



DIYOGÍ TSOH

+ THE BIG RUG +

Master Weaver: Julia Bah Joe (1875 - 1974)
Co-Weaver: Lillie Joe Hill (1913 - 1992)



Created between 1932 - 1937 to be the
“**World’s Largest Navajo Rug**”



The Origins

In 1932, weaver Julia Bah Joe and daughter Lillie Joe Hill of Greasewood, Arizona, embarked on a remarkable journey to create “The World’s Largest Navajo Rug” for Lorenzo Hubbell Jr.’s Winslow Trading Post. With the help of Julia’s husband Sam, daughters Emma, Mary, and Helen, and the *Kin ł ichii’nii* (Red House) Clan, they spent the next five years focused on that goal.



Lillie with her sheep | Image Courtesy: The Family Collection

Preparation included gathering wool, much of which came from Lillie and David Hill’s sheep. The family-designed rug pattern featured the stars and Milky Way of Greasewood’s night sky. They also included horned toads, shields, and a border pattern based on Ancestral Puebloan potsherds found near their home.



Image Courtesy: National Park Service/ Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site/ HUTR 4134

The finished work stands as a masterpiece of scale and technique. It showcases the exceptional artistry of Navajo weaving and embodies the resilience and creativity central to Navajo culture. *Diyogí Tsoh* is a symbol of pride for the Greasewood community.

Cover Images Courtesy: (top) National Park Service/ Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site/ HUTR 9637 (bottom) Old Trails Museum/Winslow Historical Society

Lorenzo Hubbell Jr

Lorenzo Hubbell Jr. (1883-1942) grew up at his father's trading post in Ganado, AZ and went into the business as an adult.

In 1924, he established a Hubbell distribution center and Trading Post in Winslow, Arizona, where he conceived the "World's Largest Navajo Rug" as a marketing strategy during the Great Depression to attract tourists into his trading post. He commissioned weaver Julia Bah Joe to make it a reality.



Image Courtesy: Hubbell Trading Post NPS Site



Image Courtesy: The Family Collection

Julia Bah Joe

Julia Bah Joe (1875 - 1974) was one of seven daughters and the only one who practiced weaving. For many years, she provided large rugs to the Ganado Trading Post, but the connection between her family and Hubbell's extends to earlier generations.

Historical records indicate that Julia was the granddaughter of Many Horses, the eldest son of Ganado Mucho. Many Horses maintained a close friendship with Hubbell Sr., and they are buried together atop Hubbell Hill in Ganado. This familial relationship likely informed Hubbell Jr.'s decision to entrust Julia Joe with such a significant responsibility.

After completion, Julia did not see her rug again for nearly thirty years. In 1965, she visited the rug at the Winslow Trading Post. According to an Arizona Republic article, Julia Joe tenderly touched her rug and thanked them for letting her see it again.

Julia Bah Joe passed in 1974 at the age of ninety-nine.

Making the Rug

To create a weaving of this monumental size, Sam Joe constructed an addition to their home and a custom metal pipe loom that could accommodate the ambitious project. Family and community members then sheared, washed, carded, and dyed wool from their sheep. They told stories around pots of mutton stew as they spun black, gray, ivory, and Ganado Red wool on hip spindles. This preparation took two years.

With the yarn at last in hand, Julia and Lillie began their work at the loom. As they wove, Julia fell ill, leaving the task to nineteen-year-old Lillie, whose determination to complete their vision shone through. Julia had instilled a strong work ethic in all her children, and when Julia at last recovered, she returned to the loom, side-by-side with her daughter. Three years after weaving began, Julia and Lillie made their last stitch, the *ch'ihónít'l*, providing a path for the weaver's spirit to exit the rug.



Julia and Lillie | Image Courtesy: National Park Service/ Hubbell Trading Post National Historic Site/ HUTR 9630

In 1937, five years after Lorenzo Hubbell Jr. first commissioned the rug, Julia, Lillie, and all who had put heart and soul into this rug, completed the 21'4" x 32'7", two-hundred-fifty-pound masterpiece.

While surpassed in size by the multi-paneled 1977 Big Sister Rug of Chilchinbeto (made with commercially produced yarn), *Diyogí Tsoh* is still considered the largest traditionally-made single narrative rug.

The Big Rug's Journey

Beyond being displayed in the Hubbell Trading Post, The Big Rug traveled from museums to the U.S. Senate chambers in D.C.; from the 1939 Gallup Inter-Tribal Indian Exhibition to Marshall Field & Company's Chicago department store in 1943. The rug went to New York in 1948 for a travel show, and to Hubbell's Winslow Motor Company as a backdrop to the new 1946 DeSoto. The rug was even in a 1948 parade.



Phoenix Jr. Chamber of Commerce Parade April 1948 | Image courtesy U of A, Special Collections

After Lorenzo Hubbell Jr.'s death in 1942, his brother Roman assumed control of the business but declared bankruptcy in 1949. Kyle Bales then purchased the Trading Post, including its inventory and The Big Rug. Throughout the 60s, the rug continued to travel. After Bales's death, daughter Patricia deeded the building to the Arizona Historical Society with the intention it become a Trading Post Museum. That did not happen, and the "World's Largest Navajo Rug" disappeared into obscurity for more than twenty-five years.

In 1998, Allan Affeldt, while restoring La Posada Hotel with his wife Tina Mion, discovered a historic photo of The Big Rug, featuring Navajo dancers. Recognizing it as a regional treasure, he reached out to Patricia. In 2012, he purchased the The Big Rug and later donated it to the Winslow Arts Trust. He then built a museum and gallery for the rug to have a permanent home.

Return to Winslow

On The Big Rug's homecoming a blessing ceremony was held with Julia Joe's remaining family including ninety-four-year-old Emma Lee, who'd helped card the wool seventy-five years earlier. Emma's family helped her walk the path of the rug one last time.



The family visited The Big Rug again prior to the 2023 exhibit opening at Affeldt Mion Museum. More than seventy descendants attended.

Diyogí Tsoh—Navajo for The Big Rug—can at long last be, as the family says, “at rest.”

Conservation

Much care and respect have been put into the creation of this exhibit by Affeldt Mion Museum and the Winslow Arts Trust. Our conservation plan will ensure that generations to come will feel the love and effort woven into every fiber of this exceptionally crafted rug.

We invite you to see *Diyogí Tsoh, The Big Rug* (on loan from the Winslow Arts Trust) at Affeldt Mion Museum located at La Posada Hotel in Winslow, AZ. Admission is free to all First Americans.



303 E. 2nd Street | Winslow Az | 86047
928.289.4366 | ammwsa.com