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RUBY ELEANOR MODESTO. Photograph 1979 by Guy Mount.

RUBY ELEANOR MODESTO died of cardiac arrest 7 April 1980 at her home on the Torres-Martinez Indian Reservation. Following a traditional Cahuilla wake, which was accompanied by Mohave and Cocopah singers, she was buried in the Torres-Martinez Cemetery with about 300 saddened friends looking on.

Ruby was born 23 March 1913 in the Coachella Valley where she lived her entire life.

Her mother, Joaquina, was a Serrano woman from Banning. Her father, Lorenzo Nombrie (Numbri, Nombre), was the son of Francisco Nombrie who provided most of the information on the Desert Cahuilla for William Duncan Strong during fieldwork for what was to become *Aboriginal Society in Southern California* and who had earlier served as consultant to Lucile Hooper for her *The Cahuilla Indians*. Although she never formally met Strong, Ruby recalled, as a little girl of eleven or so, having seen him daily interviewing her grandfather in the winter of 1924-25. The interviewing was assisted by Ruby's aunt, Rosebelle Nombrie, who served as translator. (As nearly as I can tell, both of these persons were photographed by Edward S. Curtis for his *The North American Indian*. Francisco Nombrie is believed to be "Numero—Desert Cahuilla," Plate 519; Rosebelle Nombrie appears as "A Desert Cahuilla Woman," Plate 522.)

While Ruby's first contact with the discipline of anthropology occurred in 1924-25, her own contributions to published California Indian studies did not begin until more than a half-century later when her article "Temal Wakhish: a Desert Cahuilla Village" appeared in *The Journal of California Anthropology* (Lando and Modesto 1977). A more ambitious effort, *Not for Innocent Ears: Spiritual Traditions of a Desert Cahuilla Medicine Woman* (Modesto and Mount 1980) (available from Sweetlight Books, 71250 Hill Road, Covelo, CA 95428, \$7.95), was published a few weeks after her death. It contains a good deal of

information on Ruby's life, and on Cahuilla religion, world view, and folktales.

In many ways, Ruby appears to have come into her own during the last two decades of her life. Her association with Douglas Fain of Indio led to a deep interest in Cahuilla prehistory. It was while this interest was developing that I met her. Her concern over the loss of traditional culture led to her undertaking a tutorial program for the local Cahuilla children, emphasizing teaching the native

language. This program is continuing under the direction of her husband, David, whom she married in 1935.

Those of us in the anthropological community who knew Ruby miss her both as a sincere friend and a knowledgeable consultant on Desert Cahuilla culture.

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PUBLICATIONS OF RUBY ELEANOR MODESTO

1977 Temal Wakhish: a Desert Cahuilla Village. *Journal of California Anthropology* 4(1):95-112 (with Richard Lando).

1980 Not For Innocent Ears: Spiritual Traditions of a Desert Cahuilla Medicine Woman. Angelus Oaks, California: Sweetlight Books (with Guy Mount).

