

# INDIAN MOBILE MISSION

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***It's a Party! Happy 40th Indian Mobile Mission. Not over the hill, just getting started.***

I was fresh from green New England. The thirteen-foot travel trailer bounced over the wagon trails. The only color around was brown. Every family lived in the traditional hogon home made of logs and mud. A sheep corral was the family's livelihood. The meat was on the hoof and the wool sheared by the women-folk was spun and woven into rugs. These were exchanged at the trading post for staples like flour, lard, coffee and salt.



I was lonely. No one could or would speak to me. I was new and bilagaana (non Indian). One day I got a bright idea. I would pick up any one hitching a ride. I would make the Navajo be friendly to me. Soon my idea would go into action. I stopped, they climbed in. I stepped on the gas and turned to see everyone sitting on the floor. No one wanted to be seen with the outsider. I tried to make small talk in my limited Navajo. I heard snickers.

One day an elderly Indian mother came banging on the trailer door. "Come with me," she said in Navajo. She was out of breath and turned on a run back to her hogon. I followed, entering the home behind her. There on the dirt floor was her high school age daughter foaming at the mouth, eyes popping out of her head, threatening to kill everyone in reach. "Do something!" the mother implored me. "Me!!" I said to myself, "What can I do?" The the song "Jesus Loves Me" started to flow from my heart. In Navajo I sang softly then turned up the volume as the young woman screamed. I soon saw the battle was on. Two hours later she lay softly in my arms singing "Jesus Loves Me" too.

I never got used to the idea of feeling like I was being watched. Looking up I would see grinning faces pressed against the small window. This was a great game they enjoyed. My every move was watched. I was the funniest circus around. Like washing clothes in a pail then hanging them up on a rope to dry. Indian boys had better ideas for the rope. They needed a lasso; my clothes were cast into the dust.

Children in the area might attend school up to 3rd grade. Education was not encouraged. Herding sheep, carding wool and watching me kept the children busy. Most mornings a mother with a flock of children would stop by on her way to the well. She spoke no English but I learned she enjoyed a cup of coffee. A very small girl always hid in the folds of the mother's traditional full skirt. Over time, I won the child to my side. She learned to color and shyly smile. Today, she is a high school teacher on the reservation.

Forty years, 1968-2008 and still pounding the trails. The party is all year long. Your gift of any item for a school child is appreciated. You send the gift and the Party begins. Do you need ideas? Shoes youth size to six, socks, hair ties, backpacks, school materials, shirts size ten to fourteen. Funds for special needs and traveling are much appreciated. Your gift will start the Party. Celebrate with us. Happy Birthday! Bil hoozho bi' dizhchi neeii' 'aneil kaah. (Navajo age blessing)



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[www.indianmobilemission.com](http://www.indianmobilemission.com)