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Big Eyes: The Southwestern Photographs of Simeon Schwemberger, 1902-1908. By Paul V. Long.

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Potchikoo's adventures continue. He has relations with Josette, and, soon afterward, his evil twin takes over his body and wreaks havoc all around. Erdrich treats Potchikoo's stories with reverence, respect, and responsibility, but also with the humor that is characteristic of her writing. Her responsibility is that of the consummate storyteller, a woman who both respects and reveres her traditions—all of them. Through her telling of the stories of her people, these traditions remain alive.

In the last poem of the collection, "The Ritual," Erdrich writes,

In the tremor of the long, receding footsteps
we awaken. The day is ordinary
sunlight fans across the ceiling.

There is nothing ordinary in Erdrich's worlds, in the characters she creates, or in their stories. In these stories, traditions continue; they live, they breathe, they can even be dangerous—in the sense that when one hears the stories, one is changed. The ordinary and the extraordinary are woven into one seamless whole. That is Erdrich's talent, her shining monument to the cultures she embodies.

Carolyn Dunn

Big Eyes: The Southwestern Photographs of Simeon Schwemberger, 1902–1908. By Paul V. Long, with an essay by Michele M. Penhall. Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1992. 204 pages. \$32.50 cloth.

Riding on the tide of interest created by the mass popularity of Edward S. Curtis's evocative turn-of-the-century images of North American Indians are a growing number of picture books and a heartening number of substantial scholarly monographs on less familiar photographers of the Indians. Simeon Schwemberger is a case in point.

Born in 1867, Schwemberger became a Franciscan brother and left Cincinnati for the mission at St. Michaels, Arizona, on the Navajo Reservation in 1901. With his superior's blessing, he took up photography as a hobby, and the Navajo named him Big Eyes, presumably in reference to his omnipresent camera. In 1908, Schwemberger left the Franciscan order and struck out on his

own, opening a studio in Gallup, where he sold postcards and made a living doing commercial work. Subsequently, he expanded into a mercantile operation—Sim's Indian Trading Store—which he ran with his second wife until his death in 1931.

The chronology of Schwemberger's doings, including a sojourn in Florida, is hard to follow in Paul V. Long's narrative, but a picture does emerge of an energetic, personable man always slightly out of sync with his circumstances. As a Franciscan brother, his tasks were of a practical sort, serving the needs of the fathers engaged in the religious instruction of the Navajo. Brother Simeon had a mechanical aptitude and enjoyed working outside in the mission gardens but chafed at domestic duties. His superiors may have seen photography as a way of occupying him profitably, and he made some four hundred glass plate negatives before he quit the order. His relations with the Franciscans thereafter were not the best, but his legacy remained—the negatives themselves, stored at the mission house at St. Michaels. At the invitation of the Franciscans, Paul Long first examined them in 1964 in his capacity as curator of photography at the Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff. He recognized at once that the collection was "outstanding not only in its subject matter but also in the quality of the photography" (p. xiii) and set about seeing that the negatives were preserved. *Big Eyes: The Southwestern Photographs of Simeon Schwemberger, 1902-1908* is the fruit of Long's nearly thirty years' labor. It will be welcomed by students of the Navajo and photographic historians. Schwemberger turns out to be a figure well worth rediscovering.

Outstanding among Schwemberger's photographs is a series of forty-eight pictures he made during a Night Chant curing ceremony and initiation rite held over a two-week period in November 1905. A selection of these illustrates Schwemberger's own account of the ceremony, which serves as the book's centerpiece. He received permission to photograph the Night Chant as a condition of sponsorship set by the white trader who bore the hefty costs involved. Objections still arose when Schwemberger mounted his tripod and camera in the medicine lodge to photograph the patient sitting on the sandpainting. But with the medicine man's permission already secured, he was allowed to proceed, and the result is a fascinating photographic record of a ceremony not previously performed in the vicinity of St. Michaels.

The representative portfolio of Schwemberger photographs that follows provides a handsome showcase for his work. He was

adept at portraiture. There is a striking picture of Charlie Mitchell, a Navajo headman, standing in the open, hands on his hips in a gunfighter stance, his gaze level and commanding (fig. 50); a revealing likeness of Chee Dodge, hands folded in front, shown from the knees up, standing against a wall on which his shadow is projected (fig. 51); and a strong, full-face bust portrait of Old Silversmith, presumably an interior shot (fig. 52)—three different ways of seeing three individuals, all of them free of “noble savage” conventions. In comparison, Schwemberger’s portrait (fig. 61) of an unidentified Navajo medicine man, bow and arrows in hand, his blanket thrown back to expose his chest and necklace, looks contrived. Schwemberger was particularly successful in photographing families. Two pictures of men holding their children offer attractive variants on the “Indian madonna and child” motif favored by most photographers. There is a refreshing naturalness to Schwemberger’s best work. Indeed, several of his group shots and village scenes are as artless as ordinary snapshots and reveal no special eye, big or otherwise, for composition. His picture of Jemez Pueblo (fig. 71) is about what any shutterbug might have come up with and justifies Michele Penhall’s observation in her concluding essay that Schwemberger did not demonstrate “a consistent concern for formal expression” (p. 163). But his unpretentious directness and documentary fidelity compensate nicely for any technical deficiencies.

Penhall’s essay places Schwemberger’s work in context. There was considerable photographic activity among the Southwestern Indians in the years 1895 to 1910, and she draws apt comparisons between Schwemberger and Adam Clark Vroman. Vroman, whose Indian photographs are collected in William Webb’s and Robert A. Weinstein’s *Dwellers at the Source* (1973), concentrated on the Pueblo, Schwemberger on the Navajo, but both crossed over. Also, Vroman stopped taking pictures of the Indians in 1904, just after Schwemberger began his work. Thus Vroman brackets Schwemberger on the one side, as, say, Laura Gilpin, who began her extensive photographic odyssey among the Navajo in 1920, does on the other. Readers interested in this comparison will find an excellent sampling of her work in Martha A. Sandweiss’s *Laura Gilpin: An Enduring Grace* (1986). Penhall also makes the necessary point that photographs are an interaction between individuals on both sides of the camera. Judging from the evidence in *Big Eyes*, Schwemberger was, as Long describes him, “a considerate, friendly, and helpful person” (p. 34). His subjects responded to

him in a way that brought out their own personalities. Thus his best pictures are not ethnographic studies or trips into the exotic, but appealing likenesses of people.

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Born a Chief: The Nineteenth Century Hopi Boyhood of Edmund Nequatewa. Edited by P. David Seaman and Alfred F. Whiting. Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1993. 193 pages. \$29.95 cloth; \$13.95 paper.

Edmund Nequatewa was the first of several "in-residence" Hopi at the Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff. In that capacity, he served as key consultant to anthropologists employed by the museum, as well as to visiting researchers who used the museum as a base of operations. In collaboration with several anthropologists, Nequatewa published articles in the museum's "Notes" series throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and in 1936 collaborated with Mary-Russell Colton to co-author a compendium of oral histories and myths, *Truth of a Hopi*, published as the Museum of Northern Arizona's Bulletin Number 8. This publication has become an oft-cited authoritative classic.

Thus one would have thought this autobiography would be more interesting than it is. Nequatewa dictated it to Alfred Whiting, an ethnobotanist in residence at the museum who also utilized Nequatewa's services as a consultant, just a few weeks before Whiting ended his last extended session of fieldwork in 1942. Dictated in haste and, according to Whiting, full of discursive ramblings, the notes never achieved publishable coherence, even though Whiting tinkered with them off and on over the next twenty years.

Now, nearly twenty-five years after Nequatewa's death and half a dozen years after Whiting's, the point of publishing a manuscript that neither man seemed very motivated to put into print seems lost. In contrast to Don Talayesva's Hopi autobiography *Sun Chief* (Yale University Press, 1942), which may have inspired Nequatewa to dictate his own, *Born a Chief* contains little personal revelation or ethnographic data. Nequatewa's boyhood and young adulthood, as covered in the book, spanned the years 1880 through 1902 and included some of the most turbulent years