

Governor Bill Anoatubby

As leader of the Chickasaw Nation since 1987, the governor has shepherded it to social and financial stability

Chapter 01— Introduction

Announcer: Governor Bill Anoatubby's childhood was spent in Tishomingo, Oklahoma, where he graduated from Tishomingo High School in 1964. He attended Murray State College and graduated from East Central State College before serving in the Oklahoma National Guard. He began working for the Chickasaw Nation as director of tribal health services becoming lieutenant governor in 1979 and governor in 1987.

Governor Anoatubby has been instrumental in the development of numerous businesses owned and operated by the Chickasaw Nation. Under his leadership, the tribe was the first to compact successfully for its own health system. Anoatubby has been a member leader of the inter-tribal council of the Five Civilized Tribes since 1978, remaining active in a wide range of organizations, including the Oklahoma Indian Affairs Commission and the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail Advisory Committee within the U.S. Department of Interior. He is also the longtime chairman of the Native American Cultural and Educational Authority.

Chapter 02—8:20 The Anoatubbys

John Erling: Today's date is October 18, 2010. My name is John Erling. Governor, if you'll state your full name, your date of birth, and your present age please.

Bill Anoatubby: My full name is Billy Joe Anoatubby. I'm sixty-four. My birthday is November 8, 1945.

JE: Tell us where we're recording this interview.

BA: We're recording this interview at the Chickasaw Nation Headquarters, in its main conference room, located at the corner of Arlington and Mississippi, in Ada, Oklahoma.

JE: Tell us about your name Anoatubby. There must be some meaning to that.

BA: Yes it is a warrior name within the Chickasaw Nation and it means “walk and kill.”

JE: Do you know how far back it goes and where it originated?

BA: Well, it’s difficult to say for sure but I do have an account where I had a relative that was with Davy Crockett, it was in his journal. They were working with Andrew Jackson and that we’re talking in the 1700s and early 1800s.

JE: Tell us where you were born.

BA: I was born in Dennison, Texas. Moved from Dennison, Texas, when I was just a baby, I guess you’d say, to Tishomingo, and that’s where I was raised. My dad, a full-blood Chickasaw, and the rest of the family moved to Dennison, obviously proud of my birth. He was there to work. He worked for Kraft Foods in Dennison, Texas.

JE: About Tishomingo, that was the original capital for the Chickasaws?

BA: That’s a historic capital. The Chickasaws moved into Indian Territory in the late 1830s. Tishomingo was the central part of the territory where the Chickasaws lived.

JE: Tishomingo takes its name from?

BA: It’s from a war chief, Chief Tishomingo. He was the last war chief of the Chickasaws.

JE: Then let’s talk about your mother and where she was born and where she grew up.

BA: My mother was Opal Mitchell Anoatubby. She was born in Greenville, Texas, and moved to Tishomingo when she was but a young girl.

JE: So then your father’s name and where he grew up.

BA: My father’s name was Joseph Morris Anoatubby, and he grew up around Tishomingo. He was actually born in Mill Creek, which is a small town, it’s actually between Sulphur and Tishomingo.

JE: Tell us what your father did for a living.

BA: He did mostly labor type jobs. He worked in manufacturing, he did farm work, at one time had his own farm. And was working for Kraft Foods when he passed away.

JE: Your mother, she was the homemaker?

BA: Yes she was, and a fine homemaker she was.

JE: Did you have brothers and sisters?

BA: I’m one of six children. Two were girls and the rest were boys.

JE: About your mother, what kind of person was she?

BA: Very strong lady. I mentioned that my dad passed away. He passed away when he was forty-two years old due to an industrial accident working for Kraft Foods. At the time we lived in Dennison, Texas. And the family moved from Dennison to Tishomingo. She never remarried and she raised all the kids. She worked very hard to do that.

Of course, family is quite important, we all pull together. Not highly educated, I believe eighth grade was her highest grade that she achieved. But had a lot of common sense and did, I think, a very good job of raising the family.

JE: So with six children how old was she for her last birth?

BA: Well, she was in her thirties. I believe she was thirty-two when I was born.

JE: How did the family earn an income?

BA: Well, it was a combination—there was insurance from my dad's passing. And I have to say a lot of good things about Social Security because there was Survivor's Insurance. It was available through Social Security. She also worked.

I remember as a young boy she would take ironing in and did ironing so she could still be close to home. And she did various jobs. She was a cook, a very good cook, by the way, so she worked in restaurants and she did take care of some folks, care-taking type thing during that time. She did whatever job that she could find. She worked in a factory, something that would pay the bills.

JE: You draw much of your values that you have today from your father and mother, but particularly your mother?

BA: Particularly my mother because I was such a young child when my dad passed away.

JE: How old were you?

BA: I wasn't quite three. I was two year and nine months, I think.

JE: So you hardly remember him?

BA: I have no recollection at all. All I know is what my brothers and sisters and Mom and other people would tell me about him. But when my mother would, sometimes she'd say, "Your dad wouldn't want you to do that." And it meant a lot to me whenever she would say that.

JE: Yeah.

BA: So I would straighten up.

JE: Yes. But she was the obvious big impression in your life?

BA: She was, you know, it's amazing when I was young they teach you, not necessarily about sitting you down and saying, "Okay, you need to do things this way." You learn by example. And she did a wonderful job of providing an example.

I graduated college with a degree in accounting. I knew how to keep books, basically, or had a budget way ahead of that. We had to budget as we grew up. And we all learned how to work. We worked, we began working at a very early age. Either at home or outside the home, to help bring in some badly needed resources.

JE: So I'm seeing the picture of your mother sitting down with a budget, the children are sitting around and, "This is how much money we have and this is what we can spend." Would that happen?

BA: Well, it wouldn't be quite that formal. She may be at the kitchen table working with her finances and I would be at just a young child come up and see what she was doing. She taught me, basically, through example.

JE: Your grandparents, let's go back to them. Talk about them for a moment.

BA: I was estranged, I guess you'd say, from the Chickasaw side of my family as a result of my dad's passing. So I mostly knew my grandparents on my mother's side. They were a traditional family. They had high values. My grandfather was a farmer.

JE: And what was his name?

BA: His name was Erv, Erv Mitchell. He also was a carpenter. He would build houses and do work in homes. And at the same time he would do farming. I guess farming didn't pay a lot of money so he had to have another job. But I remember going to the farm when I was just a young boy. It was a great experience.

My grandmother had a twin sister and her name was Bertha, my grandmother. Her sister was Bertie. They were very feisty sisters. They had a lot of stories. That's one of the things that I can remember when I was a young boy, hearing the stories that they would tell about when they were growing up. Of course, if you look at the time frame, we're talking about slightly before statehood. And then after statehood in the early twentieth century is when they were growing up.

The stories just seemed so real to me when they would tell them.

JE: You said that your father was the Chickasaw side.

BA: Yes.

JE: But what about your mother? She was not Chickasaw?

BA: She was Irish and Scotch-Irish. I put that on a resume once and got her an interview because they wanted to see an Irish Indian. And I got the job, by the way.

JE: Your mother and father obviously met then in Tishomingo, I suppose?

BA: They both lived in the small community just north and west of Tishomingo called Bullet Prairie. I don't know the origin of the name but it was a small farming community. That's where they met.

My grandfather on my dad's side had a homestead there at Bullet Prairie, so my dad grew up there at Mill Creek and Bullet Prairie.

Chapter 03—6:34

Chickasaw Roots

John Erling: You trace your ancestry then on your father's side to the Trail of Tears?

Bill Anoatubby: Yes. I can't tell you name right now but I had a relative that came on the Trail of Tears that was listed on a census. They had one name, didn't have two names. And then from there it came through the Anoatubby family.

JE: Did you grandparents have stories that were handed down to you from the Trail of Tears?

BA: Actually I mentioned that I was estranged from my Chickasaw roots. Until I got a little older, so I didn't have the benefit of that.

JE: Then you didn't grow up Chickasaw, per se. Blood you were, but not in tradition.

BA: Well, it would have been impossible to deny that I was Chickasaw and never tried to. And my grandfather on my mother's side, he would always acknowledge it. In fact, when I would come in the door to his home, if he was inside, he would say, "Chokma," which is the traditional Chickasaw greeting. He had a close relationship with the Chickasaws, so it wasn't like I was totally without anything. And when we'd be at the dinner table he would use Chickasaw words, which was very interesting coming from an Irishman. But he did because he'd been around Chickasaws for many years, he picked up part of the language and he would refer to things in my presence.

So I picked up a few Chickasaw words being around him. But we didn't really talk about what things had been like in the Chickasaw side. But it was never forgotten, I mean, it was always there. While we didn't have the benefit of the Chickasaw family it was never denied from any of the family.

JE: You were always reminded?

BA: I was reminded. In fact, I think it was intended to be that way.

JE: When would you say that you picked up learning the traditions of the Chickasaws?

BA: My dad was a twin. His sister also lived at Bullet Prairie. On occasion we would visit her, my mom and myself and sometimes a few of my other brothers. So we got to know them really well. I mean, they were part of the families who would make visits. We didn't spend a lot of time with them but it was a period where we would learn more about the family and the Chickasaw roots.

While again, I didn't spend a lot of time with my Chickasaw family I began to become very interested in it.

JE: About what age do you think you were when this was happening to you?

BA: Oh probably twelve, thirteen. It was undeniable; everyone knew that I was Chickasaw. And people would call you Chief and things like that to acknowledge that. They didn't really realize what they were doing but still, to me I thought it was pretty cool, you know—

JE: Yeah.

BA: ...that they would call me that. And we lived next door, at one time, to a family that were full-blood. His dad was Choctaw, his mother was Chickasaw. And so I played with the other children.

So you would become interested and try to find out more about it. I sort of had a yearning to know more, so anything I could find or learn and I would try to find out more.

JE: I'm trying to imagine what the children would do. Would they play Chickasaw games like stick ball? Was that a game that was played, was that a traditional game?

BA: It was a traditional game, it wasn't something that I played when I was a young man. Things like going fishing and hunting. In Tishomingo there's a creek that runs just almost through the town, it's called Pennington Creek. My friends and I would spend a lot of time on Pennington Creek doing a lot of things that kids do. We would have folks join us that were of Chickasaw descent or Indian descent as well as non-Indian.

I remember distinctly when I was a young boy when we lived next to this family. The father made some Chickasaw, I guess you'd call them toys. They were sound devices, you know, things that would make noise. I remember that so I picked up a little of that and understood that. He made me a bow, a very small bow at the time, but I really liked that.

Anyway, it's kind of an incremental thing learning more about being Chickasaw. And of course, in the city of Tishomingo they began an annual event, they call it the Chickasaw Festival. It was a celebration. You could go into the park and you could see the different displays, arts and crafts, and things like that that would be in the park. And they had a dish, and still do, we still have this dish, it's called Pashofa. And I was first introduced to Pashofa when I went to one of those events.

JE: What was that made up of?

BA: It's a hominy, if you were to go to a grocery store you may or may not find it, but it's called Pearl Hominy. It's in the dry form. You cook it and you cook it with pork, that's Pashofa.

JE: You weren't picking up on the language yet but you understood words in it. And the language is Muskogean?

BA: Well, yes, it's that particular group of languages.

JE: And it's the Choctaw that shares that with you?

BA: Yes, it's the Choctaws. In fact, there's a legend about the Chickasaw and Choctaw. They call it the Migration Legend where there were two brothers, it was before they began to reside in the southeastern part of the current United States. And they were being led by a leaning pole. That leaning pole, they would put it in the ground at night. When they'd awaken in the morning it would be leaning in a particular direction and that's the way they'd go. And were part of one tribe. The brothers were Chickasaw and Choctaw.

They reached the Mississippi River, went across the Mississippi River, on the other side the pole leaned, or at least Choctaw thought it leaned, and Chickasaw didn't believe that it was leaning. So the brothers then parted and formed the Chickasaw and Choctaw tribe.

JE: So the brothers' names were Choctaw?

BA: Choctaw and Chickasaw.

JE: So then they split?

BA: Yes, but the language is so close there's words that are identical in either one tribe or the other. And there are different ones. The tribes say that because we were basically one tribe that we have the same language and a lot of the same cultural activities.

JE: I'm going to go back to the Creeks. They come out of the Muskogean too. They call them Muskogee Creeks.

BA: That is correct. The Muskogee Creeks and the Seminole have a very close language, again, not identical. And the Cherokee, they're from a different—Algonquin, I think, is theirs. Iroquoian.

Chapter 04—5:45

Education

John Erling: Let's talk about you and the first school you attended, elementary school—where was it and what do you remember?

Bill Anoatubby: It was in Tishomingo, Tishomingo Grade School, they called it North Ward. North Ward was a grade school and South Ward was the junior high and high school. There were on different sides of town. The class, probably not more than thirty, forty students, maybe. I had not been to any public education at that point. Tishomingo didn't have pre-K and kindergarten and preschool and all the things we have today, so it was my first experience. I learned to read, I learned to count and all those things in the first grade.

JE: That sounds like a lot in the first grade.

BA: Well, yes, these days though they teach those kinds of things before you enter first grade, so you're quite a bit ahead.

JE: What kind of a student were you? Did you enjoy school?

BA: I was a good student, I enjoyed school. When the teacher said, "Take this homework with you and do it and bring it back," I did it. Of course, my mom had influence on that. If I had homework she made sure that I did it.

JE: In grade school and living in Tishomingo early on, did they talk about traditions of Native Americans much?

BA: Not a lot, no. Native Americans didn't have the same status as they have today. Today most people look favorably upon Native Americans. During that era that wasn't necessarily the case.

JE: So were you in your class, elementary, say junior high, in the minority?

BA: Yes I was in the minority.

JE: So were you treated then as a minority?

BA: Strangely enough no, I wasn't treated badly, not in the school system, not that I could detect anyway. There were a few kids that might make snide remarks or make racial slurs or something but I didn't let that bother me. It wasn't prevalent; it wasn't until integration

that that really hit the schools. When a lot of the African American folks began to enter our public schools. I think I was in about the fifth or sixth grade. It was in the '50s.

JE: '54, '55?

BA: Somewhere in that vicinity.

JE: That's important there. So you're in elementary and junior high in the early '50s when integration came about in our state?

BA: Yes.

JE: Talk to us about that, how that worked and how that may have affected you.

BA: Well, they were people to me.

JE: When the blacks came in?

BA: Yes. It was a bit of a shock because we had a different group of people attending school, but we developed friendships. A lot of folks had trouble adjusting, I didn't.

JE: Blacks were living in Tishomingo?

BA: There was an area in Tishomingo, it was called Colored Town. They had their own school, some commerce there, so they had a particular area within the city that they lived and went to school.

JE: Then when integration came about did they all come to your school?

BA: They all came to our school, grade school and high school. They closed the school that they went to.

JE: Did that cause problems then amongst the students?

BA: There were some problems, yeah. It was a pretty difficult period for some folks. It's like I said, I never had any problem with them. My family, they really weren't racist at all. I guess you could tell by the fact that a Scotch Irish person was marrying an American Indian. That would have been outside of our culture to do that; the family culture.

JE: What was the high school experience like for you?

BA: Just like any other student it's a really challenging time, you know. You're growing up, you're trying to be independent. I think most of the young people during that time are engaged in a lot of different activities. It was a fun time.

Some of my best friends that I have now, we still communicate with each other. Made during that school experience from first grade to high school. I enjoyed sports. I played football and participated in the other sports. Football was the one I really played. I had sort of followed the tradition of a couple of my brothers who had played prior to me. The older brother, Jayne, he was a football player. And then the next oldest was Russell and he played football.

JE: So you were expected then to—

BA: Well, sort of like something that you would do. Of course, I liked sports. Football seemed to be what I was best suited for. I was engaged in track and some basketball and those

kinds of things. I didn't play a lot of baseball but I did engage in track and basketball. But football was my main—

JE: What position did you play?

BA: I played tackle and my brother played guard, the next oldest, and the oldest played at running back, so we did different things.

JE: What was the name of the team?

BA: The Tishomingo Indians. They're still called the Indians today, being at the Chickasaw capital, you know, that's what they were called.

JE: Did you have a successful run in the teams and win championships?

BA: Well, when I was a senior we had the best record. Most of us played together from the time we were sophomore to a senior we dominated the team and we had more on the team than the other class. And we started out very green and finally became a little more seasoned by the time we were seniors. And we did very well, we won the district championship and the bi-district championship. Didn't quite make it to the state level.

Several Chickasaws on that team and a couple of Choctaws.

JE: Was that a common bond with you, knowing that you were—

BA: There's something about that, you can't necessarily put your finger on it but you bond with other Indian people. There was something there. It wasn't something you'd go around and say, you know, "He's my best friend," or anything like that. We just knew who we were.

Chapter 05—2:45

Leadership

John Erling: Based on the fact that you are a leader today, can you sense when you may have shown some leadership qualities? And was that in high school? Was it on the team? Do you think you were flourishing in some minor way back then?

Bill Anoatubby: I think it was just something that happened and it was built on throughout my life. You know, even when you're playing with other kids someone sort of takes the lead, and most generally that was something that I did.

But in the school system while I was in high school, I was asked to be in different roles other than just a student. I served on the student counsel for a couple of years and was president of the junior class, things like that. You learn it a little bit when you're doing that. It was sort of frightening for me at the time, but I did it and was better for it.

JE: Did someone seek you out for those or did you say, "Yeah, I want to be president, I want to do that"?

BA: No I didn't ask for it. I wasn't quite that assertive, but when asked to do something I did it.

JE: So they must have seen, obviously, something in you as a leader or a potential leader to ask you to participate in that manner.

BA: I often wondered what they saw. But it was an enjoyable experience, I did learn a lot about dealing with people. It's amazing when you cross over from being led to being a leader things change. And it's a more difficult challenge than following someone. That continued throughout high school.

I was co-captain of the football team. I was selected All-Around Boy by the teachers. I was always surprised when these things happened. I thought it was very cool, but I guess I never realized any potential I may have had and just stepped in when I was needed or asked to.

JE: You were just being you and weren't trying to be something that was expected. You just were given a job and, "This is me, I'm doing it."

BA: That's right. And I'm the same way today. I mean, I do this job, I had to ask for the job, obviously. But it's the same way today, I look to other people and we all work together and I do my best to give direction and move in the right direction.

It's that way today. I realize where I am and what I'm supposed to do and I just do it.

JE: Did you grow up Bill or Billy or how did they call you?

BA: I grew up being Billy until I was probably twenty-one. I have a few folks who will call me Bill, I sort of like that. When you break away from a lot of folks that know you and you go into a different environment and you're introduced, you have a choice. And so I became Bill.

Chapter 06—7:20

Business and Accounting

John Erling: You graduated from high school in what year?

Bill Anoatubby: 1964.

JE: And then on to college?

BA: Yes. I was also a member of the Oklahoma Army National Guard. I joined before I was a senior in high school. After high school, then you would have to attend six months of active duty.

JE: So you were like seventeen?

BA: I was eighteen when I graduated so I was seventeen.

JE: Seventeen when you joined the Guard.

BA: Yeah.

JE: And why did you join the Guard?

BA: Well, mostly had some friends that were joining it. I sort of liked the idea. It wasn't like I was just yearning to be a member of the military. But I thought, *Yes, I'd like to try this*. So I did. I was there for seven years. And that's what the duty is, when you sign up you sign for that length of time.

JE: And then you did two weeks of summer camp?

BA: This was every year, two weeks of summer camp. And then throughout the year we'd have three-day weekends once a month and we'd go either to the Armory or we'd go to training somewhere like Ft. Sill. But the six months active duty you go through basic training, then you go through some advanced training. During that time I was sort of assigned to be in NCO school.

JE: Noncommissioned officers.

BA: Noncommissioned officers training. That was after basic and then I when I went to the advanced training I was one of those folks that wore the stripes on the blue armband so I was in charge of a squad.

JE: While you joined that right out of high school that wasn't fulltime. Did you work or did you go into college then?

BA: After I finished the six months of active duty, it was an interesting story too. I want to go back a little bit to high school. Our family didn't have the resources really for the kids to go to college. So if there was a college that you wanted to go to you had to somehow make it there yourself. While there may have been scholarships, I wasn't always aware of what they were.

At the time, my intent was after active duty, after leaving that I'd just find a job somewhere and make a living. I'd already had some jobs prior to that. Like I said, we were taught to work so from the time I was about twelve I either had a paper route or worked in some job. So it was just something that was expected that you go on and find employment.

Well, when I was a senior in high school a fellow from the Bureau of Indian Affairs gathered several of the Indian students together in the principal's office and let us know about a program that the Bureau of Indian Affairs had for education, BIA education scholarship program. It actually gave me some hope. I thought, *Maybe I can do this*.

So I applied for it before I went to my active duty training in the military. But while I was gone a letter was received from the BIA that indicated, "Sorry we would approve you but we don't have any funding left."

I was pretty disappointed by that, but at the same time, I had been motivated to go. And so I thought, *I'm going to figure out a way to do this*. I was going to attend East Central and then expenses were more than they were at Murray in Tishomingo. So during the time I was in my six months active duty I sent money home out of paycheck

as a savings so that I could pay the tuition and buy the books when I got back. So I was determined I was going to go, at that point.

When I got back I'd saved enough for books and tuition. Actually, when I arrived to enroll at the business office when I went to pay for the schooling I had a scholarship and didn't realize it. It wasn't a large one but it would have paid for the tuition. So I had a little bit of extra then. So I started the college experience.

I will say that I probably wasn't as committed as I thought I was at the time. The first year wasn't my best year. Well, didn't fail, but I decided, *Well, maybe I will go ahead and find a job*. So after the first year, which actually started in the spring semester of 1965, and then the fall semester of '65, I decided I'd go find a job. I was working already, I was working part-time while I was going to school but I wanted to find something else. I did, but I regretted that decision after I'd made it. I kept looking for some sort of job that would pay well and they just weren't there. Particularly in southeastern Oklahoma.

I'd hear about friends who had gone to Dallas or Oklahoma City and they were making a little bit more. And I met my wife. We were married during that time.

JE: And her name?

BA: Janice, Janice Loman. We were married in 1967.

JE: And where did you meet her?

BA: I met her through a friend, a friend that I'd met in college that first year. She was the younger sister of a lady that I first courted. We just fell in love and decided we would tie the knot, and we did.

But during that same time I was thinking, *I'd like to get back in college. I really need to do that*. I was working in grocery stores and lumberyards and the like. It was decent work, I mean, it was the kind of thing that would pay some bills, but it was not what I wanted. I wanted something more.

My wife was a senior in high school. She had taken a bookkeeping class and was struggling with that class a little bit, trying to understand the language and the techniques and all. I thought, *Well, maybe I can help*. So I read, not the entire book, but that particular section that she was struggling with and it clicked for me. I understood it immediately. I showed her how to do that and I thought, *Well, I found something I like. I like business, I like accounting so I think that's what I'm going to do*.

The first go-around part of my problem was I wasn't sure what it was I wanted to do. I was going to major in math, which I was fairly good at that in high school. Then I thought, *Well, I'm going to be a football coach*, 'cause I really loved sports. Then I became acquainted with business and accounting so that's what I decided to do.

So I went back to Murray, went back in 1969, and I did very well. I made the Dean's Honor Roll. I was settled in, I was ready to get busy. After I graduated Murray, then Janice

and I moved to Ada. I went to work at Safeway. Janice went to work at Solo Cup Company, so we had a double income at that point to help save for the books and tuition. And I did fine. I was working fulltime so I didn't do as well as probably I could have.

In my major field I had better than a B average.

JE: Your major field declared—

BA: Accounting, accounting.

JE: And then your minor?

BA: You didn't have to have a minor with accounting. It was one of those you had fulltime basically on accounting. I did graduate from Murray with a business degree so I had that platform to build on, then went into accounting.

JE: From your marriage, how many children are there?

BA: I have two boys, Chris and Brian.

JE: Here we are in 2010, October, where are they today?

BA: In Ada, they're close by. And I have five grandkids, four girls and a boy. The boy is twelve, there's a girl that's eight, and a girl that's seven, and the two little ones; one just turned five and the other will turn five very soon.

Chapter 07—3:45

Accounting Job

John Erling: So then when you finished your college work you go to work for a company?

Bill Anoatubby: Yes. There were several different interviews that I had, some I had decided I really wouldn't pursue. I wanted an experience where you had more to do. There were opportunities in some of the larger companies like Continental Oil or some of those companies that were on campus recruiting. But I was advised that with those jobs you may be limited in where you could go and how you could expand on your knowledge. With an accountant job you may be placed in one area, say in Accounts Payable, and you may be coding bills all day.

Whereas if you go to work for a smaller company you get to do all the things perhaps that you've learned and you get to expand on your knowledge. I interviewed for one cost accounting job and I interviewed for one that was more of a full charge. In fact, office manager job, which included accounting, and went to work at Duncan for a company called American Plating Company. Actually, it was more than just that company that I took care of. The individual who owned that company had several other businesses that he ran. He just sold his public accounting practice so the business was set up much like a public accounting firm who did write-up work for different businesses.

I learned that and it's benefited me all my career. All the different challenges, the different things that you have to do, everything from preparing tax returns to doing bookkeeping and invoicing, accounts payable, all the things that you do as an accountant. And it was very, very good experience that I gained.

The individual who owned the company had a business in Houston and was spending a lot of time back and forth to Houston. So after I'd been there a couple of years he made the decision that he needed to move his home office from Duncan to Houston. And I didn't really want to go to Houston. He offered to bring me down there and let me take care of the office down there.

And I also had an opportunity from the former partner who was still running the public accounting firm, to be a partner in that firm. I didn't want to go to Houston. I had a small child at that time. He was born when I graduated East Central in 1972. I felt like I needed to stay closer to family so I didn't move to Houston.

And I did look for employment in Oklahoma City and I went to work for a company there called Little Giant Corporation. It was a great experience there too. They did a lot of international sales. I learned about foreign exchange and that sort of thing in that job. It was much like a chief accountant job, you were exposed to a lot of different things, everything from the actual keeping of the general ledger to the sales and keeping all the bank accounts and that sort of thing.

JE: So now then you must be getting close to your first association with the Chickasaw Nation.

BA: Yes I was. I wanted to go to work for the Chickasaw Nation from the time, but I knew that there weren't any jobs. When I was at Murray College, for instance, when I graduated there, the Chickasaw Nation was just beginning to offer employment. They only had one job, it was called the Community Health Representative. I did apply, and changed my mind and thought, *Well, I need to go on and finish my degree, get my bachelor's degree.* But I had this yearning to have a connection with and be part of the Chickasaw Nation.

When I graduated East Central I checked, I kept trying to find out if there were any jobs with the Chickasaw Nation, but there wasn't one for me. That's when I went ahead and moved to Duncan.

Chapter 08—3:20

First Chickasaw Job

Bill Anoatubby: So I was at home visiting my mother on a weekend and there was this advertisement in the local Tishomingo newspaper. I thought, *These qualifications I meet.*

So I applied for that job. It took awhile, from probably February, maybe March, until sometime in late May, 1975.

Actually, I was beginning to get frustrated with the process. I wanted to make a change and had actually applied for a job with a CPA firm in Oklahoma City. So I wrote a letter to the governor advising him that I was withdrawing my application.

John Erling: So that was Governor Overton James?

BA: Governor Overton James. In fact, I was employed by the CPA firm. I was about to go to work for the CPA firm the next day and I got this call at home in the evening, and he asked me to reconsider that he would really like for me to come to work for the tribe.

So here it was, I was faced with this decision. I said, "I've got to talk to my current employer and let them know what's going on. But I'd like to take this job."

He made arrangements with the person who was running the office in Sulphur for the Chickasaw Nation for me to come visit. But I had this problem, you know, so I went to work in the morning and I advised them of this situation. It was amazing, it was like it was meant to be. They understood, so I worked the full first day and then went to the meeting *after* I finished that day.

JE: To the meeting with the Chickasaw—

BA: To the meeting with staff at Sulphur. The assistant to the governor was there. And I was employed—I had two jobs. So I had to resign my CPA firm job because I had to move and get to Sulphur from Oklahoma City, had to make all the arrangements. I went in and explained the situation again and they tried to give me a check for that one day and I said, "Look, you don't owe me anything. It probably cost you more to train me than I would have earned, so I really appreciate your being thoughtful and considerate of me. You don't owe me anything."

So then I made the arrangements and my wife and I and two-year-old son made the move to Sulphur.

JE: And you were there then how long?

BA: I went to work in June of 1975. I was actually the tribe's first health director, which was a departure from accounting and other types of things, but it was a management job, so I felt pretty comfortable in it.

I held that job for about a year and then there was a job as the accounting director, which was in my field, so I took that job and moved from a health director to accounting director in 1976. At the time, the tribe was in the process of building the building in Ada, the headquarters building. They went to work on that in 1976, and in 1977, in January, I moved to the headquarters building with my accounting staff. We were the first group to move in. Everyone else followed after that. There were still some finish work that needed to be done on the building, but our part of the building had been complete.

So we moved the offices in 1977, and right on the heels of that, and probably in the spring, I moved just outside of Ada from Sulphur. I moved my family there, a little, small place called Pickett.

Chapter 09—3:15

Lieutenant Governor

John Erling: There is a point that you become part of the administration. How do we bring you up to becoming lieutenant governor?

Bill Anoatubby: Well, after taking the accounting director job there was some changes in the upper echelon. The person that was an assistant to the governor left the organization, and the governor actually split that job into two jobs. There was a gentleman that took part of the assistant job and I was offered the other. I was the Special Assistant to the Governor. It actually was much like an executive director job. I took management over the programs, supervised the employees, and answered to the governor.

And then after that job, in 1979, we had a new constitution that allowed for a governor and lieutenant governor, nine council members, and three judges in different departments of government. And he invited me to run with him as the lieutenant governor. We'd run on the same ticket.

So we ran together in 1979, and we were successful.

JE: And we might point out that prior to 1970, is it true that the president of the United States appointed the governor of the Nation?

BA: That's absolutely correct.

JE: But the law was changed and Overton James was appointed in 1963, then elected because the change in the law.

BA: That's correct. The background on that is that before Oklahoma became a state there was some federal legislation that was intended to abolish tribal government. Of course, there was still business to take care of. The assets of the Nation would still have to be managed. The objective was to not only manage but to sell the assets and then distribute the proceeds.

In 1907, when Oklahoma became a state, there was this process in place for appointment. The appointment of the chief executive who would take care of the tribe's business, work with the federal government and the other entities that they needed to.

So we had an appointed governor, they were appointed two-year terms up until 1963. There were three governors, Douglas Johnston, Floyd Maytubby, and then for a short

while after Floyd Maytubby's death, after about six months, his brother was appointed and he served until Overton James was appointed in 1963. So there was a lot of work that was going on within the five civilized tribes to seek a change so that the tribes could elect their chief executives. The law that was passed is called the Five Tribes Act of 1970, which authorized the popular election of the four chiefs and the governor.

The first election was held in 1971. A lot of folks ran for that position, by the way. I remember I was still in college when that happened. Then Overton James was elected for the first time. When I came to work in 1975, there was another election that was held in August, I believe, of 1975. He was reelected again, so he'd served two elected terms, but he'd served since 1963, at that point, so he served twelve years in office.

Chapter 10—3:50

Governor or Chief

John Erling: You said they named four chiefs and one governor, so we're talking about the five civilized tribes.

Bill Anoatubby: Five civilized tribes.

JE: That was given the right to elect their own chief or governor. Why are they called chiefs and your Chickasaws call it governor?

BA: That really goes back to the first constitution that we had in 1856. It was decided by the organizers that they would use a different style government than what we'd had before. We'd had more of a traditional style of government where we did have chiefs and we did have a council and that sort of thing. So that government was established in 1856, and it ran from 1856, until statehood. It was still called governor after statehood and when our next constitution was put into place in 1979, it was a given.

We did have a council, which is really a departure from our constitution because our last constitution showed a three-branch government made up of executive, legislature, and judicial. Legislature was made up of a Senate and the House. Then we had the judicial department, which had the courts.

Well, in 1979, when that constitution was established we had a nine-member council rather than a legislature. And then we had appointed judges in the judicial. There was a reformation process that took place. There were a group of Chickasaw citizens that filed a lawsuit against the US and the governor, suggesting that the old constitution was still in effect and that the existing constitution and all the acts of the governor were illegal.

They won the case, they actually won. We jumped back past all the acts of Congress and everything back to our 1867 constitution. We had original sovereignty again, but there was a problem. We had a 1979 constitution and we had the 1867. You can only have one, and we went through a reformation. They took the two, they examined them, they established a commission that did that and they went through the process of identifying the differences and the similarities and what is it we want to keep?

In 1983, a constitution was established, the same one that we live under today, and it has three departments of government, made up of the executive, which is the governor and lieutenant governor; a legislature, which is made up of thirteen people and they're called legislators rather than having a bi-cameral legislature. And then a judicial department, which was made up of now a supreme court and a district court. It changed the makeup of government.

With that constitution came a greater level of sovereignty, in fact, basically, our sovereignty was again recognized. We just jumped back and then we're able to come forward to today. It allowed us at that time to do a lot more. We were then self-governed. Prior to that the US government made a lot of decisions for us and decisions we made they had to approve. That doesn't happen today. We're truly self-governed today.

JE: And as you look back, having a thirteen-member legislature is a lot easier to deal with than if you had a House and a Senate. Would that be true?

BA: Yes. It is. They are elected on three-year terms, which is a little unusual number for elected officials. There are usually two or four or six, not odd numbers. But it works really well because we have an election every year. They're staggered terms and we have one person from the Supreme Court that is elected every year.

And the governor and lieutenant governor run as a team and are elected for four-year terms.

Chapter 11—1:00

Governor Anokatubby

John Erling: When you eventually became governor in 1987, Overton James, how did his tenure come to an end?

Bill Anokatubby: He actually made the decision to retire. It happened in, goodness, I want to say the announcement was late 1985. Before he made the announcement he came to me and told he was going to do it. He indicated that if I was going to run and would like to have his support than I need to a decision very quickly after that. And probably make the announcement that I would be running.

So I did. After he made his announcement I was right on the heels of that with my announcement that I was running.

JE: And you were forty-two years old?

BA: I was forty-two in November after I took office in October.

JE: So when you were lieutenant governor you were—

BA: That would have been '79, so I would have been thirty-six, going on thirty-seven.

JE: So since 1970, then, you're the second governor to serve the Chickasaw Nation?

BA: The second elected governor since statehood and served the longest elected terms.

JE: You're now serving your sixth term.

BA: Yes.

JE: And it expires in 2011.

BA: 2011. We're less than a year away from elections.

JE: Here we are in October of 2010, have you announced your intention for reelection?

BA: I don't generally do that until we get closer to the election. It's like anything else, it needs to be properly timed. Most people understand that it's likely that I will run, and my plans are to run. If someone asks me I'll tell them, but I just haven't made a public announcement yet. I guess until now. But not in our public, the Chickasaw public.

Chapter 12—5:10

Growth of the Nation

John Erling: I wanted to jump into how the Nation has grown. Like in 1971, I believe that Nation had two paid employees.

Bill Anoatubby: That's correct. There was the governor and they called this position "bonded treasurer," someone who would take care of the books and that sort of thing. I wouldn't have known until about 1975 what the budget was, so when I saw the first one it was in 1975.

JE: And what was the size of that budget?

BA: The tribal budget, which was for the tribal government, was twenty-five thousand dollars. And it paid for the travel, it paid for the salaries of those two people, any expenses that we may have had as a tribe. At the same time, we had federal programs. Most of our funding was from federal sources, most federal programs were funded somewhere in the vicinity of, well, it was less than a million dollars. At the time it seemed like a lot of money, but it wasn't near enough money to provide the services that we needed to.

And if you'd look at the control factor the federal government controlled more of what we did than what we did ourselves. What I mean by that is when you receive money from

someone they tell you what you can use it for, what your objective is going to be, and so on. It was just a transfer to the tribe of dollars and authority.

We had about thirty people, that I recall, and maybe less that worked with the tribe in 1975. That grew from the two in 1971, which was strictly tribally funded. That continued to grow. There was a law that was passed in 1974, and was implemented in 1975, was called the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. But everybody refers to it as Self-Determination Act. What it allowed was the tribes could contract for services and programs that were offered by the federal government that were intended to serve Indian people. Primarily those programs were within Indian Health Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. And they issued regulations having to do with the operations and programs that's occurred in 1975. And they actually offered some "you would refer to as seed money," to help tribes to get started.

Many tribes had no staff, they didn't have much going on. They didn't have the administrative infrastructure to be able to operate programs. So through what they called Self-Determination grants, which weren't a lot of money, but they were there to help out for you to get started. Maybe to get an accounting department started, to get a procurement office started, or maybe get a human resources department started. Just to get started in general, they called them Capacity-Building grants.

With the combination of the contract funds and operating the programs plus the Self-Determination grant you were able to build this infrastructure that took place from 1975, was continuing through 1979. The most employees I guess we had prior to 1987 was in excess of three hundred. During the early 1980s we had some reverse of that because of cutbacks in the federal government, percentage cuts and programs and all. So there were staff that would have to be let go.

But by 1987, we had an annual budget of somewhere around eleven million. It was still 99.9 percent federal, but we were increasing the tribal portion. In 1986, when the governor made his presentation to the tribal legislature of the budget it was over two hundred thousand. It was somewhere between 240 and 250. He gave them a message, he said, "You know, we're spending too much money out of tribal funds. We need to cut back on our spending because if we don't we're going to be bankrupt in five years."

And how we paid for the tribal budget was from what we referred to as "trust funds." And they are held by the US government, in trust for the tribe. You have earnings for oil and gas leases and timber leases and the like. The income was somewhere at \$125,000 per year. And the balance in the trust funds was less than half a million. If you do the math, if you got a budget of say \$250,000, well, you're in deficit of \$125,000 immediately. So over time, five years, the money's gone. You may have \$125,000 per year, maybe, on revenues, but your cash would basically be depleted.

Anyway, that was a bad message, not bad because of who was delivering, but because it was negative, it was something that was a challenge, it was something that was in our face, so to speak. So that's what I inherited.

We had several businesses that were in operation, not doing well. We had a little income, again, it wasn't enough to cover the full budget. So we went to work on bringing the businesses into the black and creating more revenue and it was successful.

JE: So that was your challenge as you became governor?

BA: Yes.

JE: And you're forty-two?

BA: Forty-two, yeah.

Chapter 13—4:00

Challenges to the Governor

John Erling: Did you feel, "I'm in deep water here?" or "The experiences I've had so far are burying me through this?" You were learning a lot of things, obviously. Were you accepted as the governor? They saw you as a young man and there are many elders around. Talk to us a little bit about that.

Bill Anoatubby: Well, it took a while to really be accepted. Somebody had to do it, but there were several people who wanted to do it. And I was in a position where either I would run for governor or I had to leave. Because you're in an elected position and the next person is probably not going to hire you. And I love this place, I still do. I loved it then, I love it now. I love what it stands for and what it means to the people that we serve.

So I was determined, you know, I have this to do, I must figure out some way to do it. I knew there were ways to do it so I picked the ones that were readily available to start with. And if you've got several businesses that aren't making it what do you do to make them work?

Economic development was a plank in my platform. The other planks were healthcare, education, senior services, all those things that we do today. Some things that we weren't doing but needed to be done. But it was a matter of sink or swim. In order for the tribal government to stay afloat we needed to create some sources of revenue and shore up the ones that we had. And we had some great folks working here that were just as determined as me, so we just went to work.

Some things didn't work, but the ones that did work were enough to be able to pull us up above water.

JE: With the experience that you have now and you look back on that time are you looking upon yourself as this young man and I'm wondering how he made it through?

BA: Well, again, I was determined. Fifty some odd percent of the Chickasaws who voted had confidence in me. So I thought, *I have folks that are behind me so I'm going to go do this.*

You may have heard this saying, but sometimes it's hard to remember that your mission is to drain a swamp when you're up to your elbows in alligators.

JE: Right, right.

BA: That's pretty much what it was like. I really needed to drain a swamp, but there were all these other things that were coming in. Tribal government, for instance, was fairly new. Chickasaw government was fairly new in 1987. We had this major changeover from an individual who had been there for decades to someone who was basically brand new. So I was a target in a lot of ways. People who thought, *Well, this is his first term, maybe it will be his last. And we're going to have that job.*

From a governmental point of view we had a lot of turmoil during that period. It began to settle down after a while as results were achieved and people began to have more confidence. There were some that will never have confidence because they want the job, but many came along then and were able to function as a very well-oiled tribal government. And we do today.

JE: In that era during those early years when you realized we have companies but we've got to grow them, how big was the budget?

BA: In the beginning in 1987, we had a federal program budget of over eleven million. And our "travel budget" or the fund for travel funds was edging up; it was up over \$250,000. It went on up to, well, gosh, today, our budget, just for governmental services runs about 120 million.

JE: Today then—

BA: Right.

JE: ...your total budget today as of October 2010, would be what?

BA: For the travel funds it's 120 million and we have total, and rather than classify it as budget, because some of the businesses, they have expenses so you put all that in there too, and it runs about 750 million.

Chapter 14—5:25

Diversified Business

John Erling: Today the Nation operates about ninety businesses?

Bill Anoatubby: That's correct.

JE: Do you get major revenue from eighteen casinos?

BA: Yes, that is our major source of revenue. Everywhere diversifying, and we have other sources as well. Mostly we're growing equity and growing the businesses, the other businesses, we're not taking a lot of money from what I call emerging businesses. We're involved in government contracting through Chickasaw Nation Industries.

We have a company called Solara that's in healthcare, has been in a long-term acute care hospitals. They're now more into surgery centers, their base is in the Dallas area. We have formed LLCs and we have what we call "global gaming," to replicate the expertise of our tribal gaming to another company.

We run Remington Park in Oklahoma City, and we're in the process of purchasing Lone Star and Dallas. We have several others on the drawing board. We have five radio stations, four commercial and one noncommercial.

We have a chocolate factory. We just have a wide variety of things we're into other than gaming.

JE: You manufacture stock trailers?

BA: We did at one time. It was before I was governor, when I was working in accounting. And it was a failure. It didn't make it.

JE: Construction company, computer company?

BA: We tried that too. Through C and I we offer some construction services. We have some IT services that are offered to the federal government. So we're still into some of that but in a different way.

JE: Banks?

BA: Yes we have a bank, it's called Bank Two, twice the bank. With its peers it has a better than average return on capital and return on equity.

JE: You offered members low down-payment home mortgages throughout the United States?

BA: Yes, well, now it's just in Oklahoma because of the new banking law. We're trying to figure out how we can expand it back to all of the US. But yes, we've done that over the US up until the new law was passed.

JE: You've contributed large amounts to the region's public schools and universities?

BA: Public schools, universities, and other charitable organizations. We're of the philosophy that a rising tide should raise all ships. We're part of a community so we want to make sure that we share with that community. That community is broader now than it was in 1975, or 1987. We're more involved in, say, Oklahoma City, than we were before. We're helpful to a lot of wide range of institutions from educational to medical.

JE: What percentage of your revenue comes from gaming?

BA: I don't have that percentage in front of me but just a guess, it's over 90 percent right now.

JE: Your biggest is Thackerville, is that true?

BA: It is. It relies upon the Dallas/Ft. Worth market and is very successful.

JE: So what opened it up for everyone is the gaming and casinos. That's where it all began, isn't that true?

BA: Just like I said, we had to bring some of these businesses into the black. You know, we were in some convenience stores and the like back then, in 1987. Gaming was a piece, but it wasn't the largest piece in 1987. From '87 until the mid '90s we were continuing to diversify. In the mid '90s gaming really took off. It was the change in the kind of gaming that can be done. It was from the standard Bingo into a more electronic forms of gaming.

JE: States, legislatures voted to allow that to happen?

BA: Well, we had that before the law was passed by the state, but it allows us to, I guess more than anything, kind of settle it down a little bit. Because there was a lot of dispute over tribes and what they were doing. By working with the state of Oklahoma we were able to settle it. There was less regulatory issues coming from Washington, DC. We had a firm foundation that we could stand on, and that was a compact with the state of Oklahoma. It did add a lot to our gaming operation when that occurred.

And then the state received a substantial amount of money from the tribes in the state. And the horseracing industry received considerable assistance through that act.

JE: Is the Chickasaw Nation the wealthiest nation in Oklahoma?

BA: You know, I haven't made that comparison, to be frank about it. We are doing very well. There are measurements, I guess, that you could make. For instance, the state of Oklahoma receives more in the way of fees from us than it would any other tribe. We invest our money, the funds that we receive, in probably different ways than some tribes do. We invest back in our people through education programs and healthcare programs, new hospital, cultural center, cultural activities. And then in the community with hospitals and educational institutions and others around. The arts, we help the arts community as well.

So as far as what our balance sheet looks like we have a good one. I reported at our last annual meeting that our net assets, that's after you take all liabilities off, is in excess of a billion dollars. And that's from eleven million in 1987. We have been successful over this run.

Chapter 15—4:23

Chickasaw Resilience

John Erling: You said earlier when you were in elementary school and older that maybe the respect for Native Americans wasn't as great as it is today. So today I think the state and everybody in the nation is kind of amazed to look at this story. When we think about land

that was taken away, when we think about the Trail of Tears and how your people were removed with the Removal Act, and dumped in this area that we live in that probably people out East thought, *What we now know as Oklahoma is a bunch of waste so let's put them there.*

Bill Anoatubby: Well, it was a way to get us out of their hair, so to speak. They wanted the resources, they needed the land for expansion, and basically, forced us out of our homeland.

I don't know if you can imagine this, it's hard for me to imagine, if someone were to come in today and say, "Okay, Ada is going to have to move. You're not going to be here anymore, we're going to let someone else come in," that would be quite devastating to pull up your roots and move. What it does though it shows there's a lot of strength in our people. And if you look at the history, that was done more than once.

When we moved to Indian Territory we began to thrive in Indian Territory. Then all of a sudden, they said, "Well, you're not going to have a tribal government anymore." So they took the land that we held in common and they split it up, divided it, and allotted most of it, and then a lot of it was lost. That was another downturn.

But if you look at our history you have those times where we're doing well and those times of challenges. But one thing that they have not been able to take away from us, and I say they, whoever tried, is who we are, our being, the fact that we're Chickasaw. We have that bond, it's not something you can just take away, it will be there. Even if you push it down we're still there.

If you look at many nations, for instance, where they have the rise, you know, and they become really, really prominent and prosperous and then they fall. But they usually don't come back. In our case, we continued to make this comeback, and it's because of who we are, because we know who we are, and we're holding on to that.

You look at the whole, a lot of people look and see the money, they see the casinos, they see the other businesses we're in, but that's not what it's about. It's about who we are. And when we're given the opportunity to make decisions for ourselves and do for ourselves, we have a tendency to do pretty good. And we have.

If something were to happen to take it away from us today we'd still be the same. We're still who we are.

JE: As governor now and as you look to the future, are there things that you are guarding against so that it isn't taken away? I mean, do you think in those terms? Is there some kind of defensive that you think about?

BA: Well, yes we have this defense mechanism that we have built in. You have to learn from your history. We've learned from our history. And we continue to understand what might work better and we do those things. The things that would cause us to be less likely to fall.

Now, you know, economics, that can go away in just a short while. You've seen proof of that over and over again. And we continue to work on maintaining and planning for the future when it comes to the finances of the tribe. But you look at things that are legal to make sure that you're not being put in a situation where you'll be back where you were at the turn of the century, for instance, or one thing or another.

If you try to be more a part of what's happening, what's going on around you, if we isolate ourselves that won't work. We need to have this communication and interaction with the other part of society. And be a positive force in society, not someone who pulls away and may even be a negative force.

For many, many years the tribes were thought of as a drain on society. And I don't think people can look at it that way anymore. We're just hoping to change what might happen if we were to repeat the mistakes of the past. There may be something that comes along that changes it all and we're back to square one. But we're going to do all that we can to prevent that.

Chapter 16—1:40

Governor's Advice

John Erling: Just a word to the generations coming on, advice to the youth.

Bill Anoatubby: I think that, and this would hold true for anybody, but in case of a Chickasaw, you need to hold true to yourself, who you are, your heritage, the history of the people you're a part of, and to continue to nurture the values and the traditions that exist as a result of your heritage. And be your brother's keeper. Work with others and make sure that if you can be of help and can be someone to be a leader of the group to step up and do it. That really holds true for everybody, doesn't it?

JE: Right. And you, and how you've grown into this, really shown leadership all these years, is there a name for what we would call God in Chickasaw?

BA: Ababinili.

JE: Maybe Ababinili, you were chosen?

BA: That's very possible, we have a belief that that's the case. The Chickasaw beliefs, you can see a lot of similarity to that and to the beliefs of greater society and the Christian and Jewish belief. There's a link there. You can see so many similarities when you look at it.

By and large today our people are in all walks of life. They have beliefs much like that of the rest of society. And that's why it's so easy, I think, for people to make that transition, because there was so much similarity in the two.

JE: Well, thank you, I appreciate it very much. This will inspire others, whatever walk in life, to be leaders and to be good citizens.

BA: It's been a real pleasure for me and I feel privileged that you would ask me to talk to you.

Chapter 17—O:33

Conclusion

Announcer: This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous foundation funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will allow us to record future stories. Students, teachers, and librarians are using this website for research and the general public is listening every day to these great Oklahomans share their life experience. Thank you for your support as we preserve Oklahoma's legacy one voice at a time on *VoicesofOklahoma.com*.