

INTERVIEW, INTERVIEWER, INTERVIEWEE

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Initials (Interviewer): TM

Initials (Interviewee): DOE

TM: Anyway, what I was thinking was it would be better for me, for my purposes, or I think, even for the future, and uh to um just have you talk about what you were involved in or whatever you want to say about that. I do have particular questions but if there something—actually, if you wouldn't mind starting off with uh your name, your Apsaalooke name and your clan and then, whatever you want to say from there.

DOE: All right. Kahay, eh this morning, they want me to tell a story on this machine [tape recorder]. My name is Gets A Bow, I come from the Center Lodge district. I am a Child of the Greasy Mouth and I am a Whistling Water. Today, I'm here to talk about politics, Crow Tribal politics. My name is Dan Old Elk and I'm a, I'm from the Center Lodge. My Indian name is Takes A Bow. My uh Clan is, I'm a Whistling Water and a child of a Greasy Mouth, and I reside in the Center Lodge, otherwise known as the Reno District. I got involved in Crow Tribal politics at a very young age and, at that time, I went to school at a Business College in Denver. And after completion, I came back, I couldn't find any work so I went to California and I worked with the National Park Service for a while. And coming back, I started looking for different jobs and I came to the Tribal Office, which was a little one-room office at the Bureau of Indian Affairs. They needed a clerk to keep up

with their daily work, checking mail and answer the phones and to uh keep track of records so I got involved in that. And, at that time, the Chairman was John Cummins and the Vice-Chairman was Edison Real Bird. Edison had resigned from the Tribal Council at that time to work for the Federal Government and had created some funds for, to hire somebody so I was hired to take notes. And I got interested in politics cause it was kind of a game. The 1948 Tribal Constitution that we worked under was for, we were mandated that we needed to have 100 people to have a quorum in order to work council. And I studied that quite a bit, trying to learn from past resolutions and try to learn what was going on. And the first thing that the Chairman gave me at that time was a book called Roberts Rules of Order. And he said, "Learn that, it's going to come in handy." So I looked at it, it was a tiny book and I just carried it around and it was a certain series at that time, there are a number of Roberts Rules but, at that time, I was at Denver that they used and I carried that with me and I got interested in tribal politics. Everything was run by committees at that time. They had a Credit Committee, Industrial Development Committee, the Land Resource Committee, and the Health Committee, all organized by the division of the six districts, each district had sent a representative to form a, to be in these committees and the main committee that made uh the agenda for the Tribal Council was called the Executive Committee and there was two members from each of the uh districts, plus the four Tribal officials so there was uh 17, 18 members on that whole group. And most of them were old men that didn't speak much English and they argued back and forth on what is the best way to conduct business. It was real hard to do that because, at that time, when I got involved in tribal politics, there was no real organization. There was no records or nothing was kept, everything was under the Bureau of Indian Affairs and they had to keep track of what they approved and so I started researching the resolutions and

putting them together. There was no numbering system or nothing and so, coming back from a Business College, I was in a...try to organize things as a corporation and ask things about the tribe. And so, I got into the numbering system by codifying the resolutions, the year and the Council meeting, and by dating them, I was able to put them in order.

TM: Um [Crow acknowledgement, meaning 'yes.']

DOE: And I went back and I, and every official before that took all the papers with them, the Chairman or the Secretary, it was just used to just, uh, the Chairman that had resigned would take all the papers and everything so he would come back and he'd say, "I have this piece of paper that says what was passed," and when they used it. So we never knew what that resolution was or what it meant.

TM: Uh-huh.

DOE: And it really wasn't a law but it was just kind of a resolution to do business and We didn't have any real uh tribal laws at that time. And the thing that we went by was the Federal Code of Regulations by the Bureau that was established for the Crow Tribe. It was called the CFR, they had a handbook that the Bureau used for, to regulate everything that was involved with the tribe, in terms of the land, irrigation, water use, timber use, uh sale of minerals and stuff like this. So it was all kind of mixed up, everything was...our form of government was completely different. And uh, that fall there was...I got acquainted with all the executive committee members and I was comfortable meeting with them and talking to them and I asked my grandfather if I could run for tribal office. He said, "You're pretty young for doing that," he said, "it's probably one of the most thankless jobs you'll ever have but if you want to do it," he said, "we could probably do it," he said. So he took me around to all the different districts meeting with all of his friends, family members from Wyola, all the way to Pryor and we spent probably a whole week

staying at different places and talking to different people. And he would tell them that his..."My grandson is interested in running for office. Would you support us?" And most of them agreed. I was very young but I was considered to be educated at that time because I came back from Business College. And so, when I ran for office, uh I had run with John Wilson who was the, from the Reno District, uh Douglas Adams was the Black Lodge district, uh Don Deer Nose was from the Lodge Grass district and, then, I was there. As we got together, we started campaigning to run for office. We had a lot of support and so, uh, I was able to get in. And, at that time, there was a lot of government programs coming in and going out and one of the things was setting tribal government. And the Chairman... I was elected and I was only 23 years old at the time. And this was in 1964. And uh I came in to office in 1964 and the Chairman and the Superintendent got together and they asked me if I would be interested in taking this training at the University of New Mexico for Tribal Government. I told them I was so they sent me down there and I was down there for the uh summer quarter down at the university studying all the different tribal governments. There was eighteen of us students from different tribes all over the country and each one of them had different forms of tribal governments. They had the uh Business Councils, they had the Open Councils, some were complete uh dictatorships, which was the Pueblos, they had a Governor. So we learned a lot about the governments and uh, and then we learned about the tribes that were organized under the Indian Reorganization Act, the IRA. We were not part of the IRA, we had to form our own government. The IRA was supposed to be for business councils where they have so many members that uh did all the business for the tribe. And so, our arrangement was kind of unique because we had to have 100 people in order to have a council meeting. Sometimes it was pretty hard to do that when there's a lot of activity during the summer

and there was four quarterly council meetings, there was January, April, July and September. And during these four council meetings, we had to have 100 people so that the business we tended to was the enrollment to make sure that people that were applying for enrollment were qualified and they had...we had to look at uh the tribal budget. And, at that time, whatever tribal budget that we had still had to be approved by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and if we had wanted more than that, we had to go back to Washington, D.C. to appeal to the, to the uh, to the Indian Bureau at that time. And that was kind of hard to do that because the delegations were selected at large from the tribal council. It wasn't any council members, it was people that, uh, were selected with maybe one tribal official. And I was designated to be on a delegation a number of times to represent the Chairman. The Chairman gave me his proxy to do business for the tribe at that time. And uh, one of the trips that we made to Washington, D.C., we had a number of men that were there from all the different districts on the reservation and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs looked at our delegation, he said, "I only want to speak to the elected official," and they all pointed at me because I was the elected official and I was the youngest one. And the Commissioner said, "You the elected official?" and I said, "Yes, yes sir, I am." He said, "Well, you're the only one I want to talk to, you come in," he said, "the rest of you stay out." And at that time, our uh meeting with the Commissioner at that time was to ask for per capita payments. And I made that presentation to him and that we needed the per cap for all of our people and he approved it at that time without any arguments or anything like that. And the delegation was ready to make their arguments but I came out and I said, "I got it done." So that was one of my victories. I got to a point where I started going to a lot of different meetings throughout the nation. There was the National Congress of American Indians that was organized and did a lot of lobbying for Indian rules and Indian regulations, legislation that was passed through Congress, and I

was able to meet with a lot of the different uh organizations at that time. And I started building my uh background to make the tribe stronger. There were a lot of things that one of my mentors, Frank Takes The Gun, who was one of my clan brothers, who taught me a lot, to ask for who to see, what to do, and he said, "I make a point to come to Washington, D.C. every year, at the end of the first of the year when they start making changes, to meet the head of each different department to know who they are and to talk to them and to know them by first hand [name?]. So I took that advice and I carried that on so I was able to meet with the different departments, different heads, know who they are and if any proposals or anything that was requested by the tribe, I was able to communicate with them. That was kind of a blessing to learn that and I learned my way around the D.C. loop and, at that time, our Senator from Montana was Manchester [Mansfield?] and Metcalf. I met them both personally and knew who they were so I had a good relationship with them. In fact, he invited me to join the Montana Club in Washington, D.C. The uh Council meetings that we had usually uh it took a long time because we had the old Round Hall that we had our council meetings and everything that was presented, there was always opposition. If people wanted to make amendments, if they wanted to make changes, if they wanted to have things their own way, and my job was to take notes. To make sure that I understand, I recorded everything and I took notes translating from the Crow to English to try to make it come out the way that it was presented. And sometimes it was kind of hard, it was complicated but I had a lot of help from our tribal attorneys. The publisher of the Hardin Paper, Mrs. Johnson, was there, she was always recording and she would write that out in English and I would translate what it said in Indian so I was able to get my minutes and able to put them together. It was kind of hard but that was how I worked it and our attorney at that time was uh [Burt] Kronmiller. Kronmiller was our attorney and he taught me a lot about how to write resolutions, how to interpret resolutions and

what it meant and that made a lot of sense, it made a lot of difference because, at first, I didn't know what a tribal resolution was. And it was for information and on the bottom was 'whereas,' what was passed and that was the important part of it. So I learned how to do all of that. I was working for the previous Chairman, he had me working in different departments of the Bureau to learn more about the government relationship with the tribe and he put me in the Credit Department, into Realty, and into Land Services, and all of these came in handy. I learned how to read the plat books and how to interpret the leases and all of that stuff so these were real important issues. I had good mentors that helped me to learn more and this was my real involvement with the tribe and by uh 19, later part of 1964 and '65, there was a program called the War of Poverty, Community Action Program, were getting to be involved at that time and that took a lot of our time. And this was for...we first started Head Start Program, Early Childhood Development Program and the VISTA Volunteers that came in at the same time, Volunteers In Service To America. And that was the part of the program that was a branch off of the Peace Corps at that time and we had a lot of people come in to try to help and they...I was assigned to be their Director and I worked with the VISTA Volunteers to uh initiate recreation for young people, Early Childhood Development and then we had Adult Education Programs. And then we had uh organized sports and activities for our young people and so we uh put the volunteers in different reservation uh reservation districts so that they would work in that district and then they would learn more about what they were doing there. And they were able to help the...set up the tribal councils. They would come in and we were uh a couple of guys that were in to law so they learned quite a bit about Indian Law and they started learning and helping us in that way. So this was a real good experience for me to work with the volunteers and to work with the communities. We had a lot of different activities at that time. We started building programs, housing

programs, and the Tribal Housing Authority was established at that time. And then, we had uh Industrial Development Commission that did a lot of work in trying to get some business on to the reservation to provide more employment. One of my brothers, who has passed on now, his name was George, he was the Chairman of the Industrial Development Commission at that time. The Commission was uh asked to start finding different businesses to bring to the reservation to provide employment and, as a result of that, we had the Carpet Mills and we had the Feed Mill and then, later on, we started developing tourism projects. And these were some of the things I was involved in and after uh my term was over, I was able to work as a consultant or as a uh Industrial Development activist. I went to uh...I was recruited by the University of Utah to work with different tribal governments throughout the Northwest out of economic development projects and I spent three years at the University. I was able to take some classes to further my education and to start working with a lot of different tribes on their proposals on development on their own reservations. This took me from visiting tribes from Alaska all the way down to Arizona and each of the uh groups we got we called a consortium that we worked with and the University of Utah was the base where we started. They hired five of us Indian boys from different reservations and we were sent out to all these different reservations. It was good to be with different tribal governments, to try to help them as much as we can in terms on housing, development programs and stuff like that. So I was involved in that and they sent us to all different conferences to learn more about how to work with or to make tribes better. And after working with the University of Utah, I came back and I started working for the tribe again under that Edison Real Bird administration. And I was given the title of Development Specialist and uh, this was when we started putting things together to make the Tourism Program better. We started doing the Sun Lodge Complex where we developed a motel and a gift shop and



eventually, we developed the Indian Horse Training Program and this is where we got the grandstand improvement, built a grandstand, the race tracks and doing some work in the equine program. And, at that time, we started to build our own... we had a grant from the Industrial...Economic Development Administration to build our own Tribal Building. And we started building our own Tribal Office. We had the different committees set up in different offices and tried to work it so that they would each uh tribal official had their own office. It was set up so that they would have some space for committee meetings and this was all worked out through the EDA program. And so we got that grant to start building that building and so this was where we started a lot of our projects. I worked under different administrations, Richard Real Bird, Forest Horn, Donald Stewart, David Stewart and they always kept me in as far, as a counselor or consultant and I was able to work with the tribal government closely. My uncle was the Vice-Chairman under Donald Stewart so, Andrew Birdinground, so I worked with him a lot doing his letter, writing his letters out for him and making his statements for him and stuff like that. So I was pretty much involved in tribal government for probably about 40 years all together.

TM: Uh-huh.

DOE: And I was in and out of it and uh I worked with all the different committees. I was Chairman of the Industrial Development Commission, at one time I was chairman of the Health Board, and then I was...I did some work for the Land Resource Committee and these were the three main committees that I worked with. So this committee work really helped me a lot about learning about the tribe and the other commissions that I worked on was the Water Resource Commission. I was the chairman of that for fifteen years and I did the most basic studies on the reservation on the water development and how to use uh difference resources. Before coming back home, I had a

chance to work with the Uintah-Ouray Reservation in Utah and that was a business council at that time over there. And I was their Development Specialist and I was uh given free rein to start bringing in a lot of projects and through the Community Action Program and through EDA, I was able to bring in a lot of industry for the tribe over there, for the Ute Tribe. I brought in uh a motel development, uh and I had analyzing soils project, furniture factory and there was another one, that was uh the Reservation Cemetery Improvement Program making headstones. All these projects, there were so many we brought in together that we ran out of uh people to employ so we had to import some of the other tribes from that area to fill the gap there but uh, that was my experience with the Ute Tribe. And uh I really enjoyed working with them but I had a chance to come home to work for the tribe so that's when I decided to come on home and start working here, instead of spending all my time with other places. I figured it would be better if I come back and did something for my own tribe. So basically, this is what I did for the Crow Tribe and I've always worked with them as a consultant and trying to make the tribe better. And coming back, the change of the Constitution made a lot of difference, being from the old way of doing business. The Constitution was changed where it established a uh Legislative Branch, the Executive Branch and the Judicial Branch. All of these were all completely renew [new]constitution for the tribe and the authority that was given. And before, the Legislature were the ones that made the laws and they pass on to the Executive to carry out the laws and, then, the Judicial was established to enforce these laws and we had a Law & Order Code that was made. And we would read it, the resolution system and turning it in to a uh the um regular legislative bills and this made the government a lot stronger. This improved the form of the Tribal Council. The Tribal Council uh was kind of divided and the power was given to the Legislature and the Legislature were the ones that made the laws now and they

reestablished a whole uh constitution into...they restructured everything and I was fortunate enough to be one of the first to be elected on as a legislator from my district. And I was able to take this on and to learn more about our form of government. And our form of government that completely changed from the time that I was...first knew about it and then I started working in this area now and the...there was a uh division of uh the powers that was established.

TM: Um.

DOE: So that's where we are now as far as working in this new constitution and the Chairman can still override or veto some of the legislation but they're still required to have quarterly councils to make reports. And the whole system has completely changed and we have a complete uh branch of lawyers that are working with the tribe at this time now. So this is how much change that has been made since the time I got into tribal politics.

TM: Uh-huh.

DOE: And the development and how the officers are elected so this is basically what's happened with the tribe.

TM: Uh-huh.

DOE: I want to take a rest.

TM: And here's some water.

DOE: Yeah.

TM: Uh, how were the uh committee members appointed or were they elected or...

DOE: Committee members were elected. They had regular uh elections for each of the committees and uh, some of the uh, other committees were appointed by the the Chairman. And uh, but most of the committees that were established were all elected positions from the districts.

TM: The districts?

DOE: Yeah.

TM: The uh...I have heard over the years, and I don't really know how it works but um, there's a sense that the Crow representatives, and you kind of spoke to it, have the right to go directly to D.C.?

DOE: Yeah.

TM: Is that part of a treaty or is that just the policy of the United States or the tribe or...

DOE: Um I think it's probably a policy of the tribe because I couldn't find the real uh authority on what the delegation was for. But they were there to represent tribe on any, on any and all businesses. So they were actually given free rein and so, in order for some of our resolutions where we asked for money or for different things that pertain to the land or minerals, we had to go back to Washington, D.C. to get it approved.

TM: Oh, okay.

DOE: So this was for when we had to take a group and there was always this delegation that's going to D.C. and that was established way before the treaty days. Then, at that time, they would take different committees back there or different delegations to represent the tribe and on different matters that pertained to tribal development. That's how that was set up.

TM: Uh-huh. Um were there any um, what was the relationship during the early part of your career between the government and the Superintendent?

DOE: The Superintendent [of the Bureau of Indian Affairs] was more like a dictator.

TM: Yeah.

DOE: And everything that we did, we had to go through the Superintendent and the Superintendent that was the one that kind of guided us and told us how much money we have, what our budget should be and we always had to make sure that we had enough money deposited in our IIM [Individual Indian Monies]

account to equal the budget. And the budget uh was all...all the finances was handled by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

TM: Were there any Superintendents that, like, stick out for you or...during that process?

DOE: One that really stuck out for me at the time was Otto K. Weaver, who was an ex-military guy and he was pretty strict and he wanted things done his way. And that was uh who we worked with for a long time. A lot of people didn't understand him and they would rather argue with him instead of trying to work things out with him. [chuckle]

TM: Um. That was...Otto K. Weaver was, he was during that time of the Carpet Mill development?

DOE: Yeah. Yes. Uh-huh.

TM: Yeah. And was the...I know the Housing was also in that time period. Is that the Community Development Project? When they were doing that Housing and that...

DOE: Yes, it was.

TM: Okay.

DOE: And Otto K. was the one that wanted to do the Housing on the side of the hill, overlooking the Agency.

TM: Uh-huh.

DOE: So this was one of his ideas.

TM: Yeah, oh okay. Uh-huh.

DOE: And the first uh Housing Projects that we did was called the Mutual Help where we had to put in so many...the owners or the people that wanted to own houses had to put in so much what they called 'sweat equity' and they had to put in, maybe, uh 180 hours of time towards building that house. So that was the Mutual Help Program.

TM: Were there, when you mentioned Andrew, were there other people from your family that were involved in politics during that time period?

DOE: Uh some of my older brothers were involved. Uh George Jr. and Sharon. Uh Sharon was later elected Vice-Secretary under, under uh Edison Real Bird's administration and, then, uh George was always involved in the committees. And I had a younger brother, uh Andrew, who was elected Vice-Secretary for the tribe, too, so...my family was pretty much involved in politics and uh through this system, uh we got my dad to be Tribal Judge. He didn't like the idea but we put him up to it and we elected him as one of the Tribal judges and he did his job real well. He uh...at first, he didn't like it but, after he got into it, he really liked his work.

TM: That's great. Um what do you feel like was the biggest accomplishment of the time when you were involved?

DOE: My biggest accomplishment was probably the Early Childhood Development, the Head Start Program, which is still going strong today.

TM: Uh-uh.

DOE: And that was one of the things that was uh one of my pet projects because uh I helped in making rules for the kids and getting busses for them, getting more of our young people involved in teaching the kids, learning from English to Indian, from English learning how to put things together to uh make their lives better. And this Early Childhood Development is one of the projects that I really like and I spent a lot of time with them. And my current wife, Carlene, was the Director of Head Start Program for many years, so this was one of my projects that I always liked uh, what other thing is it uh, the other one that I did a lot of work in was the water. The Water Resources, bringing the water back, making sure that we had the water rights, the Water Rights issues. And I was really concerned about that because whoever owns the water owns the economy and they can control it. And I was real sad when we lost the

Water Rights case, starting from the fishing project. The fishermen sued the tribe for Water Rights and that opened up a whole new thing. We lost the Water Rights because we didn't have adequate legal services at that time. And the people that I had before doing the Water Studies and my lawyers, we owed them money and the tribe did not pay our water attorneys at that time. And then, they hired uh a young person that didn't know nothing about water, when we had that, uh we went to go to the Supreme Court and we lost that case because of it. And I was real sad about that and I enjoyed all that work uh for the water. It was one of the saddest things that happened to me.

TM: Um.

DOE: But uh the other good things that uh made me feel proud about it, establishing the uh Fairgrounds.

TM: Um.

DOE: And that was uh, we were probably one of the few tribes that was given money to build a regular rodeo and fairgrounds. And I was real proud of that because we did a lot of things there to keep that going and to maintain the horsemanship because the Crow people are uh proud of their horses and their training in racing them and participating in rodeos, providing rodeo stock and so the reason I was real proud of that my dad was a uh the Rodeo Manager for fourteen years and, at that time, we had to provide our own stock, our own labor and we had to keep the show going, as well as participating and so, by developing this new uh fairground, that was really something that we put together.

TM: Is there any particular reason why the rodeo grounds and race track was where it is or just open space?

DOE: Just open space. Uh where it was before was right by the campgrounds and it was getting crowded there and it was...all we had was just the race track at that time and an old uh log building/grandstand which was getting old and dilapidated

so by relocating the uh rodeo grounds, we were able to have more, more room, more room for expansion, more room for the horses and more room for the rodeo people.

TM: Uh-huh uh-huh.

DOE: That's how it was established.

TM: Um, you were talking about D.C. Are there, I mean, right off the top of your head, are there any Crow names for the different places in D.C.? Or...

DOE: I can't think of it right off hand. Uh they call it Baalee Aashe [Winter River?], uh that would be the Potomac River, it's what they call it, how they referred to.

But uh, and then they called the uh Congress and the President Isaakaamiishe, [TM Or Raphelle would know the correct spelling, I do not know Crow spelling] "group of old men," that's what they call the Congress, and that was who they met with at first. And then uh the President was called Baaiilapxisaahkuua, he was uh the "grandfather," so that was how he was called. These names are kind of sticking out, one of the other things that the Tribal delegation always go back to is to look at the National Zoo where they have different animals and some of the stories that were told long time ago was when uh when my great grandfather, Curly, who was back in Washington, D.C. and he didn't want to sell any of the land, he wanted to keep the land for the tribe. And he said that the land, the ground was part of our blood. He says, "Our blood is mixed with the ground." And when he went back to Washington, D.C., they visited the National Zoo and he saw a bear that was caged and he came and talked to this bear. He said, "I'm sorry to see you locked up like this." He said, "I feel the same way, I'm on a reservation. I feel that I am locked up, too." And he talked with the bear and he communicated with him. The bear had tears coming down his eyes by listening to Curly. But this was a story that was told so..."I'm just like you," he said.

TM: Yeah. Huh. Well, is there any uh anything else you would like to add before we...



DOE: One of the things that sticks out is that the last, our last Chief of the tribe, Plenty Coups, when he went back, he was there at the time when they dedicated the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and he stood there and he took his war bonnet off and put it on top of this grave of the Unknown Soldier and that was one of the gifts that he gave and he wanted that to...when he saw the National Parks and stuff like that, he wanted his land to be known as a National Park. He wanted to give it back to the government so that they would...it would be established as a National Park. It didn't go that far, it only went to the state at that time, but it was still a park. And that kind of stood out in my mind about some of the things that our people had done.

TM: Um, uh-huh. Yeah. All right, well, thanks Dan. I appreciate your time and talking With me.

DOE: Um.

