

Interviewee: John H. Moore

Interviewer: Tracey Abla

Date: February 25, 1994

UF241A

A: This interview is with Dr. John Moore, the new chair of the anthropology department.

He came to the University in August of 1993. The interviewer is Tracey Abla, the date is February 24, 1994, and we are conducting the interview in his office in Turlington Hall. Would you please state your name?

M: John Hartwell Moore.

A: Okay. And when were you born?

M: February 27, 1939.

A: Where, in Arkansas?

M: In Williston, North Dakota, of all places. My father was in the Air Force at an air base. I think it was in Montana, eastern Montana, and the hospital was in Williston, so that is where I was born.

A: And then you moved to Arkansas later at some point?

M: Yes. When he went overseas, I went to Arkansas.

A: And that is where you grew up?

M: Right.

A: And you went for your bachelor's degree . . .

M: University of Arkansas, in Fayetteville.

A: In chemistry?

M: I was in chemical engineering.

A: And you went for your master's degree, where?

M: Well, I was at Washington University for a short time, and then transferred to New York University. [Laughter] I would be glad to go into all the circumstances of my leaving if you would like. I had some credits at Washington University and St. Louis that I transferred to New York University, but I never took a degree at Washington University.

A: And you got your Ph.D. at New York University?

M: Yes.

A: What were you doing in Washington, how did you end up there?

M: No, in St. Louis. I had a fellowship from the **SOCIETY FOR ETHICAL CULTURE**, which is a kind of secular humanist, religious body and so I had to be where they had one of their societies, and that was in St. Louis.

A: Was that the closest one?

M: Yes. I had lived in St. Louis before, and I had become familiar with the Ethical Culture Society, and I was a \_\_\_\_\_ in Missouri the last six months I was in the army. I visited the Ethical Culture Society in St. Louis and asked about fellowships. I went to their training institute they had in New York City, the summer of 1964. Then I took a fellowship with them, so that I spent three years in St. Louis. I was also on fellowship from them in New York City.

A: When you got your masters, you were already in anthropology?

M: Yes.

A: So what caused you to change from chemical engineering to anthropology?

M: When I graduated in 1961, I worked for a year for Proctor and Gamble in St. Louis, and did not like it for many reasons. I was an industrial engineer for them and did methods work. I was the person who recommended who to fire and stuff like that, so it was not a very pleasant job, although it was well paid. I hung out with

very conservative people. It was the first time I ever saw capitalism up close. And it was not a pretty sight. The caste system in the plant really offended me. The draft was on, the universal military draft. I had to go in the army anyway, so I just quit and joined the infantry. I was in the army for over two years, and when I got out, I got the fellowship and went to Washington University.

A: That was what year?

M: That was about 1965.

A: And you finished with your Ph.D. in 1970?

M: 1974. I actually got a job, full-time teaching job, in 1972 at **ALBION** College in Michigan. Then I took a little over a year to finish my dissertation. Those were the days when the job market was very good, and colleges and universities were willing to hire people that were \_\_\_\_\_ and then let them finish on the job. That is not as much the case anymore.

A: Where did you go after Albion College?

M: To the University of Oklahoma in 1977.

A: Were they just advertising to hire someone, or did you really want to go to Oklahoma?

M: Well, I wanted to go there because I was doing field work with the Cheyennes who were in Oklahoma. It would have been very handy. And also it was a bigger university. It had a graduate program. Also, my uncle lived in Oklahoma City at that time. He was getting old, and I wanted to be near him. Those factors conspired to make me take the job at Oklahoma University.

A: Where did your work with the Cheyennes start? That started while you were at Albion College?

M: I did not have anybody at New York University that knew anything about Indians, but **TOM BIDELMAN** and **JOHN MIDDLETON**, especially Bidelman, who was the chair of my committee, was into religious symbolism, kinship, social structure, those kinds of things that really interested me. He was the person who had a copy of **GEORGE DORSEY'S** book on the **SUNDANCE**. I just kind of ran into him in the hallway one day, and he said, "Look at this, look at this!" And he was showing all these paintings, body paintings that they used during Sundance. And there was not a hint in the text as to what this was all about and he said something like, "People do not go around painting dragonflies on their bodies for no reason at all. There has got to be some kind of symbolic system there." And I think I had told him previously that I was going to do field work in North America. Now there is a reason for that, that I do not think I have told you or anybody. I was active in the **VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR**. They had been investigated by the FBI and the Department of Defense and everybody, because we had helped organize the **BERTRAM RUSSELL TRIBUNAL** in Stockholm. And I had testified on tape for that. I did not go. About that time then, the New York Times published articles that said this congressman and that had introduced legislation to withdraw any kind of federal support for people that were in the anti-war movement. And so I was concerned that if I applied for money to go do field work in Africa, that I would not get it because I would be on some kind of blacklist. So I figured it was a lot more \_\_\_\_\_ for me to do field work in North America, where I could just jump in my car and I did not have to have any money or permission of anybody. I could just go do it. So that was the reason, it was not that I was particularly interested in American Indians before I started. I really was more interested in Africa when I started.

A: So how did you make contact with the Cheyenne? You were in New York [where no one] knew anything about the American Indians.

M: That is right. I am very gregarious person. I jumped in my car and I drove to Oklahoma, and I saw some tepees out on a hill in Ceiling, Oklahoma, and I just drove up and said, "Hi!" That was my introduction to the Cheyenne. No, I did not have anybody to introduce me. It was just happenstance that the first summer I had available I drove out there and happened to go to Ceiling. I happened to see the tepees and I showed up on the first day of just after the arrows had been brought into the ceremonial camp. And there were a series of events there that kind of conspired to make me welcome. It did not get started off well though because I had an old Volkswagen van and I was by myself. I just drove up to the nearest tepee, and these kids came out with some older girls. I said, "Hi." And being Southern I knew how to talk to rural, Gemeinschaft type people. I said, "Who do I talk to about camping here?" I had a tent and I was ready to camp. One of the girls said, "Well, you can talk to my dad." And I said, "Who is your dad?" And I thought she said, "Roy Netwalker" which made as much sense to me as any other Indian name. Indians were always surprising me at that time, people were named "Buffalo Hump," "Fat" and "Dung" and "Chips" and all kinds of things. I had no idea what the pattern of Indian names were. I embarrassed myself with Nightwalker, who came out of the tent, and I said, "Hi, very glad to meet you Mr. Netwalker." And everybody just laughed and walked away. I did not know what I had said. There was a lot of work to do around there and people needed errands run, so I, having nothing else to do, not knowing what to do, I started helping people, giving them rides and helping people put up their tepees and stuff. That was apparently the right thing to do, although I did

not know it. So after a few days, they made me feel welcome. Also, inadvertently I said a few things that they took to be of sacred significance, because right after I got there, I was talking to some men, and they were asking stuff like, "Did you have any trouble getting here?" And I said, "No, but I think I ran out of gas about a few miles down the road and I think the wind blew me in." Not knowing that the [Indians believed the] sacred spirit of the east Hesanoto was acting. So they took that as having some sacred significance. A couple of other things like that occurred. But I was very clumsy and rude and probably rude because I really did not know how to interact with any people. I did not know what to do with my eyes and proximity and body posture and things like that. I am sure I was very, very rude. But they were very forgiving, as long as [they could see] I was trying to help out.

A: Do you think it would be that easy for someone to just show up nowadays?

M: Yes.

A: You think so?

M: I had heard all these stories before I went to the field about, "Oh, well, Indians do not like white people," and all this stuff. And a lot of those stories, I think, are made up by other anthropologists who try to keep you away from field work. But I have never had any problems. I heard that about the Pueblos. I was visiting one weekend at Toas and went out to the pueblo, and there was a guy sitting there by their river that runs through the pueblo. And while we were sitting down, it was not thirty minutes and we were talking about health and projects, and he said, "Well, we could really use someone to work on this thing, or that thing, or the other thing." It just depends on who you are. But if you come up [and say], "I really want to know about your religion," well yes, of course they are hostile, and

they ought to be [to] somebody that is just nosy and curious about things. It just depends.

A: What I was thinking was you kind of get the impression from talking to people and [from] what you read that anthropologists, not just a white person wandering into their town or community, but an anthropologist. Maybe that comes from Vine Deloria.

M: Well, it does. And I think it is a phenomena of these mixed tribe, mixed blood elite that have kind of defined what I call Native American culture as opposed to Indian culture or tribal culture. And that is one of their sacred beliefs that anthropologists are not welcome among Indians. But I have never found that to be the case. Never. And I have worked with twenty or thirty tribes.

A: When you arrived there and you started hanging out with them, at what point did you tell them why you were there?

M: As soon as anybody asked. I had trouble trying to explain in intelligible terms because the whole idea of graduate education and writing a dissertation was hard for them to understand since they had mostly been to high school at most. I do not think I knew any college-educated Cheyennes at the time. I said that I wanted to be a doctor and I wanted to teach in college, and in order to do that I had to write a book about Indians. They understood that. I also got there when all this fuss was erupting over Father Peter Powell's book, Sweet Medicine, which had pictures of the sacred arrows that had been circulated to Cheyenne women who were not supposed to see the arrows. That was during the period when there was this transition and his reputation among the Cheyenne because he had been regarded as sort of this nice, generous man. Then after the book was published, opinion began to change. Most people really did not care about

what I was doing. I was accepted more in terms of who I was and how I acted rather than what I was going to do. Nobody was giving me the third degree about where the profits from this book [would] go or anything like that. It was just somebody showed up, and I seemed to be friendly and I was helping. That was the most important thing, as far as they were concerned, that I was being generous with my time and my car and so on.

A: Your dissertation is on what?

M: Religious symbolism. It is interesting. There was a meeting and I had been there several days. It was late one night, maybe nine or ten, it took a long time for dust to fall on the plains when you are on top of a hill. It was pretty late and these guys showed up in my tent. I gave them some coffee and they essentially wanted to know what I was doing there. And so I explained to them as I had already explained to Roy Nightwalker and anybody who asked me what I was doing there. And I said I wanted to write a book about the body paintings and what they meant. Also, I used the word cosmology and they wanted to know what that was. Anthony F. C. Wallace had written this book [called] The Anthropology of Religion in which he explained the Christian cosmology that he was raised with. I think he was a Baptist church in Missouri, I cannot remember for sure. I had just seen this explanation of cosmology, so I thought I would explain my Arkansas Methodist cosmology, with heaven and hell, and angels and Gabriel, and St. Peter and God and the Blessed Trinity and the Saints and all that stuff and how the world was organized. They were very fascinated by that, and I remember John Blackowl. I did not know who he was at that time. But he said to me, "I always wondered what white people believe, it is the first time I really ever understood it!" So anyway, that was the kind of thing that I was

interested in, their beliefs about dragonflies and tornados and all these things that were painted on their bodies. Why they had the same word for both [sun and moon]. Then they sort of broke out into a discussion among themselves in Cheyenne. At that time, I spoke no Cheyenne, I had no idea what they were talking about, except now and then they were looking at me. So then it was funny, then they all just kind of smiled and laughed and left. And left me sitting there with Roy Nightwalker. And Roy said, "Well, they think it is all right for you to stay." And I said, "Can I get this information that I need?" He said, "Sure." He said, "Right now." And so we stayed up all night. He essentially told me everything that I needed to know to write a dissertation in one night. [He told me about] the whole symbolic system [and] what the names for everything were. We went through George Dorsey's book. He told me what all the paintings were on the bodies, the whole works. And I thought, "Geez, that was easy." I knew that other people spent months of field work trying to find out things like that, establishing rapport and so on. But I think it was easy because there were so many English speakers among the Cheyenne. If I had to learn Cheyenne in order to establish rapport, sure it would have taken a long time. As it was, I could establish rapport in kind of a rural way, which they were accustomed to dealing with so it was faster.

A: So when he was able to point out to you and describe all the symbolism it was still there? It was all still viable?

M: Oh, yes. Still is now.

A: You do not think they have lost very much at all?

M: Well, some of the cosmological elements are gone now. The very next day, Jim Medicine Elk, who was the arrowkeeper at the time, came to see me and he said

he had been thinking about what I had said. And he said that there is a lot of old words for describing the universe that are going out of use. So we sat down together, and I drew a little diagram, just as I had done the previous time. I had drawn this cosmology of Christianity. He took what I had drawn and carried it around to some of the elders that were there at the camp, and was writing in things, alternative names for the sun and moon, and the names of the constellations and things like that, because he was afraid those things were going out of use. He handed this thing [back to me] that had all this stuff written in on it, and it was really neat. So a lot of those terms are obsolescent, if not obsolete in the ceremony. They were apparently in frequent use when Jim Medicine Elk was a young man. [But the words] had gradually grown into disuse. But now they did disappear, many of them, in Karl Schlesier's book, The Wolves of Heaven. And I do not know to what extent he took that from my dissertation and to what extent he collected that independently.

A: Who?

M: Karl Schlesier, [and] anthropologist at Wichita State.

A: Oh, okay. Were there things that they told you that they did not want you to publish?

M: No, I told them not to tell me anything they did not want to see in a book. [Laughter]

Most people did not care, they did not read these kinds of books, and did not really care. When they got concerned about it was somewhat later. Their attitudes toward Father Powell's book began to gel a little bit. And they did get to the point in the next couple of years that they were concerned about what was published in books. Then Jemillio Storm's book Seven Arrows was published, which was just baloney that he had made up. And [the Cheyenne] were really upset. Especially, they were upset at the notion it was normal for a young man to

have sexual intercourse with his mother as part of becoming a man. That really made the Northern Cheyenne pretty mad. \_\_\_\_\_ happened to be in Montana when the book came out, and they were just so angry and so humiliated, embarrassed by all that. And passed resolutions condemning Storm and all that good stuff.

A: But that never really affected your relationship with them?

M: No, because I was the one that reviewed the book for American Anthropologist and said it was all baloney. But it is still in print. It is disgusting. Every time I go to Barnes and Noble, I see another copy of that stupid book there. It is just San Francisco, hippy crap. It has nothing to do with the Cheyenne religion. But he has made a lot of money, and he goes around lecturing at colleges.

A: What is he, a historian or an anthropologist?

M: He was a Northern Cheyenne who never lived on a reservation. He was raised in the Bay Area, I think. [He] is universally disliked by the Cheyenne religious community.

A: You worked with the Northern Cheyennes as well?

M: Yes. Nearly every summer. The first few years I went [to] both places, Montana and Oklahoma.

A: For your dissertation, did you talk to the Northern Cheyenne?

M: Yes. As a matter of fact, that same summer I took the information I had gotten in the south up north. The people I talked to are listed in my dissertation [like] Whistling Elk, and oh, I cannot even remember their names anymore. And they confirmed that, "Yes that is legitimate." Henry Tallbull was the person I worked with mostly. He was a younger man and was related to a lot of people in the religious

community. He did a lot of the legwork for me. I lived with him when I was up there, he and his wife Irene.

A: In subsequent work, did you concentrate on Southern Cheyenne just because they were closer?

M: Well, it was until I got to Oklahoma, then I just quit going. Frankly, what happened was Henry died, and it has made me feel so bad to go back to Montana.

A: Okay. So you are a fluent speaker of Cheyenne?

M: Oh, no.

A: Not even now?

M: No. There was a time when I could pass the time of day with the Cheyennes without them laughing at me. I guess by 1981 or 1982 I could speak a little, but it goes.

A: Now you are not in practice?

M: Yes. I was a very good \_\_\_\_\_ up until I finished with my book in the mid eighties. I was good at looking at published words, and I published [an] article on Cheyenne names. So I could do that very well. Cheyenne is a hard language to get your tongue wrapped around, and your throat wrapped around in particular. It is a difficult language for an English speaker to learn, so the most competent I ever was to be able to say polite things in an understandable [and] intelligible way. No I was never close [to being] fluent.

A: I have seen that names article. What caused you to get interested in the names?

M: I guess I should explain, this, once again, has to do with Jim Medicine Elk who was the arrowkeeper. I went back the following summer and lived with Jim in \_\_\_\_\_, Oklahoma for a while. I got to know him very well. His wife was **JENNY BLACK**, who was **JAY BLACK'S** daughter, who had been a previous keeper of the arrows. After I lived with him for a while, I realized how poor everybody was,

how many problems they had. Jim was very explicit one time. I had been at a powwow in New Jersey, and I saw for sale a lot of hogs and antique dealers at these powwows in the east. And I saw some stuff that looked Cheyenne to me. A beaded dragonfly was one of the things. I bought the whole batch of stuff, not knowing exactly where it had come from. The dealer did not either. It could have been lifted from some museum, as far as I know. Anyway, I gave Jim a hairbrush made out of a porcupine tail and he felt like he had to give me something in return. He gave me a medicine feather that had elk tracks on it. I still have it. That night he said something like he was glad to talk to me about religious matters, but he wish I would get interested in something that would kind of help them a little bit. So that conversation, plus what I had seen, plus Henry's death, just kind of turned me around as far as what I was interested in, and I tried to see how I could use the skill that I already had, which was kinship, primarily. How I could use that to create some kind of project that would be useful to people. So then I started doing a kinship, a demography, and then I got into the allotment lists. Then to understand the allotment lists, you had to know about the names, if you are going to \_\_\_\_\_ people. Because there would be alternate translations of names, so the person might be named by one translation one year, and another translation the next year. But it was the same name in Cheyenne. I created a name dictionary, and that is what led to the article.

A: I do not know if you did a dictionary, but you did something with the Muskogee.

M: Yes, same kind of thing. It was a lot harder with the Cheyennes, because everything is compartmentalized. One family will tell you about another family's names, "You have to go talk to them." Because they just have this sense of turf about extended families, and they just will not speculate about things. "Well, if you

want to know about Red Hog names, then you better go talk to a Red Hog family." And they might know full well every possible convolution of the name Red Hog, but they will not tell you because they do not feel it is proper to do that.

I mentioned it in that article I did on Cheyenne \_\_\_\_\_, and I had to visit every damned elder in Oklahoma to put together the whole \_\_\_\_\_ because nobody would talk about anybody else's bird. I drove thousands of miles to get that article. The bird thing, ornithology, came out of interesting names as well.

A: What do you mean, their own birds?

M: Well, somebody's got Kingfisher medicine, so nobody else is going to talk about Kingfisher medicine. So you have to go to the person that has the Kingfisher medicine, to find out about that. Or nobody would venture to say anything about flickers, because Roy \_\_\_\_\_, had the flicker medicine. So I had to talk to Roy or talk to his son.

A: You mentioned one thing I wanted to go back and ask you about with John Black, how you said you wondered who he was. Who was he?

M: He became a close friend of mine later. [He was] a very elderly man when I first got to know him. [He was] a model of what a chief was supposed to be. [He was] very quiet, very self-effacing. He understood that the most important task of his life was to take care of the graves of people that had been buried in that area. He was paid of a tribal payroll as some kind of custodian or something at tribal headquarters. But his real job was going around taking care of people's graves. It was the kind of thing that did not offend anybody. Everybody admired him for [it]. He was never very outspoken at meetings. He never spoke very much, and at the \_\_\_\_\_ everybody was always deferring to him which I never understood because he never said a word. But then finally I began to get it after three or four

years, that that was the ideal posture for a real chief--to be self-effacing and poor. He was about the poorest man I ever knew. I have been in his house many times, and he had nothing. He had some old rotten couches that he slept on, that you sat on. They were full of fleas and ticks. Roaches were all over everywhere. He never had any food, because people used his refrigerator as if it were their own. He was just very, very poor. But that is what a chief is supposed to be, supposed to be impoverished like that. I think it finally got it for sure when John died and they had his funeral in El Reno. I went over [and] I thought I was late when I got there because there were so many people there. But I was not late, it was just that there were so many people that had been there for a day and had got there early. It was at the biggest funeral home in El Reno and the chapel part was stuffed. They put up some speakers in the parking lot and the parking lot had no cars in it, it was just several hundred, or maybe a thousand or more people standing around. The street in front of the funeral home was full of people standing around. I had to park up on a gravel pit about two blocks away because there were cars everywhere. I had brought a blanket and a shawl. I could barely get into the chapel. I walked down the aisle, and I put the blanket and shawl there and left. And I had to stand across the street in somebody's yard to hear the funeral. So I began to get it then that somebody like John was respected. I have not seen a funeral that big. I have been to a lot of Cheyenne funerals, and that was the biggest one I ever saw. He was such a modest, quiet person, it contrasts a lot [with] the leaders you see nowadays. They are so outspoken and obnoxious sometimes.

A: You said that you worked with twenty or thirty other groups?

M: Yes. I have [either] visited the reservation or knew somebody. I have done more or less with different groups.

A: Are they pretty much plains or are they all over the place?

M: Mostly plains. At a certain point, I had it in mind to write a general book on plains Indians, so every opportunity I had, I wanted to see all of them and I think I have.

A: I guess it is not that hard to do twenty or thirty tribes when you are in Oklahoma anyway.

M: That is true. When I had my grant in 1980-1981, part of the grant was to look at historic camping places of the Cheyenne. So I took off and made the great circle around through Nebraska, Minnesota, the Dakotas, Montana, then back down by Wind River Reservation, Colorado. And that was area that had been unknown to me, that very northeastern part. During recent field work with the plains Crees, it has taken me up to Canada.

A: One of the things I did not want to ask because you answered it a while ago, was where your interest originated in terms of doing things to help the Indian people themselves. Is that how you started working with the Muskogees as well?

M: Well, that had a very dramatic beginning. There was a false start and then there was a beginning. This is going to sound strange. When I was in New York, I was active in progressive, left-wing activities, and I knew a Seminole guy who had been to Cuba to cut cane and help the revolution. He was a Seminole from Oklahoma. **EVAN HANEY** is his name. I told him my uncle lived there and stuff like that, and he wanted to go back and start a co-op. He thought it would be the thing to do. Start communism up from the grass roots in Seminole County, Oklahoma. [Laughter] He was very idealistic. When I got back to Oklahoma in 1977, I kept looking for Evan, and I finally found him. I started hanging around

him and his brother **MOATIE**, and some other Haneys, and \_\_\_\_\_. And also \_\_\_\_\_ in with this bunch that was in prison. The first time I met \_\_\_\_\_ was in prison. He was out at the federal reformatory in El Reno for burning the bridge, when the Seminoles \_\_\_\_\_ got organized. There were three brothers that were involved and I know them as well as I know myself. I will think of [their names] in a minute. Anyway, they had demanded payment for railroad rights, railroad right of way and utilities right of way through Seminole County, which had apparently been contracted for and paid, according to them. And ultimately, somebody burned a bridge and somebody wrote a letter to the president, threatening the life of the president, arson, all kinds of stuff. The \_\_\_\_\_ brothers, were the three brothers. They are all dead now. I fell in with them and they had been, in turn, supportive of the \_\_\_\_\_ administration among the Seminoles. So I went over and tried to organize the library when Jim \_\_\_\_\_ was elected chief and all the \_\_\_\_\_ had been behind his candidacy. He lost all support \_\_\_\_\_ figured out how to sabotage him. About that same time, I had been talking to Evan Haney about some kind of project we could do together. He wanted to do some education project. He said, "We have got to save the language." So he managed to put together a meeting with **OTIS HARSHOW** at Otis' house. There were some other ceremonial people there, and Otis and these young guys, **WAR EAGLES**, the Haneys, and all these young militants that were there. I guess it is all right to talk about Otis now since he is dead as of a couple of weeks ago. He was one of my best friends. Otis was the medicine man for those guys and he never went to jail or anything, but he gave them medicine, he doctored them, he took care of them, he encouraged them. That is why they were all tight together. I went to this meeting and we began trying to think of what kind of project we could all do

together. Evan wanted to save the language and so on. He spoke a little himself. All of a sudden, Otis started talking in Muskogee without the usual gesture toward me, speaking a little bit in English. He gave a long, five-minute talk in Muskogee, and everybody got up and left. And I said, "What happened?" And he said, "There is not going to be any project." [Laughter] I wondered what the hell was going on. Later, I think \_\_\_\_\_ told me what Otis said was, "This guy says he is interested in language (talking about me) but he is really a missionary." We just had somebody come to the Seminoles and [say] they were a linguist, and it turned out they were trying to convert them all to Christianity. [The person was] from the Summer Institute of Linguistics, which at that time was headquartered at the University of Oklahoma. So I found out about that, that they thought I was from the Summer Institute of Linguistics, and therefore they did not want to cooperate with me or do anything. It really made me angry. Ultimately, it led to my leading the charge to get the Summer Institute of Linguistics thrown out of Oklahoma University. [Along with] the main argument that I made, there were constitutional issues, too--the separation of church and state. I got the alliance of somebody in the law school. The point I kept making to the administration was that these people were ruining our opportunities for doing any kind of meaningful work with Indian people because the Indians thought we were all missionaries at Oklahoma University. We got rid of them, ha-ha, and they all had to go down to Arlington, Texas and be the Summer Institute of Linguistics far away. Anyway, we had this meeting and Otis made this talk, and I thought that was the end of it with the Muskogees. I was sitting in my office about when my Cheyenne grant was going full blast about 1981. I think I had been at a class of something and I came back, and I think it was **JOHN**

**DUNN** who was the chair [of the anthropology department] and he said, "John, there is a bunch of Indians here to see you." And I said, "Oh, okay. Where are they?" They were in the conference room, the room which is now \_\_\_\_\_ office. I went down there expecting to walk into a room full of Cheyennes. And it was not! It was **TONY HILL** and **JOE SMITH** and **GEORGE KOZAR**--a bunch of Muskogee/Creek ceremonial men. And they were all dressed up; they dress quite different from the Cheyennes. They had all this Seminole looking stuff, and no \_\_\_\_\_ birds or anything like that, just a totally different mode of dress. And I did not know who they hell they were. They said they were Muskogees, and I was not quite sure what that was either at that time. Anyway, they said essentially they heard I had been working with the Cheyennes and why did I not come work with them? And they were out on the tail end of **HARSHOW VS. KLEPPY** case, because **ALLAN HARSHOW** had reformed the tribal town's organization. Then they felt he had been co-opted, so they had kind of seized the tribal town's organization. They were meeting at the Holiday Inn in Henrietta once a month to try and keep the thing going. And Allan had been folding up at about that same time, which is another story. But anyway, I went to their first meeting. And once again, the strangest thing happened. They had the big raffle of a painting by **JOHN TIGER**, and I won it. So they thought that was significant. And another thing that happened to me, that just floored me. [First of all,] every time I went to a Cheyenne meeting it cost me. Somebody needs fifty dollars for this, somebody needs twenty dollars for this, somebody \_\_\_\_\_ a ceremony and needs a hundred dollars. Just going to some powwow cost me a hundred dollars by the time somebody puts an arm on me for some damn thing or another. "I have got some bead work and my son is sick," and so on. So I would have to

cough up. They [the Muskogees] said, "Well, it is time to talk about finances." This was at the Muskogee meeting at the Holiday Inn. They talked about that it was important that they pay their way and I thought, "Oh my God, here we go," and I was reaching into my pocket. And they passed the hat, and they would not let me put anything in the hat. Not only that, when the hat was full they gave it to me because I had driven all the way over there! But it was two hundred dollars! And I thought, "Oh my God, this is going to be a whole different story."

[Laughter] [And I thought,] "I want to work [with] these people now!" Not only that, but they ate a lot better too! I mean, you work with the Cheyenne you have to eat sweet rice and fried bread [which] is good, but boiled beef . . . I hope Cheyennes never listen to this tape but they do not eat very well. It is awful. And Lord, I mean when they had the meal at the Holiday Inn which they had carried in over the objection of the Holiday Inn catering department, it was great. I mean it was Southern cooking, and it was [plentiful] and there was barbecue and fricasseed chicken, and I went nuts it was so good. Between the money and the supper, I felt this was the way I wanted to go with my field work. [Laughter] Also, and intellectually, I wanted to look at a clan society. I did not know how it worked. I thought I was getting how a \_\_\_\_\_ society worked, how it works with kin and all of that. I was very pleased to see that everybody in this bunch knew what the clan was. And that all aspects of clan life were still alive, and those that were not still alive they were recalled. That encouraged me. We spent some time trying to figure out a project that would be of some benefit to them, of some intellectual interest to me and would bring in some money that would interest some funding agency. We must have spent a year or two, I did a couple of pilots just trying to get access to people, and that is when I discovered that **JOE SMITH**

was about the best field worker that you could imagine. Persistent to the point of being rude, Joe could collect a genealogy from anybody. And [to] convince them to participate, mostly [he] invoked the devil and threatened people with things. Joe was just marvelous at collecting genealogies that we then used to get funds for diabetes projects. So we got \$60,000 from the American Diabetes Association to see who was there. And then we started getting other grants.

A: So you concentrated on health issues?

M: Yes. We had to get into some areas that were kind of sensitive because we did not want to run into their medicine man. That is not very active with the Creeks. We did not want to create any kind of health delivery program that would step on their toes or infringe on what they thought was their turf. So we had to know what that turf was. So **MORRIS FOSTER** and I did a series of interviews with a lot of different medicine men, but mostly the information came from **OTIS** and from **TONY HILL** about \_\_\_\_\_ disease [and] what kinds of diseases they treated and did not treat, because we were trying to figure out some way to fit in the kind of treatments we were trying to develop. That is a project that is still going on right now--trying to figure out some compatible way of treating disease that would not violate the canons of the Native Treaty.

A: That is very interesting. That had not occurred to me. But as far as what you have done with Morris Foster, is any of that published?

M: No, it will be.

A: It will be?

M: For example, there is no reason why a patient could not simultaneously go to a Muskogee medicine man and a regular doctor because the medicine man's treatment is for four days at a time. So whatever he is going to do you is over

with in four days and you can go back to the other doctor. The medicine men have no objection of you going to another doctor in between their treatments. There is probably more resistance from the Anglo doctors who do not want people going to the medicine man. That is one of the problems we are trying to deal with.

A: Okay. I wanted to go back and ask you one thing. You were talking about Evan Haney who is Seminole. Is he related to **KELLY HANEY**?

M: [He is] a distant cousin, I think. It is a common name.

A: Okay. Kelly Haney--is he Muskogee?

M: He is Seminole. Well, they \_\_\_\_\_ us Muskogees and they do not really make, especially in that area of northeast Seminole County and \_\_\_\_\_ County, [a distinction] between being a Creek and being a Seminole in that area, and they are highly inter-married and many people could enroll either place if they want to. They really do not recognize that ethnic distinction. It is artificial. It was created by the government when the Seminoles arrived in \_\_\_\_\_. See, the mixed blood faction of the Creeks did not want the Seminoles attached to them because that would have been like adding three thousand militants onto their rolls, [and] they were already having trouble with the militants that they had. So they resisted having them put back into the Creek Nation. That is why there is a separate \_\_\_\_\_.

A: So as far as the health issues [you have been] working on, you have concentrated on diabetes?

M: Yes. The intellectual issues that I am interested in are the amalgamation of the Creek Nation from component tribes, and the way the clan system has worked

historically to bring in these people. And that is the grant that I got from the **NSF**.

The NIH grant is the health-related one.

A: At what point did you get interested in kinship?

M: When I understood that you could not understand kinship systems unless you understood the demography of the tribe. For example, how many siblings you have--the theory I have, that is not substantiated yet, is that to a certain extent kinship systems are built upon a demographic regime. That is, if you have an expansive population then you could have a clan system. I think there is a relationship between the two. You cannot build any kind of kinship system on any kind of demography.

A: What about kinship? Is that something you were interested in from the beginning?

M: It was kind of mathematical. I have always been kind of mathematically oriented. I just love the models, modeling kinship and the linguistic aspect of it. I have always found it charming and I have always thought too that kinship studies is what differentiated anthropology from sociology and all the other social sciences. Nobody takes kinship as seriously as anthropologists do. I had the idea too, since I was a political deviant in graduate school, I thought, "What kind of interest can I take, what kind of expertise can I develop that is the hardest, the most technical, the most anthropological so that nobody can ever accuse me of being a marginal anthropologist?" And I said, "Well I will be a kinship expert then nobody can doubt my credentials." So there was that element too in wanting to undertake kinship studies. Having written articles, which nobody can understand, I think I have succeeded in establishing myself as a kinship expert.

A: What prompted your move to Florida? It seems like you would be right in your element in Oklahoma since that is where all the people you were working with were.

M: That is exactly the problem. I had no time to write, I had no time to do anything except do field work. I had so many social obligations to people. I mean, if I just went to every naming ceremony and funeral where I was expected, that would be a full-time job. Then having friends in two tribes, the Cheyennes and the Muskogees, I had reached a point where I just had to break away. I could not do it while I was there. I thought I would like this as the end game of my life in the last ten or fifteen productive years that I have. I have got so much material that I have got to write up, and I do not have time to drive to Geary for some baby's naming ceremony. Okay, he is a cute little kid, but I just do not have all the time in the world anymore. And if I were in Norman and did not go, then I would be a bad guy. If I am in Florida and do not go, they understand. That is part of it. Plus, coming to a bigger department and being able to have access to people with diverse interests that can serve as resources for things I am interested in, and so on.

A: You had contacts here?

M: No, I did not know anybody.

A: Really?

M: I played it very cold. I had been on a panel with **MARVIN HARRIS**, but I did not know anybody here. I had been on a panel with **JERRY MILANICH** at the museum, but other than that, I did not know anybody.

A: You say it was enticing because it is a larger department and there are diverse research interests but you are also kind of a loner here because you are really the only

one . . .

M: But my interests have broadened. I am trying to get out being just an ethnographer.

This is the way I have planned all along for how my career should develop. A lot of Marxists that I knew as young academics were immediately interesting themselves with global issues and theoretical issues. And not in a very convincing way because the arguments you can always say is people do not know what the hell they are talking about [because] they have never been out in the field. At this point in my career, nobody can say that about me. I mean, I have probably done as much or more field work as anybody in the profession [who] is around my age. And so I think I can convincingly then, address myself to broader issues at this point in my career. It was very difficult for me to hold back early in my career because I was just dying to get into some of these big fights. What I set out to do was to establish my credentials as an ethnographer and as an ethnologist before I did that.

A: So you really do not plan on doing much more field work at all?

M: God help me, no! I am tired! I mean my back is broke[n], my butt hurts, my feet are broken down, I have got every skin disease known to man. You know, I do not really want to do anymore field work! [Laughter]

A: I thought maybe you wanted to move here so you could just start afresh with the Florida Seminoles.

M: Wrong again! [Laughter] I might visit as a tourist, but I really do not want to do that professionally. I want to stick by the computer for awhile.

A: When you told them that you were planning on moving here, were your Indian friends distressed?

M: Yes, they felt distressed and betrayed.

A: But was it because they thought you were just going to abandon the projects you were working on with them?

M: Well, I have for the most part. I mean, I am still doing work on the NIH project. But the fact is, I have abandoned them. That is tough to say, but it is the truth. Life is tough, and it is something that I felt like I had to do. It was a choice: I could have been a good old guy and toddle off to the grave in fifteen or twenty years and have a big funeral or I can get my work done. So I felt like I had to make the move to get my work done. And I do not care if anyone comes to my funeral. It does not matter. [Laughter] My work is more important to me.

A: Okay. I think we are done.