

## Council '77

# Delbert Frank, Sr.

## A Voice Through The Years



DELBERT FRANK, SR.

It is no secret that Delbert Frank likes to talk. His rapid, enthusiastic speech has accented political gatherings for years. Fellow Councilmen have threatened him with five-minute limits and people rib him about his vocal wanderings.

But Delbert keeps talking and folks let him. After all, you might say he has earned his air time by paying for the ads. Action is close behind the words.

The new Vice Chairman of the Tribal Council has begun his sixth term on the Council and his twenty-sixth year on committees. The changes he has seen, the action he has helped inspire all preserve for him the undisputed honor of being a spokesman for the Tribes on many matters.

As Delbert proudly points out, he has been the chairman of every committee except timber and education, and has guided them through some critical times.

Delbert served on

- The Recreated-Development Committee when the Kah-Nee-Ta land was put back in trust after having been owned by a non-member for years, a crucial step in the development of the resort;

- The Credit Committee when the first Tribal Credit Code was drawn up;

- The Community Actions Committee when the Community Center was being planned;

- The Housing Committee when the first million dollars referendum for home construction was passed by the people;

- The Fish and Wildlife Committee when Judge Belloni ruled on the "fair share" of fish due to Indians;

- The Range Committee when the BIA area office approved a management program for the reservation's range land;

- The Health and Welfare Committee when the Self-Determination and Indian Health Improvement Acts were passed paving the way to tribally autonomous programs.

Frank has also represented the Simnasho district on the Council off and on since 1956 ("I've had two rests in the last 21 years") a time span that has included great strides in

resource and human development on the reservation.

Even during his "rests" Delbert has been in the middle of things. Sometimes he feels he can work better from the "outside."

"The people pretty much feel when I should be on the Council by what I say when I'm nominated," says Frank. "I either tell them that I don't feel like I could do anything but I know I could do better from the outside."

"I am real close to the people. In the old Indian culture you have to be accepted and trusted, then there's no limits to what they can trust you with..."

Before becoming a public servant on the reservation, Delbert was a rancher. A baker and cook by training, he got back from World War II and decided to run cattle, at which he made "a fairly good living." Delbert started working for the Tribes in 1951 and by 1956 he realized he couldn't ranch and hold office and do both well. "I sold everything to do the job right for the Tribe," he said.

Before he made that commitment Delbert felt he must "find himself."

"I had to define who I was legally before I could represent my people. This reservation is based on treaty rights so I figured I'd better be somebody from a treaty foundation."

"After learning that and getting settled down, I felt I was one of the qualified ones that could do some good for my people."

Being a councilman is different now than when Delbert first joined the ranks. With all the research and reports that are available now "a councilman knows which way to go and has the dollars to do it with."

However, Frank points out, "When I was growing up the Tribal Council was more deeply respected." The Council was a fairly new body and its close relations with the people through general councils characterized the days following the Indian Reorganization Act, adopted by Warm Springs in 1939.

"Today we pretty much do the job here," Delbert says,

(This is the last 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.)

gesturing to the council room. Very seldom does the general population get directly involved in decision-making as it once did, he comments.

The council's committees are also changing. "The job descriptions for the committees are exactly the way the Oregon State research study (1960) started them and their idea was just a draft outlining the duties in a few very simple words, not setting up the goals, objectives and responsibilities of the committees."

So when a new committee came in they had to sit there for three years before they could even know what to do. That was what was killing our committee system."

Frank is now seeing the job descriptions and goals of the committees tightened up by the new council.

But he still worries about some attitudes in council, committees and management about spending. The Council and its committees must not be afraid to hire and pay the best consultants to assist in areas where they lack expertise, says Frank.

Management, he feels, tends to lean too heavily on comptrollers. "We don't have administrators, we have comptrollers and accountants. I don't blame them because they have to be real careful about how they manage that money. But their job is to control dollars. Naturally they're going to tell you let's not spend those dollars."

Frank has however seen the Council and management make some wise expenditures to develop the Tribe's resources. He points to the Oregon State survey of the physical and human resources completed in 1960 as a base for recent development.

The \$100,000 study, which Delbert was instrumental in launching, gathered data about all aspects of the reservation — from people to timber. Frank as well as other members of committees, council and management still refer to the data even 17 years later.

Then a councilman, Frank headed up a group of five local people who conducted door-to-door interviewing for the OSU effort.

"There were people who thought it (the study) was not

worth it. I knew from the beginning that we needed this because the Tribes was penniless."

One resource that the study pointed to as potentially profitable was the range. Delbert agrees wholeheartedly.

"The range is an accepted thing. It's attractive to our people as far as making a decent living. This is something that the Indian people had accepted a long time ago when the government wanted to make 8-hour workers out of them."

The former rancher would like to see a good range management program get underway as soon as possible. It has been twelve years since the central office first recommended a management program, he observes.

"Maybe one range at a time, let's clear that sagebrush and juniper, and let's develop the water and fence it all up and set up range responsibility," says the councilman.

Frank sees two development possibilities: for individuals to form cooperative range management units or for the Tribes to take on the range as an enterprise, gradually turning it over to private groups. Working with the Yakimas and observing the Navajos has convinced Delbert that both methods can work.

As a member of the Water Board and Fish and Wildlife Committee, Delbert has come to realize the importance of preserving the Tribes' water rights.

"Water is a living thing, the most precious thing there was for the Columbia River Indian," remarks Frank. From water came the salmon, the basis of the Indian's diet and culture.

Today the Tribes' water rights have economic and political implications as well. Frank feels that the water that flows through or borders the reservation must be managed consistently not only within Indian country but also in cooperation with other agencies. He sees the Northwest as different from other regions in its willingness to work with Indians instead of "sending them back to the reservation."

As a member of the Governor's Advisory Board on Scenic Waterways, Delbert has

been pushing for classification of the Deschutes River as a scenic river, a decision he expects to be made shortly. Frank doesn't worry about development on the reservation because of his faith in the Tribes' comprehensive land use plan, but he feels a scenic rating would temper recreation on the river and development on the other side.

In Frank's mind the first priority in water use is supplying households with domestic water. Other considerations are the cultural significance of water, the fish and wildlife and lastly recreation.

Geological and economic data that have been recently compiled for the Tribes should aid in drawing up a new Water Code. The original code which Delbert helped formulate did not have the advantage of such data. "Now we'll know why we ran out of springs," he remarks.

Through the years Delbert has seen the various resources given different emphasis. He admits that for awhile the human resource took a back seat to establishing an economic base. But recently Frank has been pleased to witness and assist in the solution of social problems such as housing, health and education.

He is currently involved in implementing the Indian Health Improvement Act, although he quips, "I was born on the side of a trail in Log Springs country — what business do I have talking about health services?"

But talk he does; and act he does. He feels compelled to, as if it was his calling.

"The Council told me the other day, you know, you're spreading yourself too thin. I said I felt that would be for me to decide."

"The Council has paid me a lot of money, out of a lot of trust in me this many years . . . and I think I owe the Tribe something. You can't sit back and say let somebody else to it, or it'll come about some way. It don't happen that way."

"You can't keep still. You just have to say, I think I'm able to do that because I know what's happened along the way and I could help you."

"You've been in it so long and you just can't keep out of it."