# ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

# VERNON HANSEN

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STATUS OF INTERVIEWS:
OPEN FOR RESEARCH

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Interviews conducted–1994
Interview edited and published–2016

Oral History Program
Bureau of Reclamation
Denver, Colorado

SUGGESTED CITATION:

> **HANSEN, VERNON.** ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW. Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interviews conducted by George Petershagen, Bureau of Reclamation, Sacramento, California in 1994. Edited by Brit Allan Store, further edited and desktop published by Andrew H. Gahan. Repository for the record copy of the interview transcript is the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland.

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**Vernon Hansen**

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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.

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

**Oral History Interviews**
**Vernon Hansen**

Petershagen: This is George Petershagen conducting an interview of Vernon Hansen on behalf of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Today is August 9, 1994, and this is Tape 1, Side A. Mr. Hansen has had numerous assignments within the Bureau as a Project Manager and has worked on the Central Valley Project, the Newlands Project, and the Washoe Project.

Vernon, before we start, if you would, please, acknowledge you understand this is being tape recorded.

Hansen: Yes, I understand this is being tape recorded.

Petershagen: And that it is a gift by you to the Government of the United States and becomes U.S. property.

Hansen: Yes.

Petershagen: Okay, thank you. Then we'll get right into the meat of things and start out with where and when were you born?

## Early Life

Hansen: I was born in Vernalis, California, March 25,

1915.

Petershagen: And where is Vernalis?

Hansen: Vernalis is about halfway between Tracy, California and Patterson, California. I was actually born there, but I was raised in Patterson.

Petershagen: That was *really* farm country at the time you were born, I would expect.

Hansen: That's right. It was very arid, all of it. At that time there was no irrigation at all–especially in the Vernalis area. Down in Patterson they had just developed a water company, and just a few years before I was born Patterson was formed and they had this big land opening, selling of irrigated farms.

Petershagen: What was the source of the water for that?

Hansen: The San Joaquin River. They pumped the water up in steps, up the hill.

Petershagen: How much of a lift is that, do you recall?

Hansen: No, I don't, but I would say maybe a total lift–about seven lifts, and probably about ten feet a lift–seventy to a hundred feet, something like that.

Petershagen: Interesting. Then were you raised there in the Vernalis area?

Hansen: No, I was actually raised in the Patterson area. And all my schooling was in Patterson.

Petershagen: And you graduated from high school in Patterson?

Hansen: That's right.

Petershagen: What was the name of the high school?

Hansen: Patterson Union High School–graduated in 1933.

Petershagen: And then what?

**Studied Engineering at UC Berkeley**

Hansen: Then I went on to the University of California in Berkeley, to study civil engineering. I worked all the time. I worked five hours a day in boarding houses slinging hash, making beds, washing windows–that type of thing.

Petershagen: Oh! (chuckles) So you were learning hotel and apartment management as you were learning civil engineering!

Hansen: That's right. Then I spent five years there.

My fourth year I took all, got all my civil engineering courses done except the thesis, so in the fifth year I took the thesis and a few other interesting courses like juris prudens and economics and things of that sort.

Petershagen: So a little bit more broad educational base than some civil engineers might have had. Now, did you have a specialty associated with your bachelor's degree?

Hansen: Did I have a what?

Petershagen: A specialty of any sort? Transportation? Irrigation?

Hansen: I studied the irrigation option as a civil engineer. I studied under [Bernard A.] Etcheverry[1] and [Sidney T.] S. T. Harding.[2]

Petershagen: I've heard some of those names from some of

1. Professor Etcheverry was a member of the faculty at UC Berkeley from 1905-1951 and "a member of the consulting board which was appointed by the State Engineer to assist in the preparation of the State Water Plan adopted by the legislature in 1931," http://texts.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb0w10035d;NAAN=13030&doc.view=frames&chunk.id=div00017&toc.depth=1&toc.id=&brand=calisphere. (Accessed 2/2016).

2. Sydney T. Harding was a faculty member at UC Berkeley from 1914-1949 and authored or co-authored many works on irrigation development in California.

your compatriots.

Hansen: Yeah, they were prominent in irrigation at that time.

Petershagen: So then from high school through your college career you did this boarding house work to supplement your income, (Hansen: That's right.) pay for school, and so forth?

Hansen: Yeah. I did a lot of irrigating, though, previously, before going to college, out on the ranch. We used to get . . . The canal went right down back of our ranch. We used to go swimming there, and then also we irrigated from that canal.

Petershagen: I see. And what was raised on your ranch?

Hansen: Well, various times . . . It ended up in apricots. Before that my dad tried raising chickens and things of that sort. Apricots was the predominant crop.

Petershagen: Then when you graduated from college, what did you go on to do from there?

**Went to Work for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

Hansen: Well, jobs weren't very plentiful back in those days, so Etcheverry called the Army

[Corps of] Engineers in Sacramento, and they hired me. And this is May of 1938. So the Army Engineers were doing a joint study with the Bureau of Reclamation at that time of putting flood control space in Friant Reservoir [Millerton Lake].[3] So I worked on that study and then after that was there, oh, five or six of us from the Corps of Engineers was on it, and the Bureau representative, [Stanford P.] S. P. McCasland . . . I don't know whether you've heard of him.

Petershagen: Oh, I've heard his name too, yes.

Hansen: He asked me to come with the Bureau. And so I went from the Corps of Engineers to the Bureau. I worked probably only about a month for the Corps, and then in June or July of 1938, I went with the Bureau of Reclamation.

Petershagen: I see. So when you started on the Friant study, you actually were a Corps of Engineers employee. (Hansen: That's right.) And about how many other young men graduated from Berkeley with you, with a

3. Millerton Reservoir is the body water behind Friant Dam, a major feature of the Central Valley Project. For more information, see Robert Autobee, "Friant Division Central Valley Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 1994, www.usbr.gov/history/projhist.html.

civil engineering degree with the irrigation option?

Hansen: Oh, I really don't know, I would say maybe fifteen, twenty, something like that. I don't know whether they were irrigation option people or not, but I would say there were fifteen to twenty.

Petershagen: Okay. So Mr. McCasland induced you to come to work for the Bureau, and you really got your foot in the door at its very first opening, didn't you?

Hansen: Yes, that's right.

Petershagen: So, what was your first assignment with the Bureau of Reclamation?

**Began Working for Reclamation on Friant Dam**

Hansen: Well, with the Bureau of Reclamation, we finished up the study on flood projection with Friant Dam. And then we began to work on the Kings River and Pine Flat Reservoir,[4]

4. A Corp of Engineers' flood control project, "Pine Flat Lake was created by the construction of the 429-foot tall Pine Flat Dam on the Kings River, which was authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1944. Construction of the Pine Flat Dam Project began in 1947 and was completed in 1954." For more information, see U.S. Army Corps (continued...)

working with the Kings River Water Association. We then opened an office in Fresno, which . . . S. P. McCasland was the head of it. I went along with him and a few others to make a study down there. Let's see. I can't remember when we came back to Sacramento. We completed the study and came back to put the report together. Let's see . . .

Petershagen: When you say you "conducted this study," what do you mean? Flow rates and . . .

Hansen: Well, by that we made water rights studies, determined who would have the rights to the water from the Friant Dam. And we made studies of upstream possible developments at Wishon site, and things of that sort. Because I can remember going up there and getting stuck in the snow up at Wishon. I was down in the snow in a meadow, and I was prepared for it. I had overcoats, and I had a shotgun. I had everything. I'd get out in the morning, and I had to break the ice in the creek to get some water to put in the radiator of the car. I turned around and started back up the hill in the snow, and I'd gone about fifty feet, and

4. (...continued)
of Engineers, Sacramento District, "Pine Flat Lake," http://www.spk.usace.army.mil/Locations/SacramentoDistrictParks/PineFlatLake.aspx. (Accessed 2/2016).

here was a big [U.S.] Department of Agriculture truck coming in, and they pulled me up the hill. (laughs)

Petershagen: Now, somebody else was already up in that area. Southern California Edison had already started development up there.

Hansen: Well, yes, and PG&E [Pacific Gas and Electric Co.] finally built a dam at Wishon site a number of years later.

Petershagen: But you didn't cross paths with anybody from any of the private utilities at that time?

**Remote Studies**

Hansen: Not at that time, no. They weren't really doing anything at that time. We also did some diamond drilling at dam sites on the Middle Fork of Kings River and Tehipite Valley. Tehipite is very much like Yosemite Valley. It has the walls that go straight up, and when you start down into the valley, you go down a mile within a distance of a mile, zig-zagging back and forth.

Petershagen: So it was almost a natural reservoir site, then.

Hansen: Yes, that would have been a nice reservoir,

but obviously it would be just like flooding Yosemite. Not very practical.

Petershagen: Now, when you said that you actually did some diamond drilling, were you involved in the physical drilling yourself?

Hansen: No, I was not. The only thing I was involved in was awarding the contract to have somebody carry all this equipment into Tehipite Valley by horseback. That's the only part I had. At that time, I did not go down into the valley at all. I did years later on a fishing trip, but that's all.

Petershagen: I see. Did the Bureau have drill teams on the payroll to do the drilling at dam sites?

Hansen: Yes, we had drill teams on the payroll, and we hired people to carry it in on horseback, all the drill equipment. And so at that time, we explored the possible dam site pretty thoroughly.

Petershagen: And then you mentioned that you came back to Sacramento then from the Fresno area to actually put the report together.

Hansen: That's right.

Petershagen: And where was your office located here in

Sacramento then?

**Reclamation's Sacramento Office**

Hansen: At that time our office was located at the old Post Office building on Seventh and K Street.

Petershagen: I think at that same time there were other offices in other parts of Sacramento, were there not?

Hansen: Yes, we had one up in the [California] Fruit Building on Second and J. Then later on we had one–this is several years later–one up on about Ninth and J. I don't know the exact location of that.

Petershagen: Alright. As a young engineer getting started with the Bureau, I'm sure you had to talk to other people in some of these other offices. (Hansen: Uh-huh.) Did that seem to make your job much harder, having physically separated offices?

Hansen: No, it made it more interesting. We, in our studies here in the early days like that, we had to get a lot of the information from the State Division of Water Resources, so I spent quite a bit of time over in the State Division of Water Resources getting information from the various engineers over there, who were

all very helpful.

Petershagen: And where was the State Division of Water Resources at that time?

**Working with the State Division of Water Resources**

Hansen: At that time the State Division of Water Resources was located about Thirteenth and M Street in Sacramento. Ed Hyatt was the State Engineer, and he was in charge of that. In fact, my wife worked for the State Division of Water Resources. I went over there, and Ed Hyatt gave her the dickens for getting married to the "enemy." (laughter)

Petershagen: So you were somebody on the other side, as far as Mr. Hyatt was concerned.

Hansen: Yes, I think at that time they probably felt that we were probably going to do things that *they* would like to have done, see, like build Shasta [Dam].[5] We were building Shasta at that time, and they had made a lot of studies of Shasta and a lot of other reservoirs around

5. A major feature of the Central Valley Project, "Shasta Dam is a curved gravity concrete dam on the Sacramento River above Redding, California near Shasta Lake City built between 1938 and 1945." For more information, see Eric A. Stene, "Shasta Division Central Valley Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program,1996, www.usbr.gov/history/projhist.html.

the valley. I think they kind of felt a little bit put out that we were building that dam instead of the state.

Petershagen: Maybe some feelings that they did all the background work, and the Bureau of Reclamation was having all the fun, huh? (laughter)

Hansen: Well, it could be that. In general, all the people with the state, including Mr. Hyatt, I had to work with, were real gentlemen, and I really enjoyed working with all of them.

Petershagen: You mentioned your wife working for the State Division of Water Resources. When did you get married?

Hansen: We got married in September of 1940.

Petershagen: So you've known her just a little while, huh? (Hansen: That's right.) Let's see, that's fifty-four years ago now.

Hansen: Yeah, that's fifty-four years ago we got married. Actually, we'd known each other a little bit, because she was from Patterson, my original home. But I never really knew her there because she was a city girl, and I was a country boy.

Petershagen: So I can't make a story about high school sweethearts out of this or anything?

Hansen: No, nothing of that sort at all. This is several years after we got out of college.

Petershagen: Now, did you get involved in the military at all with World War II coming on?

**Joined the Army Air Corps in 1942**

Hansen: Yes, in November of 1942 I went into the Army Air Force as a Meteorology Cadet at U-C-L-A [University of California at Los Angeles], and I studied meteorology and got my bars as a Second Lieutenant there. I became a meteorologist at that time.

Petershagen: Why that? Did you have any say in that choice?

Hansen: No. Well, the draft was breathing down my neck, so I was looking for something in the Army or Navy that would be better than being a private in the Army.

Petershagen: So is it safe to say that meteorologist was as close to your profession as you could find at that time?

Hansen: I think so. The mathematics in meteorology

was quite a bit more stringent than that I had had in my civil engineering, but it was really a real science, let me tell you. We studied under meteorologists [Jacob A. B. Bjerknes] Bjerknes and [Jorgen Holmboe] Holmboe from Norway and these people that–[Harald U. Sverdrup] Sverdrup–came from Sweden, also.[6] It was quite an experience, let me tell you.

Petershagen: So that added quite a bit to your educational accomplishments.

Hansen: That's right. It added quite a little bit. And while in the Army, because I was a little older than the rest of them, they put me into research work. So from there, from U-C-L-A, they sent me to Cal Tech [California Institute of Technology] to do research work. And then they sent me to New York University at University Heights in the Bronx to study and do more research. So all my Army experience was in research work.

6. All three were world-renown scientists in their fields and established a training school for military meteorologists and trained over 1,200 military officers between 1941 and 1945. For more information, see Deborah Day, Scripps Institute of Oceanography Archive, "Harald Ulrik Sverdrup Biography," http://scilib.ucsd.edu/sio/biogr/Sverdrup_Biogr.pdf. (Accessed 2/2016).

Petershagen: And how long were you in the Army?

Hansen: I got out in February of 1946.

Petershagen: And when you say you got out, did you break your affiliation with the Army altogether? No Reserve career or anything like that afterwards?

Hansen: No, I had no career as a Reserve, although for a while I was a Reserve officer, inactive. I remained that way for quite a number of years. In fact, a number of years later, they kind of wrote to me and said, "Either you're going to be a Reserve officer or aren't you?" (laughter) I'd already written out a form, then I got notice reading me out of the Reserve officers. This was back in 1953, '54, something of that sort.

Petershagen: So twelve or thirteen years total service, huh?

Hansen: I made out all this form, so I sent it back in. Then I got notice from them saying I was brought back into the Reserve, and that's the last I've heard from them. (laughter)

Petershagen: Well, maybe you should send them another letter and see if it's time to retire! (laughter)

Hansen: Yeah! But I had good friends in the same program that I was in the Army Air Force, and they *were* called back several times and stayed on as Reserve officers. They all had real nice service afterward, spent time in England and Japan and things of that sort. It's a pretty good deal, but I'm glad I divorced myself pretty much from it.

Petershagen: Now, some of the retirees I've interviewed have indicated to me that they felt like their service during World War II was almost like four or five years that was taken out of their lives, and when they were released from active duty they felt like they had to catch up to other people, because they missed that time. Did you have any feelings like that?

**Easy Transition Back to Reclamation after the War**

Hansen: No, I really didn't. I felt that that was a very interesting experience, going into the Army. When I came back I wasn't held back. There were other people that took my place and so forth, but I moved into another slot. In fact, I made use of my meteorology. I became the Regional Hydrologist for the Bureau here. So it just carried on through and worked out very well.

Petershagen: Well, I'm sure that meteorology training

would stand you very well on some of the studies that you conducted later on.

Hansen: That's right.

Petershagen: So, when you were released from active duty you must have wanted to return to the Bureau. That went fairly smoothly, I take it?

Hansen: Yes, I came right back to the Bureau of Reclamation. In fact, the fellow, S. P. McCasland, left about 1941 to go into the Army as an officer, and Stan Kerr came on and became head of planning for the Bureau here. And Stan Kerr, I kept in contact with him while I was in service, and when I got out, so he gave me a job back with the Bureau of Reclamation. I was treated very well in that respect. Yeah, I came back then as a flood hydrologist.

**Worked as a Flood Hydrologist**

At that time the Bureau of Reclamation was just going into a program of spillway design floods–designed extra big floods to design the spillways of dams, because in the past they'd been using hundred-year floods, which were much too small. And so later on they had to enlarge a lot of these spillways, and I got into that program. In fact, I even

worked with the state and the Corps and went over and reached agreement with them as to the way we would design these spillways. So I got into that program.

Petershagen: And you called that position flood hydrologist?

Hansen: Yes, I was flood hydrologist at that time, and Garfield Stubblefield was the Head Hydrologist, and when he retired, well then I went on. I was head of the Hydrology Division.

Petershagen: How many other positions were there that were kind of specialties under Mr. Stubblefield? You said you were a flood hydrologist. Did you have perhaps a groundwater hydrologist?

Hansen: Yeah, a groundwater hydrologist, surface water hydrology, things of that sort. But I got into the flood part of it, and I spent kind of a little bit of time with the Denver Office, talking to them and getting the whole Bureau program together on spillway design floods.

Petershagen: About how long were you in the hydrology business?

Hansen: I was in the Hydrology Division until 1952.

## Great Change in the Bureau of Reclamation

I might say one thing: There was a great change in the Bureau of Reclamation between the time I left and when I came back. The Bureau of Reclamation, at that time, we had a Supervising Engineer here, Walker Young,[7] and staff, a small staff–had somebody that took care of purchasing, a fellow and a couple of girls. When I came back we had a Regional Director, and we had all kinds of people in the Purchasing Department, and oh, the administrative set-up was much bigger than it was when I left. That was the thing that I had noticed at that time, you see–the change in administration, tremendous change.[8]

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7. Walker Young had a distinguished career with the Bureau of Reclamation. Young joined Reclamation in 1911, worked on the construction of Arrowrock Dam in Idaho, and was construction engineer at Hoover Dam. After the construction of Hoover, Young became supervising engineer for the Central Valley Project. In 1945 Young became Chief Engineer of the Bureau of Reclamation until his retirement in 1948. For more information, see "Hoover Dam: Icon of Engineering," http://www.hooverdamnotes.com/walker-r-young.html. (Accessed 2/2016).

8. In 1943 the Bureau of Reclamation went through a major reorganization. It created seven independent regions: Pacific Northwest Region in Boise, Idaho; Mid-Pacific Region in Sacramento, California; Lower Colorado Region in Boulder City, Nevada; Upper Colorado Region in Salt Lake City, Utah; Southwest Region in

(continued...)

Petershagen: Was there a different attitude people had along with that change?

Hansen: Well, really, I don't think so. I got along with all the people even though there was all this change. Like I say, I kind of got into a specialty, so I didn't brush up against a lot of these people as much as some of my cohorts did. Anyway, I was a hydrologist until 1952. Then Mr. [Richard] Boke,[9] who became the Regional Director at that time, called me in and asked me if I would go to Eureka and open an office there to make a study of northwest California. He said that'd be a good job. I said, "Well, I have a pretty good job right now!" And he said, "You'll *always* have a pretty good job!" So I agreed to go to Eureka. This is in the fall of 1952 that we went to Eureka. Then I opened a small office there–had a secretary, and I had a hydrologist and an engineer and an economist.

## Opened a Field Office in Eureka

At that time, feelings were pretty strong against the Bureau. I had a fellow come

8. (...continued)
Amarillo, Texas; Upper Missouri Region in Billings, Montana; Lower Missouri Region in Denver, Colorado.

9. Richard Boke was Regional Director of the Mid-Pacific Region from 1947 to 1953.

out–they gave us an office space out at the airport, Arcata Airport–a fellow came out and said, "I'm saving the highest five trees here to hang you people from." (laughs)

Petershagen: Oh! Well, "Welcome to our town." (laughter)

Hansen: Yeah! Then the secretary or manager of the county and city Chamber of Commerce wrote me a letter, "I want a report from you in a fortnight!" So I wrote a nice little letter back to him, and I said, "I'll be glad to make a report, but I want to make it personally to your Chamber members." I didn't hear any more about that.

But anyway, this investigation involved cooperation between a number of agencies. The Forest Service–we got a lot of information from them. The Bureau of Mines made a study of the mineral resources. The National Park Service was in there, made a study of that program, the park program. Then we had people go and classify the land in all the little valleys and things all around. So it turned out to be quite a comprehensive study of that area.

Petershagen: This might be a good place to stop, then, so I can turn the tape over.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 1. AUGUST 9, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1. AUGUST 9, 1994.

Petershagen: Vernon, you were explaining your assignment to Eureka. Tell me, when you first found out about it, when Mr. Boke called you into his office, did you have any anticipation–did you know this project was coming up?

Hansen: No, I had no idea at all. It was just out of the blue as far as I was concerned. In fact, I didn't know they were going to *make* such a study at the time he called me in.

Petershagen: So when he first mentioned Eureka what was your reaction?

Hansen: Well, I don't know. I kind of greeted it with a lot of careful anticipation. I was anticipating something real exciting. To me, it was exciting to go there. And by the way, my wife was born in and her forbearers all lived in Eureka for many years.

Petershagen: Oh, okay. So even though she was a "Patterson girl," so to speak, she was going back home by going to Eureka.

Hansen: That's right. She was going back home.

Petershagen: Then did you take her up there with you right

away? Or was there time to find a house?

Hansen: I left her behind to sell the house, get things ready, and then she and our two daughters joined me up there. We lived around in a couple of temporary cabins for a short time. Then we bought a house in Eureka.

Petershagen: Were these temporary cabins–were these government houses?

Hansen: No, they were private. One of them was, for instance, little cabins where people on vacation lived for a short time.

Petershagen: Oh, like a motel unit.

Hansen: Yeah. Looked like they were built there before they had automobiles! (laughter)

Petershagen: When you traveled back and forth from Sacramento to Eureka what was your preferred route?

**Many Trips between Eureka and Sacramento**

Hansen: Well, automobile-wise, we'd generally go up to just–we hit Highway 101 near Ukiah, and then went up 101. In those days, 101 was a two-lane road amongst the redwoods, with the speeding logging trucks coming both

ways, so it was quite an experience driving that! It took us six or seven hours to go from here. Now we can make that trip in four hours or so.

Petershagen: So you would go north on Highway 99?

Hansen: Yeah, we'd go on Highway 99 until we get to Williams, and then cut across north of Clear Lake and Ukiah and then on north.

Petershagen: That's State Highway 20 now.

Hansen: Yeah, I guess that's Highway 20, I really don't know. And another way we used to go quite a lot was up to Redding and then across Highway 299. Back in those days, there was plenty of places where the logging trucks would have to back up to get around the turns. So you got to be careful that you didn't get caught in between. And there were a lot of places where the road was just one lane. So that was a real experience driving *that* highway. (laughter)

Then, the preferred way was the airways. We flew DC-3s a lot, and Martinliners, and there's another one similar to the Martinliner that we'd fly from here to San Francisco and on up. That was pretty good experience, too, you know. I can remember one day up there

in Eureka, or Arcata Airport, getting on the plane, and a gal sat down next to me and she said, "This is the first time I ever flew on a plane. I'm just scared to death. Mind if I hold your hand?" She held my hand all the way to San Francisco! (laughter)

Petershagen: How long were you in Eureka?

**Planning Engineer in Eureka**

Hansen: I was there . . . Let's see, I went there in '52, and we left there and moved to Carson City about the first of January, 1960.

Petershagen: So about seven or eight years altogether in Eureka. And what was your job title? Were you a District Manager?

Hansen: Over there I was just, I guess, planning engineer. I just can't really remember the name of our office just now.

Petershagen: Who did you report to here in Sacramento?

Hansen: We reported in Sacramento here, to the head of the Planning Division, which at that time was Ivan Head, H-E-A-D. Then I left, and Joe Carson took over and stayed in Eureka as head of the office there, and I went over to Carson City.

Petershagen: Now, most of what you did in Eureka, I'm sure, consisted of studies that would be aimed at diversion of water back into the valley, correct, from say, the Eel?

**Studied Water Diversions for Central Valley Project**

Hansen: Well, and also developing water and flood protection for the local area, too. In fact, there in Eureka, in about 1955, I made a report to the Board of Supervisors recommending a plan to get water for the Eureka area. This involved building Ruth Dam. I gave a number of alternatives, but I said the preference was Ruth Dam on Mad River.[10] And they built it.

Petershagen: Yeah, it's there. You're right.

Hansen: Yeah, they built it. I kind of feel like through our efforts that they built that. They needed a water supply, and that was the best place for

10. "Ruth Dam, located 79 miles upstream from the mouth of the Mad River, was constructed in 1961 by the Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District (HBMWD). The dam impounding Ruth Reservoir has a maximum storage capacity of 52,000 acre-feet covering an area of 1,200 acres. Ruth Dam is operated by HBMWD for the storage of water to be used for municipal and industrial purposes in the Humboldt Bay area." See CASE STUDY REPORT #6 RUTH DAM MAD RIVER, http://www.calwater.ca.gov/Admin_Record/C-064065.pdf. (Accessed 2/2016)

them to get it.

Petershagen: So there was more to what you did than just what some of them might say is just trying to take their water away from them.

Hansen: Yeah, that's right. We were trying to help over there, too, although it was pretty hard to help. (laughter)

Petershagen: So you were there during the construction of the Trinity Division.[11] (Hansen: That's right.) Was there a big reaction to that in the Eureka area?

**Trinity Diversion**

Hansen: Well, there were . . . Some of the officials felt strongly about it. In fact, I can remember I used to attend a lot of meetings over there, and one was a sports club. They had the meeting and the fellow, the head of the

11. The Trinity River Division consists of Trinity Dam and Trinity Lake, Trinity Powerplant, Lewiston Dam and Lake, Lewiston Powerplant, Clear Creek Tunnel, Judge Francis Carr Powerhouse, Whiskeytown Dam and Lake, Spring Creek Tunnel and Powerplant, Spring Creek Debris Dam and Reservoir, and related pumping and distribution facilities. The division diverts water from the Trinity River into the Sacramento River basin. See Eric A. Stene, "Trinity Division Central Valley Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 1996, www.usbr.gov/history/projhist.html.

organization, got up and says, "You know, the Bureau of Reclamation is thinking of taking some of our water away. What do you people think about that?" Then he says, "We have Mr. Hansen from the Bureau of Reclamation here. He'll explain it to us." So there I was sitting . . . I had the state senator from over there, the assemblyman from over there, all the officials the Chamber of Commerce had, were all at that meeting. And they spent about two hours really asking a lot of questions, espousing lots of ideas. Afterwards, Senator [State Senator Howard K. Way] Way's wife came up to me and said, "Vern, you did a wonderful job. I don't know how you held your temper so well." (laughter)

Petershagen: So then you went from Eureka to Carson City, correct?

Hansen: Yeah. Now, as far as the Trinity Project was concerned, I had no connection with that. (Petershagen: I understand.) I was just on this planning deal, so I very seldom had any relationship with the project. But I did have relationships with people in Trinity County and all the counties up there–Mendocino County. I used to travel over into Round Valley, Covelo, Hyampom–that's the one downstream just from Hayfork.

Petershagen: Down from Hayfork, that's correct. Yeah, you're one of the few people I've interviewed, I'm sure, that is familiar with Hyampom. (laughter)

Hansen: Forest Glen. But anyway, we went there, and I had just been elected vice president of the Kiwanis Club over there, and that's one of those progressive deals where the next year you're president. (Petershagen: Right.) First vice president and then president of the Kiwanis, and I had to resign my position over there in the Kiwanis Club. I got over to Carson City, and I joined the Rotary Club.

Petershagen: Okay, then what was your position in Carson City?

**Project Manager of Lahontan Basin Project Office**

Hansen: Let's see, I think it was Project Manager of Lahontan Basin Project Office. Under that office we had construction going on on Prosser Creek Dam[12] on Prosser Creek,

12. "Prosser Creek Dam and Reservoir, completed in 1962, are located on Prosser Creek approximately 1.5 miles above the confluence of Prosser Creek and the Truckee River. The dam, a zoned earthfill structure, has a height of 163 feet and a crest length of 1,830 feet. The reservoir has a capacity of 29,800 acre feet. Up to 20,000 acre-feet of this amount is required for flood control purposes from (continued...)

which comes into the Truckee River west of Reno. And we had operation and maintenance of the old Newlands Project,[13] the Humboldt Project[14] down at Lovelock on the Humboldt River. It was a pretty comprehensive job that we had over there.

12. (...continued)
November through June. Water stored in the reservoir is used in an exchange of releases with Lake Tahoe to improve fishery flows in the Truckee River, principally in the reach from Lake Tahoe to the mouth of Donner Creek." See "Washoe Project, Prosser Creek Dam," http://www.usbr.gov/projects/Project.jsp?proj_Name=Washoe Project.

13. "The Newlands Project, formerly the Truckee-Carson Project, was one of the first Reclamation projects. Construction began in 1903. It provides full service irrigation water from the Truckee and Carson Rivers for about 55,000 acres of cropland in the Lahontan Valley near Fallon and bench lands near Fernley in western Nevada. In addition, water from about 6,000 acres of project land has been transferred to the Lahontan Valley wetlands near Fallon." See "Newlands Project," http://www.usbr.gov/projects/Project.jsp?proj_Name=Newlands+Project.

14. "The Humboldt Project is located in northwestern Nevada on the Humboldt River. Rye Patch Dam and Reservoir is on the Humboldt River about 22 miles upstream from Lovelock, the county seat of Pershing County. The dam stores river flows for diversion to irrigated lands. The project lands are in Lovelock Valley, on the lower flood plains of the river in an area of approximately 45,000 acres." See "Humboldt Project," http://www.usbr.gov/projects/Project.jsp?proj_Name=Humboldt+Project

Managing the land was one of the big, big problems, since we had a lot of land under reclamation withdrawal back in those days. And I can remember getting complaints from over near Reno that there was some land we had withdrawn, people were building cabins, hauling in a bunch of junk, used cars, and all that kind of stuff. So we got a lot of complaints about that. One of the things I tried to do first of all was to get somebody else to take over the land (laughter) like the Bureau of Land Management [BLM]. That wasn't successful, so I'd go over there and I got one of the fellows that caused most of the trouble was E. Z. Graham. He was an African-American married to a white woman, and they had a bunch of sons and daughters living in these various houses and shacks that they had put up. So I had to try to get him to clean it up. He was pretty cooperative. I never tried to move him out because I figured at that time for me to try to move an African-American out of that was just bad politics. So anyway, he cleaned things up pretty good, I thought. But he still . . . I can remember going with him over the area and showing him what we needed to get cleaned up and all this kind of stuff, and his grandchildren come out and "Yeah, yeah, yeah," and they were running around the house there, naked, you know. And he swore

at them.

Petershagen: Now, explain please, if you will, the term "withdrawal." What does it mean to have land withdrawn?

**Reclamation's Land Withdrawals**

Hansen: Well, back in the old days you had all this public land, and you had the possibility of reclamation projects. And so the Bureau wanted to set aside land that might be useful for dam and reservoir construction and for any other type thing on this federal land–it's on federal land. So this land was set aside for that type of purpose, and the Bureau of Reclamation, then, was responsible for managing it and looking after the land.

Petershagen: So it was held for the Bureau to use and couldn't be given up as homestead or it couldn't be sold?

Hansen: No, that was done for the purpose of constructing reclamation projects. I'm pretty sure that it didn't have anything to do with settling people or anything of that sort. Now it could have been some of that. Although,

for instance the old Klamath Project[15] and so forth, they homesteaded a lot of land. Now some of that land they might have been able to homestead it, I don't know.

Petershagen: But in any case, your friend, Mr. Graham, had no business building shacks there and so forth.

Hansen: No, he didn't. But you don't want to go out and just carelessly kick somebody off the land–get into a lot of problems. So I stayed away from that pretty much, and I don't know what's happened to it since. (laughter)

Well, you know, the Bureau of Land Management had even *more* difficult problems over there. They had land out there and these Mustang Ranch–not Mustang Ranch, but similar things were out there on B-L-M land. And of course you come under a lot of scrutiny of people especially that don't care for prostitution.

15. The Klamath Project provides full service water to approximately 210,000 acres of cropland in southern Oregon and northern California. Two main sources supply water for the project: Upper Klamath Lake and the Klamath River; and Clear Lake Reservoir, Gerber Reservoir, and Lost River. For more information, see Eric A. Stene, "Klamath Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 1994, www.usbr.gov/history.projhist.html.

Petershagen: So then, Vernon, how long were you in Carson City?

Hansen: I was there for three years. I got there in December 1960 and left there in the Fall of '63. And I came over here then in charge of planning for this region.

Petershagen: I see. But before we leave Carson City, were your daughters grown then by that time?

Hansen: One of them was just graduating from high school, the oldest one, and the youngest one was three years back, probably going in as a freshman.

Petershagen: So how did they take to this? There weren't *too* many relocations, but going from Eureka to Carson City to Sacramento–that's still some pretty big changes.

Hansen: Yeah. The one to Eureka, I think, they were young enough so that didn't really affect them very much. They were in the lower grades in school. The one from Eureka to Carson City was much more difficult for them to handle. But they got along. They did alright, I thought–made friends, did well in school.

Petershagen: So you moved to Sacramento and took over the Planning Division.

Hansen: Yeah.

Petershagen: And what was your job title then?

Hansen: I think it was Regional Planning Engineer.

Petershagen: And so you reported to the Regional Director on that job?

Hansen: Right, in the Regional Office.

Petershagen: And that was when? About 1963, I guess.

Hansen: I guess it might have been the Spring of '63 that I moved. I didn't get the family over here until a little later, so I think it was probably the Spring of '63 I came over and took over the Planning Division.

Petershagen: And about how many people worked for you then?

Hansen: Well, I imagine 130-150, something like that. That's including members of the drill crew and all that type of thing. But this is mostly engineers and economists, secretaries, geologists, secretarial help.

Petershagen: Safe to say that that division was

considerably bigger than the Regional Office when you first started with the Bureau of Reclamation?

Hansen: Sure was! (laughs) The Regional Office was a pretty small office when I came over here. In fact, it was small enough for Walker Young, himself, the Supervising Engineer, he assigned out the automobiles. (laughter)

Petershagen: And in 1963 when you came here, the Cottage Way building didn't exist yet. (Hansen: No.) So where was your office?

Hansen: We were in the building on the corner of Fulton and Marconi.

Petershagen: Where the Town and Country Shopping Center is.

Hansen: Yes, that's right.

Petershagen: And then from there you moved into the new Federal Building when it was built.

Hansen: Yeah, and I don't remember what year that was that we moved. Several years there in the Town and Country site.

Petershagen: What was that building like there at Town and Country? Was it multiple stories?

Hansen: I really don't know right now. The *new* building, I know, is a two-story building, but that first one, I don't know.

Petershagen: The question just occurred to me, because I don't recall that I've ever even seen a picture of it anyplace.

## Managing the Planning Division

What was the Planning Division like? Did you just feel like it was really running efficiently and you just kind of settled into your job? Or are you one of these kind of guys that has to make changes when you get started in a new job?

Hansen: Well, I'm not one to make changes where they don't have to be made, and I can't really remember any big changes I made. I had to do some changing because of the fact that I was out quite a lot, and so I had to have assistants. And so I appointed two assistants, and they helped me run the shop and gave me time to, when people came into town, I could meet with them and also Mr. [Robert J.] Pafford[16] was new on the job, so I had to spend quite a lot of time with Mr. Pafford.

16. Robert J. Pafford was Regional Director for the Mid-Pacific Region from 1963 to 1973.

Petershagen: He was the Regional Director at the time?

Hansen: He was the Regional Director, and he didn't know a lot of the things that were going on. So I had to be available to brief him. With that, I had to, like I say, appoint these assistants to carry on the day-to-day activity of the division.

Then I also, at that time, was looking forward to us maybe building some projects or something of that sort someplace in different areas. And so I had a section head for different parts of the valley–for instance up in the western valley and the Delta acreage, and down the San Joaquin, and down in Santa Barbara County. In fact, I then sent somebody down to open up an office in Santa Barbara. It wasn't any big problem that I could see, anyplace. We were just, at that time, completing the investigation of the Auburn site.

Petershagen: Let's talk about Auburn in a minute, but first your Planning Division represented quite a few disciplines: economists, planners, engineers. Was that a big challenge to you, to try to keep everybody working together?

Hansen: Well, most of these fellows and people had worked together for a long time, and they

knew their jobs. There were some pretty strong-minded people that I had to deal with, but . . . Well, I can remember we used to once in a while have these–where we'd go away with a group of these managers . . .

Petershagen: Oh, some sort of a retreat?

Hansen: Retreat! And everybody opened everything up. The fellows that were running this particular one said, "Vernon, how did you come across all these guys?!" But anyway, we got along alright. I really didn't have any big trouble with them. But they had minds of their own. I managed to work things out.

Petershagen: Now, while you were the Regional Planning Director, I guess the Auburn site was probably your biggest project, was it not?

**Regional Projects at the Time**

Hansen: Yes, it was. At that time, while I was Planning Engineer, we were working on the San Felipe Project, which is to take water from San Luis Reservoir over into the Hollister-San Jose area.[17] So we got that

17. "The San Felipe Division of the Central Valley Project, in the central coastal area of California, embraces the Santa Clara Valley in Santa Clara County, the northern portion of San Benito County, the (continued...)

authorized. Then later we got Auburn [Dam] authorized. In fact, those are probably the last major projects we got authorized. And as you know, we never got Auburn off the ground. (laughter) Well, we got some construction underway, but it was put a stop to.

In fact, I could see the handwriting on the wall a long time ago. That's one of the reasons I retired when I did. I could see, you know, it used to be you'd go in, you'd start some study and everything, and you'd meet with the Fish and Game, and you'd meet with a few people like that. And it got to the point where you had comparable agencies from the state and the federal, the local–so you'd set up some little meeting, and there'd be fifty people there, trying to decide something! And it got to the point where, well, white-

17. (...continued)
southern portion of Santa Cruz County, and the northern edge of Monterey county. Authorized in 1960, the division provides supplemental water to 63,500 acres of land, in addition to 132,400 acre-feet of water annually for municipal and industrial use. Water from San Luis Reservoir is transported to the Santa Clara-San Benito service area through Pacheco Tunnel and other project features which include 48.5 miles of closed conduits, two pumping plants, and one small reservoir." See "San Felipe Division," http://www.usbr.gov/projects/Project.jsp?proj_Name=San+Felipe+Division+Project.

water rafting became more important than irrigation. As I say, I could see that there wasn't going to be anymore big developments as far as I could see. That's one of the things that helped me to decide to retire.

Petershagen: And when did you retire?

Hansen: I retired in 1970. Actually, my last official time on the payroll is January 1971, but I went on a lecture tour during late 1970 of Southeast Asia, lecturing on water resource development. Then I came back and retired.

Petershagen: I see. Let's stick with Auburn for a little while then, if we can. There are all sorts of proposals still out there for what should we do with the dam site that's been developed? Then away from that there's the questions of should we go ahead and build a dry dam up there for flood control? What do you think? You've done this kind of stuff all your life.

## Auburn Dam

Hansen: Yeah. Well, I, of course, I'm in favor of going ahead with the original project.[18]

18. "The Auburn-Folsom South Unit of the Central Valley Project was designed to provide a new and supplemental water supply for irrigation, municipal and industrial needs, and to alleviate the badly (continued...)

That's what I think ought to be built there. That's the big dam. I don't care whether it's a concrete dam or an earth-filled dam, or whatever, but I think a large dam there is the sensible thing to put in there. Now, the reason they didn't go to an earth-filled dam there in the first place was that you'd have to scour the whole countryside to get gravel and so forth to go into that earth-filled dam. They figured that it was just not practical to do that, it's better to put in a concrete arch. Now, this dry dam . . .

Petershagen: Well, let me stop you. Otherwise, we're going to get caught by the tape here. So just hold that thought, and we'll start over again.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 1. AUGUST 9, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2. AUGUST 9, 1994.

Petershagen: Vernon, we were talking about the Auburn Dam Project. When I interrupted you, you

18. (...continued)
depleted ground-water conditions in the Folsom South service area.... Authorized in 1965 , the unit consist of Auburn Dam, Reservoir, and Powerplant, Folsom South Canal, Sugar Pine Dam and Reservoir, County Line Dam and Reservoir, and appurtenant works." Due to environmental and cost concerns, the project was never constructed. For more information, see U.S. Department of the Interior, Water and Power Resources Service, *Project Data* (Denver: United States Government Printing Office, 1981), 175-178.

had explained the options of earth-filled versus concrete arch, and you were starting to say something about the dry dam idea. Can you pick it up from there?

Hansen: Now actually, I've been retired for twenty to twenty-five years now from the Bureau, and I don't know what all the alternatives that have been proposed in the meantime. I think there've been lots of proposed small dams and off-stream dams and things of that sort, which I know very little about. Now, there was a proposal a while back of a dry dam. You use it only for flood protection, and then you run it out. Well, I don't think that's very practical in that what you do, you store the water and then let it run out. Well, you ought to, I think when you store water, you ought to keep it in there and make use of it for other purposes. Now I really don't know–well, it still costs a lot of money for a foundation and to build a dam for just the flood storage part of it. I think the increment above that for putting in space for conservation is worthwhile.

Now, there's another thing about it is, you have a dry dam, the politics will enter into that pretty greatly, because as soon as you get the water in there, everybody's saying, "Oh! Hold it there! We need that for downstream

use." And then so you have a reservoir there for flood control only is being used for conservation. And that *really* endangers the flood problems as far as I'm concerned.

Petershagen: I see, and that is a little bit different twist on it than I've heard from a lot of people. But, you're right. Once it is there, it's open to politics getting involved.

**Politics in Determining Flow Rates**

Hansen: Oh sure. Politics gets into all this stuff. So it's very difficult right now, to operate Folsom Dam[19] because of the fact that everybody's chipping in and saying what you ought to do, and most of them don't have any knowledge of what's going on! (laughter)

Petershagen: Yeah, it's for sure that the Bureau gets enough

19. "Originally authorized in 1944 as a 355,000 acre-feet flood control unit, Folsom Dam was reauthorized in 1949 as a 1,000,000 acre-feet multiple-purpose facility. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers constructed Folsom Dam and transferred it to Reclamation for coordinated operation as an integral part of the Central Valley Project. Construction of the dam began in October 1948 and was completed in May 1956. Water was first stored in February 1955." For more information, see Wm. Joe Simonds, "The Central Valley Project: The American River Division, the Folsom and Sly Park Units, The Auburn-Folsom South Unit," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 1994, www.usbr.gov/history/projhist.html.

advice about Folsom.

Hansen: Sure, you get *lots* of advice about it.

Petershagen: Almost every day it seems we read something in the [*Sacramento*] *Bee* about either the level's being kept too high or too low.

Hansen: That's right. And when I was working with the Fish and Game, Fish and Wildlife Service, to reach agreement on the downstream flows, you know, for fish and everything, well, at that time we were dealing with an uncontrolled stream. Back in 1924 the amount of water going downstream past Folsom was seven cubic feet per second. Now, the minimum allowable is 1,500 cubic feet per second. And there's other people proposing more than that. So anyway, we agreed with Fish and Wildlife, something like minimum flows during a real dry year of 250-300 cubic feet per second. Well, things changed, the politics, everything changed over the years–250 second feet wouldn't be enough. Still got to get it up to 1,500 cubic feet per second (laughs) even on a real dry year!

**Depletions in Fisheries**

And back in those days, we couldn't foresee all the things that were going to come up. For instance, I think a lot of the problems with the salmon, for instance, I think are due not wholly–maybe partly–due to control of the streams. But I think a large part of it's due to overfishing. You go out in the Klamath River, for instance, they run out of fish, because when they start fishing, there's fishermen shoulder-to-shoulder across the whole stream. Then upstream the Indians are fishing with gill nets. Then out in the ocean they're bringing in all this so there's plenty of record, for instance, that the sardines, for instance, have disappeared from the West Coast, and probably mainly from–and they're not inland, they have nothing to do with these reservoirs–probably due to overfishing–the reason they don't have sardines. And the humpback whale is another example. They overfished that for a while. They got it back now, I guess, to where there *are* plenty of humpback whales, but back in those days, they were overfishing them. And when you start in overfishing, well, you've got to cut back someplace, because you're not going to improve conditions upstream, that's for sure, in my estimation.

Petershagen: Well now as we look at–well, we could go down and look at the American River here,

or go out and look at the Sacramento, there's certainly plenty of water flowing through both of those rivers right now. In a winter like we had, combined with the dry summer like this, I'm sure that without the Bureau's projects, that we have no reason to expect that sort of flow naturally.

Hansen: That's right. And people just don't know the improvement that has resulted from, say, Shasta and Folsom, and the state's project, and the Delta. Back when we were studying it, back in the 1940s, the Central Valley Project, we made studies of the amount of flow that would be necessary to keep the ocean saltwater out of the Delta. Back in 1931-34, they were pumping saltwater out here in Sacramento. And it'd get that far upstream. Now, it's kept up past Antioch or Collinsville, and they keep the saltwater out. And people want even *more* water released, and I can't understand that. They got now . . . They've found a little smelt or something of that sort, they tried to say . . . (Petershagen: The Delta smelt.) Yeah, Delta smelt. And I don't know what that Delta smelt does. (both chuckle) Those people, I think, are a detriment to the development of the area, hanging onto something like the Delta smelt. That's just like that back in the T-V-A [Tennessee Valley Authority] back in the old

days, a little fish, which I think most of them say now there was never a problem there at all, but at that time, it was a *big* problem.

Petershagen: Total change in subjects here–you mentioned a lecture tour in Southeast Asia. That was sponsored by the Bureau?

**Lecture Tour in Southeast Asia**

Hansen: Yes, it was sponsored by ECAFE, which is the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East.[20] The Bureau participated in that, and they had Bureau people go over into these various countries and lecture on water resource development. I happened to lecture in Ceylon, which is now Sri-Lanka, and Malaysia and Indonesia. There are other Bureau people that did the same thing at various times. That was a very interesting

20. "The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is the regional development arm of the United Nations for the Asia-Pacific region. Made up of 53 Member States and 9 Associate Members, with a geographical scope that stretches from Turkey in the west to the Pacific island nation of Kiribati in the east, and from the Russian Federation in the north to New Zealand in the south, the region is home to 4.1 billion people, or two thirds of the world's population. This makes ESCAP the most comprehensive of the United Nations five regional commissions, and the largest United Nations body serving the Asia-Pacific region with over 600 staff." See "About ESCAP," http://www.unescap.org/about.

experience.

Petershagen: Was your wife able to go along with you on that?

Hansen: Yes, I took my wife with me. So it was a great experience for her, too, let me tell you. So anyway, that was my last official duty with the Bureau of Reclamation, was that trip.

Petershagen: Not a bad way to go out, huh? (laughter)

Hansen: Oh, that's right. Then as soon as I retired here, I went with the World Bank for three years.

Petershagen: What did you do for them?

Hansen: I did studies on Bangladesh, mainly. In fact, I happened to join at the time when Pakistan was invading Bangladesh, and the airport was potholed with bomb craters and things of that sort.

Petershagen: So that was about 1971-72?

**Working for the World Bank**

Hansen: Yeah, in '71 I was already to leave Washington, and they grabbed me by the arms

and said, "You can't go." So I had to wait a year before I went over to Bangladesh. So I did studies in the World Bank office in Washington.

Petershagen: In Washington. So you were back there for how long?

Hansen: I was just there with them for two years. Then I went on with the World Bank . . . I went on a trip to India to consult on a project in West Bengal.

Petershagen: How did you get involved with the World Bank? You didn't just say, "Well, I think I'll retire from the Bureau of Reclamation and go to work for the World Bank."

Hansen: No, I was all retired and everything, and ready, and I got a call from Pat Dugan. Do you know him?

Petershagen: No, sir.

Hansen: Pat Dugan was with the Bureau.[21] He was a Regional Director, in fact, in '63 when I came here. Before that, I knew him in the Denver Office. He had worked for Randy Riter. He

21. Hugh (Pat) P. Dugan was Regional Director for the Mid-Pacific Region from 1960 to 1963.

was a very fine fellow. That's one of the things [about] the Bureau of Reclamation that I thought was wonderful, is the fine people that I was involved with. I thought they were all good. A couple of them I can say were not too good (chuckles), but I would say over ninety-eight percent of them were.

Petershagen: As I've gone through this experience, as I meet more and more people from the Bureau of Reclamation, I am coming to share your estimation, that it's quite a collection of very fine people.

Hansen: That's right. They were all really wonderful. Pat Dugan was a fine fellow. He was Regional Director here. He was in the Denver Office, [with] Randy Riter, and he was Regional Director here, then he was Regional Director in Denver. And then he went with the World Bank, and he was with them for, oh, several years. And when he retired from the World Bank, he called me to come. In fact, I would have to say that he was a big help to me in that he brought me into the Regional Office as Planning Engineer.

Petershagen: This might be a good time, then, to ask a question that I've asked *nearly* everyone I've interviewed, and that is, if there was anyone

that you could point to in your career as perhaps a mentor? Is there anybody you could name as a mentor of your career?

**Career Mentors**

Hansen: Well, let's see, I'd have to start with S. P. McCasland. He brought me in, and I only worked with him a couple of years before he left. Then there's S. A. Kerr, I think, Pat Dugan, and Randy Riter–fellows that I think had the biggest impact on my career.

Petershagen: I see. You came to Sacramento from Carson City during a bit of a change, I think, in the Bureau's life in that there weren't any real big construction projects on the horizon. You mentioned that you'd kind of seen the writing on the wall.

Hansen: Yeah, at that time when I first came, it looked pretty good. I mean, it looked like we were going to get Auburn. (Petershagen: We still had Auburn.) The San Felipe Project, taking water over there. And I think we were constructing one dam at Ventura, Gallegos Dam (Petershagen: Oh, right.), down there.[22]

22. "Authorized in 1956, the Ventura River Project was the third and last of three large-scale Federal water projects in the region. These 'seacoast projects' capture the seasonal floodwaters that would (continued...)

So we were doing quite a little bit. To me, at that time, the prospects looked better. But pretty soon, you could see the handwriting on the wall where the environmentalists were having lots more influence than they had before. For instance, the little old lady in New York, she was *much* more interested in white-water rafting here than in irrigation or water supply or anything of that sort and where all of *those* are.

Petershagen: When did you notice that change taking place?

### Changes in the Air

Hansen: Well, I noticed that, I think, mainly when I first went to Eureka. That's when I really noticed, or began to notice that, for instance, those people over there were pretty environmentally-minded, although not to the extent that they are now. And also, for instance, at that time, I remember the people on the Rogue River, they wanted some dams there to provide a water supply for irrigation along the Rogue. By golly, they couldn't get

22. (...continued)
otherwise 'waste to the sea'." The projects main feature is Casitas Dam and Reservoir. See "Ventura River Project," http://www.usbr.gov/projects/Project.jsp?proj_Name=Ventura+River+Project.

it, because the little old lady in New York–I always refer to that–but somebody a far distance away, that has no connection with it at all, except through the environment. They want to save every last redwood tree and every little nuthatch (chuckles) there is. And they have their right, too. That's the way it ought to be.

Petershagen: Okay, Vernon, I think I'm really kind of at the end of my agenda. As I mentioned to you before, I think that probably somebody else is going to want to talk to you more in-depth about Newlands and Washoe and the projects east of the Sierra. Is there anything else that we should talk about, or anything you want to say just on your own that we haven't covered?

Hansen: I'll have to think about it a little bit. I've been talking about a lot of things I probably shouldn't be talking about. (pause) Well, I don't know, I can't think of anything right now.

Petershagen: Okay, that's certainly fair enough. Then I think maybe that we should call it a day. So, before I turn off the recorder, I need to ask you once again to acknowledge that you gave your permission for this interview to be tape recorded.

Hansen: I sure did.

Petershagen: And that you understand that the interview becomes the property of the United States, that you've given up any rights to it that you may have.

Hansen: Yes.

Petershagen: And that you understand it'll be open for historians and other researchers that may be interested in the Bureau of Reclamation. (no audible response) And with that, thank you very much.

Hansen: Okay, thank you.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 2. AUGUST 9, 1994.
END OF INTERVIEW.