

ENTERTAINMENT

At Film Columbia

Triumph and adversity in New Mexico

ROCKS WITH WINGS: THE PATH WITH HEART. Directed by Rick Derby. Shiprock Productions. 113 minutes. Crandell Theater, Main Street, Chatham, NY. Saturday 4 p.m. World Premier.

A slow beginning, combining views of the rock formation from which the setting of this documentary is named, and its surroundings, maps of the four-corners area where four states meet, and a few talking heads providing community demographic data, may cause some viewers to turn their heads away from this film. But staying with Director Rick Derby's account of a women's basketball team on a depressed Navajo reservation in New Mexico and its coach, a young African-American in his first job out of college, will offer its rewards.

This is not one of those simple doldrums-to-success sports tales, for it effectively pries into the players' inherent sense of inadequacy and Navajo philosophy, as well as the heavy baggage coach Jerry Richardson brings to the community as one who has grown up during the tumultuous period of integration in the American south.

Some of the scenes of the Lady Chieftains, as the team is known, in game situations were made by a student who was part of the team, and tend to be grainy, occasionally indistinct. But watching their play action under these conditions, when the players are identifiable, creates an immediacy and spontaneity that generates its own kind of excitement.

Derby chronicles the teams' depressions and victories, and a footnote preceding the final credits discloses a stunning denouncement concerning Richardson.