

INTERVIEW, INTERVIEWER, INTERVIEWEE

TOPIC: CROW POLITICS

DATE: [NO DATE GIVEN]

Interview Length: 0:48:56:4

Full Name (Interviewer): Tim McCleary

Full Name (Interviewee): David J. Stewart, Sr.

Full Name (Assisting Interviewee): Loretta Stewart

Initials (Interviewer): TM

Initials (Interviewee): DS

Initials (Assisting Interviewee): LS

[David Stewart is elderly and is assisted by his daughter, Loretta, in this interview. Most of her comments are in the Crow language directed at her father, usually repeating a question that Tim McCleary is asking.]

David Stewart (DS): You're Tim?

Tim McCleary (TM): McCleary.

DS: McCleary.

TM: Yeah.

DS: I know you but I can't remember.

TM: Yeah um, the late Guy White Clay?

DS: Yeah.

TM: And Eloise, they took me as their son when I was a teenager.

DS: Oh, uh-huh.

TM: Yeah. Years ago. Long time ago, yeah.

DS: Yeah.

TM: Yeah. Um, what I, what I'd like you to talk about is uh, your, your uh, history with politics. Your history with politics.

DS: Sixty?

TM: Politics, your political career? [chuckles]

DS: You make me wish. A history?

TM: Uh-huh. Um, well, can you start with your name and your Crow name?

DS: My name is uh, David J. Stewart, Sr. I live in the area here.

TM: Uh-huh.

DS: _____ is where I live. In fact, I live three miles north of here, just north, it can be reached on the interstate.

TM: Eh.

DS: I've lived there all my life with the exception of uh, about a year, I guess, a couple years and I've lived out there and I moved out there again, in town, and then out there again and I lived in Billings for awhile and then, also in Cody, Wyoming. I came back, and I've been living there since.

TM: Uh-huh.

DS: Since 19uh, 80? Since 1988... '85. I've been there since.

Loretta Stewart (LS): It had to be '69 because I was 12 when we moved there.

TM: Huh. And uh, can you tell me your Crow name and your clans? What clans you belong to?

DS: The clan I belong to is uh, [Asking Loretta in Crow, "What do they call the Greasy Mouth?"]

LS: Greasy Mouth.

DS: Greasy Mouth! It's the clan I belong to, the Greasy Mouth.

TM: And what's your Crow name?

DS: Crow name? Let's see, I'll try to think of it, the right word for it.

LS: Say it in Crow and tell him.

DS: Greasy Mouth.

LS: He said your Crow name.

DS: My Crow name, you say? Awaxaweeahgaandaguush[sp?] Roams On The Mountains. I was named by my grandfather, just before he passed away and uh, that was his medicine, Rides Around The Mountain?

TM: Uh-huh.

DS: And uh, and that's why I uh,...What did I say now?

LS: Awaxaweeahgaandaguush.

DS: Yes, my grandfather, he named me.

TM: Uh-huh.

LS: Whiteman Runs Him.

DS: He was the last Crow Indian scout for Custer.

TM: Oh, uh-huh.

DS: When he passed away, he was the last one.

TM: Eh. Yup. Um, so what I'd like you to talk about is, is your political career. Like, why did you get interested, or how did you get interested in politics?

DS: Well, I got involved when I was about, my political career, when I was about 65, 60 years old and uh, I got involved because my uh, grandparents asked me to get involved with Crow, with the Crow politics.

TM: Eh.

DS: I used to say that uh, I should belong to the clan uncle and uh, that will enable me to be involved with the Crow tribal administration, you know, so to be a member of a clan, that would be most uh, most _____, most _____ toward the Crows, and so I said, "Alright," so I was. So, I got involved in tribal politics when I was in my, the 60's.

TM: Eh.

DS: And uh, I was not deeply involved but I was involved in tribal politics until I was about 75. Uh, really got involved and uh, I went after...after I got involved, all the clan system, the heritage? The hearsay of different stories of the tribal members and I was just was, some stories, some stories were good, some were bad, it varies quite a bit. And so, I didn't get involved with the tribe that way.

TM: And uh, what offices did you hold? In tribal politics. What different offices did you have?

DS: Different offices?

TM: Like uh, I know you were chairman but were you also vice-chairman or secretary or...

DS: Well, I recall the Greasy Mouth clan is the _____ I was appointed with and I belong to that Greasy Mouth clan and I've been a member ever since.

TM: Yeah.

DS: I have been and uh, it varies quite a bit here and there as far as the offices is concerned but Greasy Mouth was a main one. I belong to it, I belong to it and stay with that clan all these years.

TM: Uh-huh.

LS: With the time you were Chairman, what others were you a member of [offices]? Like I know you were a member of the Education Committee. What were the others?

DS: Well, that was it.

LS: You were with the 107 too, weren't you?

DS: Oh.

LS: Things like that, different things you were involved with concerning politics.

DS: Well, I belonged to the 107th committee but before then, I was a member of the tribal administration in the area of educational programs and uh, I was very fortunate to be a member of a clan that sponsored and established the college. So, you might say I was one of the key people that was involved that built this Little Big Horn College, because I was involved in that quite deeply. And uh, all the time I was with that clan. I was with them and uh, and uh, established the college system here.

TM: Uh-huh.

DS: Not only that, I was a member of the uh, what do they call it?

LS: What? What do you mean?

DS: [David is stammering] I mean the clans..

LS: The Greasy Mouths?

DS: No.

LS: Are you talking about the committees?

DS: I mean the committees.

S: The only one I know of is the 107 and education is one but I don't know the rest.

DS: I'm trying to think of a name of the one I was established originally to uh, to, to, to work the program on the college here. And uh, I'm trying to remember that name. [In Crow] When we started the college, I can't remember it.

TM: I think, I don't know the name but I think it was under uh, under a uh, Adult Educational funding program but I can't remember the name of it. What year was that?

DS: Back in the late '70's.

TM: Eh.

LS: I wasn't around during that time so...

TM: It's that program but I can't remember what it's called either. Um, what kind of uh, what kind of things did you do in the Education Committee? Like, what were the, what were some of the main concerns?

DS: Well, I was involved with the Education Committee.

TM: Yeah.

DS: The committee that was established for educational services for the Crow Tribe. And so, I was with those people there since about the 1970's and I have been with them ever since. And uh, I'm trying to remember the name of the organization.

LS: [In Crow] So this committee that you were a member of, the education committee, and before the college was built, what did you decide or speak of, as you continued [in the committee], that it was decided to build the college? Or why did you [the committee] want to build a college? This is what he wants to know.

DS: The Crow Tribal Education Committee.

TM: Oh, uh-huh.

DS: The Crow Tribal Education Committee was what it was called [overlapping talk].

TM: Yeah.

DS: And until I got into this, you just mentioned that.

LS: The Education Committee?

DS: What?

LS: You said Education Committee, the college committee.

DS: It was before the college.

LS: Uh-huh. So, why did you want to build a college in the first place? What was in your hearts that you wanted to build it?

DS: Well, the Education Committee that established the college didn't belong to one, but there was many other but, also uh, Great Falls, and went and saw _____. All three of them, in fact there are about four or five of them, that organized and wanted to be well known.

TM: Eh.

DS: So that they can eventually belong to an organization that would enable us to uh, raise funds, federal funds, for a college and, as a result from that, they drew it up to a time that we established the college and, and uh, we established the college. It wasn't much, it was a very small college and so, we worked on it and established the college. We worked with those other groups in Minneapolis uh, and uh, oh there's lots of us, two or three of them, that I worked with and uh, and uh, it took us a while but, at the time, I wanted to establish a college and I worked on it. Took me a while but with all those other groups, with their help, I was able to establish a college.

TM: Uh-huh.

DS: It took me, it took me awhile and uh, I want to do these but I finally succeeded and so, here's the college system.

TM: Uh-huh. Who else was on the committee? Other, were there other Crow tribal members?

DS: Yeah, yeah. Tragic but I forgot the names. I can't, can't seem to remember any of those names.

TM: Oh, that's alright. That's alright. Uh, when you did work on the 107, what kind of things did you do? On the 107th Committee?

DS: Well, that one was quite recent and that was the, after the settlement of this uh, reservation line back in the early '70's and as a result, we established the 107th. After we established the 107th, we also established _____ educational services. I worked with them and, as a result, the 107th was involved with the educational services for the Crow Tribe and uh, I'm trying to remember...[in Crow]: In our work, I have forgotten the names of the committee members. I'm trying to remember but I just can't seem to.

LS: [In Crow]: They probably have it written down somewhere here.

DS: What?

LS: As the college progressed along, they probably wrote it down somewhere. What did you talk about in the 107th Advisory [committee]?

DS: She asked me about the 107th Committee.

TM: Hum.

DS: In the 107th Advisory, we called it the Advisory Committee, it was formally established. The chairman was involved...Clara Nomee.

TM: Yeah.

DS: And she was quite involved and she wanted us, people that were formerly tribal officials...

TM: Eh.

DS: ...to be involved so we can be advisors to the tribal officials and, as a result, the 107th Committee was established and we were established and recognized as the advisory group working with the tribal administration, the chairman, the vice-chairman, and the all those officials and I worked with every one of them. And so, we, we had worked a lot, all of us formed what we called the advisory group and that's what we was, actual advisory group so there's a lot of things that we were involved in. And uh, the uh, involving the administration at various programs, helped different groups, always went back to '47 on up to _____ years ago. And so, we, we did a lot of things. By gosh, we worked a lot for the tribal administration as an

advisory group. We did everything that was thought to be worthwhile and advised the tribal officials in their capacities. So, we were involved in a lot of things.

TM: Uh-huh. Uh, when you were a tribal official, what position did you hold? When you were a tribal official.

DS: Well, as a tribal official, we established, besides Clara Nomee and myself, we established different groups to work with the tribal administration. That's what we did, with my...then, for getting involved with tribal administration, the tribal government, tribal programs, all the various uh, programs that were open to the public, to the tribal administration.

TM: Uh-huh.

DS: We had the capacity to help establish all the groups and to help different organizations. There was a lot of groups that the leaders _____.

LS: [In Crow]: He wants to know what your position was, your position, your title, at the time. When you were a chairman.

DS: As a member of the advisory group?

LS: No. About the time you were a chairman.

DS: Oh! The uh, first advisory group that was first established when I was the chairman of the Crow Tribe, at which time I and...one other fellow behind me. I'm trying to remember the name.

TM: Is it Pat Stands?

LS: Pat Stands. Pat Stands [to her father]

DS: Yeah, Pat Stands. Well, anyway uh, we got together and we formed the advisory group, the 107th and that's where this came about. That's where this was born, you might say, and uh, let's see, there were various committee members since. And there were a lot of different committees, about twenty five different committees that we worked with just one and, and three or so were advised from our experience, what we may have done and what we could have done for the tribe, on behalf of the tribe. And that's why the advisory group was born, you might say, helping different groups to get organized, to get established, to go along with them and help them out.

TM: Uh-huh. When were you chairman?

DS: Pardon?

TM: When were you chairman? What years?

DS: I was the chairman from '72 to '74.

TM: Okay.

DS: The second term, when my term was up, I was advised to run again but some did not want it, they voted against it. Uh, especially my wife. [laughter] She didn't like it.

TM: Eh.

LS: Because I remember you sat us down and asked us.

DS: Not one of them, all the children.

LS: Yeah, we had so much conflicts with other people and them saying things to us that, you know, we were, it was a rough two years let me say.

TM: Yeah.

LS: But then, he had taken a two-year leave of absence from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, so he did return back to the federal government at that time. Back then they allowed them to do that, I don't think they do that anymore.

TM: Oh yeah? That's good. What did you do at the Bureau, at the BIA?

DS: I was a Soil Conservationist.

TM: Oh, okay.

DS: For about...

LS: Thirty-nine years.

DS: For about thirty-two years.

LS: Was it thirty-two? I thought it was thirty-nine.

DS: Soil Conservationist. All those years, I was, I was with the Bureau of Reclamation for four years at first before I transferred to the BIA, Soil Conservationist.

TM: Uh-huh.

DS: From there, I became a Soil Conservationist, all the rest of the years until I retired.

TM: Uh-huh. Was it under the Bureau of Rec because of the dam? Or why was it under the Bureau of Rec first?

DS: Why?

TM: Why was it under the Bureau of Reclamation first?

DS: Well, it just so happened and this was a pay raise.

TM: Oh, okay.

DS: See, there was an offer, it was advertised so I applied for it and I got the job and I transferred to the BIA.

TM: Oh, okay.

DS: That's where I got involved.

TM: Uh-huh.

LS: That one time, we lived in Cody, that's where my youngest sister was born.

TM: Oh, okay.

LS: He actually worked and lived in Cody.

TM: Oh, at the office there.

LS: I think so, uh-huh.

TM: When you were chairman, was there anything that you felt was important that got done during...

DS: '72 to '74, two years. The fourth[?] year, a lot of people asked me to run again for election but, like I say, my wife, I told you before, my wife was against it. She didn't like it and just a few people didn't like that at all because I lost so many friends.

TM: Yeah.

DS: So many friends were against my running because I was running against their wishes and I made a lot of enemies in that capacity, as a chairman. It's pretty hard work, pretty, pretty, pretty rough. Anyway, all those two years, I made a lot of enemies in that capacity and then, yet, again afterwards, I made a lot of friends. Non-Indians as well as Indians, I made a lot of friends.

TM: Yeah.

LS: During your chairmanship, what were some of your accomplishments of your office? You should talk about the time they sent you to Tom Judge [a former State Governor].

DS: The uh, the time I was in the chairman's office, I ran, when I ran that office, I became involved in education and I belonged to that education service and, as a result, I wanted to establish the college. I worked on it. That's why this has been successful, the college.

TM: Were there any other programs or ideas that you had when you were in office that you...

DS: No, not particularly, no.

TM: Oh, uh-huh.

LS: Tourism. Do you remember the topic of tourism?

DS: Oh yeah. I established tourism. At that time uh, tourism was a program, relatively new program for the tribal members, different groups and when I first got involved, they became involved in tourism, I became deeply involved and I established uh, a trip to seven different countries, European countries. Established this in different countries, actually nine of them, nine different countries that we got involved with, established tourism. Tourism and because of that, the uh, the uh, the uh, trying to remember, [in Crow, he asked Loretta], "What is the name of that motel?"

LS: Motel, Sun Lodge.

DS: Sun Lodge was only about, about three years old and it didn't do too well so in order to establish the Sun Lodge, revive that, I set up a tourism program, brought in tourists. So, we had programs, Indian programs, Indian shows for different people that come in to watch the show and they paid quite a bit and they stayed there. The result was that we have the tourism along with, established the Sun Lodge Motel and that worked out pretty good for about four or five years. Then, when I left, when I left the tribal chairman's administration, the office, the tourism went down and about three years later, it died down so Sun Lodge Motel actually was, about the fourth year, they shut it down. Nobody stayed with it, with the tourism program, so it quit.

TM: Uh-huh, yeah. Uh, were other people in your family involved in politics at that time?

DS: Uh, soon thereafter, my brother, younger brother, was also a chairman. He was, he was a chairman of the Crow Tribe and he became a chairman for six years. Right after, every two years, right after that, for six years, he was the chairman.

TM: And that's Donald?

DS: Uh-huh, yeah.

TM: Um, and during your administration, were there any coal development ideas at that time? Or was that later?

DS: Well, no. But Donald carried on the Sun Lodge. He carried on...when I left, he continued with the program for the Sun Lodge, creating tourism.

TM: Eh.

LS: So, on the matter of coal when you were chairman, did they want to sell coal then or was it before?

DS: Well, just about that time uh, a major development cropped up, the coal development. In fact, that came up when I was, when I was still in it so I helped establish the coal development and then, right after that, I moved out and my brother came and took over and continued. For six years, he was, he was uh deeply involved with Crow coal development.

TM: Uh-huh. Um, did you see any changes in politics?

DS: Pardon?

TM: Any changes in politics, like, before you served or after? Like, was there any changes in how it was structured or how people became involved?

DS: When I was a chairman, there wasn't any such, hardly any developments at all and then, when I got involved and opened up the Crow Commerce Committee. We set it up and then, from there on they carried on and then, my brother Donald picked it up and continued. So, when he was a chairman, he was involved for six years in that Crow coal development.

TM: Uh-huh.

DS: And about six or eight years, he resigned and left. And as a result, the coal development continued, continued all the way up to this day.

TM: Uh, when uh, when so, in the 70's, what was the structure of politics? How did...so there was a chairman, a vice-chairman, secretary, vice-secretary but then, were there...and then, there were the committees that advised them or that worked for them. But uh, I'm not sure if I'm asking a question right there. How were they, how as it structured during your, during that time period, the 70's. Like, today, we have the Legislators that are voted in and the chairman, or the executive...

DS: Well, the program continued. There was no break up at all. It just continued. It went one year after another, one term after another, for a time of six years. After the six years, a new chairman came in, I can't remember what's his name now. Anyway, the new chairman took over and continued and it's been in that capacity ever since, the chairman.

TM: Yeah.

LS: And now, the legislature is there, how do you think it is compared to how it once was? In past councils, all the people could speak but now we go through the legislature, you see?

DS: Well, the legislature, when I was there the last year, I was for the legislature. I wanted to re-...to establish so that we have uh, continued services, especially for the coal development. The organization will assume the responsibility of keeping that coal development in continued operation.

TM: Uh-huh.

DS: So, legislation continued with that. So, when I left, the legislators, when I left, I, I, I, when I, when I left, the legislators picked it up and continued. And so, we have this coal development continuous program since. It's been on going since. You might say it's one of the most successful programs the Crow Tribe ever has. That's coal development.

TM: Uh-huh. Um, is there anything that I haven't asked that you'd like to talk about concerning what, you know, your career or, either with the BIA or when you were chairman?

DS: Well, no, uh, the uh, the years I spent with the BIA...I worked with leases. I was assigned, assigned to the lease program so I was assigned to look after leases. In other words, what we call the office lease. There's competitive leases, competent competitive leases and then, legislation...we had the uh, office lease. Office leases are a group that has the office leases in that they, they establish advertisement instead of programs and continued with that. And another part was the competitive program was that they never had that legislation.

TM: Oh yeah, uh-huh.

DS: They have, they're on their own but they was on their own according to their wishes as individuals, what they called competitive programs, is where it was at. And the other one, the BIA established the regulations to keep that going continuous and in order to continue that, uh, it was four people that were uh, under legislation of the BIA. And the other group was the

competition established for fully competitive people, competition only. So, there was two different groups, competitive and BIA legislation. So, I was working at BIA and when I left, the competition, the competitive group took over and they have competitive programs.

LS: He was also on Board for In-Med when it was first established and they used to meet a couple of time a year in Grand Forks. Then um, I'm not sure exactly when but he's still considered an honorary member of that board. That was the first year they established that Indians Into Medicine program at the University of North Dakota.

TM: Oh, okay.

LS: Because I spent a year in that program and a couple of the other grand kids ended up going to a summer program also. One is actually studying to be a nurse right now.

[Some discussion on paperwork regarding this interview]

TM: Thanks for coming.