Opening Ceremony to Midnight

During the activities opening the meeting James Silverhorn, the leader, unpacks his ceremonial paraphernalia. His chief peyote is taken out of its metal base in his peyote box and set on a nest of sage in the center of the altar, directly in front of him. He has a small serape about 8" x 15" which he sets down by him and on which he places his things as necessary--the buckskin bag containing cedar, the eagle bone whistle, fans, and perhaps other things. Everything is smoked as it is taken out. That is, held toward the fire and motioned towards it four times. He prays and talks at the beginning of the meeting. A bunch of sage is passed around. Everyone takes a bit of the sage and rubs it in their hands and then passes their hands over their hair, arms, body, etc. Some put some of the sage in their mouth and chew it. Some smell the bunch of sage slowly before taking some of it. Corn shucks in a pack are passed around, and a pack of Bull Durham. Everyone takes one or more cornshucks papers and licks them, moistening them. When the tobacco reaches them, they pour some out in the moistened cornshuck and roll a cigarette. A special fire stick for lighting cigarettes has been prepared in advance and placed on the east side of the fire, one end toward the fire and alive in embers. George Silverhorn, who is the fireman, gets the fire stick and lights the cigarettes for people who want to smoke during the meeting. This fire stick is about 2 inches in diameter and about 18 inches long, a round section of a branch with the bark removed. The branch is smooth and white, and a water bird design has been carved and painted on it. During this opening ceremony, George lights his own cigarette and then passes the fire stick around. Every person lights up and smokes, slowly. I have been told in the past to be sure and take four puffs at least on the cigarette, and don't let it go out before then. Sometimes these cornshuck cigarettes are tricky to light. Everyone is slow and deliberate in their lighting. Some people hold the digarette in their hand and place it on the glowing end of the fire stick, holding it there till it has caught. Others hold the cigarette in their mouth and raise the fire stick up and light the cigarette by inhaling. Everyone is careful not to let sparks and embers burn their clothes or blankets. I got my cigarette lit just fine, I thought, but found to my dismay that it went out after I'd taken one good puff. I sate and held it during the rest of the smoking, and finally folded it up so that when it was collected it wouldn't look so long--I hoped no one would notice. After everyone had started smoking, James spoke. He prayed In Kiowa, holding his cigarette in one hand, and making gestures and signs with the other. When people got through with their cigarettes, they put them out in the ground in front of them, and then held them. After this part was over, George Silverhorn collected the cigarettes on the north side, and Charlie High collected the ones on the south side. All these stubs were carefully placed at the ends of the crescent, where they remained the rest of the meeting.

I think it was during this time, too, the time of smoking, that Sarah Longhorn came in and went clockwise to a place on the north side of the tipi where she sat down. James asked her to explain about the meeting. Said he wanted to be sure and get it straight what she wanted, before he went on. Said he wanted to do it the way she wanted. She sat and smoked and talked in Kiowa. When she got through, she left the tipi. Said she and Evelyn would wait a little while to see if any more people came, and if there was room, they would come in later and stay the night.

I don't remember if it was before or after this smoking that James Silverhorn opened by singing the Four Opening Songs. Roger Topigh, sitting just south of him, drummed for him, and was his assistant all evening with the cedar, etc.

Then the peyote was passed around. First the sacks of peyote were held up to the fire and smoked four times in cedar smoke. These sacks were passed around in a clockwise direction. First came a sack of dried peyote buttons, then a sack of green fresh peyotes, cleaned and with the roots trimmed off. I have been told in previous meeting to either take two or four, so I took two of each. I believe this peyote may have been passed around before Sarah made her introductory talk, because I know I sat