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THE MORNING-ECHO DAYS—
THE OLD HOPI WAY OF LIFE*By* EDMUND NEQUATEWA

THE morning echo days in the Hopi towns have passed and the old people of today think that it is too bad and that the Hopis will never again be like they used to be.

As late as 1895 these echoes still sounded. The cockerels were the time-keepers, and toward morning all the men and women used to know just exactly how many times the cocks would crow before dawn. Nowadays who hears them crow and how many times? Nobody, for hardly any one is up and out until after sunrise. Thus much ambition has been lost by the Hopis. These mornings echoes were first heard by the ambitious women and girls. The second time the cock crowed, these girls would start grinding corn and singing their morning songs, which echoed through the streets, and they would have the corn meal ready to cook for breakfast at sunrise. Then, at dawn, the boys would put bells around their waists and away they would go with the sacred corn meal in their hands to some distant shrine and then from there to a spring to take a bath. The sound of these bells would echo among the hills and cliffs becoming fainter and fainter, then come again louder and louder. These echoes thrilled the people of the Hopi villages. The practice of all this, the Hopi would say, was the basis of all happiness: to be wide awake, full of life, keep yourself in good condition, to meet all hardships that may come in your way of life. Women with these thoughts in mind would take their children and the sacred cornmeal to the nearby shrine and ask for blessings, that they might be taken care of through the day and for many years to come. Men, young and old, would be on the housetops watching the sun come up over the horizon; this meant that the men were showing themselves to the wild game, hoping that in the course of the hunt they might have good fortune.

After sunrise the men would go to their kivas, as this was their community gathering place as well as for ceremonial use. Here they would card wool and spin to prepare for weaving their textiles of all kinds; here they would sing sacred katchina songs, and when the children outside heard the echo, they would tell their parents that the katchinas were in the kiva singing. When breakfast was ready, the children would come to the kivas calling invitations to everyone to come out and eat. Such was the life of these people.

The Hopis were religious and strict. At breakfast no water would be allowed, because the boys were supposed to have had their big drink at the spring, besides having had a bath, washed their faces and washed out their mouths,

but older men, women, and girls would attend to these affairs at home. If anyone should want a drink of water, he was asked to go out and inhale the cold air of the San Francisco Peaks; otherwise he would not get any.

At meal time men and boys had to sit in a certain position so that the left arm would be in between the stomach and the upper limb of the legs. When arms began to feel tight, one was through eating. Women and girls also had their position around the meal table and they too had to watch and remember when they had enough. Nowadays you can just eat and eat till you can hardly breathe. The Hopis did not used to know what constipation was, but they do now. The big eater was not thought much of, if there was anything left they would leave it to the grandparents to finish up.

In the winter, the children were not allowed to come near the fire to warm their hands or feet; they said that if you warm your feet by the fire they will grow big, and the Hopis hate big feet. Only aged folks would attend to the fire, while the rest sat back against the wall away from the heat.

This fire was, of course, for light as well as heat. One can imagine what a dim light it would be, because it was only brushwood that they burned in those days in their fireplaces, though cedar wood was used under their piki stones on which they made their piki bread. Today, you will find heating ranges burning coal, yet they will say that the rooms are not warm enough! They also have kerosene lamps and gasoline burners. Of course, they are a great convenience and add to their comfort but the people are not as hardy as they used to be. For bedding they had sheep skins and one rabbitskin blanket for cover. If there were any boys in the family, they would go to the kiva to sleep with only one blanket. What a great change! The boys of this generation have big bed rolls in the kivas in addition to heating stoves which burn coal.

Nowadays there is no control over the boys; they all smoke cigarettes, chew tobacco, or use any form of the white man's tobacco. The older men know that these young boys are ruining their health with such use of tobacco, yet nothing can be said to them. They are not fit to take long distance runs as the old men used to do when they were boys. Of course, they are all proud to have their children educated in the white man's way, which is a great help to the tribe, but if they only would keep up the practice on their home rules, be obedient and respect their elders, they would have that much more respect from the outside world. Such is the life with the Hopis of today.