

Interview with Drusilla Gould
December 3, 2002

TAPE 1 SIDE A

HES: It is December 3rd, 2002. This is Henry Stamm and I'm speaking with Drusilla Gould about Shoshone art, Shoshone and Bannock art. We're going to be talking a little bit about basketry, and parfleche, some paintings, dolls and games, but most especially, beadwork. Drusilla is familiar with beadwork. She is a beadworker herself and is also Shoshoni language teacher and we're going to discuss some of the Shoshone terms for the kinds of beadwork designs and the names of the beads themselves, or the bead colors while we do this. OK, Drusilla, I've got this computer program, the art project website so it can be displayed on your monitor there and what would you like to start with there?

DG: Let me look at this one first

HES: I'll have to drive, but you can sort of let me know and look at it on your screen there and I can look simultaneously on the laptop here.

DG: History of Shoshone-Bannock Indian Art: Continuity and Change in the Northern Rockies. I have to say that the change in the, the changes are, you know have occurred and we have seen them occur throughout time. The beadwork of the Shoshone people was based on the interpretation of the geometrical design, the interpretation of the colors that were used, and the interpretation of the materials that were used. In older times those materials were more natural, such as the hides—were what we used to sew on—such as the buckskin dresses. It was all hand-tanned buckskin. Some of those were smoked and the thread that was used at that time was sinew.

HES: Let me interject here. What I'm showing you here is perhaps the oldest, or at least the earliest documented Shoshone beadwork that I have, and it is a buckskin dress and it was supposedly given to the president of the Halifax and Long Island Railroad by one of Chief Washakie's daughters—Elizabeth or Nahtoma. Can you say anything—this was done in 1884—we do have documented date on this. So this dress was created sometime before that date. It might be as early as the late 1860s. As I said, this dress might have been created sometime in the late 1860s or 1870s. I've been told by another Shoshone beadworker that this striped design that's right through here that outlines the blue field background might have been taken from the stripes of a soldier's uniform. Does that seem possible to you, or could you say anything about this particular design? Does this motif with these rectangular forms between here, seem to appear over and over again in the early geometric designs.

DG: I'm not, I'm not too familiar with the border. It may have been from some soldier's uniform, but I know that among the Shoshone beadworkers there is always a border on everything that's done. It's, again, it's specifically what that particular family has either encountered with certain people, or certain objects, and the ideas from that come then the design. And the little, the square designs, the little blocks or rectangles, I remember seeing those is very old beadwork and the representation I don't know. But I've seen those time and time again on older, older beadwork, or older crafts.

HES: What about the length of the fringe here? On Lakota, Cheyenne, sometimes Arapaho dresses made, we see much longer fringe. Any idea why the Shoshone dresses seem to be a little bit shorter in the fringe?

DG: I don't know why, but it is traditional, it's a traditional—meaning that it's very old and a lot of the Shoshone dresses never did have a long fringe. And I think it was probably due to—some of the daily ones were basically always worn on a daily basis. So in order not to get caught up in fringe, or you got fringe in your food, or whatever, then they have the short fringe. That, in comparison to others, I don't know what other families might say, or other beadworkers, or craftspeople, but as far as I know, a lot of those dresses that were just worn on a daily basis had the short fringe.

HES: OK. I pulled up another fringed beaded buckskin dress. This is from the Denver Art Museum. It's catalog 1952.253. (I need to do that for my references.) Here again we see a beaded yoke that has primarily a blue background and then, the green boxes set these, sort of vertical panels here. A similar

design, but as you pointed out, this one also has a border all along the edges here, too, done in probably what looks to be white beads and then also maybe some green, I can't really tell 'cause I don't have a close enough [unintelligible], and there's another border design near the bottom of the dress. But again, it has short fringes. And then, there's several other dresses that we can comment on. This is one from the National Museum of the American Indian. It's catalog number 1855. It's a fairly early piece in this collection. Again, we have this striped kind of border that goes around that's very similar to one that is attributed to Chief Washakie's [daughter]. This particular dress does not look like it was smoked. The other ones that we looked at may have been. This one is a much whiter appearance. What about the designs in this? There's some inverted triangles with arrow that sort of pierces through. Have you ever seen that before in Shoshone work?

DG: I think the design on these, especially with the inverted triangles with the arrows sticking through; I think it's a combination of not Shoshone design, but maybe, may have been a combination of Shoshone and another tribe's. Because of the movement of the people throughout the land, there was a lot of designs and colors that were picked up from other tribes, as well. Or, they may have been by trade. They have seen something by trade and then they reduplicated these onto a dress and other, other ornaments and clothing.

HES: OK. One of the things we have seen in these first three dresses is a predominant use of a blue field, but with green as being the main decorative color for designs of boxes and rectangles. Here's another one that uses all of the colors, but this introduces a black or a very dark cobalt to it. This dress is also from the National Museum of the American Indian. It's catalog 10.6955. Again, we notice that it has short fringe. The yoke is not—this actually looks like it's a one-piece dress. The others may have actually been a yoke that was more two-piece. This one looks one-piece. But we have a very dark field here. And again, as you pointed out, there's some border designs that looks like in a cobalt blue and then we have greens and blues there. Again with those rectangular designs and to some extent, this is repeated in the border at the bottom.

DG: But these dresses would basically be for, like social events. [HES: "OK"] So these would be something that would be worn during times of dance. And then the color of the buckskin, also, like the hand-tanned and the smoked—certain ceremonials—if they're ceremonial dresses would, you know, would be mandatory—they be—they have more color than the other, or a certain shade of brown or the smoke color for that specific ceremony.

HES: I want to show you two more dresses. There are not a lot of dresses in the collections that I've been to. This pretty much represents all the—this one is, I think, was a child's dress, girl's dress. It has elk teeth on the yoke. Fringe is relatively short, no other beadwork designs. Can you comment a little bit about the elk teeth in dressmaking?

DG: Elk teeth was—well these are the prize dresses among Shoshone people, because it showed that the provider of that family was a talented hunter or skilled hunter. And so the elk teeth dresses were a prized possession in a family and for a young child it shows the love of the father and the mother to that child.

HES: This one is from the Denver Art Museum; it's catalog 1950.94. I've got a suggested date down here of 1870 to 1890, does that seem about right? Do you think about older dresses like this?

DG: I don't know about the dates.

HES: Yeah, it'd be hard to tell without something more specific. Finally, the other dress that I've seen here—this one has much longer fringe. Again, from the Denver Art Museum if I'm not mistaken. Yes, and this 1952.253. And, the design here goes back to the blue field, as in the bands. And then, the rectangular things—I've heard this called a "boxed eye" design. Have you ever heard of it referred to as that?

DG: I've heard that term, yeah, but I've never really, you know, actually thought about it. I've seen the little, you know, rectangular designs on many things.

HES: Uh-hum. This is a close-up of the same dress, showing one of those beaded bands. And you can see the kind of stitching that is done and it appears to me that these are not—Can you see well enough from the beads here to know if they're like [if] each bead is tacked down, or whether we've got a lazy stitch.

DG: This is a lazy stitch.

HES: And what's the purpose of the lazy stitch, besides being quicker way of beading things. They also serve a purpose, didn't it?

DG: [Laughing] Lazy stitch is basically the clothing, or the beaded pieces, can be easily folded and put away. And it doesn't pull on the thread like you would on straight stitch. If you needed to put them away.

HES: You see it a lot on the side beads in moccasins [DG: "right"] where the foot stretches the leather.

DG: Uh-hum and the threads—for the Shoshones, I mean for us here and I'm sure it's the same for the Eastern Shoshone in Wyoming, but the type of dress was very few beads and lots of buckskin. So they were like, rows of lazy stitch, and not so much as this one, but that band would probably—yeah, it would be several bands, you know, the traditional type of dresses among the Shoshone people. Very seldom do you see anything that's real full beaded, though. You know, and the reason why you don't see a lot of dresses is because our people are buried with, with the dresses they had in their possession while they were living and it's either buried with them, they wear it, or on some occasions sometimes if the individual had more than two dresses, then they would be passed on to, perhaps children or grandchildren, and granddaughters and daughters. Or even to sons to share with their daughters later in the future.

HES: Oh, thank you. That's a good explanation for why we don't find them very often.

DG: Know you don't. But, you know, if the person is still living they can leave and deed their stuff to someone and so when they expire, then that individual, then you know, has like a will. And it's upon the person's death, then you get it, but while they're living it remains theirs.

HES: OK. This is the only war shirt that I have found in any collection and actually it attributed to being Chief Washakie's. It is located in the Eastern Shoshone Cultural Center at Fort Washakie, Wyoming. Just looking at it, what can you say about it?

DG: It's a shirt [with a laugh]. It's green and yellow. But the colors, the dyed buckskin represents certain things to the individual that owns it. But it has even deeper meaning to the individual that has, that actually made this piece of clothing.

HES: Like the women's dresses we're seeing short fringes in here, not really long. There are two beaded bands that come down off the shoulders of the—not across the yoke—but down to the waist, with a green field background. But we also see some vertical stripes that are set in it. Do you think that has any kind of meaning to it, or just a purpose in the design?

DG: I don't know. To me, it looks like the American flag. [HES: "OK, symbolic"] Yeah, it may have been at peace time, or it may have been someone had shared with him a gift, or someone that was, again, reduplicated here, but I'm not sure.

HES: Uh-hum. We also see this small, this one area here and then in the middle of those—sort of American flag representation—there are areas where there is a dark field and then a light rectangular thing. Again, carrying an early geometric motif. This is—it also has either horsehair or human hair drops to it all through this area on the side underneath the arms and also off the shoulder here.

DG: And on specific ones, now I can tell you that, that's why you have the blue bands with the white. Those are—we call "spacers." Spacers are like a type of measurement, to measure from—if you could look at this, they have the same distance between the very bottom half of the work, from that half to the should.

And the shoulder probably down the back has the same. So they're like rulers. You know, they're spacers and you fill in between those spaces—I do that all the time.

HES: OK. Let me go on to a couple of other early pieces. All of the beadwork we've been looking at now is all geometric and it's all early, pre-1900, pre-1890 for the most part. These that I'm showing now are catalog 66.41.14ab from the Wyoming State Museum. Oh, these are the wrist bands. I'm going to go to a close-up 'cause it shows the colors a little better. And again, what we see here is this blue field background, and then it looks like cobalt and perhaps red in there—I can't tell—and then the green. Can you tell me something about these colors? We've mentioned that we were going to talk about the colors that we have and the names for them.

DG: Well it's hard to say when you're looking at someone else's, you know, what somebody else has created. I can speak for our family. Always, in our family, we, when we do our beadwork, we have the family colors. From my father, you know, we use the—it's called the sunburst colors. And they would be a bit like the colors in this, that red tank [?] It would go from the very dark maroon color or it would even start with a black color and gradually from there to orange to yellow. And then my mother had her color. And then my father's background color was this color, the turquoise. And that's the color—that's the color of life, because the color of water is what we call life, we call it. In our language we call it *Gwizhonaipe*. [DG spells this out with English letters] And that would represent water in his case because fathers are providers of a family unit. And fathers create life so that—and this is what we call life. Again, and this is specifically speaking of, you know, our family and our use of the colors. [HES: "And, for mother?"] And Mother, she had the color green. Green was a color of new beginning. So, like with the seasons, we start with that color and that would be her background color. And then on top of that would be whatever colors where she would carry children or grandchildren. There, on top of the green she would carry all the other colors because that's what a mother does. The mother nurtures. Green is the color of nurturing. And she nurtures children from Day one, or probably from not the first day of life, but from—I guess you can call it the first day of life when they are first conceived. Because, you know, it starts way back there. And then the nine months that she carries the child, and then for all the many years after when the child is growing. And the mother continues to nurture the child until, you know, she passes. So that color green, that's family home, that's what that represents.

HES: And what is the color green in Shoshoni?

DG: It's called *buhibite*. Buhibite [spells out] that means green. And that would be, you know, what those colors meant in our family. And then all of us as children, we have each—we have a combination of mother's colors and father's colors. And that's the specifically, you know, like when we were very young, specifically gave us a color.

HES: OK. This is very interesting and quite helpful.

DG: And the white was always for pure and that was our grandmother's color. Where they would do a lot of—she did a lot of—her work was with the white background. And with purity comes wisdom and knowledge and patience and all of the, you know, all of the good things are in the white. So—

HES: What is the name of the word for white?

DG: The word for white is *dosabite* [spells out]. The other word that I gave you for blue, that word means life—we don't make this life, but blue is aib~~i~~hibite [spells out]. [HES: "So ai is the underlined part"] Yeah, you underline the ai only. Aib~~i~~hibite, that's blue. But, you know, when you're working with colors, when you're doing, creating, then we don't use the word aib~~i~~hibite, we use the word, *gwizhonaipe* in place of that. And like, for the color green, you don't call it the color green, you call it—oh, what do you call it—there's another term they use which means to nurture. That you use, but you don't use the color, you know, the name of the color when you're doing your, when you're creating. So basically that's kind of an older form of using color in creating.

HES: This is, I'm showing you know is a close-up of a Shoshone legging. And these leggings are in the Lemhin County Historical Center in—museum—in Salmon and were collected from the Lemhi Reservation and I know that you are part Lemhi, and I thought it would be interesting to bring this up because this has most of those colors that you were just talking about—there's the light blue or turquoise, a white field background, and a very strong green, sort of, you might want to call those inverted lozenge, or a diamond, or a pyramid type of thing. I'm not real sure what that is. It's sort of interesting though because I notice here, there there's three tabs [DG: "right"] and here's there's only two. Now, I don't know if that's mistake, or has meaning, or just because of the way the width of the buckskin backing is, changes to fit the upper and lower part of the leg.

DG: These were leggings?

HES: These were, I think were leggings. Let me go back and look at these. These are the two pair here. They credit them, since they're not that long, I think these are only six or seven inches long [DG: "they could be cuffs"] they could be cuffs.

DG: Because I'm thinking that if they're leggings they're upside down. They would be upside down, and then those little trees would be elves pointing down, other than, like little pine tree needles.

HES: But if they're cuffs, and they're, then they're right side up, then, right?

DG: Right. Because they would hold your hand up, or leave them down [motions with hands the positions]

HES: So I'm not sure. I may need to go back in and change what this says on it here.

DG: If it's six inches long then [HES: "about that long—it's still cuff length"] But it could be a child's length, too, if they said it was leggings.

HES: Yeah, well they didn't really say. This particular set of pictures are not mine so I'm not too sure on that. [We] may look at another Lemhi Shoshone object or pair; and this is a pair of moccasins. And, somewhat unusual design. We have primarily a white field that seems to be done with lazy stitch and then we've got some sort of mountain designs with green on one side and cobalt blue on another and then the mountain is intersected by a band of a white bordered in green with cobalt rectangles. Then across the forestep or the instep, we have pretty much a green field, or light green field, with a darker green, light blue, cobalt, sort of rectangular design on it. Have you ever seen anything like this before? It's highly unusual, as far as I've seen.

DG: Umm, I can't say that I have seen them, but I may have. But that is quite unusual to have the border that wide. The border [HES: "right here, or right down there"] the border, the white border all [HES: "this one"] Yeah. But it might, that may be it was done to fit the patterns here. Maybe a little rocket-like looking thing. And it's strange that it hold the blue and the green. It could have been—I don't know—are these children's moccasins? [HES: "no, these are adults"] Adult moccasins? [HES: "These are adults"] Because it might be just the combination of like a family, like in our case, you know, when we do something for a child, it includes the parents. And even the grandparents. You know it might be just the combination of a lot of different things.

HES: I think things are—let's see if I can remember. This is a design that, I think is also—this is a Lemhi beaded design. The pair of moccasins that I showed you before, I think had hard soles. These, I think, are soft sole. More typical of Shoshone-Bannock work and more typical of people who lived west of the Wind River Mountains, too, I think. This design is pretty common. I've seen it from moccasins that were attributed to Kiowas or Southern Arapahos, Southern Cheyenne, also from the northern Plains. And it sort of looks like a person, in some ways, here, with a stick figure—but the colors in it, here, are the same kinds of colors I've seen in Shoshone work over and over again, which are blue, then a dark blue or cobalt, a green. There's usually either a red or a dark green band here, little bit of white. What I don't see is a real

prominent red field, or real prominent red parcel in it, or all green. And those are more indicative of Plains. If you were speculating about these, what would you speculate.

DG: [Laughs] That looks to me like a phase, too, just from where I'm at. I really don't know. [long pause] But the tops, the leggings are, that's Lemhi for sure, 'cause we do—and this is a man's moccasin. So, you know, it's basically, they have the high tops.

HES: Yeah, so they almost have like a wrap in that. They do have a tongue in them, too, or maybe not [DG: "Yeah, they do"] But, yeah, you're right, we don't see in some of the other Eastern Shoshones, we don't see the high—

DG: Well, the high ones are actually for, it's made for young boys and they're made for dancers.

HES: OK. Here's another pair—very similar. They're also from Lemhi. Same colors executed a little bit differently. Where the other one used some triangular kinds of designs in this basic vertical and horizontal pattern, this is all strictly rectangles and squares. Colors are the same. Differently arranged. Again, we see the high cuffs and these, I think, also are soft sole.

DG: Yeah, they were—they're soft sole. Are they male or female, or can you tell? It doesn't say?

HES: No, it doesn't say. The way these are displayed are just indicated that they came from Lemhi, but they don't indicate male or female on them.

DG: I would say that this would be probably a female. It's a little more feminine looking. It's a lot lighter than the other one. Where the other one is more rounded they look like a child's moccasin, actually, in the first one that we saw. And it may just from one family, too, you know. We don't know how or who they acquired them from. So, it's really kind of hard to say.

HES: OK. And then, I think, I probably have some more but I'm not sure we need them. This one, moving away from Lemhi, these were collected on the Wind River Reservation in 1898. I couldn't tell, they are separate sole construction, but they're soft soles. And they're not hard soles, which we normally find over at Wind River. And it also has a design that I've never seen, even remotely on any other pair of moccasins that have been attributed to be Shoshone. But we do have this collection information, the date of collection, and where it was collected.

DG: You know, many of these designs are actually designs from like, parfleches. Like I said earlier, when we didn't have a lot of really unusual types, or more intricate types of designs, it was basically that. It was like, you know, just the straight up and down and going across. But I would say this really looks like one of the parfleche designs. But, you know, it's made to fit this and it may have been a part of a design, or a part of a collection of stuff that were all basically pretty much, you know, done with the same beadwork. Or the same kind of designs.

HES: This is catalog E200393 and this, these moccasins are in the National Museum of Natural History. And the design is somewhat circular and uses green, cobalt, light blue, white and Cheyenne pink-Crow pink—I've heard this color referred to—that are somewhat inverted triangles, or butterfly-like horizontal, and then these radiating bands of cobalt mixed with green. Is there a name for this rose, or Cheyenne pink, or Crow pink?

DG: We call it *Ainga'qibi'*—and it's just a combination of red and white. And I can spell that out for you. And that's actually a combination of red—if you mix red or natural pink with white—we call it *qibite*. And it's white chalk we used to clean moccasins with. So it's a combination of those two colors mixed. And that's what *ainga'qibi is*. But I would say that these are ceremonial moccasins because of the red paint. It has red ochre right on the shoes. Or it could be for a special, what would you call that?—not like something that would be worn on a raiding party, but something a little similar to that, where they would actually be going after something. We have a lot of the red ochre stuff that we use when we go to—it's part for protection and it's part for gain.

HES: OK. So these moccasins actually do tell a story, then.

DG: Or they may be, belong to someone that was a medicine—a healer. A medicine person or a healer.

HES: There's just no information on who, where—I mean, we know where they came from, what time they came from, but we don't know who collected them, I mean, who made them or sold them, as the case may be. I've got a close-up on the design. That's a little [DG: "A little bit better, yeah"] This also looks to me like this leather is not buckskin but might be even buffalo. It's a—

DG: Yes, it's much rougher—it could be either buffalo or moose. 'Cause moose have that same gritty look to it, but it's actually softer than [HES: "than buffalo"] to get in and out. Yeah, this has been done sometime earlier.

HES: Yeah, this again—they might be actually quite early. Just because of the soft soles. I have another item here with a lot of that pink color in it. This is, was identified as Shoshone's woman saddle. It is catalog 1956.170 in the Denver Art Museum. And the frame is a wood frame. I'm assuming it's cottonwood or willow, I'm not too sure which. Pretty dry by now. It's all sinew done. This is all buckskin that I'm point to here that covers the frame. And just the pommels—they're high pommels, front and rear, actually have beaded drops and tacking on the top. And the colors we see are the light green—I guess this is greasy greenish-yellow and the dark green is also greasy, then the whites. And then turquoise, light blue, and the use of the Cheyenne pink here, and then that boxed eye design, again. I'm not too sure they have any collection information on this. Doesn't look like it.

DG: Yeah, and that depends also on the length of these drops off the saddle horns—it just depends on the family. Some people have them shorter, more elaborate with longer fringes and some of them have them long like this with short fringe. And again, it's just based on their family. And those, and this—the lines on here, like the dark color would be the spacers in here. They show where the mid—the middle section is of a particular article.

HES: When somebody is beading these in and using these spacers here and here, and I guess right there, probably, are those beaded in first?

DG: I do mine first. Or sometimes, I'll just mark and when I get to that point, I'll put it on. But yeah, a lot of times, you know there's space, there's spacers and you put the spacers in first. Like, for instance, I did a belt and my mom did a belt for my dad, too, the very same way—the spacers were put in first. And then you fill in the rest with what amount of space you have in there with whatever color. You know, if you have more of one color, then it will fill the larger spaces and if you have less of one color you'll fill, you know, the smaller spaces. But, you know, it just depends on, too, you know, how much your supply of beads. [laughs. HES: "yeah, beads are precious"]

HES: Let's see. Another interesting pair of moccasins. These have been described to me, looking at E200394 from the National Museum of Natural History. Another of my interviewees described these as having the design of a woman's saddle. They're inverted U with sort of flags off the end of what represents the pommels of the saddle. The main field is this turquoise or light blue color and then the saddle is done with a green field and then just some darker blue and darker green, little bit of white. And off the back of the moccasins we also can see green fields, another blue field, another green field that alternates around.

DG: Looks like yellow or a lighter green, something.

HES: And then again, these would be the spacers here? [DG: "yeah"] OK. Now I'm pointing to the verticals off the heel. These moccasins are side-seamed construction, by the way.

DG: What do you mean?

HES: They're not separate soles.

DG: They're all one piece?

HES: This is all one piece and the stitching starts here and goes around the outside this way. They are not stitched on the instep.

DG: You know, there's one group of people I know that does that and that's the Yakima people. They do the one-piece.

HES: Well, I actually have had some questions about this to somebody else. I think maybe of the—it was at the Montana Lewis and Clark Center, there, in Great Falls. And I asked one of the attendants there if they could do some research for me, and pretty much, the separate sole construction was something that came only after Europeans, EuroAmericans actually got to the area. Because most Indian peoples just did this side-seam, fold around, stitch on the outside and that we don't see the separate soles developing until about the 1830s, 1840s on the Plains, and you actually can track the development of European influence in shoes across by noting when the separate sole construction actually makes its way from east to west. But, this is one of those interesting pieces in that sense. It was collected in 1898 on the Wind River Reservation. Highly unusual design, but the colors are all right for the Shoshone colors. So it may be a Yakima kind of influence—

DG: Yeah, you know, its—I don't know how it is to other people, but to our own people, we don't separate ourselves from any other tribe. We're all one tribe and our people come from many different—today—tribes, but they're really not. And we're all blood related. So a lot of this sometimes, you know, because of the relationships and the connections that we have by blood to other—today we call it tribes. Because in our case we—our own, our very own great-grandmother was from Warm Springs and she would probably have this style. And then she married our great-grandfather who was Kutenai/Flathead. And of course, they had their own style, so the blending then—and after they were married would then happen and they both lived to be over a hundred so, you know, when they got together it was way back. And then on the other side, I have a grandfather—Eastern Shoshone—and her mother, his mother would be—we don't know by tribe—a lot of people we don't know by tribe—but we do know she's from the Montana area. So she could be any tribe up in that area. And so it goes like that. A lot of people are related by blood, but, and then that—a lot of the migrating and the trading and that, they pick up on a lot of different things.

HES: Well, given that introduction, I thought maybe I'll try to find this other pair of moccasins—I've got one more page here that you've seen before. And I want to highlight them and show them to you. And I'm on page three of the webpage for the beadwork and I'm looking at a pair of—

END OF SIDE A
TAPE 1 SIDE B