their coal through Castle Dale and then back up the canyon. When Norm and I did the (archeological) survey we went up and down that trail and there were lots of Indian writing and things and I told Norm there is no fetching way they should build a road up here. Imagine 24/7 trucks running up and down this road, all the stuff was starting to fall off the cliffs, roll over, then they will be dusty- no way- you will try to save this, you or I, the tribe, the BLM, everybody has to get involved in this. The tribes, the Hopis, the Navajos, the Utes.

Sufco Mining road is up by Salina. If you go to Sufco, you go on the backside, it is a private road, they can't keep you out, they run their fans through there from the mine. You can drive down there, it is a one lane road. Sufco wanted to pave that, the coal mine wanted to pave it. And the ranchers, I don't think, really cared, but it was an easier access to haul their cows up there.

MH: So, if I understand it then, this was the start for you, helping out with an inventory of what is there, at the ancient sites there?

FH: Yes.

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MH: And could you tell me how working with Craig Norman led you to becoming involved with the early days of the Grand Staircase- was it after the designation or before?

HF: It was before the designation. I worked with Norm for a long time. We did a lot of surveys for the Forest Service and the BLM. We had tried to bring back the natural plants that used to grow up there. We got rid of a lot for sage brush that did not belong up there that overtook the natural plants up there. Whenever the natural stuff came back, the cows would come by and eat it- then it was gone. We did a lot of railing. We marked areas to save some trees, but we replanted grass. A rancher [on public land] does not understand what it costs to refurbish the ground that a cow has eaten down during the spring and summer. There is nothing there, nothing for the wildlife to eat for the winter, then the wildlife is starving.

MH: A good point, ranchers leasing public land are not like most ranchers who manage private land, who plant every year, rotate crops, and rotate pasture, creating a healthy and sustainable production. It is more difficult to control that on public lands. Who are you working for as you are refurbishing this public land?

HF: Many times I did not go out on these types of projects. I was young, married and raising a family. The BLM and Forest Service contracted it out. We would go back in the next year and see what came back, over and over, it was the same "In two years we are going to open this up again to the ranchers." I said, "How will you let them graze on this, are you going to let them back and let them do it again, so you have to redo it again?" Here, two years ago, we did our reservation over in Koosharem. We found out how expensive it is to reseed our land. We took out a lot of cedar trees, a lot of sage brush, and two summers we reseeded. This is just my family here, we reseeded, we lined up five feet apart and take off and plant, with a planter. For two summers we did that. Some guy wanted to run his cows up there and I said, "No, not for the price you want it for." Those bags of seeds were \$6000 or \$7000 and \$10,000. There ain't no way you are running your cows out there. The reason we redid it was for the deer herds. What you guys did was shoo the herds out of there. The deer in October [for the hunt]-that is what my family eats. Unless you are willing to give up five cows for Koosharem Band, sure. Feed them." But I know they would not give up an eleven hundred dollar cow. They do not realize how much it costs to restore the land.

MH: Why do you think they do not know the real cost of refurbishing the graze land?

HF: They complain about where is the money going to (from the fees from the grazing permits), what we pay in, where is it going to? The government sends out a contract and says, this is what we need, and the guy who picks the seed, he sets his price and the BLM has to pay that price, then the grazing fees goes up to cover the contract.

MH: So, does it really cover it? What are the real cost of railing and reseeding these area? Especially on the Grand Staircase, that is rough country.

HF: Yes, back in the 80s, Norm and I toured that land. That was when it really opened my eyes. The government is trying to reseed, make everybody happy, and keep the wildlife for sportsman. When Craig took me down through there, near Price, Ferron...We made that loop as we were doing those loops, doing the surveys. That is when it opened my eyes- all of this is getting

destroyed. Norm had taken on something else, I was no longer helping him. Then a bunch of radical flower sniffers (he chuckles) came in and they wanted to try and find out what we thought. That is where the Grand Staircase came in. Norm asked me if I wanted to go to a meeting with these guys. Go camp, see some of the sites. I said, "Yes." Basically what I seen was the same as what Norm and I seen on the Fish Lake side. You are never going to make everybody happy. The sports industry were just coming out with three-wheelers back then. They were making their own roads in the same way as over in the Fish Lake. They did not care about trespassing signs, which the government set up, tearing it up. I think we rode down through the Paria Wash. Where the riverbank should have been lush with grass, there it was all trampled down by the three-wheelers. People riding up and down, sports enthusiasts. Right outside of Kanab, we went to a place where Johnsons used to run it, (chuckles). They were a big thing there. You know where the movie site is?

We did a lot of surveys through there, looking at the damage the cows had done, and what the three-wheelers had done. (ATV impacts, Archeological sites)

The federal government is not blind, they said, do not put a road in, go in by horse. In a lot of those areas, the feed that was up there was tromped down by three-wheelers- what had been replanted. Some of the tribal members went up there, on their own, camping with their kids. We seen stuff that was done [to sites] by the white man who does not respect these things, like the Native American do.

Basically, that was when it was decided we will meet at Capitol Reef, all the tribes, Northern, Southern, Pimas, all from the area. We met for five days at Capitol Reef, discussing what we saw, the pictures we were seeing. One day when we were there we had just gotten done eating, one of the rangers said, I am going to give you a tour down the canyon. We all got in the van, got out, looking at all the writings on the rocks. Here comes a pick-up, a father and his son. The son and dad got out of the truck and began to shoot, bang, bang, bang, and then they take off. They took the license plate number down. We go over to where they had shot, it was a water wheel there, and they tried to shoot the middle of it. Target practice. You should have seen these people here that make the decisions, to make it a National Monument, while you are up there doing all this stuff. I think right then and there, it took the cake; People don't respect it, turn it into a National Monument.

MH: Is there anything you saw or were told on the Paria that reflects this type of abuse? I know the Paria is a rare riparian area, a waterway, a life force, on the Monument and it has many archeological sites and writings along it. What were you seeing that was alarming?

HF: Just the destructiveness at the sites. Like the Bear Ears, trying to make that into a national monument. One of the rangers goes out there once a week and he will find dig sites, Anasazi sites. That was the same in Kaibab. Go walk out there on the desert along the wash and you will see someone had dug up pottery.

My Grandpa and my Dad and I used to go out there all the time. We used to go and gather wood out there, at Bear Ears. My Grandfather herds sheep out there, and took the sheep out there once a year. Dad would help him load the sheep, leap up in the truck and take them up there. Then go down and get another load, him and my brother, my uncle. They did that for my

Grandpa. It is the same way with the guy who took the tour with the County Commission, he knows exactly what the laws are down though that canyon (Recapture), he still did it. Phil Lyman, in San Juan County. He still took people down there and went camping even though the road is closed. The law says the road is closed, why you don't hike you ass down there if you are 180 lbs., do some hiking, lose some weight. The law is the law. You can't break it just because you are the county commissioner.

MH: We had a similar thing occur on the Paria, which was closed to motorized vehicles on the Paria, and State Representative Mike Noel led an ATV group right up the Paria, cut down all the signs. I believe that is a federal offense.

HF: I work here for Paiute Housing here, for the tribe. One year we were going to rent ATVs and take that ride, up the Paria, but it was closed. To see people like that, this is our land, we can do what we want on it. Sure, walk in a designated areas. Like them Boy Scouts that went out to Goblin Valley and started to knock those rocks over. Shoot, when I was out there, I went up to Goblin Valley when I was five years old, I saw those rocks. And to see Boy Scouts, from our Church do that...start doing stuff like that, being destructive. It pisses you off. This is why you have people that fight for our grandkids, so they can have it, and their kids can have it.

MH: Now in Cedar City when they were doing the planning here, the Management Plan for the Monument, were you involved with those sessions?

HF: No, everything was done in Capitol Reef. They basically set a map up on the wall. Fish Lake was involved in that. Choose which area you as Native People want designated as a National Monument and so we took our pens and marked it in, then found out that they didn't do all the area like where that old man was. I think he is raising hay up in there too. We put our pens up on the map and the next year it was on the news, front page, and I thought oh, we got a new National Monument. People were saying oh, you can't do this and you can't do that. Before we did that we made sure we told the government people, within the next five years we know plants will be coming back that we as Native Americans use. What we want from you is that you guarantee us that we will go back in there and we are able to collect these plants, but not over take it, take a few, just what we use for our medicine. They said, OK. There was a bunch of stuff we wanted, they asked for our help on this. We had a medicine man come help. He said he and his dad used to go up in there on the Paria and look for plants. But he said the cows had eaten them up. We wanted access to the medicinal plants, maybe when there was a hunt, we would be the first to go hunt the area. I still see people fighting over it, over the land. Shoot we had so much land all over the United States, why can't they go do that over there. There is plenty of land.

MH: Yes, the Paria is a small area.

HF: Yes, just a big old mud hole, why are they fighting over it?

Interrupted by Max the dog...

MH: I am interested in the area between the Paria and Lake Powell, and I was wondering if you remember any of that area in your inventories, like from Wayne County and south?

And any of the medical plant names?

HF: There was a Hopi medicine man, and a Navajo medicine man there. It was a long time ago. I was looking for one of my maps, that shown how they were going to choose the area, but when I moved it was misplaced.

MH: So the maps of Capital Reef that you worked on, what were some of the areas you were discussing, the place names?

HF: You know right there at the San Rafael, give me a pencil and paper.

San Rafael Swell, by the 70, all of that was included from the mesa, clear down to Green River, everything towards Blanding, backside of Monticello. It was a square looking area, then over and around over to and below Torrey, Loa and out to the desert that runs over to the Paria. All through that, that was all marked on that map at the time. We were to landmark our areas, where we do our stuff.

MH: And I wonder what happened to those maps?

HF: One time I got a letter from the State, they had some native shields, some guy had found them and dug them up and didn't want them anymore, wanted to get rid of it. I was asked if my tribe would take the shields. I said, "No, we are not Nez Perce, those are Nez Perce horse shields." I told him the story of how the Nez Perce would bring their horses down all the way from Washington and meet at Fish Lake at the big Swap Meet where they did all their trading. That was where those war shields came from. Lost in gambling. I said the best thing for you to do is go bury it where you found it or give it to the Park. It has nothing to do with the Natives here, it is a different tribe.

MH: I just reread Arthur Richards (a Paiute Elder) interview and he talked about horse racing and betting and he said sometimes you would lose your wife from a bet!

HF: (chuckles) Yes, that is how the war shields were lost. The Nez Perce would come down. My father and my father-in-law's friend, he passed away too, he had a lot of stories about the Nez Perce coming down here and trading stuff like that. They would bring back deer hides, for the winters up there.

MH: Still going on. There were different Native American groups coming up the Paria to Cannonville, we have some of those stories, people trading blankets and produce for horses being raised around Cannonville. And it still goes on, Navajo coming up to buy hay.

HF: That is how I got started in it, the tribe asked me one day if I could go sit in on a meeting for them, report back on what was said at the meeting. That was it. No money to be made in it, Koosharem Band is the poorest tribe in the world. The meetings were in Torrey, at the Park.

MH: But you did get on the Paria.

HF: Yes, we got in with somebody from Kaibab, even if it was not in my area, it is not my place to speak, but there is something that belongs to the Native People, a plant, I will speak up for you. If you don't like this rancher and what he is doing I will speak up for you about what he is doing.

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MH: So, to clarify, these meetings were before the Monument was designated and you were trying to figure out boundaries based on the value and needs of Native Americans?

HF: That work was done during the 80s to the 90s, right in there.

MH: Well, this is interesting, the timing, the Monument went in in 1996, as a nice environmental piece for Clinton's reelection campaign. But it sounds like government people, was it the National Park Service, wanting to talk with you about scared places well before then?

HF: So, it was what needed to be preserved on the Forest, a lot was being destroyed, they wanted to bring some of it back, protect it. Then the GSENM Monument came into the picture later on.

MH: Do you know if Monument Planners used those same maps and recommendations done at Capitol Reef meeting for the new monument?

HF: It cuts down south of Escalante, all the way south. One time my wife and I were driving through there and saw this sign for the Grand Staircase and we stopped and I took a picture of her next to the sign, laughing that I should send it to the ranchers, see, this is what you caused. Just teasing. The Kaibab and the Navajo were involved with that. But here, over on the Fish Lake we had many groups, these guys, the AFL (?) and the Sierra Club, all these groups in there and we met in Salt Lake City and were able to put a stop to Sufco, quit picking on that guy and leave him alone and that road will never be open.

MH: So, what are your successes do you feel with your work, as a cultural representative and with the surveys you helped to complete? What were the results of that involvement? Do you feel successful in having a say?

HF: I think it was. It is just people who do not want to abide by the law. The government that we elect seems like they are the majority that don't want to abide by the law. To me it's like they are saying they do not want to save it for their kids or other people who love to visit our country and see these sites, our sites. This is what I like about it and I am glad we did the Grand Staircase. Sure, it sucked [for some], a lot of feelings got hurt, a few cows were starved.

MH: I think the cows were going to starve anyway if they got left on the range, the designation occurred during a drought.

HF: Ya, it was a big drought then.

MH: The landscape is tough to graze cattle on, too. Cows go feral all the time. The Forest Service land seems like it works ok- more water, better terrain.

HF: We did a lot of improvement on our Fish Lake land; took out trees, a lot of sage brush, replanted a lot of grass, deer feed. If people would just realize what it costs to do all this [restoration]. Your money is working to bring back your elk herd. But they don't see it that way. If you want to go see something, instead of jumping on your four wheeler, leave your four wheeler and walk up there, enjoy the scenery, look at it, then walk back to your four-wheeler, you are not breaking the law if you leave it by the gate. It is ok to walk up there and **look** at what is preserved up there.

MH: On an ATV, you scare animals away, too.

FH: What we saw was a lot of stuff was being destroyed, a lot of vegetation, on the San Rafael. You look out on that landscape and you see four wheel tracks going up like this...and I look out and say, holy hell, there is supposed to be wild grass there, it is all trampled down. Wild grass. Eventually it will come back, we will all open our eyes, the glaciers are melting a fast, and we are going to open our eyes. Look at what we have done, we need to restore this.

MH: What a great thought. And do you have any other thoughts about being a cultural representative?

FH: I had fun being a cultural representative. I got to help with Native plants and get them growing back up to where they are supposed to be. I thought the Forest Service was in charge of controlling the grazing permits just right. I worked for the Forest Service for seven years. I was a range guy, from fixing water troughs to reseeding on the Fish Lake. I did some dozing.

MH: That is pretty neat thing, you were working on your heritage land.

FH: Yes, when we used to walk on the trails and one of the guys would find an arrowhead, "Hey, I found an arrowhead!" I said "Cool, don't be crying around when you have nightmares tonight, I would just throw it back where you found it." And he did that. I know of ones, after ten years, that will take it back, saying, "I should have listened to you. Here is the arrowhead."

MH: Did you ever get to meet after the designation, since they were meeting here in Cedar City then?

FH: It was probably here, but off doing something and couldn't go. I did a lot for work with Norm on the BLM side, surveys. That was out of Richfield (office). We did a lot of work together, I have not seen him for a long time.

MH: Is he still in Richfield?

FH: I think he is. Many of the old guys are gone now.

We were doing this for our kids, and later on in their life when they see that Grandpa's generation destroyed everything, fished the lake out...it's mainly for the kids.

MH: That should be something that really resonates in Utah, for the next generations. That is a message that should work pretty well here.

FH: The law is set for anyone, government official, you or I, we are not above the law, we should obey the law. So, what if you and your friends ride up there, you will get a ticket, everything will be confiscated (gun, fishing rod), and I think that stuff should never be given back to them. The stuff should be sold off, to buy seed and reseed somewhere.

MH: It is odd for me- breaking laws, but there is little respect for the Federal Government here in Utah.

FH: And I am working on deer hunt tags, expediting getting the tags. Now when deer hunting comes around I have to hunt my chairwoman down to get a tag. The tag should come from the State. I should get like six tags for me and my sons and grandsons- here are the tags for your family. Another problem I have is when I go into a National Park, I do not feel I should have to pay to go

in there. It is my Park, our family lived here before these guys came in their boats, I should not have to do that. Arizona I can do that, I just give them my Tribe ID and they let me in. But not in Utah.

MH: On Federal properties in Arizona?

HF: Yes.

MH: Wonder why it is different in Utah?

HF: It needs to change. President Obama needs to change that for all the Native People. We should not have to pay for what was ours.

MH: Is there a movement for that right now?

HF: I have not heard that. It should be that the First People should get that. I should not have to pay for that.

MH: Interesting. Good perspective. Thank you for sharing that. Any last thoughts on this topic?

HF: I think most of the people that were involved are gone, the people I knew. The people over in Richfield- Capitol Reef, they are all retired now.

MH: Well, then I want to thank you.

HF: You bet.

End of Interview- Time 00:50:53

ⁱ http://historytogo.utah.gov/people/ethnic_cultures/the_history_of_utahs_american_indians/chapter4.html
Utah's Native Americans: Tom, Gary & Holt. Ronald; The Paiute Tribe of Utah, Chpt. 4-Termination