

RICHARD FOWLER VAN VALKENBURGH — 1904-1957

Historian, anthropologist, and long-time friend of the Navaho, R. F. Van Valkenburgh died at Window Rock, Arizona, June 19, 1957. His sudden death came as a shock to his many friends, Indian and non-Indian, and to the Navaho Tribe by which he was employed.

Van, as he was widely and affectionately known, was born in Newark, California, graduated from the Compton High School, and studied at the University of California. Much of his training in history and anthropology derived from his close association with R. L. Moodie, J. P. Harrington, E. L. Hewitt, and F. W. Hodge.

In 1925 he married the former Elsie Condon of California, from whom he was divorced in 1931. A daughter, Mrs. Mary Hinojosa, survives from this marriage. In 1938 he married Ruth Williams of Oklahoma, who, with a son, Richard John, survives him.

Van worked and lived among many Indian groups in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and elsewhere. From 1929 to 1934 he studied the San Luiseño, Pima, Simo'mo, Ventureño, Hopi, and Mohave. From 1935 until his death his major interest remained the Navaho, with whom he did his most important work.

From 1935 to 1941 he was employed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to head a social and economic survey of the Navaho Reservation, during the course of which he acquired the familiarity with the region that was to make him so valuable to the Tribe as an expert witness and collaborator in the development of the Navaho claims case as well as in the solution of many knotty land problems. From 1952 until his death Van was employed by the Navaho Tribe, in charge of its Department of Land Use and Surveys.

Through the years Van accumulated a voluminous body of notes and manuscript material, in addition to knowledge he did not commit to writing, and it was his intention to spend his later years in writing. From 1936 onward occasional brief, but valuable, scientific articles on such subjects as Navaho common law, shrines, and tribal history and government, were published by the Museum of Northern Arizona, the Southwest Museum, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. For the public at large he wrote interestingly and frequently in *Desert Magazine* and *Arizona Highways*.

At a memorial service held on August 6, 1957, the Navaho Tribe recognized Van's devotion to the cause of the Navaho people and adopted a formal resolution expressing appreciation of his invaluable services to the development of the Navaho claims case.

He was the principal moving force in the establishment of the Navajo Tribal Park Commission and the Navajo Archeological Society. Van was keenly aware of the wealth of archaeological material in the Navaho country, and exerted his influence on the Tribal Council to protect it for posterity. In fact, the location and study of ancient Navaho hogan sites is an important aspect of the claims case and much of Van's work from 1952 to 1957 was archaeological research.

Van's death is a great loss, and he will long be remembered by his Navaho as well as his non-Navaho friends.

ROBERT W. YOUNG