

CHAPTER XI

EPILOGUE

“What’s past is prologue.”

William Shakespeare. *The Tempest*, Act 2, Scene I. ¹

The saga of the Wigglesworth clan didn't end with Doc's passing in 1963 (or El's in November 1979), and its tapestry continues to be woven by all surviving members, many of whom are yet impacted and influenced to varying degrees by the spirit of Tom and Ann and Doc and Edna. Many more of them there are who perhaps even unknowingly bear the stamp of their character and courage, even as they also reflect and pass on the many fine traits we came to recognize in old Tom Wigglesworth in the course of these pages. The world is all the better for this, and we're the better for knowing about these fine folks. There remains, then, only a compulsion to try to put it all in perspective. More recent news items *may* well serve to help us in this endeavor.

Excerpts from an extended entry from the *New York Times* of 8 Sep 1968 and datelined Durango, CO, seem relevant, thus:

If it is not a once-famous train that is headed for oblivion these days, then it is a railroad route . . . What may be the latest to join the ranks is the 200 mile narrow gauge route of the D&RG Western between Alamosa and Durango in southern Colorado, by way of several points in New Mexico. A petition to do away with this route is now before the ICC. The route that the D&RG seeks to abandon would not affect the carrier's popular 45 mile run between Durango and Silverton. The latter ride is an objective of just about every visitor to southwestern Colorado.

[Well, of course, both of the routes mentioned are prime examples of Chief Wigg's engineering skill and perseverance.]

As for the Alamosa-Durango route, it is one of the nation's highest (it crosses a 10,000 foot pass) and most widely scenic runs; however, it already has been cut down to irregular freight service and only occasional passenger excursions . . . Approval of the abandonment petition is expected, for the railroad says (and what a neat trick that is) that it is losing \$500,000 a year on the line. The petition points out that there is little need for the run, since good highways crisscross and are parallel to it.

[The article then goes on to elaborate ways to save the line, as through an organized fund-raising save-the-railroad movement, and an infusion of \$150,000 from an on-site movie project starring Robert Mitchum and Arthur Kennedy.]

New Mexican officials are agitated over the proposed abandonment, regarding the line as a scenic and historical attraction of special importance to the state's poverty stricken northern counties [which, needless to say, are largely comprised of Indian Reservations]. One suggestion is to make a national Monument out of the route . . . (and) operate it for the benefit of tourism, with railroad buffs donating their services. . . . (others have noted that) since the run winds and twists through some of the nation's highest mountain ranges, and is deeply buried in snow in winter and swept by torrential rains in summer, the cost of maintenance would be disparately high.

This line's construction was regarded as a major engineering feat at the time - it would still be so regarded today - especially the 64 mile stretch between Antonito and Chama. **[Don't you get the feeling that, as we used to say at the movies, "This is where we came in.?"]** It's said to be the wildest region ever penetrated by an American railroad.

Then, on 13 Jul 1982, the town of Silverton and environs

celebrated the 100th anniversary of the D&RG's Durango-Silverton Railroad. *The only regulated 100% coal fired, steam powered, narrow gauge in the United States.* Actually, the celebration lasted the entire week of 8-13 July, and the anniversary was shared by St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church and the Grand Imperial Hotel. Well, at least this shows that some things really last.

The program included the exhibition of the movies *Denver and Rio Grande*, starring Edmund O'Brien and Sterling Hayden, and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, starring Robert Redford and Paul Newman. It also included [would you believe it?] a String Quartette Chamber Music Concert. The festivities, which embraced many more events (such as the judging of a beard-growing contest) than mentioned here, concluded with a Special Train trip to the dedication of the monument at Cascade Canyon and an address by Colorado Governor, Richard Lamm.



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(As luck would have it, the very week in June 1986 in which this section of our saga was being "transcribed" in the greater Washington, DC metropolitan area, local TV exhibited two movies featuring the D&RG: the *Butch Cassidy* flick, and *Ticket to Tomahawk* featuring Dan Dailey. The disappointment of the former (from the scenic point of view) was more than offset by the latter, which opened with the credits being rolled over a shot

out the front of the engineer's cab as the train puffed up the canyon highline along the gorge carved out by the Animas River. Beautiful!

In any event, the *Silverton Standard and the Miner* published a 32 page special anniversary edition marking the triple jubilee, and one article pointed out that it was the railroad which brought the Catholic Church to Silverton, arriving via the train from Durango on 22 July 1882 in the person of father Michael Brennan. Following the decline of mining, the church today is a mission at Ouray.

The ads and "regular" features incorporated in the special edition are almost as interesting as the extensive historical data, much of which has been included in an earlier chapter of this book. For example, the weather report for *the 4th of July* records a high of 76 ("that's the spirit") and a low of 31! Most places the latter would be below freezing, folks. One ad invites everyone to "ride the fire-breathing dragon," the same being the "64 majestic miles in the Southern Rockies of Colorado and New Mexico through tunnels, gorges, and over breathtaking trestles." This would be Chief Wigs' crowning achievement of the run connecting Antonito, CO, and Chama, NM, and which crisscrosses the state border some two dozen times. Still running then 7 days a week (through 10 Oct), it had apparently been renamed the *Cumbre & Toltec Scenic Railroad*. And, since this run was still in operation as of publication of the 1986 Tour Guide for Colorado/Utah, the good people of that community seemingly must have prevailed in part over the abandonment proceedings reported earlier in the excerpt from the *New York Times*. Alleluia! There may be hope for the world after all.

Somewhat sadly, there is a postscript to this extended description of the 100th anniversary of the Durango-Silverton of 8-13 July 1982. The 26 August 1982 edition of the *Silverton Standard and the Miner* carried a social item of some relevance

to our story, thus:

John M. And Virginia Wigglesworth from Chevy Chase, MD, visited in Silverton Wednesday and Thursday with the Smithsonian group which is touring railroads and silver mines in the Rockies. The group is staying at the Grand Imperial Hotel, and rode the train Thursday. Wigglesworth is the grandson of Thomas H. Wigglesworth, engineer in charge of the San Juan extension of the D&RG from 1880-82. His grandmother, Anne Wigglesworth and father, Dr. Albert M. Wigglesworth were the first passengers on the D&RG railroad.

(Coincidentally, the same issue carried an obituary of Jim Cole, grandson of Billy Cole, *Old Wig's* cook on the Durango~Silverton job. The marriage of Billy and his Irish bride were not a matter of record in Silverton until Jack confirmed it by quoting Doc's manuscript at a Smithsonian group banquet at the Grand Imperial Hotel. As it happened, reporter Allan Nossaman was the main speaker.

Again, on yet another Smithsonian trip, Jack met R. C. Gorman, a nationally famous painter in San Francisco, but born in Chinle and a WWII *code-talker*. It was established that Gorman had known Doc, since his first question was, "Did your father have a limp?" Join a Smithsonian group and see the world! (Gorman was born in 1931 and died in 2005. DFJ) ³



R. C. Gorman in 1987.

Now, there is a reason for all this possibly seeming madness,

these extended quasi-digressions. A picture should be emerging, and that picture is this: all progeny derives life and inspiration from its roots, and long-gone ancestors somehow live on, not only through any enduring physical monuments of their creation, but most especially through their proud progeny.

There *is* a circuit of love, esteem and mutual respect between humans from one generation to the next, and we come to see that we are, indeed, all in this together. Poet John Donne is right: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." We've now passed the midpoint of the 1980's, but the trace of our links with the 1880's and before have not yet been obscured by the passage of time. Pride in our independence should long ago have fallen hostage to our recognized debt to all who have preceded us.

Perhaps St. Paul, no hero to modern feminists, has somewhere put it best: "What have we that we have not received?" Indeed. And that is why it is profitable as well as interesting to seek to rediscover our ancestors, our heritage. It is at once a most humbling exercise, and yet one wrought with inspiration and encouragement. Also, it reveals all too well how prone we are to race through life with blinders on, absorbed in self-centeredness, and thus oblivious to those around us, including those whose lives, barely overlapping our own, we saw no need to even attempt to really know. We're the losers. We risk remaining totally unaware of the source of those inherited virtues and traits, which we in our folly take to be our own handiwork. How often we pass, like ships in the night with their wireless switched off, incredibly fascinating and heroic older relatives from whom we could have learned much of value - hidden treasures, never unearthed because we fail to make the effort of establishing contact.

Surely, Doc Wigglesworth and his ever loyal and faithful Edna stand out in this regard. Two more quiet, unassuming, self-

effacing laborers in the vineyard can scarcely be imagined. Yet the pattern of their love and life together brims with rich testimony to uncommon courage, fortitude, humility and enduring charity, an abiding concern for other's, and general good cheer. Their lives were one continuous example of service, self-sacrifice and steadfast commitment. There may have been a day when we could look to recognized saints, celebrated national heroes, or even the sports pages for such exemplars of character to emulate. But, not anymore. The world seemingly quickly consumes or corrupts anyone long in the public eye, and we are fortunate, indeed, who can turn inward to our families and find true paragons who practiced what too many others only preached.

Doc was not long at his final earthly home, Carroll Manor, but he left his mark. He had been there scarcely two months when the Jan-Feb 1961 issue of the bi-monthly Carrollette reported on his arrival, noting that,

"Dr. Wigglesworth is fine company. He has a genial disposition and is an excellent conversationalist. He likes good music and good books, and he can discuss many interesting subjects. He already has many good friends in Carroll Manor."

In the same interview it was noted that,

"The Doctor says the happiest years of his life were the 53 years from the day of his wedding until the year 1954, when Mrs. Wigglesworth died."

Would anyone who has ventured with us through these pages so far ever doubt it? And Doc was mentally keen and perceptive to the very end.

Here is a tribute to Doc published in the *1920 Annual of the*

Franciscan Missions of the Southwest:

For 15 years Dr. A. M. Wigglesworth was at the head of the medical work of the Fort Defiance Agency and attended all those years also to the sick of our St. Michaels Indian School, thus becoming one of our main benefactors. An exceptionally eminent physician and surgeon, he gained the complete confidence of the Navajos. They recognized his ability and appreciated him for his successful treatments, his tact and unvarying friendliness, and, last but not least, because he had acquired their exceedingly difficult language. Even the medicine men went to him or sent for him for treatment and medicines instead of trusting to the efficacy of their own remedies, songs, dances, etc. Under his supervision a general School and Agency Hospital and a Tubercular Sanatorium were built at Ft. Defiance, and incalculable good was done for the amelioration of the health conditions among the Navajos. In March 1918, he was transferred to Washington DC, and placed at the head of the Medical Department of the Indian Service - a well-merited recognition.

While at Washington he decided to embrace the Catholic faith, to which his wife and children belonged. Since the administrative work in the Capital did not suit his temperament, he returned to Ft. Defiance the same year, arriving there whilst *the* epidemic of influenza was raging. Laboring with his wonted zeal and ability among the 300 sick at Ft. Defiance, he and his family were infected with the dread disease. While his family soon recovered, he suffered a relapse and was hovering between life and death for almost a week. During this time I (Fr. Anselm Weber, D.F.M.J received him into the Church. The Good Lord spared him for his family, his many friends and the Indians. On 29 May 1918, he and his little son Francis and three children of Mr. J. L. Hubbell (the Trading Post entrepreneur) of Ganado, AZ . . . received their first Holy Communion at our St. Michaels School. Soon after, because there were no adequate facilities for the education of his children at Ft. Defiance, Dr. Wigglesworth accepted transfer to the large non-Reservation Boarding School at Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Clearly, Doc was not only one of the first of what we call today

***People Persons*, he was a staunch and true friend of the Indians, forsaking a glamorous main desk job in his wife's own home town after a mere eight month stint to return to their service - gladly exchanging a comfortable life in our Capital City for the primitive conditions of the Arizona-New Mexico mountain-desert region. If Doc had a love affair with his Navajo friends, and he did, it was mutual.**

Our final exhibit in support of this contention is Doc's obituary as carried in the June-July 1964 edition of the St. Michaels Mission Franciscan Fathers' publication *The Padres' Trail*:

The Navajo people lost a sincere and devoted friend with the death of Dr. Albert M. Wigglesworth, who was called to his eternal reward in Providence Hospital, Washington DC, on 6 Jun 1964 at the ripe old age of 92 years.

When he was still a child his parents came to Colorado where his father was construction engineer on the Durango-Silverton branch of the D&RG Railroad. After graduation from the Medical School of Colorado, the doctor served first as physician at the Southern Ute Agency, then at Ft. Lewis Indian School near Durango in Colorado and later at Ft. Apache Indian School in Arizona.

He came to Ft. Defiance, AZ, in Dec 1904 to become the first successful white "medicine man" to minister to the Navajo Indians. He was the only doctor on the entire Navajo Reservation and there were few Indians in those days who as yet had any appreciation of the advantages of an education. After all, how much classroom learning is required to produce a good sheep herder? Likewise, the Navajo felt little need for the white man's hospitals or medicines. The medicine man was taking care of that and the native hogan proved quite satisfactory for the comfort and ceremonial treatment of the patient right at home.

Entering a field in which his profession was practically unknown, Dr.

Wigglesworth confidently accepted the challenge of a true pioneer, instructing the Indians in his methods of healing and demonstrating the value of sanitation. He acquired a working knowledge of the difficult language and, by his sincerity, tact, and patience, soon gained the good will even of the Hatathli or native medicine men, who at first viewed his presence as an intrusion on their domain.

Before long he had prevailed upon the Bureau of Indian Affairs to appropriate funds for the erection of the first hospital and also the first tuberculosis sanatorium in Navajoland, thus laying the ground work for the extensive facilities that provide medical and surgical services for upwards of 80,000 Navajos today [1964].

Remember the problem posed in the very first chapter? Navajo Chee (Red) Dodge was in Washington at the head of a delegation of his braves pleading before Congress for funds for more schoolrooms and the improved education of children in his tribe. Congress treated him as though he were there for laughs, mocking his meager formal education. They were apparently unaware that this venerable old chief, who was to die at Ganado a year later (1947) at age 89 was a man of stature in his community. Born at Ft. Defiance in 1858 of a white Army father (soon killed by Apaches) and a full-blooded Navajo mother (who died during his infancy), the resourceful English-fluent Chee was a paid interpreter (\$500/year) on the post by age 16. He participated in the *Long Walk* (between Gallup and Ft. Sumner) of 1864-68, and was accepted as tribal chief from 1884, and served as chairman of the three-man tribal council from 1923. He even held posts in the Chester Arthur and TR administrations. At age 88 he was still on Capitol Hill fighting for the improved education of his people.

A companion of Chee's on the *Long Walk* was the better known Navajo war chief Manuelito (this being his Mexican name of record) who negotiated the earlier referenced treaty of Laguna Negra (just north of Ft. Defiance) on 18 July 1855 - three years before Chee was born. The treaty of 1868 went so far as to concede "the necessity for education," and promised a teacher for every 30 children (ages 6-16) the Navajo could compel to attend school.



Manuelito 1818 – 1893 ⁴

(This would be where Aunt Kate Watson, and later - happily for our story - Edna Mae Wigglesworth came into the picture as teachers. A hundred years later fulfillment of this function was being supplemented by *VISTA: Volunteers In Service To America*.)

It should be emphasized that the initial thrust for the importance of education came from the Navajos themselves, and that Manuelito was a prime mover in this campaign. In his old age (he lived from 1818 -1893) Manuelito said:

"My grandchild, the whites have many things we Navajos need but cannot get. It is as though the whites are in a grassy valley, with wagons, plows, and plenty of food, and we Navajos are up on a dry mesa. We can hear them talking, but we cannot get to them. My grandchild, school is the ladder! Tell our people this!"

Well, Manuelito's latter day compatriot kept telling both the Navajos and the white men, but to little apparent avail in Washington. Yet, the Navajos never gave up. No doubt a major factor in their endurance and progress was their early recognition of the vital importance of education. Thus, the chairman of the tribal council in 1963 has remarked,

"Other Indians have vanished . . . have lost their native languages (which explains why Navajos remain foremost as wartime communicators among the military services) . . . have lost all or parts of their native hunting grounds . . . have deserted their longhouses or tepees. But not the Navajos!"

In large measure, education has been the key to their survival and proliferation as the predominant Indian tribe today. It is not without significance that our Edna played a role in the education of Navajos.

There you have it. In spite of everything, the Navajo tribe has grown and prospered. In 1852 they numbered a mere 7,000 (lagging even the Utes at 12,000). By 1890 they had increased to 17,200, and Doc himself serviced some 20,000 by 1904. By 1968 the Navajo numbered 125,000, and the largest and most populous American Indian Reservation today (1986) is the Navajo, with 160,000 Indians scattered over an area of 25,000 square miles, somewhat larger than the entire state of West Virginia - and over 3/4 of which is rugged desert country. (The 2010 Census population count of Navajos is 332,000.⁵ DFJ)

Just think of that! Doc Wiggs, as noted earlier, once handled this all *by himself*! No, not quite! Meanwhile, Edna was helping out on the educational front! In this perspective, it's nice to reflect that perhaps their tender loving care for over a quarter of a century had something to do with the Navajo emerging on top. Certainly, Doc's exemplary life conclusively proves that one single, solitary but dedicated individual can indeed make a difference. You'd have to

say that Old Doc Wiggs packed a tremendous wallop for a 5'-6" tall, 160 pound cripple! Of his life-story, as the saying goes, it could easily be said: "They just don't make movies like that anymore."

Doc was indifferent to the creature comforts that most of us crave. The greed infesting modern society always remained a complete stranger to him. Recall his starting salary: \$1000/year. You don't get rich that way. (Even Chee Dodge was bringing down \$500/year as an unschooled interpreter at 16. On the other hand, the Governor of the entire New Mexico Territory was earning only a paltry \$1500 per year in 1849, and this was long before the lucrative banquet-speaking circuit was open to politicians.) Even as Doc never grasped for wealth; *apathy, envy, malice* - such notions simply weren't even in his vocabulary. His primary concern was always *people*: healthy, happy people. People were his business - his life. Everything he ever did was to ease their plight, and everything he did - he did with good cheer AND a *smile*. The *American Way* may denigrate titles and such, but nobility is still alive and well, thank you. Albert Matthew Wigglesworth proved that!

As the Navajo say: Axol'a-do: May time go on!

NOTES

1. Wikipedia contributors. "What's past is prologue." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 17 Nov. 2014. Web. 24 Nov. 2014.

**2. Taken on 11/21/2014 from the website Colorado Peak Politics. Colorado's Conservative Bully Pulpit. "Economic Cocaine," 1/22/2013.
<http://coloradopeakpolitics.com/2013/01/22/economic-cocaine-dick-lamm-slams-mark-udall-for-fiscal-cliff-deal/>**

3. Image of R. C. Gorman taken on 11/21/2014 from the website R. C. Gorman. Navajo Gallery. Taos. <http://rcgormangallery.com/bio>

4. Wikipedia contributors. "Manuelito." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 18 Nov. 2014. Web. 22 Nov. 2014.

5. The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010. 2010 Census Briefs. By Tina Norris, Paula L. Vines, and Elizabeth M. Hoeffel. Washington, DC – The United States Census Bureau. C2010BR-10. Issued January 2012. Table 7. American Indian and Alaska Native Population by Selected Tribal Groupings: 2010. p. 17.