

## Nick Sanchez Story (1997)

Nick Sanchez still lives in the most beautiful mountain villages in New Mexico where I was born and raised. Nick is now 84 years old and I am 82. As children we herded sheep together on the neighboring mountains during the summers. We had a tent, a bedroll and a few pots and pans to cook with. The first thing we did when we got up in the morning was to go and check on the sheep and then we made breakfast. We had a sack of goatmeat or sheepmeat that we kept hung in a tall tree to keep the eagles and coyotes away. Sometimes we fried the meat or else we made stew.

One evening, after it had rained all day, we came back to camp all tired and wet. We built a roaring fire and while Nick made some bread in a Dutch oven I baked sheep ribs. We enjoyed a good supper before we went inside our tents and went to bed. We always had a prayer asking our God to keep us safe through the night on account of the wild wolves and coyotes. Nick would tell me not to get up during the night to check on the sheep because I was too young. He wanted to do the checking. Nick would take his rifle and shoot a couple of shots into the air to scare the coyotes and then he would go back to bed only to get up again when the coyotes would come near again.

Shepherding is the kind of occupation where if you do not know how to pray you will soon learn how to because one is always in constant danger from the wild animals. Nick would take some animal fat and grease the outside of our tent to make it waterproof. He also made slingshots that we used. Nick was a good shot. Once he shot a wild turkey with his slingshot so we had something different to eat. We had a donkey that we used to haul our water down from a canyon.

Nick would tell me stories that his father had told him. One story was about a man who came from Spain and married one of the natives. His name was Prudencio Martinez who had many goats he pastured in the mountains. Prudencio knew where to find gold in the mountains and he always had gold. Once my dad and I went looking for our horses and cows and my father showed me the place where El Rancho de Tio Prudencio was. The trees had grown so that it was hard to see what was left of El Rancho de Tio Prudencio. There are still some of his relatives living at Llano de San Juan. One of his great-granddaughters went to Allison James Presbyterian School in Santa Fe and was my teacher there.

by Antonio Duran (4-16-1914)