Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Rogers C. B. Morton, Secretary of the Interior, was honored as an "advocate or the American Indian" in an award given him by the Crow Indian Tribe of Montana. The presentation ceremony was held October 16 in the Secretary's office.

The framed document presented to Morton by the Crow Chairman, Pat Stands, cited his leadership in promoting Indian self-determination and his role in the Alaska Native Claims Settlement. The restoration of Blue Lake to the Taos Pueblo and Mount Adams to the Yakima Tribe were also mentioned.

Morton was the second recipient of the award named after Chief Plenty Coups, the last Crow chief. In 1921 Chief Plenty Coups, represented the Indian people of the United States at the dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington Cemetery. His war bonnet and coup stick are kept in the museum at the Tomb. His personal flag will now be placed there also. It was donated to the Museum by the tribe. Chief Plenty Coups was a friend of President Teddy Roosevelt and an acquaintance of many other high officials.

Morton, in his acceptance remarks, commented on the statesmanship of Chief Plenty Coups who both kept his tribe from war with the non-Indians and retained the tribal lands. Morton also said that President Ford had expressed his support for the efforts of the department and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to help the “Indian community by a dynamic part of the United States community -- and not step-children or wards.”

Commissioner of Indian Affairs Morris Thompson welcomed the Crow delegation and other guests. Barney Old Coyote, a Crow Indian who is President of the American Indian National Bank, gave background information on Chief Plenty Coups and the award named for him. Colonel Eugene Bauer, Chief of Staff of the Military District of Washington, and Raymond Costanzo, Deputy Superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery received Chief Plenty Coups’ flag, presented by a relative of the Chief, Vincent Goes Ahead.

Other members of the Crow delegation were Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Bell Rock, Mrs. Stands and Mrs. Goes Ahead.