

Elsie Freland

Interview

Gruber-Miller

Margie Lee is that she is 76 years old, born in 1934. She lives in Ft. Defiance, Arizona on the Navajo Reservation, and she is full blood Navajo. Margie was married on 1963 and is still married to Richard Lee, and they had their first child in December of 1962. Her parents are Dolly and Don Tabaha, and Dolly passed away in 1994 and Don passed away in 1992. Margie has 6 siblings Johnny Tabaha (passed away), Beverly Willow (passed away, my grandmother), Alvina Willow, Diana Tabaha (passed away), Mary Sounding Sides, and Louie Tabaha. Then Johnny Tabaha didn't have any children, Beverly Willow had three daughters, Alvina Willow had four children, Diana Tabaha didn't have children, and Mary Sounding Sides has seven children.

*Have you lived in Ft. Defiance your whole life or did you live somewhere else at one point?*

She lived in Ft. Defiance her whole life, and she never lived anywhere off the reservation. Where she lives is hard to explain, because she doesn't live in a rural part of the reservation but there isn't really any "cities" on the reservation. There are little towns and she lives in one of the little towns, and surrounding her house is most of our close relatives.

*What was your most memorable moment in your childhood?*

She said it was just being around her family, and that means her whole family. Cousins, grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, and siblings, and they were all around during holidays and birthdays. She also said Christmas was always her favorite holiday and Easter too, because her mother would cook a big dinner. Even though she and her siblings didn't get much or any presents during Christmas she was always happy, and she didn't start getting her parent presents till she was older.

*How was your household run, and looked in your childhood?*

She had a simple home, and they didn't have much but that never bothered her. Family was always important, and so family was always around but not as much during holidays and birthdays. Her mother ran the household, took care of everyone, and worked. Then her father

worked but it was hard for him to keep a job, because he had a drinking. Over time he stopped drinking and worked full time. Throughout her life school was not always that important, and going to college wasn't pushed.

*I asked her if she thought living on the reservation her whole shaped her differently.*

Her response was that she never knew anything else, because she never lived anywhere else. And when she did travel it was to see other relatives on different reservations or traveled to different places besides reservations but didn't stay there too long.

*How many children do you have? And what kind of education did they get?*

Darlene is her oldest and she graduated from ASU with a Masters, and then she had Marlene graduated from SIP in New Mexico. Then Mariene her youngest went into the Marine Corp. and was discharge honorable.

*How far did you go with your education? And did you emphasis education to your girls?*

Margie finished high school and went to college but went off and on. Then her siblings Beverly got her BA degree and Masters, and Mary went to nursing school. Diana and Alvina went to trade schools. She said she told her girls that education was important, but she never put pressure on her girls on going to college.

*How was raising them and did you work when they were young?*

She was a stay at home mother with the two oldest, but with Mariene her grandma would watch her when Margie went to work. She worked as a secretary for some office on the reservation. Margie said that her daughters were all good girls and didn't get into big troubles. One of the hardest times for Margie was when they all started to leave for schooling and start to get married.

*I first asked her how the culture of kids today is different from her culture when she was growing up.*

All she said was that she doesn't know the culture today so she can't answer that question, then I asked it in a different way. Plus she said living in Ft. Defiance has hindered her point of view

when talking about the culture today. With her living in Ft. Defiance it is very sheltered from the outside world, and she doesn't leave the reservation enough to see different cultures. A reservation is completely different from the "normal" world, and only someone that has lived on a reservation would understand.

*So how kids are raised today is it different from how you were raised?*

She said yes, and then said "when my mom would cook you would eat it or don't, and there was nothing else to eat besides that food...you grow to like it." Then she said kids these days get a choice, but with everything in their life. She said that they are spoiled and the parents seem to be afraid of their kids. In her day she wouldn't have gotten away with doing that, because her parents ran the household.

*I know that your sister, Diana, died at a young age. What happened? And how old was she?*

Diana was 21 years-old when she died. She was killed in a car accident with her friend when she was at school. This was a great loss in the family, because the whole family is close. (My grandma, Beverly, talked about Diana fondly, and she always seemed sad when she talked about her. The pain is still there through the years.)

*I know I am closer with my sister than my little brother. Which were you closest to?*

Beverly Willow (her sister) she was closest (my grandma), and they stayed close even after Beverly moved up to Wyoming after getting married. Mary, Alvina, and Beverly married a man from Wyoming and moved there. Margie said they moved up to Wyoming one by one, and that she missed them but it was ok.

*I know you have diabetes. When were you diagnosed and how does it affect your life?*

Margie was diagnosed in 1997, and is on a little dialysis machine when she sleeps at night. She said that she doesn't have diabetes anymore, because with her religion (Christianity) even though she is on dialysis doesn't mean she has diabetes. If she prays to God and lives a pure life God would take away all her illnesses, and that means her diabetes too. (With her religion she doesn't believe she has diabetes anymore, but is still on the dialysis machine every night)

*Religion is a big part of your life. When did you start to go to church? And how has your religion helped you through the years?*

She started to go to a Christian church in 1972 with her husband, Richard, and has gone every since. Every Sunday and sometimes Wednesday, and it has helped her get through some tough times. From losing loves one, and dealing with her health problems, and some family health problems. She doesn't practice many Navajo traditions, because it conflicts with her Christian religion but she can speak Navajo.