Don Novey grew up all over the world, but his Sacramento roots led him back to a lifetime of work building the California Correctional Peace Officers Association into one of the most powerful unions in state history.

**Part II: The Arrow Flies. As the CA prison system grows, so does the power of the guards' union...and its leader.**

Dan Morain: So 1994, it passes and the prison population grows from... So actually, Wilson signed that bill on March 7th, 1994, not ’93.

Don Novey: Okay.

DM: The prison population takes off, more prisons get built. The prediction was, it was going to hit 230,000 by the turn of the century, by 2000. Obviously, it never did. But it did hit 176,000 and you guys, I mean, your officers have to deal with some pretty horrendous crowding situations.

DN: Yeah.

DM: So, tell me about that.

DN: Yeah, that’s no problem. I’ll tell you exactly the way I put it to the governor. Our job is to protect the public, number one. Number two, you give us the tools and no matter how many you cram in there, we’ll take care of it, that’s our job. We’re the least of your worries.

DM: So... Well, but clearly, clearly it became a worry for the governor, for Governor Wilson when officers were accused of setting up gladiator fights down at Corcoran.

DN: Definitely.

DM: And the US Justice Department indicted them.

DN: Yeah.

DM: And so how did you deal with that? That was clearly a crisis in your world, right?

DN: Well, it was one of them. The massive over-population is something that when you commit to, you gotta deliver. So we worked day and night to make sure that worked right, and it was tough. We had state wardens and staff that did finally toe the line for the governor, and it got kind of rough because certain things weren’t getting done properly and things were getting tougher inside the walls. But the interesting thing about that whole thing, he was also up for re-
election that year, some young lady [Kathleen Brown] was running against him. And the press was hammering him, big time. And so, I get this call out of the blue from a guy named [Mike] Wallace in New York. And he said to me, he said, ‘You know, you’re not only screwing up the prisons out there, you’re taking paper bags full of money into the Capitol.’ And I said to myself, I said, ‘I’d like to have one of those paper bags at home so we can go to the grocery store.’ I mean, I don’t know what the hell this guy is talking about. But I listened to him and I said, ‘Well, if you want to talk about it, I’ll talk about it.’ But anyway, he hung up, I didn’t think anything else about it and then somebody whispered in my ear, just like on Shrimpgate, somebody whispered in my ear and said, ‘Basically, they’re coming for you.’ And next thing I know, Mike Wallace is at the front door of CCPOA’s headquarters.

**DM:** This is down in West Sac?

**DN:** Mm-hmm, correct. And so, he comes in and fortunately I had a media crew waiting for him. And so, he came upstairs to my office and there was a camera waiting for Mike Wallace and Lowell Bergman, his producer, said, ‘What’s this all about?’ Well, I said, ‘Well, I kind of heard you guys were coming and so I figured, you know, maybe I’d get some film shots of a celebrity,’ And Bergman probably thought it was himself, but Lowell had other things going on with the smoke industry. So, anyway, Wallace comes into my office, and my wife was brilliant on this, because she got me to visit some guy... Some lady, that was retired designer, fashion designer off Wall Street, and she had a little paint store with paintings and stuff and drawings.

**DM:** So like an art gallery?

**DN:** A little art gallery on the coast.

**DM:** Yeah.

**DN:** And in the gallery she was talking to my wife about me buying something. Which I kind of don’t go for because I’ve been to all the biggies the Prado’s and stuff. Lo and behold, this lady starts talking a story about her husband going to school with Mike Wallace and Leonard Bernstein. And so, I kind of catch in on this and I said, ‘Okay, that’s kind of interesting.’ So I slide over and listen to the lady’s story. Well, anyway, the story finishes and everything, and I never know how the hell I’m going to apply something like this. So Mike Wallace walks into my office and I said, ‘Sit down. Do you want to drink or something and relax?’ And he’s raring to go though, you can tell he’s got... The cat’s out of the cage. And I said, ‘Well, can I ask you one question Mr. Wallace. It’s an honor to have you here, number one, but number two, [chuckle] how did you get the nickname ‘The Chink?’ He froze, he absolutely froze. He said, ‘How in the hell did you learn that?’ And I said, ‘Mr. Wallace, you knew I was in the intelligence corp’ and I left it at that. But we became very good friends out of the whole thing. It slowed him down. We went through the whole thing about him and Leonard Bernstein because they’re the ones that gave him the nickname. And so, he knew my sources were impeccable, even though they weren’t totally true. But I knew the story and a story that sometimes is used at the appropriate times pays off handsomely. He became cordial. And maybe this guy isn’t what somebody in the Capitol portrays him as being, a bag carrier into the Capitol. A thug hugger out there that beats people. I’ve never had an inmate ever complain about my handling of their life or assaulted them or
handcuffed them in the wrong way or anything. Because I want the profession to be the best it can be. So that’s why I pushed all these bills to make it a better profession. But Mike Wallace’s situation at that time with us changed dramatically that afternoon. And...

**DM:** So he was down here doing a story about Corcoran, right?

**DN:** Then then he was going to go up to Pelican Bay. He was going up there for ‘Cornfed’ Schneider. The guy that killed his cellmate. Thug of the absolute worst, even though he worked on my steam line at Folsom. He wasn’t that tough a guy. But what happened was, Wallace left us and went up to Pelican Bay. They wouldn’t let him in the prison because he lost his ID card. It was in his wallet that was on my desk. So Wallace finally figures it out, calls me and says, ‘Hey, you know, I can’t find my ID card. I don’t... You know, I can’t find anything.’ I said, you can’t find your wallet, number one, Mr. Wallace, because it’s on my desk. And that was kind of the joke between him and I. Christmas time you send a card to him. And he really appreciated not going out and blabbing it. I’m blabbing it right here, but he’s now deceased. But he really was a tough interrogator, you could tell, and I put him in that category. I don’t ever consider him an interviewer. An interrogator and he enjoyed his work.

**DN:** And he asked me before he went inside to do Cornfed Schneider, he said ‘You know any words of wisdom or something?’ I said, ‘Yeah, how are you going to do this interview?’ [He says] ‘I’m going to go into his cell.’ I said, ‘No, you’re not.’ I said, ‘This guy, for celebrity purposes, he’ll cut your throat right there with anything he can get his hands on. You’d be stupid.’ ‘Well, you know, Novey, I had to deal with the Hezbollah over in the Middle East and all,’ you know, he goes through that line. I said, ‘This guy will kill you.’ So they did it through the cage and he didn’t have to go wind and the drum with the guy. And it was a good thing. Mike Wallace don’t deserve to be... whoever the stupid manager was, the warden wasn’t there that day and they were playing basically pussyfoot with Mike Wallace. And you don’t do that. And I don’t care if he’s on the other side 100 percent, you give the respect due. And you’re also a public servant.

**DM:** Well, so how did you deal with the reality that you’ve got officers charged with pretty awful crimes? Civil Rights violations.

**DN:** Yeah. Oh yeah.

**DM:** How did your organization deal with that?

**DN:** Well, we put a team of seven attorneys together, made sure every officer was represented. So they had a feeling of I’ve got total representation, because that's very... It’s a very much big thing, because I know what it does to the families and those officers’ families.

**DM:** And did they have to pay for these lawyers?

**DN:** No. No, that’s our job under Bowman v. Washington. And of course, I think we took it up a notch. But I figured our number one duty was to protect the membership. That’s our job. So anyway, we went to a Denny’s Restaurant, these seven attorneys and myself.
DM: In Fresno?

DN: Yeah, four o’clock in the morning. And...

DM: Because farmers start early.

DN: They sure do. But [Michael L.] “Mike” Rains, the lead counsel on this whole thing who’s done some big cases in the Bay Area, he’s the one that fostered this whole thing. He says, ‘We’ll work for a good jury pool.’ And they did. And that cost additional dollars in a way, spending extra time for that stuff. And they were all exonerated. The jury found them not guilty on all charges. Federal court, very serious charges, as you said. And I understand that and we worked within the law and the law won. It’s not so much us.

DM: Do you believe that there were ever so-called gladiator fights at Corcoran?

DN: Yeah.

DM: You do?

DN: Oh, yeah. Where in the hell do you think the gladiators come from?

DM: And did officers stage ‘em?

DN: I don’t. I’ll tell you what, the job is so busy, so rough, so overcrowded, that if officers staged them, then they don’t belong on the line. There might have been a few officers that were intimately involved in something, but they sure in the heck weren’t the ones that were brought to charge. These seven officers didn’t do it.

DM: So, when I was covering the Capitol, the word was that no warden would get approved without CCPOA’s approval. Is that true?

DN: No.

DM: Did you have a say in who the wardens were?

DN: No.

DM: No? No say?

DN: No, and I didn’t want it.

DM: Why not?

DN: Because that wasn’t my job. Now there was always one going out on his own and becoming someone they call a tough guy or a tough gal or whatever. There’d be ways to handle those
scenarios, and I never had a problem doing that. And I could get their attention, that wasn’t that
difficult.

DM: To get a warden’s attention?

DN: Yeah. So, give them their glory with their family, and if it’s somebody I personally didn’t like, they could prove me wrong. And I usually congratulated them. I’d attend every hearing. And it probably got them thinking too. Why in the heck’s this idiot here? But I found out that there’s better ways to handle things, especially with directors as well. Cal Terhune, I thought was one of the best directors in the state. And two governors, one Democrat, one Republican told me, one of the five best administrators they’ve ever had was Cal Terhune. Marine, just like Pete Wilson. But Davis liked him too. He hated one thing. In the Youth Authority, they did not have to bring superintendents up for approval in Senate Rules. So I’d run a bill every year, making superintendents go in front of the Senate Rules for confirmation. And somehow Cal would come over and we’d negotiate something else, and then I would drop the bill. It was like a pet project thing for both of us. He would tolerate me and we’d both get what we need down the road. But he was a master at working with people.

DM: So...

DN: And he was in the execution chambers several times with me too.

DM: So you spent $100,000, your union spent $100,000 to defeat John Vasconcellos, or did you think you were going to defeat him? He was running for re-election in a district that he basically couldn’t lose, right? So why did you spend $100,000 against him?

DN: Well there was. It’s the reason we had 108 bills passed. This was a time that certain political action issues weren’t coming to full fruition yet. So, Burton tells me that... He says, I hope you don’t go whole hog here. Well, I said, it’s in the other house John. I think that’s why it came down, but Willie Brown was the most concerned. And so, he called me in and he said, can you give me a promise? And I said, what do you need? And he says, I need to have lesser than more. And I knew what that meant. Lesser than $100,000 and not more than. Because you can’t say that stuff at the Capitol for obvious reasons. So I devised a plan to educate John Vasconcellos that there are people out there that can put you on notice without a candidate running against you even. And the candidate was a nice person, who was actively involved in the victim’s movement. I think he was originally a Mormon that moved in from Utah, and he hadn’t been associated with a political movement that long in the state. In other words, he was a neophyte. And he was trying hard. I even saw Gayle Wilson down on the campaign trail for him. I was saying to myself, ’God why is... The governor’s sending his wife out here’ because we all know what’s going to happen. So what I did, I did what I call an educational program, we slipped a couple of waiters into the John Vasconcellos fundraiser down there in San Jose. And we had these little leaflets slipped underneath every one of the plates at the 1000-person event. And basically it endorsed the other guy, when they picked up the plate. And I know Vasconcellos, it drove him nuts. And the other time was, there was three billboards, they were close to his place, and they disappeared. And [chuckle] I can’t comment on, but these are people who’ve operated all over the state from different elements. And you gotta do what you gotta do to let people know you’re there. But you
don’t want to be brutal about it. Nobody’s going to get hurt, but you gotta send a signal. Because when that happened, he went back to Willie again, twice. And he says, they’re killing me out there, they’re killing me. And Willie had to reassure him, you’re going to win, you’re going to win by 75 percent. So, Willie calls me back in again and says, can you slow that down? Well, I said, you didn’t ask me about that end, and actually we bonded more after that than we did...

**DM:** You and Vasco? Or you and Willie?

**DN:** Me and Willie. Willie and myself. Vasco probably didn’t totally understand the whole thing anyway.

**DM:** And why had he rubbed your union wrong? What had he done?

**DN:** I didn’t think a whole bunch about it, but he told me personally, it was my opposition to that bond measure, I think it was at that time. It was a 1990 bond measure, that he went out and righteously opposed. But you know something, I didn’t think that because there was a lot of people on both sides of the issue, it didn’t bother me one way or another. And I had been through so many of these things. I’m just trying to adjust to keep our facilities up and working. You know, you think it’s just the managers running these places, it’s the staff running them, and you gotta keep them buoyant. You gotta keep them working within the element, and it’s a tough job.

**DM:** So after you went after Vasco, Vasconcellos then, who was Chair of Appropriations, Ways and Means. And then Appropriations and always had a seat on the Budget Committee, so he had a lot of clout at the time. After you ran the campaign against him, what changed? Did it have the intended effect?

**DN:** Yes, it did. I call it the 119 Theory. It got the attention of 119 people, and the one that they all thought we were trying to get was John Vasconcellos, and that wasn’t it at all. I was just to let everybody know that we do exist. We’re not just a bunch of thug huggers. We’re not throwing money around, but we have an understanding of the political process. We’re not giants of the trade like the California Teachers Association. My God, we only have twenty something thousand members, they got 240,000. I think that’s what it was at that time. So yeah, you just live with it.

**DM:** So, let’s see, you... 1998, Dan Lungren versus Gray Davis. You supported Gray Davis, your organization supported Gray Davis. First of all, why?

**DN:** Well, this is going to sound kind of weak to some people out there, but here in my heart I have a fond thought about Gray and Sharon Davis. Sharon’s father was a legendary minister at our prison system in Southern California, and he always did the right things. That’s not at the top of the chart, but the bottom line is that this guy served his country, he’s the only Governor...

**DM:** ‘He’ being Gray Davis?

**DN:** Gray Davis, the only Governor of California to serve his country in combat. And in some people’s eyes, he kind of looks like he was always Lieutenant Governor or something. But he felt
very strongly about public safety victims. Him and his wife were actively involved in it. Outside of me, which is hard to do, and he cared about the state. And then he got taken by a ride and he got put on a pedestal that he didn’t see coming, basically, like The Economist magazine put out there, ‘Oh, he’s going to be the next coming, this guy’s going places,’ and all that stuff. And I told him personally, I said, ‘It don’t happen that way, Governor. You’re going to run into some crossroads out there, we all do in life, and you’re going to hit up... Get hit upside the head.’ I didn’t know that Arnold was sitting down at that hotel there on the coast with the Vice President of the United States who was trying to... A week earlier, trying to shoot some attorney at a dove feast in Texas or something. But anyway, all that stuff aside, Gray Davis, I thought was the best person.

DM: So...

DN: Can I follow-up on that? And Dan Lungren wasn’t. And the reason I’m saying that is, Dan Lungren basically lied to us in the interview, and when we talked to him over the years, he always showed up at the victims’ events and the opening of a prison or something. But something was lacking there. And I didn’t realize that when he played football at Notre Dame, we couldn’t verify it, because that was his excuse to go 4-F in the draft. And I have a lot of veterans in my element, and they didn’t like that. And his dad was the doctor to Richard Nixon, and somehow he doesn’t get into the draft and guys like me do? It kind of ticked me off, but he thought it was all about... Because remember my principle I told you at the start, when we interview for governor, we interview both candidates, and when the election is over, I call both candidates.

DM: Tell me about the call with Mr. Dan Lungren.

DN: I called Dan Lungren. And I can tell you exactly where was it at. It was the day after the election, and my wife and I were at In-N-Out Burger. I don’t know about being celebratory, but that’s where we were at. And I get him on the phone, he’s at the Sac Metro Airport, and he says, ‘How could you do this to me?’ And I said [chuckle] to him, ‘George Deukmejian has a lot to do with this because I respect the man, and he was your neighbor down in Long Beach, but you didn’t tell us the whole story in your interview.’ And he hung up. He hung up.

DM: Somebody had told me that it was quite a heated conversation on his end.

DN: Oh, yeah.

DM: And that you were fairly quiet.

DN: Yes. Yeah.

DM: And then what happened after you hung up?

DN: That was it, we never talked to each other.

DM: Wasn’t there additional money that you decided to put into the campaign after that phone
DN: I don’t remember that in all honesty. Because we always had enough. For that time, for that time. I know you’re probably talking about one of the advisors that was in a room that made the comment that Don Novey should have been representing the engineers, we’d have a bridge over every puddle in California, [chuckle] right? And we both know who that is, but that’s their right. But what he forgot…that I called him. I didn’t hide anything. You know, I called the winner, of course, that’s celebratory. But the bottom line is, you’re straightforward at both sides and they have to give you a grudging thought later on. Even though his wife was a secretary to former Deukmejian executive that denied our officers a housing benefit in her area. I didn’t make... I said, ‘Hey, that’s politics.’

DM: So, there were Democrats who ran afoul of you, Richard Polanco being one. Tell me about that. Richard Polanco, long-time legislator from Los Angeles, very influential in the Latino Caucus. Helped build the Latino Caucus, helped create it. And yet your union had real issues with him. What was that about?

DN: Well, philosophically, he was very strident in attacking us because we were the guard line. He’d question things like double celling and stuff like that out there. You know, it should only be a single cell and all that other stuff. And then he’d be braggadocious about, ‘Well, when I was a kid, I was tied in with the East Los Angeles crowd,’ so to speak. I didn’t think of him as a heavyweight. I mean, he helped his Caucus, I understand that. And a lot of those people in that Caucus, yeah, I got along well. Very well, actually. Because I knew many were soul-of-the-earth-type people. And I knew the Latinos were the most decorated element in California in World War II. Big deal. Korea as well. And part of the soul and fiber of this state. And I’ve got Hispanics in my family. But the fight wasn’t over the Latino issue, it was him trying to make himself stronger in the public safety element and however that resonated in his part of Los Angeles. I don’t know. And I really didn’t care. The person I was more worried about was Gloria down there. Because she was receiving threats from the gang leadership, supposedly.

Gloria Molina?

DN: Yeah, Gloria Molina [2:11]. And I had a very cordial association with many of the Hispanic legislators, of course. It started out with Art Torres [2:27] and of course later on Richard Alatorre [2:31] and I became pretty good friends. And he had problems. But I looked past him because he had a good mind and I had him work on couple of issues with our female facilities as well. And he was quite helpful. But we just didn’t rub each other right. But I didn’t think it was super personal. Now, I did deny him, I’m going on the record, I did deny him seats, at Staples Center when I was on the State Athletic Commission. I want to go on record on that one. I think Gil was with him, Gil Cedillo. And it was the Oscar De La Hoya – ‘Sugar’ Shane Mosley fight. And I knew everybody ringside from Muhammad Ali. Matter of fact, I told Muhammad Ali, ‘Who were your fellow gold medal winners at the Olympics in 1960?’ Oh, and it was ‘uhhhh.’ It was kind of sad. I said, number one was Cook, who was a Sergeant in the United States army and who didn’t make the Olympic team, but the other guy broke his hand. He went on to win the gold medal at light middleweight. And the other was a gentleman from Detroit, Michigan that won the middleweight crown. And of course, a lot of people don’t know this Muhammad Ali
won the light heavyweight title at the Olympics. But he was happy to hear that. And I had met him several times and he’s a kind of a guy you want to admire. But the guy sitting next to him interrupted us and it was Shaq O’Neal. And I said, ‘Buddy, there’s only one celebrity in this row and it ain’t you.’ I got my kicks on that one. Shaquille, he’s a class act. He really is. Comes from a pretty good military family. There were some great people there that night, but somehow Richard and Gil were trying to slide up towards the ringside. I don’t... They thought, they could have some ins and there’s Don Novey over there. Well, there’s a time where you have to put ‘em in their place.

DM: I see. I see. Well...

DN: Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

DM: So you used to reward legislators or contribute to legislators who were in your favor on their birth dates. John Burton, $73,000. So he turned 73 and he got $73,000. Sheila Kuehl turned whatever age she was and got that plus three zeros. How’d you come up with that? And this was back in the day when you could give unlimited campaign donations.

DN: That’s correct.

DM: Yeah.

DN: I didn’t want ‘em to feel bad about how they would remember the contribution from our element. So I figured it’s celebratory. It’s their birthday. ‘My God, I’m 73 today. Oh God. There’s a check for $73,000.’ And to be honest, Burton, it really didn’t matter because there was much more involved there that’s part and parcel how he became pro Tem. We were the only identifiables, of all people, conservative element in a way, that stood behind him when he was running for pro Tem. And it was a big deal. And these other people running. When he went into the big caucus meeting and he says, ‘I’ve got – however he put it, blankety blank element – behind me. Does anybody else in the room match that?’ And that kind of stunned the room. He was a master at finding the right time to drop a lug. And he did very well by it. In other words, we basically contributed to him in such a way that nobody could match what he put on the table.

DM: So he knew that you were backing his candidacy for Pro Tem, and he let the caucus know that.

DN: Yeah, he said our name in a way that we weren’t there, but the way the greenback presentation occurred, it delivered a real message, I guess, in their element. And he’s always wanted that. And outside of the polling stuff that we worked together on for a lot of years, he was quite taken back because, like when I responded to the Brown administration in the early ‘80s on the off-duty weapons thing, I was just a matter of fact with him. I said, ‘You deserve it, John. You’ve displayed to me what it is to be a great leader in this state by crawling off the gutter on 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue when you were a congressman and you were wasting your life. And you haven’t touched any of that since then. I not only admire you’...I almost broke in into tears telling him this, it was a big deal to me. It had nothing to do with my politic. It had to do with ascending a leader to the top. A bit unusual at times, I’ll go on the record on that one.
But I had great admiration for him because when I saw him tell my peers in labor, ‘You fellows... and gals, there was a couple of ‘em in there, don’t understand then even when the opposition, Governor Wilson, isn’t on our side, you don’t kick him in the teeth. I don’t kick him in the teeth.’ And he stormed back into his office. Send them a signal. And that’s an art form that tells it all.

Whether you like John or not, he’s always been supportive of the poor, the downtrodden, the people that can’t get up and have difficulty doing anything. And that’s why he always carried blankets and beans, as I call it in his car, and he’d hand these things out to people on the streets of San Francisco. That’s what he was known for. And I admired that.

In his greatest speech of all times, was over the 2000 presidential race. A lot of people haven’t heard that it’s an outstanding statement. This guy [Warren Beatty] gets up in front of the host, who happened to be a guy named Clint Eastwood, and this guy gets up and says, ‘I’ve got on my brown suit tonight, because I think I can be the next president of the United States.’ These people are higher rollers than I’ve ever sat around. High, high, high level. And he makes his statement that he’s more of an environmentalist than Al Gore is basically what he’s saying in this room. And the host, Clint Eastwood, stands up and freezes, kind of saying, ‘what the hell is this all about?’ Because Eastwood’s not used to that type of stuff. And John says something in front of everybody, all these super high rollers. He looks over there at the movie star, Warren Beatty, whose wife’s sitting next to my wife. And he says, ‘Yeah, that might be environmental to you, that brown suit. But it looks like shit to me.’ And the place went wild. I’m saying to myself, how in the heck can you? It was a stunning statement at a magic time with well-chosen words that shut Warren Beatty off. And my wife goes over afterwards and tells John, ‘Hey, I just heard it from the wife. He never changed diapers anyway, Don. So he was right on. Gimme a high five, John.’ That’s what my wife did. So I, I think it’s a classic story about a guy being right. And here he is choosing between a Carmel conservative, so to speak, even though we wrote Clint Eastwood’s environmental plan when he ran for mayor. And we contributed to him too, that was a big deal. And all lot of law enforcement in the state said, when the hell are they doing? And Clint Eastwood helped us out in several things later on in life.

DM: So you had an association with the Pechanga Indian reservation or Pechanga tribe, right?

DN: Correct.

DM: Tell me about that. What’s the Genesis of that?

DN: Les Macarro, chairman Mark Macarro’s father, was our job steward at Youth Training School in Southern California. And he was doing an escort. Inmate bolts on him, he’s reaching out for the inmate, a car hits him, kills him. He gets killed in the line of duty. He’s the first one our foundation steps forward for. I think we gave $50,000 or something like that to the family. Mark Macarro his sister and his brother were just getting ready to move on in life, go to college and stuff like that. Well, they all did as a result of this thing, contribution with the correctional peace officer foundation. And the irony was that one goes on and becomes attorney, they all become pretty well off. Mark Macarro a few years later calls me up and he says, you know, how do we get into this political action game?
DM: Well, Les Macarro dies in line of duty long before there’s a casino at Pechanga.

DN: Oh yeah. He was running a bingo parlor. Les Macarro is the tribal chief, but they had to get something together. And so...

DM: But this is before tribes are a force in California?

DN: Anything.

DM: Yeah.

DN: Richard Milanovich at Agua Caliente. There’s several of them. Danny ‘I’m Lou Rawls’ Tucker out of another tribe in Southern California. The guy always wanted to sing. And the women tribal leaders were the ones that always felt abandoned. Yeah. I could tell. In Southern California, I attended about every tribal meeting just to let them know I was there and I was doing it for the right reasons. And I was there to help them.

DM: So...

DN: Nothing for me, but it came out the way that we were something. So I developed this political action committee with the tribes called NAPO, Native Americans and Peace Officer PAC. Mark gets several other tribes to sign on. And so we have a big meeting, a pow-wow, in Sacramento and they all say, ‘Well, how much do we have to contribute and everything?’ I said, ‘It’s going to be the minimum since the start. We’re not going to play this out big time yet.’ And so they said, ‘What does that mean?’ I said, ‘we’ll put in maybe five figures, maybe $10,000. I don’t know, something light.’ He says, ‘how’s that help us?’ All of us being in the same element sends a signal to everybody in Sacramento, and probably somebody in Washington too, that you’re here to stay. And of all people, the guy that comes in and helps negotiate that, of all people, Marty Morgenstern. Gray Davis brings in Marty Morgenstern, Don Novey, and John Burton in the pro Tem’s office and we hammered out a deal to develop these compacts. With all the tribal chiefs sitting there, by the way. Nothing hidden everything up front, that’s the best way to work these types of things. And then we developed NAPO PAC as subsequently to that issue that was on the table in the capitol.

DM: And so this was at the start of the Gray Davis administration.

DN: Yes.

DM: And, and then that goes on the ballot in 2000, right? Yeah. And so what’s your relationship... How does your relationship with Les Macarro and then Mark Macarro play into that?

DN: Well, Mark Macarro who’s now been the tribal chief for quarter of a century. They basically appreciated us standing up for their family in their time of need. And it was headed up by Glen Mueller at the foundation here with Charleene Corby and they helped the family get
back on track, and Mark went on to do good things and he probably passed it amongst...guys like Anthony Pico, airborne ranger was in my dad’s unit, 82nd airborne.

DM: He’s a Viejas chair?

DN: He was Viejas. Strong Democrat, you probably don’t know that, but he hated Tom Fonda [Late CA State Sen. Tom Hayden]. He wouldn’t get in the car with him on K street. One time they was out there. ‘Oh, do you want to get in here?’ And Mr. Hayden’s in the car. Basically, hell no, I’m not going. But that was his Americana about him. He was a different flavor of a Democrat than Tom was. And it’s kind of interesting to see that. But Anthony Pico was also one other thing. He was the religious leader amongst the tribal leaders. That was huge. And I saw that in person a lot. And I took heed of their culture. A lot of respect there. And the thing that really cited that for Carol, my wife and I, on our 25th wedding anniversary, I said, ‘Where do you want to go?’ Just like our 50th is coming up. She wanted to go to the Little Bighorn. And she said they won one there maybe we should take a look at it. And she was right. And it’s always been a big issue for her and I.

DM: That’s so interesting. So you also spent a lot of money in local races. You had a local PAC. And so why did that matter to CCPOA when you were president?

DN: It was multi-faceted. There was a little bit of a clamor out there amongst the troops that, ‘Is there any way you can come up with any ideas that can, instead of us getting stepped on and them not prosecuting our officers and getting assaulted and stuff, is there anything you could do?’ And so I mulled it over and I came up with this local PAC scenario. It was not a great deal of money, but it was enough to get the attention. And if it was one that had statewide impact, of course we would go another route to enhance it. But there was local DAs that would laugh at them, and say, ‘Hey, who are you?’ I deal with real deputy sheriffs, that type of line. And this kind of spirited... I had to worry about the little synergies that were built into that. And what I mean is that like maybe three or four chapters probably want to go in on something and take it up a notch on something else. And it wasn’t so much of what they were doing, it was making sure we adhered to the collective bargaining and made sure we adhered to the FPPC and in very rare cases, FEC. Because it was so important that every time you use a dollar it stayed clean. You mentioned earlier about this thing about you contribute money out loud. It’s like a Citizens United with the Uihlein family in Illinois are big shots. But I always thought that this thing with the local level made sense, the NAPO thing made sense. I even started MILE PAC. You probably never heard of that one. Minorities in Law Enforcement. I wasn’t into all this other stuff out here they’re doing now about Black Lives Matter, hell I was thinking about Black Lives Matter before Black lives mattered, I guess, for these folks. But I thought the African American element within my line of work should stand up even more. And I developed Minorities in Law Enforcement PAC. I kept it at a pretty decent level, nothing super, but it sent a signal to a lot of people that we care about everybody.

DM: So you got a very significant contract from Gray Davis in 2002. He had come out against private prisons and then soon thereafter your union gave him $251,000, which made it the largest donation that he had received heading into his re-elect in 2002. How big a deal was that contract to your organization?
DN: Well, it was the longest one ever. I think it was a 5-year package and it was reasonable from my perspective. And what I mean by that is that we could have had more.

DM: You could of had had more?

DN: Yeah.

DM: You didn’t ask for more?

DN: No.

DM: And why?

DN: Because I always found out in the pool of life, you can all swim in the same pool, but when you start dumping in that pool, it ain’t going to do any good in the long run for everybody actually. So that was like when Wilson... When I got my throat hung, when I asked for a pay decrease, people forget that, and I took a 5 percent hit from the state.

DM: This was in the recession in the ‘90s right?

DN: Yep. When membership was out there protesting Don Novey in the parking lot. And it was tough. And Wilson said in front of his Director of Finance that when the budget comes right, this will be fixed. And it’s a good statement. So I took it to the board of directors, and they laughed me out of the room. So we went in there and kiss Pete Wilson’s ass and we get a 5 percent pay cut. You are frigging brilliant, Novey. And I had to eat that for about 18 months. But so I go back in there and Wilson’s balanced the budget finally, and he brings in the Director of Finance [Craig Brown] who used to ride to work with Dan, the other guy. They rode a bus together. Craig Brown and Dan Walters.

DM: Oh really. I didn’t know that.

DN: Well, yeah. They had to ride a bus together. Anyway, we’re in there. And Wilson says, Craig, how much is in the budget for state employees? He said ‘15 percent.’ And he looked at him and he said, ‘Give it all to the guard line.’ I said, ‘Whoa, whoa, wait a minute, Governor, you can’t do that.’ He says, ‘I committed to you.’ I said, ‘Well I was almost committed because of what the hell you did to me, but maybe somewhat lesser.’ So we agreed to somewhat lesser, but it’s still wind up because the guy that you were watching a fight with last night wrote the lead article above the fold. Guard line receives a 12.5 percent pay increase. But it was kind of comical in reflection, but he was a man of his word like all governors are, they stood by their word. I got re-elected. It was a tough election. And the irony is that I guess Pete Wilson really didn’t like unions.

DM: He was okay with yours.

DN: Well, there’s probably another reason.
DM: Which is?

DN: Well, you know, if you spend your money wisely your investments come through. I don’t know how else to put that. But Davis was left out in the cold. He was a good person, stood very strongly on public safety issues. Thought he was going somewhere in his whole... As I go back. I think it’s the whole FERC issue. The federal elections, not federal, the Federal Electric Regulatory Commission, basically hung out Gray Davis. The budget went off. The grid went off. I was with of all people, the Lieutenant Governor.

DM: [Cruz] Bustamante?

DN: In an event somewhere. And he said ‘What do you think this means?’ I said ‘I’ve already talked to the old man.’ And he’s now starting to realize he’s going to get recalled. And I did a poll. And my polling was still spot on. And I was sitting with Sharon Davis at an event, a quiet event. It was at Pebble Beach. But we were sitting there. And...

DM: Was this the Governor’s Cup?

DN: Yeah, that’s what they call it, yeah. I don’t like to talk a lot about it because everybody gets upset, but it always worked well for me. That’s another story. But Gray Davis pulled out his credit card. That’s a big deal, and puts it on the table. We just finished dinner. Sharon is asking me she says is it really that bad? I said ‘yeah.’ And I said can I ask you a question, Madam First Lady, and she said, ‘Yeah, Don, go ahead. Have you ever seen that credit card before, because you know, he’s pretty cheap.’ And she laughed. She says, ‘Actually, I’ve never seen it.’ And we got a big laugh out of it. She was in a real tense mood. And I was trying to lighten the subject matter a little bit because she’s a real nice person. All the First Ladies, including Arnold’s wife. Arnold’s wife was very strongly supportive of victims’ issues. Her husband didn’t know he was screwing over their victims issues half the time, but Susan Kennedy ran that shop anyway. It was a tough thing seeing Gray go down the way he did. Only Governor to do it, I think, in our home state.