

Council '77

Jacob Frank, Sr.

At Home On The Range



COUNCILMAN JACOB FRANK, SR. WITH HIS YOUTHFUL SUMMER WORK CREW.

The Simnasho-born council member makes a seemingly obvious remark about himself. "I'm an Indian."

As the reason for his being elected to the Tribal Council, Jacob Frank, Sr.'s observation sounds too simple, even when he goes on to say, "My thinking is Indian."

But the spare statements take on real substance when the new councilman speaks of things close to his heart — the people and resources of this reservation.

Then a thread of traditional Indian thought can be seen weaving itself through his remarks. For Jacob, land and people are one.

It is reflected in his feelings about being a councilman. "I'm responsible not only for the people of my district but also for the land base and natural resources within that area."

And it is revealed in his plea for protection of those resources for the well-being of future generations.

Jacob Frank the horse ride boss has spent many years in the saddle pondering the value of what could be the reservation's most important resource other than timber — the range. Its potential can only be realized if livestock owners become sensitive to the impact they have on the land.

"The range we're using does not belong to one individual," reminds Frank. "It belongs to all the members of the tribe. If the people of the reservation are good enough to let you graze on their land, all right, let's take care of it."

"We've got two things here," he continues, "Livestock and the management of a natural resource which has really been depleted by livestock." The proper distribution of cattle and horses can go a long way toward preserving the reservation's supplies of grass and water, insists Frank.

Although the open range in the North End appears to have reached its maximum carrying capacity, Frank believes that with sound management livestock could be increased twofold.

Organizing into a formal range unit is one possibility for the stock owners, but "only if

they want to," says Frank gently. "I've seen them work and operate in my younger days just as good or better than a formally organized range unit. These people co-operated, they worked together, not because they had to but because they wanted to."

**"I'm an Indian.
My thinking is
Indian."**

Things are different today, he regrets. Owners take the ride bosses for granted and accept less responsibility for the control of their own stock.

The seasoned horse and cattle owner feels that the range is a low priority of the Tribal Council. But he adds, "I think this drought will bring to the surface a lot of the things that hopefully we can use as a tool towards managing or conserving a lot of the range area."

Frank sees the Simnasho district's immediate needs as water development and the distribution of livestock. "If we can get to these water holes as soon as possible and build fences around them and maybe build catch ponds so the animals won't be getting directly into the source of the water and draining these areas out, then I think we may have water just a little bit longer."

Bringing water to the people of Simnasho and Schoolie would be a way of preserving the human resource in Frank's district, says the councilman, who dreams of moving back to the north end. "We've dodged this thing long enough. We're at the point now where we should say, 'All right, let's do it.'"

Frank has no sympathy for those who want to move the people where there's water. "Home is the man's castle," he asserts. "And once we get the water for those people, I think we are going to have more people moving back into that area."

(This is the third in a series of articles introducing the five newly elected Tribal Council members who took office May 2, 1977. Nearly half of the previous council was replaced by these individuals, some of whom are seasoned public officials and others who are new to government.)

During the next four years, events on the Warm Springs Reservation will be shaped in part by these people. True to the climate of improved communication the new council is attempting to create, here is one opportunity for the public to become acquainted with the views of their new representatives.)

"We could be saving a school, too," he added, referring to the dwindling enrollment at the Simnasho grade school.

A top priority for the reservation in Jacob's view is housing. "I'd like to see the development of housing where the people want to live." He objects to zoning that doesn't allow people, especially older folks, to pursue their traditional ways.

Frank worries about the Tribal Council's list of priorities. "I think it's been juggled around quite a bit to fit the immediate needs . . . the priorities are not real stable."

He feels that many projects are carried out by tribal and BIA departments without proper communication with the Council. Part of the problem is that the Council often doesn't follow through on issues that are brought to them, he observes. Though some would say that time pressures are the reason for such neglect, Jacob seems to feel that time could be spent more efficiently.

For instance, the council should be more directly involved in the creation of their agenda, should turn a lot of the talk to action, and not delegate too many tasks to other groups.

"We're ducking responsibility by setting up too many committees to do the job that the Council should be doing themselves. I think in order to straighten this out, the Council should be doing more work out there and taking a good look at what these people are trying to make them aware of, rather than just sitting in the council room and doing their talking."

**I'd like to see
the development of
housing where the
people want to live.**

Maintaining good communication with the people and keeping abreast of the issues that face the reservation is probably more work than a part-time person can handle,

feels Frank. He looks ahead to a time when councilmen might be full-time public servants. In the meantime, a councilman should at least stay in touch with the particular needs of his own district.

Being elected to Tribal Council by the people of Simnasho was a landmark in the life of Jacob Frank, Sr. "I see it as being accepted back by my people," said the 42 year old council member, whose life has made a dramatic about-face.

It took a Presidential Pardon for a felony committed over twenty years ago, a seventeen year period of sobriety and lots of stamina to win back the people's confidence.

Turbulent teenage years set a pattern in Jacob's life that he found hard to break even as a young adult. Facing the responsibility of a wife and family was literally a sobering thought for Frank and he began the long process of repairing his life and his status on the reservation.

"I've got to give a lot of credit to guys like Rudy Clements. He was one of the guys who was really involved in my coming back," commented Frank.

Clements "opened the door" to a career of helping young and old people, first through the Community Center and now through the OSU Extension Service.

Frank has a special concern and affection for youth. "If you're going to shove them out of the way and say, 'No, you're just a kid, get away from here, you're just in the way,' then it's going to be another Jacob Frank all over again," he warns.

"I think some of the people in higher positions should recognize the youth as the people. We've got goals to work towards and we're looking directly ahead without looking down below at what it takes to reach those goals. We're ignoring our youth too much."

It has occurred to Frank that a "junior council" consisting of 8 or 9 kids chosen by the Tribal Council might be just the vehicle by which the needs and thoughts of youth in

school and at home can be brought to the attention of the adult leaders.

Growing up is a lot like a "guessing game" for youngsters caught between white and Indian cultures, remarks Frank. Kids who learn the white way in school and are experiencing less of Indian language and traditions at home are suddenly expected upon reaching adulthood to understand and practice Indian ways.

Frank has tried to take a lot of this guesswork out of growing up. He works with crews of boys in the summer, teaching them the techniques of livestock management. He also leads a drumming group of 12-15 boys, encouraging them to become familiar with Indian ways.

**We're ignoring our
youth too much.**

"I'm criticized a lot of times for doing this," says the self-appointed teacher. People say, "Why? What good is the Indian today? What good is it to teach these kids to sing songs, drum, talk Indian?"

"I say, 'Wait a minute fella, let's take a good look at those people who set up this reservation for what it is today. I don't think that very many of those people knew how to talk English, read, write, understand — yet they set this reservation up for what it is today simply because they were Indians and they think Indian."

"And they didn't stop there. They followed through with their plans. They were not a selfish people; they were broad-minded and they took a good look down the road and said, this is what's going to be happening in the future — let's set it up on our reservation so that our youth can live a little longer with Indian freedom."

Jacob Frank has been trying to build on what these older people have provided. As a councilman he has been given one more way to express his Indian identity and be "damn proud of it."