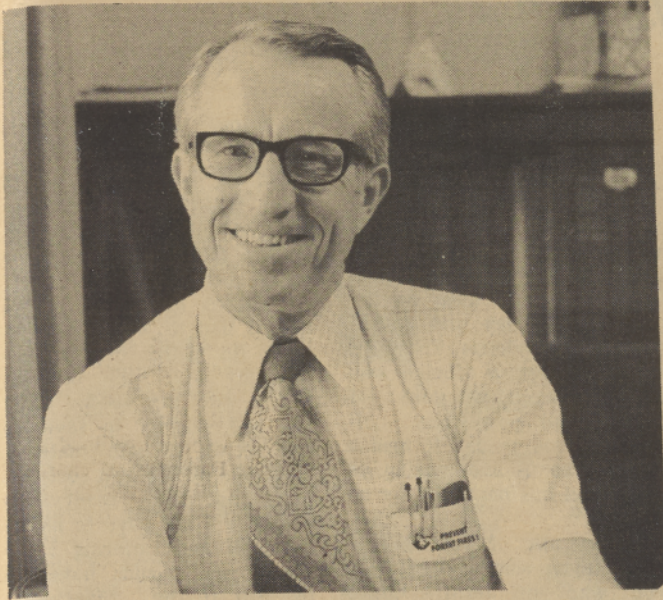


Jim Cornett Reflects on years with BIA



JAMES CORNETT, BIA SUPERINTENDENT

Warm Springs BIA Superintendent James Cornett managed to get through twenty-five years of his life without being aware of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He proceeded to spend twenty-four years contributing his skills to the BIA in a career characterized by dedication and sensitivity.

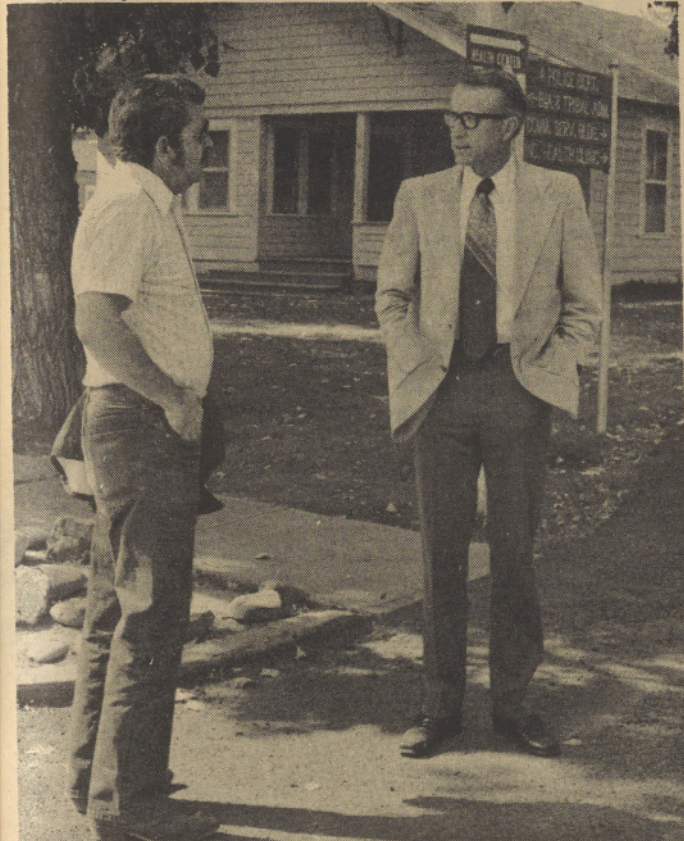
This week marks Cornett's 30th year of federal service including the Navy, and as he reflects on the time spent, his enthusiasm is apparent. His career in the BIA has evolved naturally from soil scientist to superintendent throughout the western states and he has found challenges and rewards in every position. Cornett is making a trail of friends and experiences that continues to grow daily.

Having grown up on a farm amidst the Cheyenne-Arapahoe people in Oklahoma, Cornett felt committed to both farmers and the Indian population. He overcame the fact that he was a high school drop-out, determined to help people in agriculture. Being recruited by the BIA when a

junior in college was a happy event in his life.

Cornett's first assignment was at Ft. Peck, Montana where he spent four years as a soil conservationist. He then transferred to the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana and spent six years in soil conservation there. In Zuni, New Mexico, Cornett assumed the responsibilities of Land Operations Officer and after two years became the Acting Superintendent for another two years. Cornett moved on to a two-year superintendency at Ft. Totten, North Dakota, returned to Zuni for two more years, spent a year in the Albuquerque Area office, then came to Warm Springs in August of 1971.

Although the BIA has largely shaped his life in terms of time and location, Cornett has also created a personal life of satisfaction. He and his wife Wanda have raised a son Phil who attends Oregon State. Golf, gardening and photography are favorite family pastimes. Cornett also has a pet project which is tracking



BIA SUPERINTENDENTS are never off-duty. Cornett discusses business with BIA Plant Manager Jack Fiala during his lunch hour. Photo by Cynthia Stowell

down and recording his family's history.

Spilyay talked with Mr. Cornett about his thirty years with the BIA and most recently his five years here in Warm Springs. The following are highlights of the impressions Cornett offered on a number of topics close to him.

On Changing Locations-

I've felt that the moves have not only been good for me, but I think they might have been good for the Indian people because they do get new faces and new ideas. If someone is set in their ways or not responsive, this gives an opportunity to the Indian people to see some different ideas. Change is sometimes a good thing.

Some of the moves are particularly hard on the families, much more so than the employee. I think the wives of the male employees have some real problems adjusting and making friends, whereas the employees are involved from the first day we're on the job. My wife Wanda has been just great. She's been real supportive and a real asset.

On Living on Reservations-

My wife and I were both raised on farms so we like the rural setting. We've always felt much safer on a reservation than if we'd lived in a large city.

There have been some places where it's been hard to get acquainted with the people, like the Zuni who are very involved with their traditions. But we eventually made friends with many of the Zuni.

We've hated leaving every place we've left . . . Each place has been our home . . . Hopefully we've made a contribution wherever we've been.

On the Satisfactions of His Job-

The most satisfying things are not the big projects, but the things that affect people. Seeing people grow — like an individual who was about to drop out of school and through your encouragement he did go ahead and get an education and you saw him grow and develop. Or seeing a struggling farmer make it with your assistance. This is what makes it all worthwhile. The big projects might make these such fulfilling things possible. But it's clear that BIA officials, to be successful, have to be interested in more than just their jobs.

On Changes in the BIA-

There's been more and more emphasis on strengthening tribal government. This is a national policy. Under Public Law 93-368 the Tribe can redesign programs or they can contract for programs if they don't like the way the Bureau is operating them. The people have to be involved in these programs for them to be effective.

There's more latitude now to move funds around. Until about two years ago Congress appropriated funds to the Bureau in line items.

In Warm Springs the Forestry Program has grown from where it was crippled by under-funding to where it's funded and we can do some timber management work. We got the Assistant Secretary of the Interior out there in 1972

and we sold him on the idea of using some of the administrative fees for doing timber management work.

Our Road Maintenance Program, although we still think it's under-funded, is up to where we can do a better job of road maintenance than we did five years ago. There's been headway made in the Range Management area. We have two range units established.

A lot of this is due to the awareness of Congress and their appropriation of more dollars.

On Warm Springs-

I continue to be more impressed every day with Warm Springs. There's a real productive attitude here. One thing that makes Warm Springs different than other places I've been is that we don't spin our wheels . . .

I think that Warm Springs is blessed with outstanding leadership among the Tribal people. The people have allowed the leaders of the Tribe to do the things that have really benefited the Warm Springs people.

Warm Springs, of all the reservations I know anything about, is the only reservation where the Tribe can truly have self-determination. I say this because economically people aren't forced off the reservation. They can choose to stay and work at home with hope of advancement or they can leave and go where they feel opportunity is better. We have a good selection of professional and sub-professional jobs here. The young people can aspire to be a doctor, a tribal lawyer, a superintendent, a manager of

one of the enterprises, a forester . . .

Politics are separate from business. As a result of this you've got some real successful operations here. The general and technical knowledge of the Tribal Council members, on difficult issues such as water rights is amazing.

The working relationship of the people and the Tribal Council — communication that goes both ways — is better than any tribe I've worked with.

On His Role in the BIA and in Warm Springs-

I hope my role has been more supportive than it has been a leadership role. In other places I almost had to be the initiator. I don't have to play that role here, with an able Tribal administration and consultants.

I was actually phased out of my superintendency at Zuni when the tribe took over the administration of BIA programs. But if you're committed to the idea of Indian people assuming greater leadership roles and controlling their own destiny, then you see yourself as an individual in this whole process as unimportant. What we're doing is important but whether I or somebody else does it is unimportant.

I've enjoyed working with the Warm Springs people and I feel I've contributed something. But I've probably gained more from my association with the Indian people than they've gained from me. I've learned an awful lot from these people.

I hope that the things we've done in the last five years have resulted in continued growth of the Tribe.

Water Board Positions Filled

Two positions on the Waterboard have expired, and the Tribal Council took up the matter at a meeting held on Oct. 4, 1976, at 2:00 p.m.

The two positions were discussed by the Tribal Council and it was agreed on to reappoint the two members back to the Waterboard and these were Sid Miller, term to expire July 8, 1978, and Cy Katchia, term to expire July 8, 1979. The third member of the three man board is Delbert Frank and his term will expire July 8, 1977.

The Water Board will have to work on the future use of

the water resource here on the reservation. The availability is there but the need is to put it to use.

The States are trying to take control of all available water and determine the distribution and allocation of the surplus water. There are court suits between the States and others concerning water uses.

The Water Board is presently working with Clyde, Criddle, and Woodward firm Hydrogeologists from Salt Lake City, Utah. This study is known as Phase II here on the reservation.

Shorthand Offered

Shorthand classes have begun at the Adult Learning Center and no matter what level you're at there's a class for you.

Two Beginning Shorthand classes will be held on Tuesdays, one at 11:00 a.m. and the other at 1:00 p.m. Both hour-long classes are the same so you can choose the time that's best for you. There will also be individual lab work to be carried out at the student's convenience. The first classes will be October 19.

Shorthand II is for those who have had previous instruc-

tion and it will be held on Fridays from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. This class has already begun but more students are welcome.

Tribal and BIA supervisors have traditionally been very supportive of secretaries' involvement in the shorthand classes. You and your supervisor can discuss mutually convenient times for you to attend the free classes.

For more information contact the Adult Learning Center at 553-1428 or drop by the Community Services Building.