

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

JAMES R. JONES



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Interview Conducted and Edited by:
Donald B. Seney in 1999
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Statement of Donation

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Editorial Convention

A note on editorial conventions. In the text of these interviews, information in parentheses, (), is actually on the tape. Information in brackets, [], has been added to the tape either by the editor to clarify meaning or at the request of the interviewee in order to correct, enlarge, or clarify the interview as it was originally spoken. Words have sometimes been struck out by editor or interviewee in order to clarify meaning or eliminate repetition. In the case of strikeouts, that material has been printed at 50% density to aid in reading the interviews but assuring that the struckout material is readable.

The transcriber and editor also have removed some extraneous words such as false starts and repetitions without indicating their removal. The meaning of the interview has not been changed by this editing.

While we attempt to conform to most standard academic rules of usage (see *The Chicago Manual of Style*), we do not conform to those standards in this interview for individual's titles which then would only be capitalized in the text when they are specifically used as a title connected to a name, e.g., "Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton" as opposed to "Gale Norton, the secretary of the interior;" or "Commissioner John Keys" as opposed to "the commissioner, who was John Keys at the time." The convention in the Federal government is to capitalize titles always. Likewise formal titles of acts and offices are capitalized but abbreviated usages are not, e.g., Division of Planning as opposed to "planning;" the Reclamation

Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992, as opposed to “the 1992 act.”

The convention with acronyms is that if they are pronounced as a word then they are treated as if they are a word. If they are spelled out by the speaker then they have a hyphen between each letter. An example is the Agency for International Development’s acronym: said as a word, it appears as AID but spelled out it appears as A-I-D; another example is the acronym for State Historic Preservation Officer: SHPO when said as a word, but S-H-P-O when spelled out.

Introduction

In 1988, Reclamation began to create a history program. While headquartered in Denver, the history program was developed as a bureau-wide program.

One component of Reclamation's history program is its oral history activity. The primary objectives of Reclamation's oral history activities are: preservation of historical data not normally available through Reclamation records (supplementing already available data on the whole range of Reclamation's history); making the preserved data available to researchers inside and outside Reclamation.

In the case of the Newlands Project, the senior historian consulted the regional director to design a special research project to take an all around look at one Reclamation project. The regional director suggested the Newlands Project, and the research program occurred between 1994 and signing of the Truckee River Operating Agreement in 2008. Professor Donald B. Seney of the Government Department at California State University - Sacramento (now emeritus and living in South Lake Tahoe, California) undertook this work. The Newlands Project, while a small- to medium-sized Reclamation project, represents a microcosm of issues found throughout Reclamation: water transportation over great distances; three Native American groups with sometimes conflicting interests; private entities with competitive and sometimes misunderstood water rights; many local governments with

growing water needs; Fish and Wildlife Service programs competing for water for endangered species in Pyramid Lake and for viability of the Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge to the east of Fallon, Nevada; and Reclamation's original water user, the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District, having to deal with modern competition for some of the water supply that originally flowed to farms and ranches in its community.

Questions, comments, and suggestions may be addressed to the senior historian.

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For additional information about Reclamation's History Program see:
www.usbr.gov/history

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**Oral History Interviews
James R. Jones**

Seney: My name is Donald Seney. Today is July 14, 1999. I'm with Mr. James R. Jones in his home in South Lake Tahoe. Mr. Jones is a—are you a member or president of the board now?

Jones: I'm president.

Seney: President of the South Tahoe Public Utility District Board. This is our first session and our first tape. Good afternoon.

Jones: Thank you.

Seney: Why don't you give me, Jim, a short biography, just where you were born, and when, and where you grew up, (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) and then how you found your way here?

Early Life

Jones: Okay. I was born in Los Angeles in 1943, January 12, 1943. My father was with the F-B-I [Federal Bureau of Investigation], so we moved around quite a bit. (Storey: Uhm-hmm.) Moved to San Bernardino, and then for a few years in the late '50s in Washington, D.C. And, in 1950 we moved back

to California and I've been here essentially since then. I grew up in Southern California, Los Angeles, went to high school in Los Angeles, started college at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, and my father was actually teaching there at that point. So.

Seney: Oh, was he? What did he teach?

Jones: He was teaching some law courses, (Seney: Yeah.) business law. But he just . . .

Seney: He was probably an attorney, was he?

Jones: Yes.

Seney: Or a lawyer by training?

Jones: Yeah. He had just retired from the F-B-I at that point, and that was when the football team crashed in Bowling Green. Do you remember that? The plane?

Seney: I do remember that. Yeah.

Jones: Anyway, he took over the legal work and we moved up there from Los Angeles, (Seney: Yeah.) and I was just getting out of high school. So, I went, started there. (Seney: Uh huh.) After a year I decided to do a little traveling, and went skiing, and

wound up in Mammoth,¹ and then Colorado for a while, and then—I started out in architecture there, and went back, and then eventually wound up going to [University of California] Berkeley in civil engineering. And, I was kind of in and out of school, and working, (Seney: Right.) and wound up at, finishing at Cal Poly in Pomona with a B-S in civil engineering. And, was offered a job with the Bureau of Reclamation in Sacramento. That was in June of 1968, and I was there for three years. And, maybe we can get into that later?

Seney: Sure.

Jones: But, and then after three years I went back to graduate school at Stanford [University], in their Environmental Engineering Program, which it just changed over from the Sanitary Engineering Program. So, it was still a lot of sanitary, (Seney: Right. Right.) environmental engineering. Was there for a year and a half and, or a little less than a year and a half, and then when time came to go back to the Bureau of Reclamation there really wasn't a position there for me, and I wound up going to the Environmental Protection Agency in San Francisco, Region 9.

1. Mammoth Mountain is a ski resort located in eastern California, along the east side of the Sierra Nevada range in Inyo National Forest.

I was there for about two and a half years, I believe, and then there was a job opening up here with, through the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Lake Tahoe Area Council that was funded by the National Science Foundation, and I got on that and worked here for almost three years on that, until the funds ran out, and I decided to stay here. (Laugh) (Seney: Yeah.) So, I've been doing mostly civil engineering work since then, a little survey, and some structural work, design work, and mostly by myself. (Seney: Right.) In 1977, I was, first ran for the board with the South Tahoe Public Utility District.

Seney: Let's hold off on that a minute (Jones: Okay.) and talk about the Bureau.

Jones: Okay. Okay.

Seney: Because, of course, this is a Bureau project, and as I (Jones: Uh huh.) said the senior historian will want me to ask you about your Bureau experiences.

Working for the Bureau of Reclamation

Jones: Uhm-hmm.

Seney: I take it you must have applied to the federal government, (Jones: Yes.) to the Personnel Board?
Or . . .

Jones: Yeah. So, as I was getting out of school in June of '68, I applied several places. (Seney: Sure.) The U-S-G-S [United States Geological Survey] was another one. After I accepted the job at the Bureau I found out I could have had one in Alaska, which would have been interesting. (Laugh) But, and there were several other things. (Seney: Yeah.) But, the Bureau, at that point, sounded very interesting because they had what they called the Rotation Engineers Program, and I got into that. And, I believe I was in the last year or last group that went through that Rotation Engineers Program.

Seney: Explain to me what that is.

Jones: That was, basically they put us in about four different offices over a period of a year, three to four-month assignments, and rotate us around. (Seney: Uh huh.) And, there was a group of seven. The last group was seven, that I was in. I think that was the last group. (Seney: Right.) And, they did some special things for us. They'd take us on some field trips to, oh, see some of the projects, Bureau projects, and the dams, and some of the irrigation projects, and I worked in four different offices for the Bureau. And, then after about a year and . . .

Seney: Which offices did you work in?

Jones: Well, I worked in the Water Quality Branch for a short time. I believe that was the first one I worked for. I worked in one of the Engineering, Design Engineering Branch. I went to Denver for about four months and worked in the Office of Atmospheric Research, (Seney: Oh.) which was a real different (Seney: I'll bet.) office to work in. I was the only engineer. And all the others were . . .

Seney: But, what was the Bureau doing with Atmospheric Research?

Jones: They were doing the cloud seeding, (Seney: Oh, sure. Sure.) and hail suppression up in the Dakotas. And, cloud seeding, snow augmentation. I worked on several things in the Rockies, and out of the Denver Office, and down around Gunnison and that area, Ouray².

Seney: That makes sense then, right.

Jones: And, it was a very interesting time to be there. I was the only engineer. All the rest of them were meteorologists. So, I felt I learned a lot about meteorology then.

Seney: I'll bet. Yeah.

2. Ouray is small community in southwestern Colorado.

Jones: But, then I came back to California after that assignment and wound up working for the, I think it was the interagency something. It was a joint project at Firebaugh [California] with the Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Water Resources, and the Environmental Protection Agency to develop some processes for removing the nutrients from the agricultural [Lake] Tahoe drainage waters. (Seney: Ah.) And, there were two projects. One was algae stripping, where you would try and grow algae under optimum conditions in the water, remove that, and in essence you were removing the nutrients. (Seney: Ah.) The other one was an anaerobic denitrification project, and I eventually wound up being in charge of that project and wrote the final reports.

Seney: What does that mean, in layman's terms?

Jones: Anaerobic denitrification, (Seney: Sounds good.) the main, the reason we were doing this was to remove the nutrients, the nitrates for the most part, and phosphates, but nitrates, so that you wouldn't create algae blooms if that water was dumped (Seney: Ah.) into the [Sacramento/San Joaquin] Delta, and that was the (Seney: Okay.) idea at that point.

Seney: Sure.

Jones: So, under anaerobic conditions, with no oxygen, there, certain bugs will start to work on the nitrogen, nitrates and give them off as a nitrogen gas, and the water coming out then doesn't have the nitrates in it (Seney: Ah.) that went in.

Seney: For water purification in a broad way?

Kesterson Reservoir

Jones: That was the idea. (Seney: Yeah.) And, the water was being stored, at that point they had started to collect it and were storing it at Kesterson Reservoir³, which was never . . .

Seney: It's notorious now?

Jones: Yes. Yes. And . . .

Seney: Was it then, by the way did they realize what (Jones: No. No.) what kind of pollution was being

3. "Completed in 1971 by the Bureau of Reclamation, Kesterson included 12 evaporation ponds for irrigation drainage water. The reservoir, a part of the San Luis National Wildlife Refuge, was an important stopping point for waterfowl. In the 1960s officials proposed a 290-mile drainage canal to the ocean known as the San Luis Drain. Only 85 miles were completed, however, and work on the drain halted in 1986 after scientists discovered bird deformities due to drainage at Kesterson." For more information, see Water Education Foundation, "Kesterson Reservoir, www.watereducation.org/aquapedia/kesterson-reservoir (Accessed 5/2016).

unleashed down there?

Jones: No. We had no idea that anything like that. At least I didn't know of anything. (Seney: Yeah.) And, that was something that was being concentrated over many years through evaporation, (Seney: Right.) because the water was being put in there. And down the valley you lose seven or eight feet of evaporation off the top of a reservoir. (Seney: Yeah.) So, over the twenty-some years after that that this was started, you know, there were heavy concentrations of (Seney: Yeah.) selenium and other things.

Seney: Right. Right.

Jones: At that point I, I mean I never got involved in anything where, you know, we were (Seney: Yeah.) knew about, you know, those concentrations. Of course, at that point it happened.

Seney: It came, that would have came up in the early '80s, didn't it, (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) when the bird deformities (Jones: Yeah.) related to selenium became very apparent.

Jones: Yes.

Seney: Yeah. Right.

Jones: But, our main intent was to clean up the water so that it, they could finish the drainage, the canal that would have dumped the water in the Delta someplace, or into the North Bay, (Seney: Yeah.) San Francisco Bay.

Seney: Make it clean enough to?

Jones: Clean enough so that—because (Seney: Right.) the salts in it were not that much compared to what would be already in the Bay. So, it was . . .

Seney: Did they ever get to the point where the water was at an acceptably clean level to do that?

Jones: Well, we probably could have, but the, the tile drainage system was never really completed. (Seney: Ah.) You know, they needed to do that whole valley (Seney: Right.) and the farmers weren't ready to spend a lot of money (Seney: Yeah.) if there wasn't a crisis. (Seney: Yeah.) And, by the time it became a crisis, then it was too late. (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.) And, then the selenium had been discovered and at that point there was no way that that water could be (Seney: Right.) dumped into anywhere (Seney: Right.) in the Delta, (Seney: Right.) or the North Bay.

Seney: Yeah.

Jones: So that, you know, it was one of those things where they, they should have pushed ahead and, but the farmers didn't want to spend the money and especially if one farmer had the tile drain in and his neighbor didn't, well the neighbor was getting the benefit of having the underground water removed that was starting to collect the salts. (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.) So, they went on and did some other desalinization studies and some other things after I left.

Left Reclamation

But in . . . I'm losing track of time. But, I believe that would have been in the middle of 1971, or early '71, we were finishing up those reports, and at that point I knew I'd probably be moving on to (Seney: Right.) another assignment and I was also thinking about going back to graduate school. (Seney: Right.) And, the, because of some of the conditions with the Bureau at that point, they were, they were having a problem with their grade average. You know, the G-S [General Service] rating, (Seney: Yeah.) and they had to, they had a, they couldn't raise the average so they couldn't give some of us young engineers the raises that (Seney: Ah.) we had kind of been promised.

Seney: Did they have too many senior people at that point?

Or . . .

Jones: Well, it was, I think it was more because the Bureau was such an older agency and there were probably a lot of senior people. (Seney: Yeah.) But the, they just had this average that they had to keep and they were reluctant to give some of us the raises. So, I said, "All right. I'll go back to school." (Seney: Yeah.) And, it was kind of working out good at that point, and I got accepted at Stanford. And . . .

Seney: Let me ask you about the Rotation (Jones: Yes.) Program. That sounds kind of interesting, actually, and it sounds to me like a kind of recruiting device, in a way, or when you bring new people in give them enough exposure so they'll want to stay.

Reclamation's Engineer Rotation Program

Jones: Yes.

Seney: Is that how you saw it?

Jones: Well I, that's, I, that's the reason I went with the Bureau (Seney: Yeah.) and accepted the job immediately, and then found out I've had a couple of others later. But, (Seney: Yeah.) you know, coming right out of school it seemed like the best way to get a lot of experience and move around (Seney: Yeah.) in the different offices, not only in

Bureau of Reclamation History Program

Sacramento, but in Denver.

Seney: Right. Looking back on that I know you said it's been so long, and it has been. I mean, 1971, that (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) gets to be a long time ago?

Jones: Uhm-hmm. Uhm-hmm.

Seney: And, that you had a hard time remembering the names of some of the people. I'm not so interested in the names, but what, what's your kind of overall feeling now when you look back on the Bureau experience and how would you evaluate that, and how would you evaluate the Bureau?

Jones: Well, it was a good experience for me. I mean that was, you know, that (Seney: Sure.) especially moving around in those different offices. I kind of felt that maybe I didn't have, you know, there wasn't a lot in the future there for me. I mean, I could have moved up and stayed there. (Seney: Yeah.) But it, I could kind of, it seemed like I could pretty well predict (Seney: Yeah.) what the Bureau was going to do. I mean, it was, that, it was at a point when it was cutting back, it wasn't going to be building any more big dams, (Seney: Right.) or any more big projects, and it was turning into more of an operations and maintenance organization. And, I kind of wanted to get on into some other things too.

(Seney: Yeah.) And, the water quality, which was, at that point I had become more interested in than any of the other (Seney: Sure.) aspects of it, was just a small branch and was kind of limited.

Seney: It's a larger branch now?

Jones: It's a lot larger. (Seney: Yeah.) Yeah.

Seney: Right.

Jones: Yeah. And every once in a while I see some of the guys that I worked with there. (Seney: Yeah.) But, most of them have gone on, retired, or moved on to a couple (Seney: Sure.) other things. So.

Seney: Sure. Well, what was your, what was your—well, this would had to have been the first job you had in an organization of this kind?

Working for the Federal Government

Jones: Well, for the most part, yeah. (Seney: Yeah.) I had worked, I had been in and out of school before, and I had worked. For four summers I had worked for the Forest Service. (Seney: Okay.) So, I got around the state quite a bit, (Seney: Yeah.) fighting fires, and was a patrolman in the Los Padres [National Forest], and (Seney: Yeah.) surveyed on the Tahoe National Forest. So, I got around and the fourth

year I was going to be a smoke jumper, which would have . . .

Seney: Ooh.

Jones: But, I tore up my knee skiing the year before.

Seney: Oh no.

Jones: So, I couldn't do it. (Seney: Yeah.) So, I had seen the (Seney: Yeah.) governmental agencies (Seney: Yeah.) and I was, you know, pretty aware of, you know . . .

Seney: Did your father offer you some insights as well?

Jones: Some.

Seney: Based on his own experiences?

Jones: The F-B-I was a whole different (Seney: Oh sure. Yeah.) story with, (Seney: It was [inaudible]) he came out of the—oh yes.

Seney: Yeah. Right.

Jones: And he, that was a different, (Seney: Yeah.) completely different (Seney: Sure.) type of organization. But, I kind of thought that I wanted

to, you know, work for the government, (Seney: Yeah.) and did for a while, and then just kind of, the way things wound up, you know, I've been here, (Seney: Yeah.) you know, I have my own small practice for (Seney: Sure.) now twenty-five years.

Seney: Did this strike you as (Jones: Twenty-three years.) a well-run organization, or good sense (Jones: The Bureau?) of *esprit de corps*, or was it enjoyable to work in? Did it seem like they had their heads screwed on right, if that's not too blunt a term?

Jones: I think, I think, you know, most of the people I was dealing with, of course, I was, you know, lower level and (Seney: Yeah.) just had a job to do, and was going out and doing it. I, you know, I didn't get involved in the politics of the (Seney: Sure.) management or middle management or upper levels. I enjoyed it. And it was, (Seney: Yeah.) you know, it was a nice, well the three years I was there. (Seney: Yeah.) And, started in Sacramento, a short period in Denver, and then when I was on the Firebaugh Project I was living in Fresno (Seney: Yeah.) for almost two years. (Seney: Yeah.)

And, so it was, and that wound up down there it was kind of, the last several months was writing a report and it just kind of, I'd write a draft and send it out for review, and then I'd take off and I went skiing back in Colorado (Laugh) a couple of

times for a week, or two weeks. (Seney: Yeah.) You know, just take some of my leave and then (Seney: Sure.) come back and, (Seney: Sure.) you know, work on the next (Seney: Right.) draft, and so (Seney: Yeah.) it would kind of taper down there and then when it, when I realized that, you know, things weren't going to work out and, you know, something for me to go back to Sacramento for, you know, graduate school, that opportunity (Seney: Yeah.) opened up, and I . . .

Seney: What led you to that? Tell me about going to graduate school. Because, you have a masters degree, do you?

Graduate School

Jones: Yes. Yes.

Seney: And, masters of science, I suppose, M-S?

Jones: MS. Yes. M-S. And, it was called the Environmental Engineering Program. It was in the Civil Engineering Department. It had been the Sanitary Engineering Program up until a year or two before that, (Seney: Right.) and it kind of expanded.

Seney: They had to revamp the name, at least?

Jones: Right. (Seney: Yeah.) And it was, I had, undergraduate was a real grind for me. (Seney: Yeah.) You know, I was, the thing . . .

Seney: Well, it sounds that way, jumping in and out as you did. (Jones: Yeah.) Yeah.

Jones: Other things were happening. (Seney: Sure.) I was in an automobile accident at one point in the middle of a year so I just, you know, it was on a quarter system so (Seney: Yeah.) you know, you miss a couple three weeks, (Seney: Yeah.) and you get . . .

Seney: Serious automobile accident?

Jones: No. It just knocked me out.

Seney: Is that the scar I see on your head?

Jones: No, that's . . .

Seney: That?

Jones: That's this one. (Laugh)

Seney: Oh, I see. Okay. Well, you've got a very handsome skull, large one.

Jones: Yeah. That's another one. (Seney: Yeah.) It was, it just, you know, I thought, "Well, I'm going to go

skiing again.” (Seney: Yeah.) So, I went for the rest of that season. And, but, it was the type of thing where it was, for me, it was grind, you know. (Seney: Yeah.) Something I, I knew I had to get through school, (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.) you know, and I, but I was working, and in and out, (Seney: Yeah.) and some other things were happening and I just—so. But, once I got out and I had worked for three years I realized that, “Hey, there’s a whole lot of other things that I’d like to go back and learn.”

Seney: Yeah. Yeah.

Jones: And, as an engineer I could see a lot of potential in the water quality area, and it was just, you know, just after Earth Day and a lot of things were (Seney: Yeah.) happening and a lot of new opportunities. And, I considered going back in, going, getting a degree in biology, which would have gone along with the engineering. (Seney: Sure.) And, but the Environmental Engineering Program covered a lot of that and it was, it was too good a deal to pass up at that point. (Seney: Right.) Perry McCardey [spelling?], who was the head of the department there, had been a consultant to our algae, the Anaerobic Denitrification Project.

Seney: Ah. So, that’s another connection?

Jones: That I was working on. (Seney: Yeah.) So, it kind of was a connection, (Seney: Yeah.) and I was also working with Bill Oswald [spelling?] from U-C Berkeley, who was our algae expert, and he, he tried to talk me into going to Berkeley, (Seney: Sure.) go back there, and I was, “No, I want to go to Stanford.” So, (Seney: Yeah.) it worked out. (Seney: Yeah.)

Worked for the Environmental Protection Agency

And, when that period was over and I was considering going back to the Bureau there still wasn't a position open for me. (Seney: Uh huh.) And, there were several things that were opening up at E-P-A and I had one opportunity in Washington that was, I was talking to people about, and I happened to be in the office in San Francisco and saw a job announcement that sounded pretty good, and I asked them about it, and they (Laugh) grabbed me, and said, “Sure.” (Seney: Yeah.) And, so I mean within a matter of days they had offered me that job. (Seney: Yeah.) It worked out pretty good. It was doing operation and maintenance inspections of wastewater treatment plants and doing some other things (Seney: Yeah.) in the Region 9, which is California, Arizona, and Nevada.

Seney: So, that was very related to what you had just been doing (Jones: Yeah.) in graduate school, and

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whatnot? Yeah.

Jones: Yeah. And, it allowed me to get around and see a lot of facilities and (Seney: Yeah.) see the state, and meet a lot of people in the state agencies (Seney: Right.) too. (Seney: Right.) The state as well as different regional boards and whatever.

Seney: I take it these experiences and contacts have probably been helpful to you on, in your South Tahoe Public Utility District? Yeah.

Small Community in Water Resources Development

Jones: It's a small community in a lot of ways.

Seney: Yeah. Right.

Jones: I see people that (Seney: Yeah.) when I, you know, go to Sacramento sometimes, or go to conferences, the Association of California Water Agencies, I've been active in that, (Seney: Yeah.) there's people that I worked with many years ago (Seney: Sure.) and went to school with. (Seney: Sure. Yeah.) And so, that . . .

Seney: It is a small community. (Jones: Yeah.) Yeah. Of pretty specialized (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) people?

Jones: Yeah. Yeah.

Seney: Right. Yeah.

Jones: Yeah.

Seney: So, you said you worked for E-P-A for a while
(Jones: Yeah.) and doing these kind of things?

Jones: Yes.

Seney: What happened to that job? Did that . . .

Jones: Well, I got offered a job up here at Lake Tahoe,
which . . .

Seney: That's right it was T-R-P-A [Tahoe Regional
Planning Agency]?

Lake Tahoe Area Council

Jones: Well, it was, it wasn't, it was kind of with T-R-P-A,
(Seney: Yeah.) but it was, (Seney: Yeah.) that was
in the end of 1973. Yeah. I moved up here, I think,
December of 1973 and the job lasted for about three
years. It was a National Science Foundation
program and T-R-P-A and the Lake Tahoe Area
Council—T-R-P-A is the Tahoe Regional Planning
Agency (Seney: Right.)—and the Lake Tahoe Area
Council had been, it was a private organization, or

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private individuals and businesses (Seney: Right.) in the area—it was really, was before T-R-P-A or any of the other planning entities up here—to try, their objective was to try and get some of these planning processes going. (Seney: Right.) And . . .

Seney: Maintain the quality of the environment?

Jones: Yes.

Seney: I understand.

Jones: And planning, (Seney: Yeah.) and certain things. It's too bad we're not in my office. I have a map that would be very interesting to show you that was what they proposed in nineteen, in the early '60s, and they called it the 1980 Plan, which was planning for what they thought would be the ultimate build out. And, at that point it was, "Well, how many people will this place hold?" (Seney: Yeah.) And, they didn't think about, you know, actually buying some of the lands and (Seney: Yeah.) start to reduce. And, I think they figured there would be 870,000 people living here if everything was built out to (Seney: Good lord.) what it was planned for, well could have been planned for. And now, that's been reduced to 150,000 or 170,000.

Seney: That's the practical total?

Jones: Yes.

Seney: The actual total?

Jones: Yes. Yes. But, they had freeways going around here. They had a bridge over Emerald Bay.

Seney: I have seen some of those. (Jones: Yeah.) Yeah, they were very ambitious (Jones: Oh yeah.) and from now, our perspective now, (Jones: Yeah.) frightening plans?

Jones: Yeah. Yeah.

Seney: Yeah.

Jones: And so it was a very interesting time to come in because (Seney: Yeah.) T-R-P-A had just been in operation for about three or four years before that. And, they had gone through a lot of turmoil in (Seney: Right. Right.) getting things going, and starting, and putting . . .

Seney: Well, getting Nevada and California to agree to the same process?

The Politics of Tahoe Basin Development

Jones: Yeah. Yeah.

Seney: And all of that.

Jones: There had actually been a California Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and a Nevada Tahoe (Seney: Right.) Regional Planning Agency, and then they needed a Bi-State Compact, (Seney: Yeah.) because, in order, (Seney: Sure.) and then approval by Congress. So, it was in the late '60s, '68 I believe, that—(Seney: Something.) '67 or '68, (Seney: Somewhere in there. Right.) that T-R-P-A was finally ratified.

Seney: Was this period, when you came in '73-'74, is that when the California people sort of withdrew and put—you're smiling (Jones: Yes.) and nodding your head “yes”—and withdrew, and—because, my understanding is that you had this combined board with so many Nevada and so many California (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) representatives, and if I came in with a proposal to build something and unless the whole board could agree, and both, they voted differently, (Jones: Uhm-hmm. Uhm-hmm.) you're nodding your head “yes”, (Jones: Yeah.) that I would get to build what I wanted?

Jones: Yeah. If they, if they could not make a decision within a certain period of time, and there were a lot

of projects that were just held up in the air because they couldn't make a decision (Seney: Yeah.) to either turn it down or approve it, so that after so many days, I believe it was ninety days, there would be some projects that would be approved, and they went ahead and got approvals.

Seney: And, these were, tended to be Nevada gambling kind of projects?

Jones: Some of those. Yeah.

Seney: On the California side? Yeah.

Jones: And several, several projects that are, well there's a large, the carpeting place that's right over there by Round Hill, that's built right up on the highway? Well, it was the county supervisor that built that, (Seney: Oh.) and he knew what the loopholes were and he was able to get that through and built that (Snapped fingers) and got that in there. And, there were several other projects (Seney: Ah.) like that. And . . .

Seney: I know there were proposed casinos.

Jones: Yes.

Seney: One where Douglas County government buildings are now.

Jones: Yes.

Seney: And then the other one a little closer to state line.

Jones: Actually right across the . . .

Seney: Where the meadow is?

Jones: Right across the street from that.

Seney: Oh, is that right?

Jones: And that meadow area that's (Seney: Oh yeah.)
across the street was going to be the other one.

Seney: Yeah.

Jones: And, those were slowed down. But the, the, after T-
R-P-A was formed, California, and it was Zieburg
[spelling?]-I forget his first.

Seney: Edward Zieburg [spelling?] the Assemblyman?

Jones: Edward Zieburg [spelling?]. Yes.

Seney: Uh huh.

Tahoe Regional Planning Agency

Jones: He was very active in the creation of the, or recreation of the California Tahoe Regional Planning Agency with some stricter mandates to control some growth. (Seney: Right.) And it, they were here for, in operation for four or five years, (Seney: Yeah.) and I was involved in a lot of things there through this National Science Foundation program that I was involved in. (Seney: Right.) And eventually, we were able to get them out of there, because it was really difficult to function because here you had two planning agencies (Seney: Yeah.) that you were trying to get approvals from and the, a lot of things got streamlined, eventually, where you only had to go through one or the other, but it was still a period when it was very difficult to deal with, with, you know, getting anything through. (Seney: Sure.) Even some of the good projects (Seney: Yeah.) that really needed (Seney: Right. Right.) to go through.

And, a lot of people in areas where maybe some projects were really needed, you know, redevelopment type things, tear down (Seney: Yeah.) something, (Seney: Yeah.) or pave something over, I can remember one in particular where somebody had a lot that was, the building was on half the lot and the parking was the other half, and he wanted to go in, do some nice things, do some planters, and take out some of the asphalt, and improve it. (Seney: Yeah.) And, they came

out, “Well, no, you’ve got to conform so that means you’ve got to take out almost all of this parking asphalt.” And he said, “No, I won’t do it.”

Seney: Yeah. Sure. Can’t blame him.

Jones: And, there were a lot of instances (Seney: Yeah.) like that.

Seney: Yeah. Well, it did have that reputation for inflexibility (Jones: Sure.) and insensitivity, to put it charitably, (Jones: Yes.) when it first began. And I think, at this point, as we’re talking 1999, T-R-P-A is not regarded as so doctrinaire and difficult to deal with.

Jones: Although, They still get (Seney: Right.) painted with that same brush (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.) at times. (Seney: Yeah. Right.) And, there are times when it’s difficult (Seney: Yeah.) to deal with them, and sometimes it’s frustrating for things that take a lot longer than we feel they should, and some projects seem to get through when others don’t, (Seney: Yeah.) you know. If you have a lot of . . .

Seney: I know it doesn’t make a lot of sense.

Jones: If you have a lot of money (Seney: Yeah.) and a good lawyer, sometimes, and the patience (Seney:

That's right.) you can get some things worked.

Seney: Yeah. And you hire a former staff member as your consultant (Jones: Uh huh.) and there's some feeling that that's awfully useful?

Jones: Yes.

Seney: Yeah. Right. I know that Blockbuster Video (Jones: That's . . .) is mentioned as an example of (Jones: Yeah.) just that sort of thing.

Jones: Yeah. There's a lot of those.

Seney: We're both smiling because we live here and we know how it works, right?

Jones: Yes. Yeah.

Elected President of the Public Utility District

Seney: Right? You know, you came here in '73 and by '77 you're elected to the Board of Directors of the Public Utility (Jones: Yes.) District? That's unusual in a small town to come in and be elected so quickly, because this is a powerful entity in this town. (Jones: Yeah.) It helps to determine how much building is going to go on and, in terms of how many sewage connections (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) there can be.

Jones: Yeah.

Seney: And, as you know, one way to limit growth is to limit the number of allowable sewage connections. (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) I suppose one of the most notorious examples of that in California was Malibu, who used to (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) limit growth by limiting sewer connections, (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) and allowing them. How did, how did you get on the board after only four years?

Jones: Well, I had been very active in a lot of things. So, maybe a little about the National Science Foundation Project?

Active in Regional Planning Projects

Seney: Okay.

Jones: It really got me involved in a lot of things very quickly, and I guess I got to know a lot of people, and with my background I thought, you know, "This would be perfect to be on a Utility District Board, because normally you don't get (Seney: Yeah.) people with backgrounds like mine," which is, you know, you get some business people. And, you know, right now we have somebody from the Chamber of Commerce, so they have a business, a realtor, (Seney: Right.) we have a contractor.

Seney: Well, that's typical isn't it?

Jones: And, that's typical.

Seney: Yeah. Right.

Jones: And it's, and it's good to have. You want to have a (Seney: That's right.) cross section (Seney: Yeah.) because it's a big business. (Seney: Yeah.) I mean, we've got other things, budgets, insurance, personnel issues, (Seney: Right.) and it's—but I've been able to kind of carve out my little niche and, you know, as far as being the, you know, on the Operations Committee and, (Seney: Yeah.) and representing the district on some issues. So, I've been very active with the Association of California Water Agencies, and very active on this M-T-B-E [Methyl Tertiary Butyl Ether] issue. And, I was appointed to the Governor's Committee, Panel on the underground storage tanks, the M-T-B-E leaks.

Seney: Would this have been by [California] Governor [Pete] Wilson?

Jones: By Governor Wilson. (Seney: Yeah.) And, it was just about a year ago we finished that with recommendations. And then, I've been chairman of the Association of California Water Agencies' M-T-B-E Committee. So, I've been real active (Seney: Right.) in that area because of my background.

Seney: Sure. Sure.

National Science Foundation Program

Jones: But, but coming in, the National Science Foundation Program, Project, was an attempt to coordinate a lot of the research projects that were going on here. The National Science Foundation was funding quite a few in the area. Dr. Goldman was the biggest one, but there were quite a few others.

Seney: From U-C Davis? From U-C Davis? Right.

Jones: And a lot of other U-C Davis (Seney: Yeah.) programs. He has been the biggest one for quite a while, (Seney: Right.) and he's had a lot of impact. But there were . . .

Seney: Studying lake clarity, particularly, and water quality in the lake?

Jones: Yeah. But, there were some water, air quality programs. Dr. Cahill [spelling?] from U-C Davis was doing some things. There were some forest health studies, erosion studies, and some socioeconomic type studies. Quite a few, I think. Yeah, something on the order of forty or fifty (Seney: Right.) that were going on in the area, and

some done by the University of California, some done by U-N-R [University of Nevada, Reno]. There were others being done by the U.S. Geological Survey. Bureau of Reclamation, I think, was doing a couple of small ones at that point. U-C-L-A [University of California, Los Angeles] had some things that they had done.

Just quite a few, and the National Science Foundation had several multidisciplinary coordination type projects going on in the nation. One of them down in the Navajo Nation, and then the Four Corners area. And, there were a couple others. And so, they were looking at doing this multidisciplinary type of (Seney: Yeah.) coordination (Seney: Yeah.). And our mandate was to collect the information and get it to the decision makers. (Seney: Right.) And then, reverse that also, you know, “What information was necessary from the decision makers point of view?” you know, and try and find those things out, and generate some . . .

END SIDE 1, TAPE 1. JULY 14, 1999.

BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1. JULY 14, 1999.

Seney: You were talking about the range of studies and whatnot. That’s an important thing, isn’t it, in a complex environment like this one? (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) I mean, you’re going to have a lot of

disciplines, (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) people who are concerned about forest health, and water quality, and fish, and (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) I mean and then you've got all these government entities around this (Jones: Yes.) lake, states, federal government is here?

Jones: Uhm-hmm.

Seney: It must seem rather daunting at times, I would think, to get much done?

Lake Tahoe Area Research Coordination Board

Jones: Well it, yeah, we were, it was called the Lake Tahoe Area Research Coordination Board, and that kind of describes what we were trying to do, (Seney: Yeah.) is coordinate the research (Seney: Yeah.) and work with all of the different governmental entities, as well as all of the researchers.⁴ And so, I got involved with quite a few people in a very short period of time there. And, they had had one executive director that was appointed, who had been a local, (Seney: Uh huh.) who had didn't really have any technical background (Seney: Right.) and then they hired me as the technical person, and he wound

4. James Richardson Jones, *Inventory of Research Activities in the Lake Tahoe Area: a Bibliography* (South Lake Tahoe, California: Lake Tahoe Area Research Coordination Board, 1976).

up leaving after a very short period of time, within about four or five months, and I wound up being in charge of the staff at that point. And, it was usually a small staff of three or four (Seney: Right.) people, (Seney: Right.) professions, (Seney: Right.) a secretary, and we had a very interesting governing board that was chaired by Doug Lees [spelling?], who was the Forest Service—what's his title? He was the head of the (Seney: Ranger?) San Francisco . . .

Seney: I'm trying to think of what his—Regional Ranger or something?

Jones: Ranger. Yeah. He was, (Seney: Something. Yeah.) anyway in charge of this (Seney: Right.) California Region and he had a real interest in Tahoe because he had been the Forest . . .

Seney: Forester, that's what he is.

Jones: Yes.

Seney: Regional Forester.

Jones: I believe that's it. Yeah.

Seney: Yeah.

Jones: But he had spent a lot of time at Tahoe and at one

point had been the District Ranger for the El Dorado National Forest. So, he was the chairman of that board. And, then there was a representative from the California Resources Agency and Nevada Resources Agency, and several others, and then we had an Advisory Committee that was, Charles Goldman [spelling?] was on it, Tom Cahill [spelling?]. There were several other people from U-N-R , and from around the state. (Seney: Yeah.) So it was a, it was a very interesting group to work with at that point.

Seney: So, this got you known by and known to (Jones: Yeah.) the kind of local influentials, the sort of people whose help you need if you want to get elected to (Jones: Yeah.) something like that?

Jones: Yeah. I think that, it certainly helps. Yeah.

Seney: And, they must have approached you, did they?

Issues within the Public Utility District

Jones: Yeah. There were people saying, “Why don’t you run for this? You know, you could do something.” “Yeah. I think I could.” And, I had become active in the (Seney: Yeah.) Kiwanis Club. (Seney: Right. Right.) I was active in Kiwanis. And so I was, I jumped in, you know, as, (Seney: Yeah.) a lot of

ways in the community.

Seney: Did you have any opposition when you ran?

Jones: Oh yeah. Well, (Seney: Did you?) it was the, at that point the district was in real trouble. There had been a Cease and Desist placed on it by the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board for all sorts of things. They were having a lot of problems with their operations. They were having spills. And, there was, at that point there had been a moratorium on any new connections. (Seney: Right.) And, this was not because of T-R-P-A and its planning process. This was because of, they thought that the district couldn't treat, (Seney: Yeah.) and then they were in real trouble.

And, I don't know how much you know about the South Tahoe P-U-D, [Public Utility District] but it was the first tertiary treatment plant, but it was an experiment. Some of the processes, the big ammonia stripping tower over there had never really been done on that scale, (Seney: Yeah.) and it was something that they tried and it didn't work very good. Especially because it was temperature dependent, and in the wintertime up here (Seney: Oh.) it just, (Seney: Yeah.) ammonia stripping didn't work. (Seney: Yeah.) And, there were several other things. And the basic design of the plant, where everything went right through a

straight line, there was very little flexibility in operation, it just made it a very difficult plant to operate.

Seney: Yeah. If something went wrong you had, you, (Jones: Right.) it just went straight through it and . .

Jones: Well, or you had to shut it down.

Seney: Yeah. Right.

Jones: And then . . .

Seney: You had no impoundment ponds?

Jones: There were some ponds (Seney: Yeah.) that could take it for a while, (Seney: Yeah.) but not for very long.

Seney: Yeah. When did the board, when did you start exporting it, shall we say, to Alpine County?

Exporting Sewage Outside the Basin

Jones: Okay. That was in the late '60s, or about '67 or '68, somewhere around there. All of the districts within the basin were mandated to do that. That was something that when Ronald Reagan was governor,

and-[Paul] Laxalt?

Seney: Laxalt, right.

Jones: Was governor of Nevada (Seney: Right.) they came to an agreement, you know, that everything would be exported. (Seney: Yeah.) And, it was, I think a lot of it was based upon Charles Goldman's [spelling?] studies. At one point, they thought, "Well, we can just take a pipeline down to the bottom of the lake, and the lake never turns over, so we'll just dump it there." I mean, there were all sorts of wild (Seney: Yeah.) things. (Seney: Yeah.) And, but they finally came to the position that (Seney: Don't do it. Yeah.) everything should be sewer treated and everything discharged outside of the basin. So.

Seney: But, even to discharge it outside of the basin you weren't treating it well enough from the Lahontan Water Quality Review Board's (Jones: Well . . .) point of view?

Jones: Okay. At that point, that's when there had been some funds from the Environmental Protection Agency, or the Federal Water Quality Control Administration before that, (Seney: Yeah.)—that's not right—but, there had been some grants to do some things (Seney: Right.) to upgrade this plant, and so they were trying to do the tertiary treatment,

and we were meeting some pretty strict (Seney: Yeah.) requirements (Seney: Yeah.) because that water was going over to Indian Creek Reservoir, (Seney: Right.) which was for water contact sports and trout fishery. (Seney: Yeah.) So.

Seney: It had to be pretty good?

Jones: It had to be pretty good. (Seney: Yeah.) But, every once in a while they'd have a fish kill over there and it would be traced back to high nitrates or ammonia, or something, and so there was, there in '70, early '77 Lahontan had come down on the district pretty, pretty hard. And, there was a lot of ill will about what was (Seney: Yeah.) happening to the (Seney: Yeah.) district. There were several board members that had been on there for quite a while and had been telling everybody how great the plant was. "We've got the, you know, the best treatment plant in the world," and all of sudden, "Wait a minute, why isn't it working?" (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.) And . . .

Seney: It must have made them vulnerable, then, just running for office?

Elected President of the Public Utility District

Jones: It was. (Seney: Yeah.) And so, that was November

of '77 is when I ran, (Seney: Yeah.) and the, it looked like all the incumbents were not going to run. There were three of them. And, two of them decided not to, and the one, whose name was Ed Haggerty [spelling?], was the president of the board at that point, and he ran and I, you run by seats (Seney: Yeah.) and I applied for his seat.

Seney: Numbers rather than districts?

Jones: Numbered seats. Yes. No, they're not districts. But, just (Seney: Yeah.)—and there were three or four other people that also signed up for that and then towards the end of the sign-up period he signed up for, to run again, (Seney: Oh.) and everybody was kind of surprised, and it was (Seney: Yeah.)—but, I wound up coming out ahead (Seney: Yeah.) of him, and (Seney: Yeah.) then the next two terms (Seney: Right.) after that. And . . .

Seney: Well, this is serious business to the community? I mean, the casino's going to be concerned. The motel/hotel people (Jones: Yes.) will be concerned. The builders, the bankers, the lumber yards, the real estate agents. (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) If you can't connect sewers (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) activity stops, and that's . . .

Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board

Jones: And that was the, the process that was being used by the environmentalists, the League to Save Lake Tahoe. Lahontan didn't admit it, but I feel they, felt like they were trying to be the environmentalists and shut things (Seney: Yeah.) down. And, the fact that the district was supposed to have been the most advanced treatment plant in the country. I think some of those people over there thought if they could find fault in it that it was a feather in their cap. (Seney: Ah.) Because, that attitude seems to have, still today . . .

Seney: Persists with the board?

Jones: Yes. I don't know. There's, we've had some problems (Seney: Yeah.) with them. But . . .

Seney: Well, I know they fined you recently for spills (Jones: Yeah. Yeah.) the last couple of years, ruptures in the pipe going (Jones: There was . . .) to Alpine County?

Jones: Yeah. That was during a construction, we were replacing the export pipeline, (Seney: Yeah.) which had had some problems. This was (Seney: Right.) built in the late '60s and we had been trying to do all these things. We've always been behind, you know. (Seney: Yeah.) But, we've gone ahead and bitten the bullet and done some of these things.

But, we were in the process of replacing the export pipeline. We'd had a lawsuit many years ago against the contractor because of some shoddy construction, and poor inspections, and things like that. (Seney: Yeah.) So, we were going ahead. And, one of the sections we were testing with treated effluent and there was a spill. And, we think there was 10,000 gallons, so that's real easy for Lahontan to figure out. "Well, we charge \$10 a gallon, we'll charge them, you know."

Seney: That's \$200,000 or something, wasn't it?

Jones: Well, they reduced it. It was (Seney: Did they?) reduced back, but there was a whole lot of back and forth (Seney: Yeah.) on that. (Seney: Yeah.) And . . .

Seney: Yeah. I know that the relations were strained considerably over that.

Jones: Yeah. And it was, the contractor admitted, really, that in—but, we were the ones that were named, and they came after us with a vengeance. There was a couple of people on their board that I felt were out to get us.

Seney: How do you explain that? Why is that, do you think?

Issues with the Board

Jones: Well, there was one that had a personal thing. He had, he had wanted the job of general manager here and there were some other things that (Seney: Ah.) really . . .

Seney: That's not infrequently the case, is it?

Jones: Oh, no.

Seney: That some of these things are personal (Jones: But . . .) rather than professional?

Jones: And, he had, I think, maybe been given some false information by a few people and came after us, and it was—(Seney: Yeah.) but the, we really fought it. We didn't think it was right. There had been several other instances (Seney: Yeah.) where they had come after us and felt that, you know, that, you know, we just, we just felt it wasn't right. (Seney: Right.) In fact, in one of the negotiating meetings we had one of the staff persons at Lahontan said, "Why are you fighting this? You can just raise your rates and pay for this out of that." (Laugh) We said, "Wait a minute. That's not the way it works." (Seney: Yeah.) And, even their own staff report said there was no environmental impact. (Seney: Yeah.) But, because the state law, the Porter-

Cologne Act,⁵ said that “there shall be no discharges within the Tahoe Basin,” we were in violation, (Seney: Yeah.) even though there was nothing negative. (Seney: Yeah.) And then . . .

Seney: Well, this was up the hill, wasn't it?

Jones: Yeah. It was way . . .

Seney: I mean, it was away from the lake?

Jones: Way away from the lake. (Seney: Yeah.) Yeah. And, there probably was some that got in. (Seney: Yeah.) Well, there was some that got into the river. We know that.

Seney: It would have had to have gotten in, right.

Jones: Yeah. So, it was, but they wound up fining us \$50,000, and there had been some discussion at their meeting the night before, we had a tape where they had discussed it, out of order, and had made the decision that instead of the potentially \$350,000 they could have fined us they were only going to

5. The Porter Cologne Water Quality Control Act of 1969 “is the principal law governing water quality regulation in California. It establishes a comprehensive program to protect water quality and beneficial use of water.... [and] established nine Water Resources Boards and the State Water Board.” See www.waterboards.ca.gov. (Accessed 5/2016)

fine us \$50,000. And, I mean, they were just, there were so many things that irritated us. And then this was about the same time the M-T-B-E issues started coming up. (Seney: Yeah.) And, we've had several gas stations here in town that have been leaking, one since 1984.

MTBE in Groundwater

Seney: Which one was that?

Jones: The Terrible Herbst is that one.

Seney: Yeah.

Jones: And there have been several others.

Seney: Right. Across the street from Meeks (Jones: Yeah.) on Highway 50?

Jones: Yes.

Seney: Right.

Jones: And, nothing had been done. There had been some attempts by Lahontan to write a letter and say, "Hey, you know, you're in violation. Do this. Do that." And, you know, they'd maybe get a letter back and nothing would ever happen. (Seney: Yeah.) And,

we had a stack of correspondence that was like that.

Seney: You're gesturing at least a foot high? Yeah.

Jones: That, you know, and we would then say, "Wait a minute, you know, why aren't you going after them? You know, we've (Seney: Yeah.) got wells in that area." (Seney: Yeah.) And, we had some other problems. And, it was one of these things where the Terrible Herbst people would say, "Well, it's not us. It's the . . ." there was a gas station where the Muffler Palace is right across the street. (Seney: Right.) There were also some gas tanks at Meeks at one time, but, but these had been taken out. (Seney: Yeah.) Well, when we started getting M-T-B-E, which was the new additive in some of these monitoring wells, the only one it could be would be Terrible Herbst (Seney: Yeah.) So, then we went back on Lahontan and it's, and I have the feeling they felt this was just sour grapes, we were trying to get back (Seney: Ah.) at them. And, and then it just, it just kept blooming, just bigger and bigger. And, here we've got seventeen gas stations in town and fourteen of them have leaked.

Seney: Oh. I know it's a Lahontan problem.

Jones: And, we've lost, lost a lot of our . . .

Seney: Yeah.

“It wouldn’t have happened if Lahontan had been doing their job”

Jones: And it wouldn’t have happened if Lahontan had been doing their job. But, I asked the executive officer once, why didn’t he go after them with the same vengeance that he came after us, you know. They couldn’t find any environmental impact, but here we can show, you know, (Seney: Yeah.) significant environmental impacts. (Seney: Yeah.) And he said, “Well, we can only fine by the gallon, ten, up to \$10 a gallon.” He says, “If they only discharge a hundred gallons, that’s not, we don’t get much in fines, in the way of fines. It’s not worthwhile for us.” And I was just saying, “Wait a minute. That’s not the reason, you know. You’ve got to stop them from polluting.” (Seney: Yeah.) And, I don’t know if that made a real impact on them, but (Seney: Yeah.) I mean they’ve been kicked. They’ve been audited by the state, and the state audit came out and really criticized them. It said, “The continuing . . .” I can get you copies of these.

Seney: I’d like to see that. Yeah. Right. Yeah.

Jones: That they “continually failed to protect the environment.” And, going back to the one fine that they (Seney: Yeah.) came after us on, they had not

collected any fines in quite a while, at least anything significant. (Seney: Ah.) They needed to show something. That was another thing that was . . .

Seney: And they needed to show some, show some enforcement activity (Jones: Yeah. Yeah.) in the way of fine collections (Jones: Yeah.) and whatnot?

Jones: Yeah.

Seney: You know, despite this fine, you're pretty well squared away on the sewer (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) side now, are you not?

District in Pretty Good Shape

Jones: Yeah.

Seney: And, you've got sufficient sewer capacity to meet build-out demand within your jurisdiction?

Jones: We think so.

Seney: Yeah.

Jones: We're not (Seney: Right.) sure the--yeah. Things are changing. (Seney: Yeah.) The flows are changing. They're being reduced because of, you know, low-flow toilets, and (Seney: Yeah.) water conservation, and some other things. So, we were

using a higher flow-per-sewer-unit or per capita years ago. (Seney: Yeah.) That's gone down. (Seney: Yeah.) And, the operations we've been able to improve at the plant. And, we've got a couple of really great operators that have been able to just continually reduce chemical costs, and operating costs. One thing, you go over there now, are you familiar with activated sludge processes?

Seney: You know, not really.

Jones: Anyway, we've got four large tanks. These are 150 x 20 by maybe 20 feet deep, (Seney: Yeah.) and years ago we needed to have two or three of those operating all the time. Now, we're down to one, just because we've been able to improve the operation, (Seney: Ah.) and tweak it, and (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.) you know, continually learning. (Seney: Right.) So it's, the plant is operating quite well. For the last three years, I believe, we've met every standard that Lahontan has established on us. We've been perfect. (Seney: Yeah.) We have not missed anything. (Seney: Right.) They really came after us before we finished the plant modifications. And, I mean, we'd have one little thing and they'd just crucify us.

And, but they, I'm sure they knew that once we finished that, (Seney: Yeah.) you know, things

would be a lot better. (Seney: Yeah.) And, so we're, we're doing pretty good. Every once in a while we'll have a pipe, sewer manhole, little backup. (Seney: Yeah.) And we've, (Seney: Yeah.) we've had some problems with those with, with some sabotage, kids throwing two-by-fours down manholes. Things like that. (Seney: Yeah. Right.) But, for the most part, (Seney: Yeah.) we've got a good system where we're going out there and putting a good roto rooter through them on a periodic basis and cleaning out the accumulations.

Seney: We seen then doing that in our neighborhood (Jones: Yeah.) with the sewers.

Export Pipeline

Jones: And, that and the (Seney: Yeah.) water system. And, (Seney: Yeah.) we've, the big thing the last several years has been the export pipeline, which is going to cost about \$30 million. And I . . .

Seney: But, it's not all your money is it?

Jones: No.

Seney: There's others who are going to be contributing and chipping in on that?

Jones: Yeah. We've gotten, we've been promised \$9.7

million in federal funds, and I've been involved in going back to Washington and getting that appropriations, and we're going again in September.

Seney: Is the state going to thrown in a little, and Nevada?

Jones: No, the state hasn't been (Seney: No?) doing any (Seney: Yeah.) but we expect to get another \$3.2 million this year that we're working on. So, I've been real active in that, (Seney: Yeah.) because of my, kind of knowing my way around Washington, (Seney: Yeah. Right.) and then having been on this M-T-B-E Committee, (Seney: Right.) and back [inaudible].

Seney: And I suppose you're being active in the Association of California (Jones: Yes.) Water Utilities is very helpful (Jones: Yeah.) to you, too, in terms of political contacts?

Jones: Yeah. Through that ACWU [Association of California Water Utilities] I've, they've got an office in Washington. They've been helpful. (Seney: Right.) And, once a year they send a delegation of people back to be briefed and then to go do some lobbying on our (Seney: Yeah.) behalf. I've gone back for the last four years in that group. So, I'm kind of getting to know my way around.

Seney: Yeah. Right. Right.

Jones: It's kind of . . .

Seney: Let's talk about the water side, because you not only process the sewage (Jones: Yes.) you ship out the water that, how shall I say, makes the sewage possible, (Jones: Yes.) in a way? And, as you know, I live here locally, (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) and I live off Upper Truckee North, and when we first bought our house fourteen years ago, we were, we were then served by the Tahoe Paradise Water Company.

District Absorbing Local Water Companies

Jones: Yes.

Seney: Fresh, clean, untreated, unmolested water. We then got a letter in the mail, after about a year or so, that the Public Utility District had absorbed, bought out, (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) somehow, the district, and I guess our feeling has been, and I'm only going to make an aside about this, that you're making up for lost time with the amount of chlorine (Laugh) that we've (Jones: Oh.) gotten in our water.

Jones: Well, we try not to.

Seney: Yeah. I just, that's just an aside, (Jones: Okay.) and

I don't mean to dwell on that. But, when did you start absorbing all of these other water companies, and are there any left that you haven't (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) absorbed on your part, on (Jones: Yeah. Yeah.) your side of the basin? Talk about that a little bit.

Jones: You haven't gotten giardia, have you, since (Seney: No. No.) we took over? There were some real problems with giardia because they were not chlorinating.

Seney: Well, that's what people were saying.

Jones: And, there were some other problems.

Seney: Yeah. Yeah.

Jones: They weren't meeting some of the standards.

Seney: Right. I know that you're, (Jones: Yeah.) you're doing things they didn't do and probably they should have done (Jones: Yeah. Yeah.) under the statutes. Right.

Jones: The district, in the early '70s, started buying some of the water systems, as some of the water systems really couldn't be sold and the original owners were dying off. Globin [spelling?], one of the several

water systems in town. There was Hoffman [spelling?], owned several systems that were not really interconnected. And, (Seney: Yeah.) in the early . . .

Seney: These would have been, if I may, would have been built by the developers of these tracts at the time that the tracts were laid out?

Jones: Some of them, yes. (Seney: Yeah.) Some of them were put in after. I mean, you know, they, some of them had wells for a while, and then they came back in and they put in the water systems. And, just each area was a little different. (Seney: Okay.) And, some of these were quite old systems and really there was nobody that was going to buy them. I mean they just, they needed to be taken over by a governmental agency.

And, at that point there was an agreement—I wasn't involved in any of this—but, an agreement between the city and the utility district that the utility district would take over the water systems, (Seney: Right.) and that that would become part of theirs rather than it becoming city water, because it did stretch out into the county, beyond the city limits. The Hoffman [spelling?] and the Globin [spelling?] systems were the first ones. Later the Tahoe Paradise system was purchased in about the mid '80s. (Seney: Yeah.) There's been the Angora

water system, which is the area near the Y, and then Gardner Mountain, and that's basically what the utility district operates now. (Seney: Yeah.)

Tying in Different Water Systems

I mean, we had to kind of take each one of those as we took them on and bring them (Seney: Right.) up to our standards. (Seney: Right.) There's been a lot of inerties. We put in some mains, basically up and down Highway 50. We have wells that pump into the main. It's like a spinal cord (Seney: Right.) of this whole system. (Seney: Uh huh.) Pump into that and then it, there are lines that go off, (Seney: Yeah.) and we have different zones, pressure zones, because of the elevation changes. And, it's a very complicated system, and a lot more than you would have down in the flat lands. (Seney: Right.) And then M-T-B-E . . .

Seney: You can't gravity flow it all? You've got to pump it?

Jones: There's—yeah. It's all pumped. (Seney: Yeah.) It's all groundwater. We have some tanks where we pump it up in, and there is some gravity flow back (Seney: Right. Right.) from those tanks. (Seney: Yeah.) But, yeah, it's . . .

Seney: Whereas the sewage is pretty much gravity flow, isn't it, or do you have to pump it a little?

Jones: We do some pumping, but (Seney: Yeah.) basically it's all flowing towards the lake. (Seney: Yeah.) We've got some pump stations that take it and then pump it back towards the sewer plant, which is, oh, what, a couple of miles from actually the south shore (Seney: Right. Right.) of the lake. So.

Seney: Again, your motive, impetus for taking over the water companies was?

Jones: Well, I'm not sure.

Seney: You said something before.

Pressing Need to Unify the System

Jones: I'm not sure what the motive was with the first two. I mean, there was a lot of, there's been accusations that it was just there were, some of those board members were trying to build their own little empire. And, there had actually been a vote of, public vote not to—I'm not sure exactly how that was worded. But, it was, somehow they got around that and went ahead and bought (Seney: Yeah.) those first two water systems. And then . . .

Seney: There was some suggestion of maybe that was . . .

Jones: That's not what the public wanted but, (Seney: Yeah.) you know, but there was no way that they were going to be able to find private companies who were going to come in, (Seney: Yeah.) because they were so (Seney: Yeah.) rundown and they were, for the most part, owned by the original owners. So the, you know, just . . .

Seney: They must have had water rights, I would think? They must have been pretty old systems in that area?

Tahoe Basin Reliant on Groundwater

Jones: Yes. But, most were groundwater, (Seney: Right.) and there were some that had water rights, surface water rights, (Seney: Yeah.) but we've, for the most part, haven't used those. There was a small amount over on Cold Creek. (Seney: Yeah.) We had a treatment plant there, but that just became too difficult to operate, (Seney: Right.) because in the springs when the, you know, there's a lot of water coming down it would be dirty. We'd have to treat it. And then later in the summer it wasn't a dependable source. (Seney: Yeah.)

So, it just, we, ten, twelve years ago we kind of made a decision to just stick with groundwater, because then we didn't have to go through a lot of

the treatment processes that are going to be required for surface water, the filtration, chlorination, (Seney: Right.) and some of those other things that are required if you have surface waters. Little did we know that M-T-B-E was going to (Seney: Yeah.) take away a good part of one of our—well, it really took all of our wells out of one pressure zone, the area down by the Y. So, we were having to pump through that, into that pressure zone, and then beyond to the next pressure zone, and it's really complicated the operation (Seney: Yeah.) and . . .

Seney: And probably raised the power costs and everything?

Jones: Yeah. Required a lot of babysitting (Seney: Yeah.) of the system. And, basically we lost that area as well as our buffer that we had, the backup. We really, right now, are on the ragged edge. (Seney: Yeah.) If we lose a major well or pump or something like that we'll be in some real serious water (Seney: I know that.) conservation.

Seney: I know. Yeah.

Jones: But, we're making it through this summer. (Seney: Yeah.) Last year we just made it through. (Seney: Yeah.) If we can get through this summer we'll have another well online and then some other things will start happening. We've done some interties,

and it's (Seney: Yeah.) things are getting better. But, it's going to be costly because of that we've sued the industry, and we're going after them.

Water Rights

Seney: Yeah. I can't blame you. Let me, you know, I deal in both California and Nevada, (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) and sometimes, frankly, I can't recall what water rights are which. (Laugh) In California, my understanding for groundwater is all you have to do is notify the Department of Water Resources that you're putting in a well, that you don't, there isn't (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) any . . .

Jones: Water rights, as such, are required.

Seney: Right. There are not water rights.

Jones: Like they are with surface water.

Seney: Yeah. Like surface water rights.

Jones: Yeah. And, I don't know all the legal (Seney: Yeah.) applications.

Seney: Nevada's different, by the way?

Jones: Yes. Yeah.

Seney: Nevada you have to go through the state engineer, (Jones: Right.) and you do have to have rights to acquire (Jones: Yes.) that groundwater, (Jones: Right.) because I suspect it's more precious there. There's less of it than there is here.

Jones: Well . . .

Seney: So you . . .

Jones: California's been slow to, I mean they need to do it, (Seney: Yeah.) but they just haven't. (Seney: Right. Right.) And there's just . . .

Seney: Well, this has been mostly a surface water (Jones: Yeah.) state, and that's what most of the law (Jones: Yeah.) deals with.

Jones: Though, we've been over-drafting basins for a long, long time.

Seney: The sinking in the Central (Jones: Yeah.) Valley is incredible.

Jones: Yeah. Yeah.

Seney: Right.

Jones: Yeah. Yeah.

Seney: So, you can go ahead and say if you decide to drill a well at X site, you just drill it and (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) send off whatever form is required (Jones: Right.) to the Department of (Jones: Yes.) Water Resources, is it, or is it Water Quality Control Board?

Issues with Finding New Water Sources

Jones: Yeah it's—I'm not sure.

Seney: One or the other (Jones: Yeah.) would want to know? Right.

Jones: Our biggest, the biggest problem we've got right now is, the biggest hangup is we're looking, because we didn't want to drill another well in town where all the gas stations are we're going out on Forest Service property, as far out as we can go. (Seney: Uh huh.) We're probably going to be out there near the Visitor's Center now. So, we're, that's, we're having to go through the Forest Service process to (Seney: Oh.) get a Special Use Permit to put a well in out there and then . . .

Seney: The Visitor's Center, do you mean out where they have the trout (Jones: Yeah.) profile?

Jones: Probably not that far out, but this side, probably this

side (Seney: Yeah.) of the Visitor's Center, (Seney: Yeah.) in that area. It looks like there's a good spot out there. The only problem is that now we're two miles out of town, at \$800,000 a mile to put a main line back into town, (Seney: Yeah.) you know, a big (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.) pipe. You know, that's an additional expense.

Seney: You bet.

Jones: But, right now the Forest Service has, they've got a little incentive to help us, because in the last month or so they've had a problem dealing with their water purveyor and there's a, one of the small water systems. It's not part of ours now. (Seney: Ah.) And, they either had to make some significant expenditures to improve their system or cut off the Forest Service. And, the Forest Service wasn't in a position to make any long-term agreements with them. And so, they were just . . .

Seney: So, the trade off is you'll, you'll take care of them if they'll let you drill out there?

Jones: They want, they were going to be cut off here about two weeks ago.

Seney: Oh, is that right?

Jones: And, the Forest Service was just getting desperate. I

mean, this was the week before Fourth of July.

Seney: Yeah.

Jones: And, we kind of worked with them and worked something out, and (Seney: Yeah.) they, the, we're not going to have to take on any of their demand until the end of the summer, and at that point everything just really (Seney: Yeah. Right.) drops. I mean, (Seney: The huge . . .) by next spring we'll be . . .

Seney: Decrease in demand, isn't there, (Jones: Yeah. Yeah.) after Memorial, or after Labor Day?

Jones: Yeah.

Seney: Yeah. Right.

Private Water Systems

Jones: Yeah. So, where that would only be a couple of percent of our water supply, it would have been something like forty percent of the Lukins [Brothers Water Company] water system. And, that's one of the three water systems in the south shore that we don't own or control. Lukins is over here, kind of at the northwest corner of town. There's the Tahoe Keys water system. And then there's the Lakeside

Mutual water system, which is the area where a lot of the motels are, up right at the state line, (Seney: Uh huh.) from Highway 50 down to the lake, and back to the park.

Seney: So, here, where we're sitting, actually, in Tahoe Keys, they have their own private water system?

Jones: Right.

Seney: Right. The Lukins water system . . .

Jones: And, cleaner water here.

Seney: It's very good. (Laugh) Probably not too much chlorine in it?

Jones: Right.

Seney: Yes. I'd like to get hooked up to this one.

Jones: Right. (Laugh)

Seney: The Lukins system is the one that's over by Highway 50, on this side of Highway 50?

Jones: No. No. No. Eighty-nine. Fifty . . .

Seney: Eighty-nine. I'm sorry. I meant (Jones: Eighty-nine.) eighty-nine.

Jones: Right at the north, (Seney: Yeah.) northern part.

Seney: And that one has got very low pressure and (Jones: Yeah.) not enough fire hydrants, I understand?

Jones: Right. Right.

Seney: And so, the fire department's not very happy about that one, I'm sure?

Jones: Right. The city's been reluctant to approve some new projects, especially commercial projects (Seney: Sure.) in that area (Seney: Sure.) until they can get fire flows. So, they're trying to figure something out.

Seney: Yeah. Because, the pressure's very poor, (Jones: Yeah.) and there's a good deal of leaking (Jones: Yes.) between what goes in and what comes out?

Jones: That's why the pressure's poor. They don't want to pump it up or they'll blow the system apart.

Seney: Ah. (Laughter) You know, one of the, as you know, and you raised the question, "Why in the world maybe do I want to talk to you?" (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) Because what I'm interested in, what we're interested in for this Bureau project, is the impact of Newlands. And, as I said before we

began, of course, Newlands [Project]⁶ takes a tremendous amount of water out of Lake Tahoe. (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) Without that project there there might conceivably be surface water rights that would be available to you to pump. Does the, does the South Tahoe Public Utility District doesn't own any surface rights, does it, to the lake? Do you pump any water out of the lake?

District has No Impact on Lake Tahoe Surface Water

Jones: I--no, not from the lake.

Seney: Right.

Jones: We have some surface rights, as I said, over on Cold Creek. (Seney: Right.) We wound up with some, not so much rights but applications that had been filed with the state many years ago that are still on file, (Seney: Still pending? Yeah.) are pending (Seney: Yeah.) and I don't, I don't think anything has been approved in over thirty years and . . .

6. One of Reclamation's first projects, the Newlands Project provides irrigation water to lands in the west-central Nevada counties of Churchill, Lyon, Storey, and Washoe. Water for the project comes from Lake Tahoe, which lies on the California/Nevada border, the Truckee River which drains Lake Tahoe, and the Carson River. For more information, see Wm. Joe Simonds, "The Newlands Project," Denver, Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 1996, www.usbr.gov/history/projhist.html.

Seney: And, that has to do, of course, with the Interstate Allocation, (Jones: Yes.) which has been up in the air, the 22,000 acre feet for California, eleven for Nevada, which is contained in Public Law 101-618,⁷ (Jones: Yes.) but doesn't become final then until the Truckee River Operating Agreement⁸ is signed by

7. Public Law 101-618 became law on November 16, 1990. The law contains two acts: The Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribal Settlement Act and the Truckee-Carson-Pyramid Lake Water Rights Settlement Act. The main topics of the legislation are:

- Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribal Settlement Act
- Interstate allocation of waters of the Truckee and Carson rivers.
- Negotiation of a new Truckee River Operating Agreement (TROA)
- Water rights purchase program is authorized for the Lahontan Valley wetlands, with the intent of sustaining an average of about 25,000 acres of wetlands.
- Recovery program is to be developed for the Pyramid Lake cui-ui and Lahontan cutthroat trout
- The Newlands Project is re-authorized to serve additional purposes, including recreation, fish and wildlife, and municipal water supply for Churchill and Lyon Counties. A project efficiency study is required
- Contingencies are placed on the effective date of the legislation and various parties to the settlement are required to dismiss specified litigation.

Source is: http://www.usbr.gov/mp/lbao/public_law_101-618.html (Accessed 12/2007).

8. "More than 27 years in the making, the Truckee River Operating Agreement (TROA) now guides use of the river that winds nearly 120 miles from the mountains of Lake Tahoe to Pyramid Lake
(continued...)

all of the participants.

Jones: Uhm-hmm.

Seney: Then once that's finalized the suballocations will be made, with . .

Jones: Within . . .

Seney: I'm trying to think. It's not the Department of Water Resources. It's the Water Quality Control Board, isn't it, that will make those suballocations?

Truckee River Operating Agreement

8. (...continued)

and is the primary water source for Reno and Sparks. The long-pursued plan brings the Truckee River's management into modern times, protects the area from protracted droughts and offers a promising future for the region as a whole....

"The agreement brings an end to historic uncertainty between Nevada and California over distribution of the river's water, allocating 90 percent to Nevada. Beyond enhanced drought storage for the Truckee Meadows community, it modifies the operation of federal and selected non-federal reservoirs in the river system to protect and improve water quality and enhances conditions for the endangered Pyramid Lake cui-ui and the threatened Lahontan cutthroat trout. By retaining more water in upstream reservoirs, TROA also expands the range of recreational opportunities, including boating and fishing." See, Truckee Meadows Water Authority, "Truckee River Operating Agreement," https://tmwa.com/water_system/settlement/ (Accessed 2/2016)

Bureau of Reclamation History Program

Jones: I'm not sure. I know the Department of Water Resources was involved in the (Seney: Yeah.) Operating Agreement, (Seney: Right.) and I went to a couple of their meetings years ago when they were just getting that rolling. But I, I really, I'm (Seney: Yeah. Right.) knowledgeable of what's happened since then.

Seney: Well there, at some point these pending applications that you've inherited, (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) and I take it under the law those are yours now, and if they're ever acted upon (Jones: Yeah.) favorably that will belong to you?

Jones: Yeah. I don't think we've ever anticipated that . . .

END SIDE 2, TAPE 1. JULY 14, 1999.

BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2. JULY 14, 1999.

Seney: Donald Seney. I'm with Mr. Jim Jones at his home in Tahoe, South Lake Tahoe. Today is July 14, 1999. This is our first session and our second tape.

You know, what I'm raising all this for, Jim, is that I know, because again I'm a local, is that that M-T-B-E problem is a serious one. I mean, I don't think anybody suspected that this additive, which has now been eliminated from the gasoline . . .

MTBE Problem

Jones: Not completely.

Seney: Well, I guess . . .

Jones: It's still out there and it's still in the groundwater obviously.

Seney: Well, I'm thinking about, it's out of the gasoline now? So . . .

Jones: Well it, no it's still being used in California. Eighty percent of the gas stations, and I don't know if this really happened, but had made an agreement with the state that eighty percent of them, by July 1, would be, have M-T-B-E-free gas. (Seney: Yeah.) These are the distributors within the Tahoe Basin, (Seney: Right.) and that includes incorporation yards. There's twenty percent that don't. Until all of those are cleaned out, I mean we've still got a threat, (Seney: So . . .) because these gas stations . . .

Seney: It's still flowing into the water?

Jones: Yeah. Yeah.

Seney: I know some of the stations around here have signs up, "M-T-B-E-free gas." (Jones: Yeah.) Yeah.

Jones: There are several of them.

Seney: Yeah.

Jones: But, the state of California has, (Seney: Yeah.) Cal Trans and their state parks do not have M-T-B-E-free gas yet. (Laugh)

Seney: Is that right? You know, this is, unlike other things that turn up from these tanks, and whatnot, apparently this stuff moves (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) lickety-split? Talk a little bit about it. You must, being on the M-T-B-E Committee of the water (Jones: Yeah.) users you must be familiar with all that?

Jones: Yeah.

Seney: Talk a little bit about how that moves, (Jones: Yeah.) and why it's such a danger.

Difficulties in Removing MTBE from Groundwater

Jones: This stuff, it's very soluble. Much more soluble than any other of the constituents or additives to the gasoline. It separates from the gas plume. They found, years ago, several years ago the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory—I used to work there—but, it's the Lawrence [Livermore] National Laboratory

now, (Seney: Yeah.) found that these plumes would spread and when they reached certain concentrations the bacteria in the ground would start to break down things and then they just didn't move any further. But, this M-T-B-E does, is not broken down. It's much more soluble, so it just spreads and separates from the gasoline plumes, and will move at the speed of groundwater.

Well, here in Tahoe we have such a confined basin, at the south shore, and the water is so close to the surface that it doesn't take, you know, very long for that M-T-B-E to get into the water and then spread at the speed that the water, the groundwater, is moving. And because we've got the granitic soils, it's traveling often at one to three feet per day, and we think there's some instances where it's been up to nine feet per day. So, in . . .

Seney: That's really unusual, isn't it, for something to move that quickly, is unprecedented, maybe?

Jones: Yeah.

Seney: Yeah.

Jones: Although, the industry knew about this. We've got documents and some articles from the American Petroleum Institute and other places from the early '80s knowing that this would be a problem.

Seney: They must have had it tested, I would think?

Jones: Well, they did some, they did some air quality tests, and they—the requirement was, by federal requirement, that oxygenates needed to be added to the gasoline to improve it. (Seney: Right.) This goes back to the early '90s. As it turns out, the newer technology engines don't show any difference in what's coming out of the tailpipe whether this has oxygenated gas or not. It does on older cars, and maybe cars that have a lot of miles on them, (Seney: Yeah.) from the newer technology. So, it's really not that necessary. (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.)

But, most of the studies that were done were done for inhalation. There were no ingestion studies that were done. There's some indications that U-C Davis and, well the U-C study, which was Davis, Berkeley, Santa Barbara, U-C-L-A, (Seney: Yeah.) found that there were some evidence that it was a carcinogenic agent, (Seney: Yeah.) and in fact they found more evidence to show that it is than some things that have already been listed as carcinogenic agents in California under Prop 65,⁹

9. Approved by California voters in 1986, Proposition 65 became the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 that requires the state to publish a list of chemicals known to cause cancer or
(continued...)

have, you know, less information and (Seney: Yeah.) they were determined to be carcino—but this is so prevalent. It means a lot of money to the industry. It’s, it was a big political thing. (Seney: Yeah.)

District Efforts on Monitoring MTBE Pollution

But, I mean, we’ve, you know, we’re just looking at it as, you know, small water company (Seney: Yeah.) that has lost its water aquifers because it’s now polluted. (Seney: Yeah.) And, we’ve got, some of the wells—we made a policy a long time ago that we would not serve any water with M-T-B-E in it. So, as soon as we even knew that the plume was close (Seney: Yeah.) we were testing a monitoring well, or something like that. We would shut off the well. So, some of them didn’t reach high concentrations in the wells, and some of the, (Laugh) or the people who were sued have come back and said, “Look, you know, you’ve still got good water there, you know.” Well, we know that as soon as we turn it on (Seney: Yeah.) we’re going to pull those plumes in.

Seney: Right. Right. As soon as you start taking the water

9. (...continued)

birth defects or other reproductive harm. For more information, see OEHHA, “Proposition 65 in Plain Language,” oehha.ca.gov/prop65/background/p65plain.html. (Accessed 5/2016)

out it's (Jones: Right.) going to drag that?

Jones: And what we're hoping is that the plumes can be remediated and cleaned up so that maybe we can turn those wells on, but it's going to be many years. I mean, you're talking maybe decades for this. I mean, you pump the treated . . .

Seney: And you don't know that that will happen in any case? I mean, it may not?

Jones: There are techniques for pumping and treating. It's very expensive. (Seney: Yeah.) It's going to take a long time. There's a lot of water down there, and you're pumping out a certain portion of it and you're just, you know, pumping it back in and diluting it, you know, (Seney: Uh huh.) and it just takes—but this stuff, at very low concentrations, five parts per billion is the state standard now for taste and odor. The standard, that's what's called a secondary standard. The primary standard is fourteen parts. That's more for health.

Regional Water Quality Control Board Not Doing What's Necessary

I think most people feel it's going to be more of an aesthetic (Seney: Yeah.) problem before it becomes a health problem. (Seney: Yeah.) That

you're going to taste it and you're not going to want to drink it. (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.) So, that's—well anyway, it's just difficult. (Seney: Yeah.) We've, we're having problems now with getting it cleaned up. The responsible parties, the gas stations are, is, some of them are just not cooperating. The Regional Water Quality Control Board is just not gone in and done what's necessary. (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.) They claim, "Well we, as the Lahontan Board, cannot tell somebody how to clean it up. We can tell them to clean it up, and they can submit a plan."

And, in one case the Tahoe Toms, down at the Y, has got almost pure product under their site, and they're pumping just a few gallons a minute out. Well, it's not even slowing down the spreading of the plume and they're pumping it through activated carbon, which is not working. We've had breakthroughs and that's going into our sewer plant. And the, because they have to, they can't discharge that effluent from their treatment process (Seney: Yeah.) anywhere, and we want to make sure that they're doing something, so we're kind of in an awkward position. We don't want to take it, but we've got to take it in order to get the water cleaned up. (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.)

Well, they've already spent \$1 million down there and this will be reimbursed by state funds, and

there's nothing to show for it. And, Lahontan has not gone in and said, "Hey, you've got to clean up so much of this per day. (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.) And, that system that you've got in there is inadequate. You have to start pumping, you know, many more gallons. You have to go down and find the edges of the plume and, you know, do whatever is necessary." (Seney: Yeah.) And they're just, they, they just don't seem to have the power or the (Seney: Will?) the will to go in there and (Seney: Yeah.) do it. They're, and I don't understand why.

I've had a real problem, and I've had some long discussions with the executive officer and some of their, their staff people, and they just, and we, in fact Monday our general manager and another board member and I were in Sacramento and we met with the Winston Hitchcocks [spelling?] and the new member of the State Water Resources Control Board, and expressed our displeasure with them. (Seney: Yeah.) They were asked to do some things along with the, as far as the governor's mandate, the A-R-B [Air Resources Board] and the California Energy Commission, and they've gone ahead and done things. But, the state board has just been very slow (Seney: Uhm-hmm.) and, I don't know what it goes back to. There was, there seemed to be some pressure, you know, to keep them from doing things before, Governor

Wilson could have done some things (Seney: Yeah.) but he didn't. A month after he was out of office, did you know his wife was appointed the Board of Directors for ARCO?

Seney: No, I did not.

Jones: Yeah. And ARCO had the patent on M-T-B-E, even though they had sold it just recently. (Laugh) So, the whole thing just, (Seney: Oh man.) you know, you keep . . .

Seney: I want to get back to, you know, what I thought, given (Jones: Yeah.) my experience with the Newlands business and the water and the lake and all that, and as I read about the pollution in the wells, (Jones: Yeah.) and of course you've sent out things about it with the bills, (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) and whatnot. I thought, "My god, if this is compromised as much as it looks like it's compromised, you know, they may begin to need to draft out the lake and to take water there." Is there any thought that this M-T-B-E situation will lead you to, down the road, to have to make demands on surface water, on the surface water?

MTBE in the Lake

Jones: At this point, I don't think so.

Seney: We'll forgive you for that. (Laughter)

Jones: I probably got a little noise on there.

Seney: Toying with the microphone. (Laugh)

Jones: Yeah. One of the problems is their infrastructure is just not set up to take anything out of the lake. We'd have to run some additional large pipes down there, put in a surface water treatment system. (Seney: Yeah.) We don't have the water rights for the surface for that type of thing. And, last year the M-T-B-E in the lake was, exceeded five parts per billion.

Seney: So, it was even worse than the groundwater, maybe?

Jones: In some ways. In some ways. Yeah. (Seney: Yeah.) The Lakeside Mutual water system that I talked about earlier (Seney: Right.) has a lake intake, 2,500 feet out and 100 feet deep. And, last year at the end of the summer they were getting twenty-five parts per billion, which is the state standard. So, you know, now that they're no longer serving it, (Seney: Yeah.) the jet skis hopefully, you know, with going, eliminating the two-stroke (Seney: Yeah.) machines will eliminate a lot of the

M-T-B-E in the lake.¹⁰ (Seney: Right.) And in surface waters it seems to break down quickly, if it's close to the surface and you've got sunlight (Seney: Uh huh.) and the vaporization. (Seney: Right. Right.) But, unlike groundwater, in groundwater it doesn't break down. The only figure I've ever seen as far as how long it would be there is that its half-life was 10,000 days.

Seney: Good lord.

Jones: That's twenty-seven years.

Seney: Yeah. Good lord.

Exporting Contaminated Water to Alpine County

Jones: But, one of the things I was talking about where we have these mitigation projects, or remediation projects, and they have to dump their effluent into our line, we're getting low concentrations of M-T-

10. "Water pollution is an issue across the country and particularly here at Lake Tahoe. Because carbureted, two-stroke engines powering boats and personal watercraft are highly polluting, TRPA set standards that went into effect on June 1, 1999 to allow only the cleaner, direct fuel-injected two-stroke engines to operate on the lakes in the Tahoe Region. Including Lake Tahoe and Emerald Bay, these lakes include Fallen Leaf Lake, Upper and Lower Echo Lakes, and Cascade Lake—which is private." See Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, "New Voice for Lake Tahoe," www.trpa.org/programs/watercraft (Accessed 5/2016)

B-E at the plant, and occasionally we've gotten some pretty big slugs, where their systems had a breakthrough, and that was due to some poor consulting, as far as I'm concerned. (Seney: Yeah.) But, where maybe they should have had backup activated carbon and they didn't. (Seney: Yeah.) Because, then what you do is you take the first one out, put the second one in the first place, and then you bring in another one and (Seney: Yeah.) that's your backup. But now, the treatment plant does not remove any M-T-B-E. It just, you don't remove any.

So now, we're exporting it over to Alpine County. Now, that gets into the Carson River basin, (Seney: Right.) into the reservoir that we have over there. It appears that it's breaking down and it's not going to be a problem, but we're still getting some low concentrations (Seney: Right.) over there. The people are concerned. They're not worried right now that it's going to be a problem as long as it doesn't get any worse. We've been, we've gone over and talked to the supervisors over there, as well as the farmers (Seney: Right.) that are taking the effluent, (Seney: Right. Right.) putting it on the land, and the attitude was almost, "Well, why did you bother us? (Seney: Yeah.) You know, if it's that low concentrations." You know, we wanted to make sure they knew, that they didn't get, you

know, hear it by some rumor. (Seney: Right.)

So, that's over now in the Carson River basin. We have gotten some requests from the Nevada E-P-A, you know, for information, wanting to know, okay, because, (Seney: Yeah.) you know, supposedly is not, that water is not supposed to get into Nevada. It's all supposed to be used on the California lands, but they're worried. (Seney: Sure.) They're concerned. So.

Seney: Sure. Sure. I've actually interviewed one of the farmers over there, whom I'm sure you know, Hubert Bruns.¹¹

Jones: Yes. He's an old-timer.

Seney: He's a very interesting man.

Jones: Yeah.

Seney: Yeah. I don't know anybody else in the state who's getting 12,500 acre feet of free water the way he is.

11. Hubert Bruns participated in Reclamation's Newlands Project oral history series, see Hubert B. Bruns, Oral History Interview, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interview conducted by Donald B. Seney, edited by Donald B. Seney and final edited and desktop published by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, 2011, www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html.

And, when he puts that on his fields, do you think that's going to filter some of that M-T-B-E out before it gets into the water table (Jones: It probably won't even get on . . .) and flows back into the Carson?

Effects of Exporting on the Carson River

Jones: It probably won't get into the, out of the reservoir. We don't think we're going to get much, if any. (Seney: Uh huh.) It's very low concentrations. It's probably, you know, .5 or less parts is what's in the reservoir.

Seney: And, are you monitoring this as it comes out?

Jones: We are. Yeah. We're monitoring it now.

Seney: And you've, you . . .

Jones: Well, I don't know exactly what's coming out because we just started to discharge, because we hold that water through the wintertime. (Seney: Right. Right.) And, I saw some figures just the other day on, they had run some profiles on several different spots (Seney: Right.) in the reservoir and there were some low concentrations, one part or less (Seney: Right.) per billion. (Seney: Right.) When that gets into the canals over there and then it's

spread on the surface we're pretty confident that it's all going to break down.

Seney: And then diluted by (Jones: It has . . .) other water once it flows into the Carson? Yeah.

Jones: But, it doesn't appear to be a problem (Seney: Yeah.) that way.

Seney: Yeah.

Jones: And, Hubert Bruns is, I'm not sure that he's getting 12,000 acre feet from us.

Seney: I think he's getting 12,500 out of that. Yeah.

Jones: I thought total we only shipped about 5,000 acre feet a year (Seney: No.) out of the Tahoe Basin into the . . .

Seney: Am I wrong about that? I could be. I mean, I could.

Jones: Yeah. I'm not sure.

Seney: I mean, I have so many numbers.

Jones: You may have a decimal point off.

Seney: So, I'm not very good with them, but he gets a lot.

Jones: Yeah.

Seney: He gets . . .

Jones: And a lot of farmers over there are getting a free, (Seney: Yeah.) not a free, but they're getting guaranteed water source (Seney: Right.) that, you know, a lot of farmers only get in a drought, you know. I mean it's . . .

Seney: Well, and he told me, of course, as you know, that you all ended up paying for his ditches.

Jones: We had to.

Seney: The original notion was they would pay for them, but you couldn't take a chance of them not being up to snuff (Jones: Yes.) because that would get you in environmental hot water. And . . .

Jones: Oh, we've been watched every time we turn around.

Seney: So you, you go over and paid for—he liked that. He chuckled. He thought that was wonderful.

Insuring Water Quality in Indian Creek Reservoir

Jones: Oh, we're paying Alpine County over \$100,000 a year (Seney: Yeah.) in mitigation fee. We're buying

some trout to go in Indian Creek Reservoir¹², and we're paying for all the monitoring that's going on over there. (Seney: Yeah.) So, that's a lot of money. (Seney: Yeah.) And we were, we were forced into it. We were told we had to export this water out of the Tahoe Basin. We had to build a pipeline. We had to find a place over there. There's, originally it was in Indian Creek Reservoir. (Seney: Right.) And, then I don't know, do you know the . . .

Seney: Yeah, I do. Now it's below Indian Creek Reservoir (Jones: Right.) isn't it?

Jones: Yes.

Seney: There were signs, "Stay out of here. Don't come in here."

Jones: Yeah. Yeah. There were.

Seney: And, all that. Yeah.

Jones: Indian Creek, there was a long-term commitment to keep that as a water contact reservoir (Seney: Right.) with trout fishery. (Seney: Right.) And, we sent the tertiary-treated water over there. When we backed off of tertiary and went to secondary, which

12. Indian Creek Reservoir is located in Alpine County near Markleeville, California.

saved a lot of money and a lot of heartache, (Seney: Right.) we built the new reservoir downstream.

Seney: Right. Right below it?

Jones: Right below it. We did some water rights exchanges over there and are taking water directly out of the Carson River upstream a couple of miles from Woodford's area, or maybe a mile upstream, (Seney: Yeah.) and running that into Indian Creek to keep the water there high quality. And then the outlet from Indian Creek actually goes underneath the new reservoir and comes out down below. (Seney: Ah.) So the, and then the new reservoir just backs everything right up to the (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.) toe of the new (Seney: Right.), of the old reservoir.

Seney: Right. Yeah. You know, as far as I'm concerned all of this we're talking about here relates to the Newlands Project, (Jones: Yes.) because of course that's a major contributor to the project itself, (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) and the water quality is going to be of big interest to them in terms of what's, what eventually flows their way?

Jones: Uhm-hmm. Yeah.

Seney: You don't see though any point at which you might

have to make a claim, I guess, as you've already said, on surface water rights here?

No Claims for Surface Water

Jones: There's been no discussion about that (Seney: Yeah.) for a long, long time. I can't see where we would benefit, and I think we've just got to go ahead and continue with groundwater. We're running into more problems with that with the new standards coming down (Seney: Yeah.) from Washington on radon and arsenic. That may be a problem for us, because a lot of the wells out in Christmas Valley have higher levels of radon and arsenic (Seney: Right.) that are kind of right in the range that, that E-P-A [Environmental Protection Agency] is considering, you know, where to put the (Seney: Oh.) standard.

Seney: Can you filter that out easily, or is that treatable?

Radon and Arsenic Treatment

Jones: It'll be easier to treat than M-T-B-E. (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.) But, at that point, we may be better off putting in some more wells out there closer to the lake and then putting in a big main and just taking it back into Christmas Valley area, Myers Christmas Valley, (Seney: Yeah.) and not going through the process of trying to treat it back there. Because, it's

a much more confined basin. We're probably getting more of the ancient waters as we get down deep, (Seney: Yeah.) and getting into the granitics you get the radon and arsenic. (Seney: Yeah.) And, the wells that are closer to the lake we have less, less concentrations. But, right now we're just not sure where they're going to set that standard. The standard, like for arsenic the standard as been fifty forever.

Seney: Fifty parts per billion?

Jones: Fifty parts per billion. And, we run around fifteen parts out there in Myers, (Seney: Yeah.) in that area. We're less as you get towards the lake. They're considering dropping it down, possibly, to two, but somewhere between two and fifty. Probably going to be on the lower end and we may be right, (Seney: Oh.) you know, we're right there.

Seney: Yeah. Yeah.

Jones: So, we're not sure what that's going to happen. The radon, we're probably going to be high. We're going to have to do something.

Seney: Yeah. Yeah. That's regarded as more and more serious as times goes on?

Jones: Yeah. And, we have a higher concentration.
(Seney: Yeah.) And that's because . . .

Seney: And, that's coming off the rock we've got here,
right?

Jones: Yes.

Seney: The granitics, (Jones: Yeah.) the granite you're
talking about?

Upcoming EPA Standards for Radon and Arsenic

Jones: Yeah. But, that's also a very complicated issue,
because it is in the atmosphere here. (Seney: Yeah.)
And, we, what you get in water is a very small
percentage of what you're going to inhale in other
ways, that the standards that are being set by E-P-A
just don't recognize some of this. (Seney: Yeah.)
And, they're going through the process now.
They'll be making their recommendations, I believe,
in January of next year, and then they have a year
before they become final. But, they're still doing
some studies. They didn't really have some good
science, especially in arsenic. (Seney: Yeah.)
There was very little in the way of studies. They
were basing stuff on things that were done in
Formosa forty-five, forty or fifty years ago. And,
very little. And, the thing is they know they won't
have all the data in until after they have to make

their (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.) their standard. But, because it's been federally mandated . . .

Seney: They have to do it. Yeah.

Jones: They're going ahead and doing it.

Seney: Yeah. I know. A lot of the stuff doesn't make sense.

Jones: Yeah. So, it complicates our process and what we're going to do with our whole water system, and then the M-T-B-E, it's just, it's difficult to—we're trying to redo our master plan (Seney: Yeah.) and it's a moving target.

Seney: How close can you drill to the lake?

Drilling Wells Next to the Lake

Jones: Right up to the lake, I guess.

Seney: You can . . .

Jones: We can—yeah.

Seney: Sink that baby right next to the water, you think?

Jones: Yeah.

Seney: Or probably?

Jones: We don't want to get too close, (Seney: Yeah.) but you know it's, the closer we get to the lake (Seney: Yeah.) I mean there, there, we're not sure what the actual impact on the lake and how much we'd be actually (Seney: Yeah.) pulling back from the lake, (Seney: Right.) but the idea is we want that big sand filter. (Seney: Yeah.) You know. (Seney: Yeah.) You know, between us and the lake. And, I think that in most of our studies we feel that we're still getting water that serves, you know, that's, the gradient is towards the lake. (Seney: Right.) I mean, we're not actually pulling it back.

Seney: You're intercepting water that would flow to the lake (Jones: Right.) rather than the lake water itself? Yeah.

Jones: Right. And in not going as deep as we can and getting down to that, the old granitics, the fractured rock that's down there, you know, a thousand feet (Seney: Right.) or so, you know, in some places, or as you get closer to the mountains it's, you know, much less, (Seney: Right.) but when you get close to that fractured rock that's where that old water is, and we're pulling out the rate on. It's just been (Seney: Yeah.) accumulating there for years. (Seney: Yeah.) So. So, that affects us, and, you know, the fact that we're shipping 5,000 acre feet a

year over the hill. (Seney: Yeah.) I believe that's the figure I got.

Seney: Is it? Yeah.

Jones: I can get you some.

Seney: Yeah. I must have that wrong, then. Because, maybe he said he's getting 2,500, or 1,250. (Jones: Yeah.) I mean, I get so many numbers . . .

Jones: The 1,250 sounds more reasonable.

Seney: Yeah. It does, doesn't it.

Jones: That would be about one-fifth of what (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.) the, or one-quarter.

Seney: Yeah. I think there are four or five of them involved. (Jones: Yeah.) So, that's probably more like it, yeah.

Jones: Yeah.

Seney: I have the right numbers on his interview.

Jones: Yeah, and there's, they're changing over there. I mean, Hubert Bruns is in his eighties.

Seney: Oh yeah.

Jones: And, there's some talk about, you know, perhaps his family might not want to continue farming. Also, the Ganzburgs [spelling?] over there, (Seney: Yeah.) and some of the others, and that they may turn some of that land into, you know, to subdivide it. (Seney: Right. Right.) That they may not need the water, and now Bentley has, owns a large percentage of the land over there, as well as a large amount over in Nevada, and there's been some talk that he may want to take his water over into Nevada. (Seney: Yeah.) So. You know, if he wants to do it, that's fine, you know. (Seney: Yeah.) He can go to the governor and, you know, (Seney: Yeah.) work that out. (Seney: Yeah.) We're not going to try (Seney: Yeah.) and do that. But, I mean, it's, you know, it's, (Seney: Yeah.) politically for us to go over to Nevada and say, "Hey, take our water," (Seney: Yeah.) you know, we're—if they want it, fine. (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.) But, we're not going to push it on anybody. So, that may change things as, over in Alpine County, you know, and that's up to them basically. (Seney: Right.) Because, we've been providing that water and we've got some long-term contracts to do it.

Seney: Are you paying any attention at all to the TROA [Truckee River Operating Agreement] negotiations?

Monitoring TROA Negotiations

Jones: Which ones? The . . .

Seney: TROA. I guess I'm not—the Truckee River Operating Agreement negotiations?

Jones: Oh yeah. Not much.

Seney: Yeah.

Jones: We know they're out there. (Seney: Yeah.) It's, you know, because they've just gone back and forth so much over the years, we've kind of just monitored it a little bit, (Seney: Yeah.) and then we've had, we've had some consultants do a little bit of work for us years ago on it, and then a few years later we followed up with some more, (Seney: Right.) but I don't even know where they are with that now.

Seney: Well, they've allegedly made an agreement, but they're negotiating the details. I'm going to go to a meeting next week, but it's taking them forever. And, the only impacts I can see directly on you is the one I raised earlier and that is, until the TROA is signed off on the, whoever it is that's going to make the suballocations here (Jones: Yeah.) will not make them. (Jones: Yeah.) But, if you're not concerned

about surface water rights, that's not going to have much impact on you.

Jones: Well, but, well in a way it does, because the 22,000 acre feet doesn't differentiate between water, surface water rights or (Seney: Ah.) groundwater. It's just extraction. You use . . .

Seney: So, they're measuring what you're pumping out?

Jones: Oh yeah.

Seney: How many acre feet are you using at this point?

Jones: I don't know.

Seney: I'll ask Rick.

Jones: Yeah. I could get those figures.

Seney: Yeah. I'll ask Rick. He'll know.

Jones: I think up to—Rick?

Seney: Yeah.

Jones: You're going to be talking to Rick?

Seney: Oh yeah.

Jones: Oh, he'll . . .

Seney: He'll know all those.

Jones: He'll have all those figures.

Seney: Yeah, right. I want to talk to him about the pumping.

Jones: I know we're, we're, in the summertime we're up to about ten or eleven thousand, (Seney: Yeah.) ten or eleven million gallons per day. (Seney: Yeah.) In the summertime we drop down to about a third of that. So, I mean we could do the figures, but . . .

Seney: I don't know how much.

Jones: Yeah. I'm not sure what that works out to.

Seney: Yeah. Right.

Jones: But, I know that Tahoe City has been monitoring it and [blank space] and because they're more on the edge as far as their water and how much.

Seney: Right. It does. It has a greater impact on them.

Jones: Yeah.

Water Meters

Seney: Yeah. And one of the things they've got, you know, and it has a, an impact too, is they measure the water use at the meter rather than at the intake. (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) For them, and of course there are no meters here, so (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) it has to be measured at the intake, and (Jones: Yeah.) they do that because their system is, leaks a lot, (Jones: Yeah.) and (Jones: Yeah.) that's to their benefit to do it that way. (Jones: Yeah.) And that's in the legislation that it'll be measured. Are we going to get to meters at some point, do you think?

Jones: Here?

Seney: Yeah.

Jones: I don't—we've got so many other higher priorities.

Seney: Yeah. And that's a hornet's nest, isn't it?

Jones: Many years ago I thought maybe that was the way to go, but we've actually done some, had some studies done that looked at how much water we were using, and there's a range, you know, for metered versus (Seney: Yeah.) unmetered, and we were actually fairly low on our water consumption (Seney: Yeah.) because a lot of these places are, you know, they're not used year round. (Seney: Right.) Only part of

the year. So that, we didn't really see that there would be a significant savings. State requirements now require that all new construction have water meters put on them, (Seney: Right.) but it didn't say we had to read them. (Seney: Right. Right.) So, there's a whole lot of—and, we're starting to read some now to get some feeling on what the (Seney: Ah.) newer houses are requiring, because most of them are larger. They need more vegetation.

Seney: Have more bathrooms?

Jones: Yeah. And more landscaping outside. That's where we really get (Seney: Yeah.) a big demand in the summertime, (Seney: Yeah.) because it's about three times our normal flow.

Seney: It strikes me the fashion is changing a little bit, as people are more landscaping more than they have in the past?

Jones: Well, that's a requirement of T-R-P-A [Tahoe Regional Planning Agency].

Seney: Right.

Jones: See, T-R-P-A requires that any new project you have to, you have a mitigation fee (Seney: Yeah.) that you have to put, or a security deposit that you

have to put up, (Seney: Right. Right.) and you can't get that back until you've got your landscaping in. Well, if you want to do some sort of zeroscaping, you know, with little or no (Seney: Yeah.) water use, that takes a lot longer. You put sod in in an afternoon (Seney: Right. Right.) and get your security deposit back. So, a lot of these houses that are being developed, built, are by spec builders and they want their money back as quick as possible, (Seney: Right.) or whatever, so it's—we're trying to work with T-R-P-A to see if we can come up with something where, (Seney: Yeah.) you know, we'd—because it's . . .

Seney: Forcing people to do that? Yeah.

Jones: Yeah.

Seney: Yeah.

Jones: And, we're trying to get some data now from the newer houses that have meters on them to see if, you know, we know it's disproportional. We'd like to see how much. (Seney: Yeah.) And if we can work out something with T-R-P-A so that (Seney: Yeah.) we can change that process. Because, I mean, you've seen it. All the new houses (Seney: Yeah.) they've all got a—when you pay \$25,000 to \$30,000 in just fees alone, you know, that really ups the (Seney: Yeah.) price. So, you're not going to

build a small house up here.

Seney: That's right.

Jones: They're going to have to be large. They're going to be fancy. They're going to be with a lot of landscaping. (Seney: Yeah. Yeah.) And, that just requires a lot more water.

Seney: Yeah.

Jones: So. That just keeps adding up.

Seney: All right. Well, okay, thanks. That's all I really want to ask you about, and it's been very helpful. And, I know this is sort of ancillary to the project, but I need to talk to everybody around the lake to get a (Jones: Uhm-hmm.) full picture of what's, of what's going on. So, on behalf of the Bureau I thank you for giving me your time.

Jones: Well, it's been very interesting.

Seney: All right.

Jones: If you have any more questions, you know, come on by.

Seney: Okay. If I have more I will.

Jones: Okay.

Seney: Okay. Great. Thanks again.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 2. JULY 14, 1999.
END OF INTERVIEW.