

A Weave of Time

BACKGROUND NOTES

The making of A WEAVE OF TIME actually began in 1938 – the year in which anthropologist, John Adair went to Pine Springs, Arizona on the Navajo Reservation. Here he apprenticed himself to an expert silversmith, Tom Burnside, with whom he worked daily throughout that summer. In addition to his leatherbound notebooks, Adair brought several still-cameras and a 16mm, hand-wind Kodak Cine Special. During the three months he lived with the Burnside family he took thousands of feet of silent, black-and-white motion picture film. The result was a beautiful and rare record of daily life in Pine Springs as it was in 1938. Many of Adair's still-photographs were incorporated into his book, *Navajo and Pueblo Silversmiths*. However, all of his 16mm footage was archived and until now has never been seen either by the Navajo or the general public.

In April 1983, Adair met with filmmaker, Susan Fanshel and she agreed to direct a film which would place his historic images in the context of the present. Based on their previous work together, Fanshel asked co-producer, Deborah Gordon to join her and Adair in the making of the film. That Fall, Fanshel and Gordon returned to the Navajo Reservation with Adair and were introduced to members of the Burnside family he has now known for close to fifty years. Together, the filmmakers and family explored and agreed to the idea of a documentary which would tell their story on film.

Principal photography was accomplished in four separate trips to the Southwest beginning in May 1984 and ending in April 1986. During this two-year period, the family had several opportunities to see themselves on film. Their reactions became part of the filmmaking process. From 40,000 feet of new material (about 20 hours) and 4,000 feet of Adair's historic footage, Fanshel and Gordon edited the final film. Editing took close to a year and was the most demanding aspect of the project. In the end, the filmmakers found their form in a tapestry-like structure, where past and present are woven together to create a multi-faceted view of the dynamics of culture change.
