ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

FRANK KNELL

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STATUS OF INTERVIEWS:
OPEN FOR RESEARCH

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Interviews Conducted and Edited by:
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STATEMENT OF DONATION
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS
Frank W. Knell

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Brit Allan Storey

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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 Interview
Frank Knell

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, senior historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing Frank Knell of the Bureau of Reclamation in his office in Washington, D.C., in the main Interior Building on the seventh floor at about ten o'clock in the morning on October 6, 1993. This is tape one.

Well, Mr. Knell, if I could get you to tell me about your early life and your education and how you arrived at Reclamation, I would appreciate it.

Early Life

Knell: All right. I was born and raised in a little town in southern Utah called Cedar City. I was born there in 1938. I went to school there and graduated high school in '56 and went to the local junior college at that time, an outfit called College of Southern Utah. It's now achieved university status. Transferred to the University of Utah and graduated there in 1961 with a degree in political science. Went to graduate school a year or so and worked various jobs. Neared completion of the master's degree and completed an application, got a letter of recommendation from one of the local professors, a guy by the name of J. D. Williams, who was an excellent teacher and quite an institution in politics and public administration in Utah. Made some applications and started shopping around for a job.

I remember the day I took those around. I went to primarily northern Utah, where the big federal installations: the Internal Revenue Service and also Hill Air Force Base, some defense installations in Ogden. Drove back into Salt Lake City, coming from the north, pulled off to a grocery store or a service station or something. My wife and I looked through the Yellow Pages under "Federal Government," and saw an outfit called the Bureau of Reclamation under Department of the Interior, which was in a direct line between where we were and where our home was. So I decided to take the last application and drop it off there.

I found the place at 32 Exchange Place down in downtown Salt Lake City. My wife circled the block while I ran the application in, talked with the receptionist, a lady by the name of Esther Mory, who today is working downstairs with the [U.S.] Fish and Wildlife Service. I've maintained a relationship with her for thirty years. She introduced me to the head of the employment section, a guy by the name of Bob Donaldson, and that led to a couple of interviews, and I was selected for employment, and I felt very fortunate about that. I'd been working pumping gas for a dollar an hour. My beginning salary was $5,795 a year as a Personnel Management Specialist, a GS-7. So I was in tall cotton at that time.

Storey: Could you tell me about your family background in Cedar City?

Knell: Yeah. I come out of good old grassroots, rural, redneck, Mormon stock. Aunts and uncles,

parents, grandparents worked farms, ranches, laboring-type people.

Introduction to Reclamation

I realized after I went to work for Reclamation that I had been exposed to Reclamation without really knowing it. During the summer–I think it was 1963–I got a job at the local 7-Up bottling plants, delivering 7-Up and other flavors, soda water, in the surrounding communities. One of my weekly trips involved taking a load of soda over to Kanab, Utah, and then on a very bumpy dirt road out to Page, Arizona, where I sold 7-Up to various outlets and stores, locker rooms, and showers room where Glen Canyon Dam was under full construction.[1] They were working three shifts at that time.

I made, as I recall, forty dollars a week and eight cents a case for everything I could sell. Those locker rooms and shower rooms at Glen Canyon were really moneymakers. I would be sliding in the bottles at one end of the cooler and they would be taking them out of the other end when they came off shift, fixing themselves drinks. They had bottles of bourbon and whiskey and gin scattered around the locker room. I was providing the mixers. I made pretty good money that summer.

1. Completed in 1963, Glen Canyon Dam is a principal feature of the Colorado River Storage Project. For more information, see Jedediah Rogers, "Glen Canyon Unit, Colorado River Storage Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 2006, www.usbr.gov/history/projhist.html.

Storey: Was your family a farm family?

Knell: Yes and no. My dad was primarily just a laboring man. He never did own a ranch. He worked on farms, worked on ranches and drove a truck, worked in service stations, but never did own property.

Storey: Do you ever remember any discussions about water or water rights when you were young?

Local Water Useage

Knell: I don't know a lot of discussions, but I was certainly aware that that was very important. Droughts would wipe people out, we all had in those days had large family gardens. You would get up at two or three o'clock in the morning and take the water when it was your turn to take the water from the irrigation ditch running through town. When your next-door neighbor had used his allocation, you'd go out and move the wooden stays out of the dam and the water would run on your property. When you were through, the next-door neighbor would get it. Water and irrigation was importance to the water, something we just kind of took for granted in that area. It was very dry. It was a very barren arid. Water is very important.

Storey: A lot of cedars around? It's named Cedar City properly?

Knell: Not really.

Storey: No?

Knell: The Mormon pioneers missed it. The trees are actually called junipers. They thought they were cedars. That's how it got its name. That's right.

Storey: You know, when I was talking to Roland Robison[2] in Salt Lake last week, I was reminded that the first time I went to Salt Lake City there was water running in the gutters as a sanitary measure, to help keep the streets clean. I was just wondering, did that happen in Cedar City near you?

Knell: Not that I recall. Well, in Cedar City when I was growing up, there was probably only one gutter or two gutters. That was on each side of Main Street. You get off Main Street and you just had dirt, dirt bank ditches. The water ran in to carry the irrigation to farms and the gardens and the homes in the various neighborhoods.

Storey: Do you happen to remember any disputes over the water in the town, using it for gardens?

Knell: No. The water in Cedar City, the primary source, is a stream called Coal Creek that comes out Highway 14 and goes up Cedar Mountain.

Storey: That's the one that goes over toward the north entrance to Zion [National Park], and I've forgotten the name of that other.

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2. Roland Robison served as regional director of the Upper Colorado Region, 1989-1993 and participated in Reclamation's oral history program. See Roland Robison, *Oral History Interview*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interview conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, September 27, 1993, in Salt Lake City, Utah, edited by Brit Allan Storey, www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html.

Knell: Highway 14 goes over to Navajo Lake, Cedar Breaks, and down into the junction of 89,which goes down to Zion.

No, I don't remember any range wars or shooting incidents or anything like that about water.

Storey: Do you remember any unusual incidents that happened while you were out at Glen Canyon during construction there? Were you aware, for instance, of labor unrest or any funny stories or anything like that?

Impressions of Glen Canyon Construction

Knell: No. What I recall is the massive nature of the job. It was a very interesting place to spend time. I would go out once a week and I could see the progress, of course, that had been made since the previous week, see the thing slowly grow in size. It was a very busy place, very dusty, very dirty, very hot. The local people, of course, were very excited about that. It was pumping money into the economy, but they could also anticipate what it would mean in the future in terms of the tourist trade and economic stimulus for that part of the country.

Later, when I went to work for Reclamation, my friends and relatives in southern Utah heard about that or as I was discussing it later. They had good things to say about Reclamation. The public image, the recollections, the experiences with Reclamation were all very positive. So that made me feel good.

Storey: Do you remember how long you worked at that job, how long you went around and visited the site?

Knell: It was just summer, one trip a week. So it was probably seven or eight weeks.

Storey: So it was during the summer, though.

Knell: During the summer, right.

Storey: What did you do as a Personnel Specialist for Reclamation?

Reclamation Personnel Specialist

Knell: First job, I was assigned to the Classification and Wage Branch, and I classified jobs, which means I tried to analyze the nature and difficulty and responsibility of work being assigned by people, attach a grade to that and the grade attach resulted in a salary. It's the way Uncle Sam classifies work, which leads to a hierarchy of supervision and managerial jobs and worker bees down below, and that's tied to wage grade.

I hated it, by the way. It was not fun work. It was very controversial. You're always being pressured to classify the job higher than what it should be so people can get more money. I didn't find classification to be enjoyable work. I think that's still true.

Storey: Were there any other major issues besides this constant pressure to raise classifications that you remember?

Knell: In the early days, let's see, I did enjoy going on the field trips and seeing construction activity in the region. The Salt Lake City Office is the headquarters for the Upper Colorado Region–at that time, the Curecanti Unit over on the Gunnison River in western Colorado.[3] Various features of the Colorado River Storage Act, in addition to Glen Canyon, were either in construction or being planned, and final preparations were made for construction. So it was a very busy, active office, a lot of field travel, and that was very enjoyable.

Storey: What other personnel issues were there? Or if you don't remember any–

Knell: No. I worked in classification, I guess about a year, and then transferred over into staffing and employee development training, and I enjoyed that much more. That was more satisfying work. In fact, that is the work I stayed with pretty much until I left personnel, I think in 1978. I moved out of personnel function, per se.

Storey: When you say training and personnel development, were you doing the training or were you arranging for other folks to do the training?

3. The Curecanti Unit, now referred to as the Wayne Aspinall Unit, is a piece of the Colorado River Storage Project to developed the water storage and hydroelectric power generating potential along a 40-mile section of the Gunnison River in Colorado by the construction of three dams and powerplants: Blue Mesa, Morrow Point, and Crystal. For more information, see Zachary Redmond, "Wayne Aspinall Unit, Colorado River Storage Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 2000, www.usbr.gov/history/projhist.html.

Knell: Primarily arranging for other people.

Storey: And a whole broad range of things or did you specialize?

Knell: Very broad range. A broad range. Recruitment for that time, in the early days, again, construction inspectors, engineers, technicians, laboratory people as well as support staff, office types.

Job Corps

In 1964, as part of [President] Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, the Job Corps program hit Reclamation. I kind of had an interest in that, and so the personnel aspects of that were handed over to me. I remember opening up the Job Corps Center in Ogden, Utah, and we established one in Collbran, Colorado, on the Western Slope of Colorado. Those were very interesting times, because that type of work, the sociological improvement of society, so to speak, handed to an organization that had been primarily engineering and very technical, was kind of traumatic for a lot of people.

I remember we also didn't have a hell of a lot of time to prepare for that program, because Johnson indicated he wanted the program up and running as fast as it could get there, and he had people showing up, young people showing up at the Greyhound Bus depot, I remember, in Ogden to enroll in the Weber Basin Job Corps Center, and we didn't have a Weber Basin Job Corps Center. It existed in name only. The first few months, these young people stayed in the

homes of Reclamation employees, because we had nowhere else to put them. Eventually we got dormitories established and it worked out okay.

Storey: Let's explore the Job Corps a little bit. Reclamation provided the personnel who ran those, is that right?

Knell: Right. They still do. Reclamation today, I think, has five Job Corps Centers. We still have Collbran, Colorado; Weber Basin, Utah; Marsing outside of Boise; and a couple of others in the Pacific Northwest Region.

The Job Corps, I think, has been a very positive addition to Reclamation program. I think we have to recognize in our society is such that a lot of young people out of ghetto areas, dropouts, drug problems, getting away from those areas and spending time in a conservation center and having three good meals a day, and people who care, vocational training, health services, a lot of these kids visit a dentist for the first time, twenty-one, twenty-two years old, seeing a dentist for the first time. I think Reclamation should be very proud of its Job Corps contributions.

Storey: How were the people recruited? I sort of got the impression from what you said earlier that they just showed up and signed up to work there.

Job Corps Enrollees

Knell: Yeah. They were recruited by the Department of Labor. The program is actually administered

by the Department of Labor, and then Reclamation operates the centers through agreements with the Department of Labor. And don't get me wrong. That's not how the program operated in later years. It's certainly not how it operates today. Just when it first started, the initial establishment of the program was kind of chaotic, because it was just getting started, very disorganized. We had young people showing up and we didn't have anyplace to put them. But that was resolved shortly and the centers were established. Dormitories were built. It's still there. Weber Basin is still–they're both still there. Weber Basin is a very fine facility, well run, well kept.

Storey: What kind of personnel would you have been recruiting for the Job Corps positions?

Knell: Job Corps program really has three primary areas of emphasis, they did last I was involved, and that's been several years. In the mid-sixties, they were interested in providing what we called social skill development, learning to get along and live with fellow human beings in a dormitory setting. So we were looking for people with counseling experience or interests, credentials, psychology majors.

There was also a formal education program. One building was a schoolhouse. They were tested to determine their status, their level of educational development, and remedial programs were put together to help them learn how to read and write and spell, things of that sort.

Then the third program was vocational training, receive training in various blue-collar trades–welding, painting, electrical work, carpentry, auto mechanics, other trades like that.

Storey: So Reclamation was recruiting instructors?

Knell: That's correct.

Storey: And, I presume, supervisors, they were doing work, right?

Knell: Right. They would contract for local community development projects, community improvement projects: making trails in the national forests, clean-up projects, making signs for recreation areas, working with local schools to paint and refurbish buildings. They were being reimbursed for the work that was performed, but the contracts had to be written in such a way that both those receiving the services and the Bureau recognized that the primary purpose was training. So if you were building a rock wall for someone, you might tear it down three or four times before you let it stay up, because the training was the important thing, and, actually, the accomplishment of the work project was secondary.

Storey: Did they work on Reclamation projects also?

Job Corps Activities on Reclamation Projects

Knell: Yes. I'm trying to recall some of the projects. I remember on the Western Slope of Colorado doing some remedial work on some of the small dams. They were clearing out brush from the

dams and helping build recreation areas, picnic tables, things of that sort. Where the Reclamation program could be meshed with the developmental aspect of Job Corps, projects were devoted to Job Corps.

Storey: So if I'm understanding you correctly, the Job Corps program that Reclamation managed and administered was not really sort of in the mainstream of Reclamation's mission. It was a subsidiary mission.

Knell: That's right.

Storey: Which sometimes contributed to Reclamation projects.

Knell: That's right.

Storey: What were some of the problems? You mentioned earlier that there were some folks who had problems with this program.

Issues with Reclamation Involvement with Job Corps

Knell: Well, a lot of Reclamation people, as I'm sure you know, have always been very proud, and rightly so, of Reclamation's tradition of being a very different federal agency in that we "pay our way." We build projects, and the water users and power users reimburse the federal government for the cost of those projects. This means we're not tax users, we're not bureaucrats, we're not part of a growing, huge government bureaucracy, we're not getting into socialized programs.

Then when the Job Corps program hit, this was a direct opposite of that. These were tax dollars being used to accommodate young people. Some old-liners in Reclamation did not like that. They did not like to be burdened down with the Job Corps program. They wanted to build the dams and do what they had done in the past. So there was some tension within the agency. There's no doubt about that.

Storey: This is obvious. The Job Corps sounds to me as if it's a very obviously socially-oriented program aimed at vocational training and so on. From your perspective, why was Reclamation involved, instead of, say, the whole program being in the Department of Education or in the Department of Labor, for instance?

Knell: I'm not sure. You'd have to talk to someone like Ron Robertson in Denver, who heads up the Job Corps program now. But I think in the early days, the assumption was that agencies who were involved in conservation or related types of activity could provide meaningful development experiences for young people, and I think they were correct. Once the program was implemented, we had good experiences. We educated a lot of young people. We prepared them for meaningful employment.

I think one thing that was considered was the rural setting of Reclamation projects. Initially, these young people were coming out of ghetto areas like Watts, California, to the wild open spaces of northern Utah or western Colorado. I assume the theory there was that a change of scenery and a change of pace, a different

climate, would be beneficial, and I assume they were correct.

Storey: How long were you associated with recruiting for the Job Corps program?

Knell: Mid-sixties. Let's see, I worked in the Salt Lake City Office from '64 through '69. That would have all been Job Corps. I took a flyer on a job in the Trust Territories out in the Pacific for four months in '69. That didn't work out, so I came back to Reclamation.

In '70, transferred to Denver Office. In '75, back to the Salt Lake City office. I worked in personnel there from '75 to '78 and then moved into the front office as Assistant Regional Director in '78. I worked there until 1985, when I transferred to Washington. So Job Corps involved, to some extent, either in personnel or other administrative aspects of the program from '64 through probably '85, when I came back here.

Storey: What else were you doing when you were in training and employee development in Salt Lake?

Concentrated on Employment and Staffing

Knell: The primary part of the job during that period of time was employment, was staffing. As I indicated, all of the construction projects for that region, or many projects were in full swing at that time, and the big part of the job was staffing, getting people hired and getting them placed where they were needed throughout the

region. Training was pretty well limited to a basic lineup of courses through the Civil Service Commission or local colleges and universities. That probably took maybe 10 percent of my time. Staffing employment the other 90 percent. We did not have a very ornate or well-developed employee development program.

Storey: What were the big issues in staffing in those days in Reclamation?

Knell: Trying to find and develop construction supervisors and managers and technicians and inspectors.

Another issue in the mid-sixties was wrestling with the beginnings of the E-E-O [Equal Employment Opportunity] program and affirmative action and translating that into providing opportunities to people regardless of race, creed, color, age, sex, any other non-merit factor. There again, that era, that culture, that caused tensions and stress within the organization. The black community, for example, is not very large in Utah. The Mormon Church influence certainly felt in that culture because that's where we did all our work. So we were pushing community norms in some cases that were not too responsive. Certainly the emphasis in those days is not anywhere near what it is today, but there was enough to make it very uncomfortable for some people who did not quite agree with some of those programs.

Storey: How did you go out and recruit, if that's the correct term, construction personnel in those days?

Employee Recruitment

Knell: Construction, well, there are two different types. For graduate engineers, we had a very active college recruitment program nationwide. Those were fun activities for me because it allowed me to travel through parts of the country I'd never seen. I used to take a ten-day or two-week trip through the South, for example, fly into New Orleans, recruit north at L-S-U [Louisiana State University] and then drive down to–is Tulane in New Orleans?

Storey: Tulane is in New Orleans, yeah.

Knell: Then drive through Mississippi and recruited at the University of Mississippi-Oxford, over to Mississippi State at Starkeville. Drive through Alabama and recruit at Auburn, recruit at Tuskegee Institute.

Storey: Thirty miles south. I taught at Auburn for three years.

Knell: Oh, did you? And then on into Atlanta and see if you could talk some people from Georgia Tech into joining you and moving West. So those were fun trips, and it gave me a chance to see part of the country I'd never seen before, so I enjoyed that.

Storey: What would a typical day on a campus be like for you as a recruiter?

Recruiting

Knell: It depended on how active the program was and

how well you were known. It could be all the way from having twenty-five people signed up to talk to you, which was a very long day, hand out a lot of material, answer a lot of questions, or you would go on and find you only had two or three people to talk to.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 1. OCTOBER 6, 1993.
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1. OCTOBER 6, 1993.

Knell: One of the reasons I liked recruiting in the South is because in my spare time I'm kind of a Civil War nut. So it gave me a chance to visit battlefield sites. Once in a while I would get one of the engineering faculty members to introduce me to somebody from the History Department and we'd talk Civil War for a while. So that was fun, too. It was a full range. It could be very busy or sometimes you'd find you didn't have any interviews scheduled at all, and you'd leave materials for the civil engineering department, electrical engineer, and mechanical engineering departments.

Competition was pretty tough. Uncle Sam's pay rates were not really that comparable. We signed up people who wanted to move West, had an interest in the West. We signed up people who had a sense of public responsibility and were interested in contributing to the federal government programs. Overall, I think we did very well. We recruited some excellent employees who later moved into top managerial positions in the Bureau.

Storey: I have a sense from talking to you and other people that the recruitment process in those days

was considerably different. I mean, the Civil Service process that you'd have to go through was considerably different than it is nowadays. Walk me through as if I was a person who was interested maybe in a civil engineering position, let's say. You come to the campus and you put up a sign or something saying, "I'm going to be there. If you're interested, come talk to me." That would be the way it would work?

Knell: Right. That's correct.

Storey: And then I would come in and talk to you. And then what would happen? Say I was interested.

Knell: Well, I would give you materials, probably give you a couple of brochures on what Reclamation was. We would talk about the big flashy projects like Glen Canyon or Hoover Dam or Grand Coulee.

Storey: Something they would recognize, probably.

Knell: We would talk about the Design Center in Denver. I would try to get from you your primary field of interest. Are you a designer? Are you interested in construction? There are three types of engineering interests–electrical, civil, and mechanical.

We had at that time what we called a rotation engineering program. For the first year, young college graduates were rotated through the various types of engineering programs. The purpose of that was to let the organization size up the recruit to see what we had and also look at the recruit to see what kind of engineering

work what we had, so at the end of the year try to match them up. To the extent we could, we could match up the field of interest with an organizational need.

If you were interested, then you filled out a form. We sent it to our engineer recruitment office in Denver. They ran it through the Civil Service system, got you a rating, and then you were hired if you were within reach, based upon your grade-point average, whether or not you had graduate school, any relevant previous experience you had extra points for, veterans preference gave you extra points, if you had served in the military. A register was established based upon numerical scores, and people were hired from the register. Now, I've been out of personnel pretty much since '78, so I can't tell you too much about how that process compares with what we now do.

Storey: Am I correctly getting the sense that you were cooperating with other regions? So you might do the South, say?

Knell: That's right.

Storey: And they would be doing other parts of the country?

Engineering Recruitment Program

Knell: The engineering recruitment program was coordinated out of the Denver Office. Each region pretty much took care of its own recruitment program in that specialists or employees in that region would visit colleges

and universities within the boundaries of the region. Since Reclamation is active only in the seventeen western states, there were obviously a lot of universities in the Midwest, Northeast, South, that wouldn't have been visited. So those trips were coordinated by the recruitment office in Denver.

I visited out of Salt Lake City, Utah State, University of Utah, and B-Y-U [Brigham Young University], and a couple of times a year would go on a trip to the Big Ten or the Big Eight or the Southeast, New England, or somewhere, to visit schools outside of Reclamation's primary area.

Storey: So would all applications go to Denver?

Knell: Uh-huh.

Storey: Even out of, say, Utah State?

Knell: Yes. Yes. That's right.

Storey: How did this work?

Knell: They were sent there for a rating. As I recall, Reclamation had an agreement with the Denver Office of the Civil Service Commission, the O-P-M [Office of Personnel Management] today, then the Civil Service Commission, so that they were rated for Reclamation, and then Reclamation would hire from the registers that were established.

Storey: So, say, the Salt Lake City Regional Office needed to pick up five engineers. They would

go to Denver and say, "Give us the list and we'll pick up five"?

Knell: Right.

Storey: Were they sorted by areas where they would work or something?

Knell: Yeah. If I were recruiting you, you would be asked to indicate what areas you would consider. If you said Reclamation-wide, then you're considered for anything. If you indicated Southern California only, then obviously that's where you would be sent.

Storey: So the impression I'm getting is that the list changed, depending on the geographic area that was interested in hiring people.

Knell: That's correct.

Storey: But it was unified by the Denver Office and the Civil Service Commission in Denver.

Knell: That's correct.

Storey: So there was an organization that took care of the whole organization. What about for things like secretaries and other types of personnel?

Hiring Non-Engineering Personnel

Knell: Local personnel offices took care of those from the local community. For example, in Salt Lake City, there was a local office of the Civil Service Commission. If people were interested in secretarial or typist jobs in the federal

government, they went into O-P-M, took the typing test, got their names on a register. When Reclamation had a vacancy, it would go to O-P-M, which was right next door. I would literally go next door, just walk next door, and get a list of names, bring the list back, call them on the phone, line up interviews, and we would make selections from those lists.

Storey: Who would be, for instance, selecting secretaries? Would it be the supervisors? Would it be the Personnel Office?

Knell: No, the supervisor.

Storey: You're an intermediary, then.

Knell: Right.

Storey: And that would be the case for the engineers also?

Knell: That's correct. Now, the Personnel Office had to maintain sort of a check to make sure that O-P-M's rules were followed, that veterans weren't bypassed, that supervisors–and I think they still have a rule of three. That may not be true. In those days, we had a rule of three. That means you had to hire one of the top three candidates as determined by the numerical scores. If you had somebody that scored 98 and there were half a dozen people listed, and down on the bottom somebody had a score of 70 and that person happened to be your next-door neighbor's cousin, obviously you couldn't hire the person with 70 and bypass the person with 98 score. So there was a monitoring process that took place

in personnel, but the supervisor made the actual selections.

Storey: Obviously, if you were recruiting, there was a need to go out and get people interested in Reclamation. Did we have a problem getting enough qualified personnel in any category on board at Reclamation in those days?

Reclamation had Little Trouble Finding Employees

Knell: Not really, as I recall. There were always shortage categories. Some categories required a hell of a lot more effort than others. But Reclamation's program was seen in those days in a very positive light. The jobs, they paid well. At least they were competitive. The work was exciting and worthwhile.

We also, in addition to working through O-P-M to get new recruits, we would recruit for mid-level and higher jobs through our own vacancy notice system, and we would hire status candidates, people who had already achieved their eligibility, say, with other agencies. We were considered to be one of the better employers of the federal families. We were usually successful, when we wanted to, picking up people from B-L-M [Bureau of Land Management], or [U.S.] Park Service, or [U.S. Department of] Agriculture or other agencies, because we stacked up pretty well.

Storey: Now, as I recall, you said you were there from about '63-'64 until the late sixties, is that right?

Trust Territories in the Pacific

Knell: Late sixties, yeah. I took a flyer on a job in the Trust Territory in the Pacific Islands in '69, went out to Saipan. That didn't work out. I found myself in a situation that just was intolerable. So I came back. Reclamation picked me up in Salt Lake City, and then a year later I moved to Denver and worked in the E&R Center.

Storey: The job in Saipan was not associated with Reclamation?

Knell: No. No. It was Interior Department.

Storey: It was the Territories Office.

Knell: The Trust Territories Office.

Storey: Okay. Would you mind discussing that, or would you prefer–

Knell: No, I can. It's not too much to do with Reclamation. This was in 1969. It was a personnel job, and my job was to organize and implement a Civil Service system in the Trust Territories in the Pacific Islands, which included the islands of Saipan, the Northern Marinas Islands, Yap and Palau, Truk.

Storey: Ponape [now Pohnpei], maybe?

Knell: Ponape. It's been a long time. I can't remember. A couple of things were really bad, and one was my fault and one wasn't. I found myself working for–I found this out later–a guy who was very paranoid and also very ineffective, and he thought I had been sent out there by the people in Washington to get the goods on him

so could be fired. So he kind of worked against me, which caused severe problems. I was twenty-nine years old at the time, pretty green, pretty wet behind the ears. I didn't handle it very well. I just reached the point where I couldn't function. It just wasn't worth it, so I came home.

Another factor was also Vietnam, because in '69, all hell was breaking loose in Vietnam. So trying to implement a Civil Service employment system among the natives in Micronesia at that time was third or fourth or fifth fiddle behind as far as United States resources, assistance from O-P-M, the Civil Service Commission. We just couldn't get it. So it was a bad situation and I didn't handle it very well and I came home.

Storey: And you walked right back into Reclamation?

Returned to Reclamation

Knell: Yeah. They were very good to me.

Storey: Did you go back to your old job? A different job?

Knell: Back to the same job, the same office, working for the same people, and a year later I transferred to the Denver Office.

Storey: And in the Denver Office you were working in personnel again?

Knell: I was in personnel again, employee development and training, and staffing, recruitment.

Storey: How did the job change between Salt Lake and Denver, or did it?

Differences between Denver and Regional Offices

Knell: Big change, yeah. These are back in what some people call the glory days of Reclamation. There must have been five, six, seven thousand people in Denver. I don't recall. It was a massive organization that had just moved into Building 67. Much more bureaucratic, larger scale, more levels of clearance, more levels of surnames, more frustrating.

The regional office's primary focus was on providing assistance to the field offices where the work was really done. So there's more hands-on work. The Denver Office was the headquarters office. The work was more internal, if I'm making sense. In the regional office, the emphasis is external, helping the people at Glen Canyon or Curecanti or Ogden or wherever to get the job done. In Denver you're meeting the needs of the designers and research people down the hall. It was quite an adjustment for me to make in that regard, and I didn't like it as well. As a result, when I got a chance to move back to Salt Lake City in '75 as the Personnel Officer, I grabbed it. I went back to smaller operations.

Storey: Were you promoted when you moved to Denver?

Knell: Yeah. I started as a [GS] 7. Let's see, promoted to a 9 in Salt Lake, promoted to an 11 in Salt Lake, promoted to a 12. I guess I got my 12 to

go out to Saipan. Came back to Salt Lake, went back to an 11, promoted to a 12 later. I got to 13 when I moved to Denver. I got to 14 when I was promoted to the Personnel Officer job in Denver, and that would have been probably 1974. So that was the chain of events on promotions.

Storey: How did the issues change between Salt Lake City and the Denver Office? In terms of personnel, did you have new or different issues in terms of recruitment or anything else?

Knell: Yes and no. What was the same was the Civil Service system, following the rules and regs, finding the flexibilities, trying to be fast and response, provide management and employees with what they needed. What was different, again, was the level of frustration. I have found through the years that organizational size is a factor, and that large organizations are much more frustrating, more stressful, generally speaking, than are small organizations. So me moving from small to large organizations required some adaption on my part.

I'm trying to come up with an example that might illustrate that. Getting a letter out, for example, depending on the nature. In Salt Lake City, I probably could have sent something out over my signature, which means it would have gone out the day I wrote it. In Denver, it might go through half a dozen or ten or twelve levels or surnaming, to be signed by somebody else, and it might take ten days to two weeks to get it out. Size is a complicating factor, I think, and Denver had that problem and still does.

Storey: The Denver Office, of course, was headed by the Chief of Engineers and the regional office by a Regional Director.

Working under the Chief Engineer's Office

Knell: That's correct.

Storey: Did those positions and their responsibilities affect you in personnel much?

Knell: Yes. I'm not sure I understand. How do you mean? How did I react? Or were you thinking of something specific?

Storey: No. I'm not talking about anything specific. I'm trying to probe whether or not the Chief of Engineers' Office was different, how it was different from the regional offices.

Knell: The regional office was very informal. It was smaller. Everybody knew everyone else on a first-name basis. In Denver, people were placed in Building 67, which has fourteen floors. I have always theorized that part of the problem in the Denver Office, in addition to sheer size, is the layout of the physical plan. Because in a regional office, if I wanted to visit someone, say, in the Property Branch, I would get out and walk from my office down the hall, make a couple of turns, and find the person and we'd do business. On the way, I would see probably half a dozen other people. We would visit and acknowledge each other, exchange information and communicate.

In Denver, if you want to see somebody, you

walk down the hallway, you get on an elevator and you go from the fifth floor to the thirteenth floor, and the only people you're going to see along the way are the people who happen to be in that same elevator with you. When you get out of the elevator, you find the person, do business, and go back to your office. That really cuts down communication. There's no mingling. There's no informal system. All organizations have an informal communications system. But the extent of the degree and the effectiveness of the informal system, I think, is nowhere near as effective as in the regional offices. So that was a factor.

People on the fourteenth floor were not well known. I'm not saying they weren't accessible. There also was an aura or a mystique, an elitist streak that ran through the organization that I think got in the way of doing business effectively.

First EEO Grievance

E-E-O, I'm reminded of an incident. This was the early seventies and E-E-O was becoming a more prominent part of personnel and also in management practices. I remember the first E-E-O complaint.

Storey: The first grievance you had?

Knell: The first grievance was a black female engineer who had been bypassed for promotions and filed a formal complaint. She went through the informal process of counciling but was not satisfied, filed a complaint. The staff, trying to

solve the case, went to the Chief Engineer, a guy named Harold Arthur,[4] and, in effect, said, "Harold, look, you need to know that I don't think you can win this. Her credentials are very good, and credentials on paper of the person you didn't select, the black female engineer, were better than the person you did select. Now, there's a way out of this in that you have right down the hall another vacancy, identical vacancy. What you can do is select the person who filed the grievance, and that will take care of it."

He chose not to do that, and the reason he chose not to do that is he did not want to appear to be caving in. By God, he was the Chief Engineer, and he had made a decision, and no one had the right to challenge that decision. That led to a formal complaint, including a hearing in front of an administrative law judge. I don't think Harold really understood the power of these new E-E-O rules until he found himself in this hearing, under oath, being cross-examined by an attorney.

The dialogue went something like this. The attorney is accusing Harold of mistreating this poor, unfortunate victim and asking how he could allow this to happen, and why he didn't reverse his decision. And Harold got very upset

4. Harold G. Arthur served as director, Office of Design and Construction, formally chief engineer, 1972-1977 and participated in Reclamation's oral history program. See Harold G. Arthur *Oral History Interview*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, during 1994 and 1995, in Denver, Colorado, edited by Brit Allan Storey, 2000, reformatted and revised, 2010, www.usbr.gov/history.oralhist.html.

and turned to the administrative law judge and demanded that this attorney stop treating him like this. The administrative law judge simply said, "Just answer the question, Mr. Arthur."

So here was the top executive of the Bureau of Reclamation being put down in a situation he didn't control. It was a new experience to him, I think. It was unfortunate it happened. The lady won the case and, I think, got back pay and promoted and all that sort of stuff.

There were several cases similar to that in those early days when managers were adjusting to a new way of doing business. I think Reclamation has come a long way, and I like to think we're no longer faced with situations like that. I think we handle them better today than we did back then. I think society does. They were probably symptomatic of society in those days.

Storey: How well do you think we are doing from where you sit, recognizing you're no longer in personnel?

Reclamation Improving with EEO Concerns

Knell: I think we do pretty well. I have an interest in that area. I think race relations, that whole area, is our number-one problem in our domestic society. This unit that I supervise here is a very small administrative support unit, but we have a very active program, which we recruit and train minority group members and try to equip them to grow and develop on the job and use low-graded jobs as the mail room as an entrance

level job and to take advantage of opportunities and to go to school–and if it's job-related, we will help pay, and we're pretty liberal–and prepare them for careers. We have some real success stories. We've learned to do that through the years. We sure wouldn't have been doing that in the sixties or seventies. Today we're doing it.

I think you see women emerging into executive roles. In fact, we have a Principal Deputy Commissioner who is black. Right across the hall there's an S-E-S [Senior Executive Service] black fellow who runs the Native American Affairs Program. I think those are signs of progress.

Storey: When you were in Denver, you were a staff person and then you became the Chief of the Personnel Branch or Division?

Labor Relations

Knell: I think there were three moves. When I went to Denver, I took a branch chief job that included staffing, recruitment, and employee development training. Then later I was reassigned in a classification of labor relations, E-E-O–that might have been it–and then later was given the job of Personnel Officer which is responsible for all of the areas. We started talking about one branch chief, served some time there. The other branch chief was later selected to be the personnel officer, so I moved into his old job to get some experience, and when he left, I took his job. I was only in the Personnel Officer job for about six months and

then got a chance to go back to the region, so I did.

Storey: Tell me about labor relations in those days. I take it we're talking about unions here.

Knell: Right. Right. The labor relations program in the region was actually much more demanding, more real than in the E&R center, in the E&R center in those days. We had two unions, as I recall, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, which had a chapter primarily in the laboratories, and we negotiated wages. As far as I know, they still do. That's unique to the labor relations programs in the federal government. We would gather data from surrounding employers and try to match up what the prevailing rate was in the local area and negotiate wages with those people.

In the region, we had very large labor relation programs, again primarily with International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers who run the power systems, generation and transmission of power at the major dams.

Storey: Back in those days, anyway.

Knell: Yeah. That's right. That's right. Western Area Power. WAPA does a lot of that now.

Storey: Yeah. But what kinds of issues and problems were there for Reclamation arising from unions, being within a government organization like that?

Knell: I can't think of anything other than just normal

routine, run-of-the-mill, day-to-day administration of the contracts. We would negotiate contracts. The union people would elect officers. We would negotiate with the officers. When we had knowledgeable, cooperative union people, we could usually resolve the problems with very little hassle. Quite often you'd get somebody who wanted to make a name for himself or herself, had an ax to grind, was unreasonable. Then you would have labor problems. Not the extent that labor could be a problem in the private section, because there's a law that says you can't strike against the government, so we never had the wildcat strike threat facing us. But you would be faced quite often with sick-outs, people calling in sick and you knew damn well they weren't sick, slowdowns, picketing.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 1. OCTOBER 6, 1993.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2. OCTOBER 6, 1993.

Storey: This is Brit Storey interviewing Frank Knell on October 6, 1993.

Did your office become involved in labor relation things like sick-outs and so on?

Personnel Office's Role in Labor Relations

Knell: Yeah. Yeah.

Storey: How did you become involved?

Knell: Well, on the job I had when I was a Branch Chief handling labor relations, I was the one at the table negotiating with people across the table

and try to resolve whatever the problem was that led had to the union people being unhappy. As a Personnel Officer, the job is just to monitor that part of the program and you have somebody else who actually negotiates with the union.

I didn't have enough of that in my era, my tour, to really develop an expertise in labor relations. It just wasn't that big of a program. So I don't have a lot of in-depth experience in labor relations. I negotiated a couple of contracts, monitored the programs. That was about it.

Storey: Were there tensions between managers and unions or union employees?

Knell: Oh, yeah. An old cliché out of labor relations is that unionism is a self-inflicted wound, and I think there's a lot of truth to that. Poor managers give ammunition to unions, which they then turn around and use against you. And I don't mean to imply being a good manager you just necessarily cave in to all demands. A good manager, I think, innately or has learned to develop conflict resolution skills, be able to honestly state your case and to empathetically listen, understand, develop a bond of trust so the problems can be resolved.

The best blue-collar union manager I ever worked with was a guy named Bud Dewey at the Flaming Gorge Field Division in Salt Lake City, or out of the Salt Lake City Region, out of

Flaming Gorge.[5] Tough, tough as nails, and a very demanding manager, but was as honest was the day was long. Excellent negotiation skills. Had a lot of respect. He ran an excellent program and people in the union loved him.

Managers' Effect on Labor Relations

If you get a manger who is weak, unsure of himself, has an elitist streak, a need to control other people, then you're going to have problems, and we had a few of those around, too. I had a guy in Glen Canyon who thought that the way to resolve problems was just to give them more money. His line for years and years was, "All we've got to do is turn the generator one more time. We're cranking out electric power here. We're selling it for millions of dollars. Give them some." There are more issues to be considered than to give them money.

Storey: How did you participate in that issue of giving them more money?

Knell: There are usually caps on how much money you can give them. Also, you're bound by the prevailing rate. The goal is to be fair but to not give away money, and it's not to penalize them by not paying them a fair wage. So an honest attempt to determine what is prevailing, what is fair, is the guideline. That's a lot of work, by the

5. Located on the Green River in northeastern Utah, Flaming Gorge Dam was completed in 1963 as a major feature of the Colorado River Storage Project. For more information, see Toni Rae Linenburger, "Flaming Gorge Unit, Colorado River Storage Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 1998, www.usbr.gov/history/projhist.html.

way. That's a lot of hard work, a lot of hassle. What he wanted to do was to bypass that, buy them off, give them more money, and send them home.

Storey: So in some ways, at least personnel was a safety valve in dealing with these kinds of issues.

Knell: Oh, yeah.

Storey: And protecting the government.

Knell: Yes. I think so.

Storey: While you were in Denver, if I'm recalling correctly, was about the time that Ellis Armstrong[6] was the Commissioner, and he was reorganizing the function of the Chief of Engineers. Do you happen to remember anything about that or any of the tensions it might have caused or anything like that?

Commissioner Ellis Armstrong

Knell: What year would that have been? Do you have any–

Storey: I believe I'm correct, '69 to '73 he was Commissioner. Yeah.

Knell: Well, prior to becoming Commissioner, he served briefly as the Assistant Regional Director of Salt Lake City.

6. Ellis L. Armstrong served as Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation under the administration of President Richard Nixon, 1969-1973.

Storey: That's right. For about a year, I guess.

Knell: That's where I encountered him. Now, he used that position as a lobbying base to get the job of Commissioner. Quite honestly, I'm not a fan of Ellis Armstrong, even though he is from my hometown. I thought he was an old windbag. I don't think he was that effective as the Commissioner. The first time I met him, he autographed his speech and handed it to me. I guess he thought I would like that; it didn't mean anything to me.

As the Assistant Regional Director, he'd really been a pain in the ass of the Regional Director, because the Regional Director was trying to do his job and Ellis is lobbying to be Commissioner and going around, had gone to the Commissioner, went around the Regional Director, and playing the politicians and it really kind of made a nuisance of himself. I think to most people who are honest that worked for Reclamation at that time, Ellis Armstrong was kind of a joke as a Commissioner. He was not effective.

The reorganization–I've lived through a lot of reorganizations. I can't draw anything specifically out of the one that took place during his reign.

Storey: Well, let's move on then and talk about moving back to Salt Lake. You became the head of the Personnel Office in Salt Lake.

Return to Salt Lake

Knell: That's correct.

Storey: And at that time, what major issues do you remember confronting personnel at the regional level there?

Knell: Okay. That would have been 1975. The major construction program has pretty well been accomplished. We're now winding down. Still had two Job Corps Centers, getting more into operation and maintenance programs than construction. Staffing, recruitment, training, classification, labor relations, pretty well issues, problems we already talked about. I don't know anything specific out of that era.

Storey: Had E-E-O evolved at all?

Knell: E-E-O had evolved. Yeah, it had evolved. I remember walking up the hall one day.

Can we take a break?

Storey: Sure. [Tape recorder turned off.]

Knell: . . . what I was saying when I interrupted myself.

Storey: Well, we were picking up about how E-E-O had evolved when you moved back to Salt Lake City.

Knell: When I went back to Salt Lake as Personnel Officer, the role of the E-E-O Officer was assigned or had been taken by the guy I worked for, the Assistant Regional Director for Administration, a guy named Elwood Bywater. Bywater was an old-line conservative, white

male Mormon, great guy but just very, very conservative, even in the Utah culture, which one aspect of that is pretty much the place of women is in the home to raise families. I don't think that's overstating the case.

We had a few progressives, some would call them militant women in the work force, who had been unable to get anything going in the way of organizing or women's programs or promoting the cause of women. So they came to me. In fact, one of the leaders worked for me, a lady named Arleen Manning, one of the fine human beings on the face of the earth, and suggested that I should be the E-E-O Officer since I was a little bit more liberal, younger, and more in tune with what was going on.

So I walked up the hall one day and suggested to the Regional Director to make me E-E-O Officer in addition to Personnel Officer. His name was Dave Crandall, who is also another fine human being. So I went in and talked to Elwood, and he thought that was probably the best idea I've ever had, because he was not interested in being E-E-O Officer. He didn't like it. He didn't understand it. He didn't want anything to do with it. So I assumed the role of E-E-O Officer.

One of the stories they tell about Elwood in E-E-O that came to mind, he was attending an E-E-O conference, in a discussion or panel discussion where they were talking about the plight of Native American Indians. And someone had indicated that part of the problem was we didn't know these people, we didn't

know their customs, we didn't understand them. In effect, "we didn't know where they were coming from." We didn't know where they were coming from in terms of we didn't understand them. Elwood didn't know what that meant and responded, "Yeah, we do know where they come from. They came from a damn reservation," which caused a long pause in the proceedings of the conference.

Anyway, he was a great guy, but E-E-O was not one of his strong points. So I became the E-E-O Officer, and we started to do some basic, elementary things like organize, educate, and make sure we provided opportunities for minorities and women, and just, in general, get in tune in terms of emphasis that needs to be placed on that program, in my opinion.

EEO Activism Leveled Off

So you're right. It has evolved, and I think we're doing better now than we ever have. I think we've reached a plateau. I'm jumping forward to the current date. I think we've reach a point where we have to assess where we are and adjust our thinking and our methodology.

I see things going on that really concern me. The selection process in Reclamation today for key jobs seems to be we either have to hire someone who has superior credentials, just world class, or be a woman or a minority. That frightens me. I think we can do all three. We are screening out the males, the white males, just because they're white males, and we're not screening the women and minorities enough to

see if they are capable of performing. And it's been my experience that if you really want to hurt an E-E-O program, put a women or a minority in a top job, let them fumble around and destroy themselves, and that gives the conservatives, the people who don't like the program anyway, a chance to say, "See, we told you so." See? That concerns me.

I think we've got to do better than that, and I think we can recruit and train and select people who are world class, or soon will be, because they have the potential to learn, who happen to be a woman or minority. And we're not doing that. It's possible to do it, but I don't think [unclear].

Storey: Have you seen changes in emphasis based on gender or minority, culture, or anything like that through the years in this program that you've noticed, or has it just sort of been uniformly the same throughout?

EEO Effects on Reclamation

Knell: All I can do, I guess, is respond by reflecting on my own experience. Being an E-E-O activist in Salt Lake City was much different than trying to do some things here in Washington, D.C., and I also spent a year and a half in Phoenix along the way, too, which was interesting, because I was exposed to the Hispanic and American Indian culture a little bit more than I had been.

I think to be effective, you've got to take stock over the situation you find yourself in and then adjust accordingly and keep pushing, but

don't push so hard that you turn everybody off. Do it yourself to show that it can be done. We have a lot of supervisors and managers who spout the verbiage, but you look at their own shops and you don't see a hell of a lot of affirmative action.

I think that the quality of management, overall management, including human relations or E-E-O, I think reflects the style and the confidence of the person in charge. And I can show you some very sick programs in the Bureau of Reclamation right now, and I can show you some very healthy programs. I personally like [Daniel] Beard's approach.[7] He's kind of controversial about things and he's been very critical of Reclamation in the past, but in the five or six months that he's been here–when did Dan show up, in May? This is October?

Storey: I think he was March or May. I've forgotten which.

Knell: I've found that I like his values. He's very honest. He's very open. You know exactly what he has on his mind and where he wants to take the organization. So there's not the game-playing or the subterfuge we've had in past commissioners. And he's very interested in E-E-

7. At the time of this interview (1963) Daniel Beard was just beginning his term as Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner and served until 1995 under the administration of President Bill Clinton. Mr. Beard also participated in Reclamation's oral history program. See Daniel P. Beard, *Oral History Interview*, Second Edition, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, from 1993 to 1995, in Washington, D. C., edited by Brit Allan Storey, 2009, www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html.

O. He, himself, I think has made some positive moves in the personnel change that he's made personally. I think he has good expectations. So we'll probably made some progress in that area. I'm rambling now. What was the question again?

Storey: That's okay. When the E-E-O program first started, which I presume was while you were in Salt Lake on your initial tour, was there more emphasis, for instance, on hiring blacks as opposed to all minorities, hiring women as opposed to other minorities? Did that change over the years as you were involved in the program?

Changes in Hiring Practices as a Result of EEO

Knell: My reaction based on what I felt at the time is initially the E-E-O program meant blacks, and I can remember the emphasis on the college recruiting program we talked about earlier. I spent a lot of time at Tuskegee and Southern and Tennessee A&I, and that was by design. That was to find black graduate engineers that we could bring West and incorporate into Reclamation program. So my perception of the program, at least in those days, based on what I was doing, was that E-E-O meant making up for lost time primarily with blacks.

The women's program I've experienced came somewhat later. Hispanics, Asian Americans–

Storey: Native Americans.

Knell: Native Americans. The emphasis came later. Today, my understanding of E-E-O certainly includes all minorities and women, but initially I think the emphasis was on blacks, and maybe appropriately so.

Storey: Then which group would have come next, in your recollection?

Knell: Probably Native Americans, Indians, because we put together, again while I was in Salt Lake City, an apprenticeship program in the power system in that region, headquartered primarily at Glen Canyon, which is on a Navaho reservation,[8] and tried to make some inroads there finding interested folks who would take the training, accept the training, prepare themselves to be electricians, electrical power types, power plant operators, programs like that.

Storey: When would that have been, the Native Americans?

Knell: Probably the late seventies, early eighties.

Storey: Where did women come in, in your recollection?

Emphasis on Hiring Women

Knell: Well, I was influenced right in the beginning because of this lady I mentioned earlier, Arleen Manning, who was a rebel, a cigar-smoking career woman in Salt Lake City, for God's sakes.

8. The land on which Glen Canyon Dam and the city of Page, Arizona was given to the federal government through a land exchange with the Navajo Nation prior to dam constrcution.

And stood out like a sore thumb. She was great. She was very good for me. I learned a lot from her. She was a fine public servant.

I have a wife and a daughter, so I've been interested in women's rights for some time. When did it happen? I would guess maybe about the same time. It was in Denver that I encountered my first militant situation. We had an employee there, a lady who was really a very marginal employee, who probably should have been terminated or disciplined for lack of performance. She became very active in the NOW [National Organization for Women] organization. And filed a complaint, jumped on a plane and flew to Washington and, as I recall, tried to get in to see the Secretary, ended up in the Bureau Personnel Officer's office, and we had a telephone call wondering what in the hell was going on.

That led to a kind of ugly situation. We were told to resolve it by buying her off. A directive came from Washington just to take care of it. She had an attorney, so we negotiated with the attorney and promoted her retroactively in return for her agreeing to retire. So she got a check, a retroactive promotion. Part of the agreement, as I recall, she was go away, she was to disappear. No more going to Washington, no more campaigning with local politicians, getting TV time, and all this sort of stuff.

Well, she didn't quite do that. After the deal had been struck, the next issue of the NOW newsletter had a big picture of her on the cover being presented this check by her attorney, as I

recall. The headline was something like, "Reclamation Presents Check for X Amount of Thousands of Dollars, Agrees to Having Discriminated Against This Person," something like that. So that left a bad taste in everybody's mouth. And every once in a while you have a situation like that, and people just take advantage of the system.

EEO Discrimination Complaint Program

In fact, the E-E-O discrimination complaint program, I think, is kind of characterized with incidents like that, because once you leave that part of the system or that phase where management can deal directly with the employee, you lose control. You turn it over to your attorneys, the employee has already retained legal counsel, and the attorneys do their thing. And when it gets to the Department of Justice, which handles these cases for us, they've got bigger fish to fry. They just don't have the time or the staff to really delve into these cases and see if discrimination really occurred, and they will come back to you and say, "Look, it's going to take you X number of years to fight through this. It's going to take a lot of staff time. Now, you put that into dollars, it's going to cost you maybe $200,000 to resolve this, even though no discrimination took place. So if you can buy this person off now with $10,000, you've got to do it." So you enter into plea bargaining, and the merits of the case are never really decided.

Storey: They're out the window.

Knell: They're out the window. That's why it's really critical that every attempt be made to resolve it while you still have control.

Storey: At the informal level.

Knell: At the informal level, or even at the formal level if you're still in control. If you've reached the point where you're going to court, then it's "Katie bar the door." You don't know what's going to happen.

Storey: Well, back in Salt Lake, you were Personnel Officer for the region for about how long? '75 to–

Knell: '75-'78.

Storey: '78. And then in '78 what did you do?

Assistant Regional Director for Administration

Knell: I moved up the hallway and became the Assistant Regional Director for Administration.

Storey: For administration. Now, what does the Assistant Regional Director for Administration do?

Knell: Well, it is responsible for all of the administration support functions. At that time, it was. The classical design in the regions is the Regional Director, Assistant Regional Director for Programs, or just Assistant Regional Director. That's somebody who oversees the basic line functions of design, construction, operation and maintenance. Then there's an

Assistant Regional Director for Administration, which is supposed to oversee the functions which provide administrative support so that that design, construction, operation and work gets done. The functions include personnel and property, procurement, I-R-M, computers, E-E-O. What am I leaving out? Aircraft services. All of the administrative paraphernalia and programs that exist in federal organizations.

Storey: Once again, what are the major issues that you remember having to deal with?

Disenchanted with Federal Employment

Knell: Well, looking back on that era in my career, it's kind of interesting. I had reached a point where I was really burned out. This would have been '78, '79. Teton Dam hit[9] Reclamation in '76, as I recall. Vietnam [War] was all in its glory. Watergate had come and gone. Quite frankly, I was a little bit burned out and ashamed to be a fed. I was fed up with incompetence and lies and wasted taxpayer money, all of the bad side of being a public servant.

So I wrestled with just cashing in my chips and going into private sector and doing something else. I went back up on campus in Salt Lake City and talked to a number of people,

9. Teton Dam was planned as the major feature of the Teton Basin Project in eastern Idaho. On June 5, 1976, shortly after construction was completed, the dam suffered a catastrophic failure, causing over billion dollars worth of property damage and 11 casualties. For more information, see Andrew H. Gahan and William D. Rowley, *The Bureau of Reclamation: From Developing to Managing Water, 1945-2000*, Volume 2 (Denver: Bureau of Reclamation, United States Department of the Interior, 2012), 820-832.

and J. D. Williams, who had been my champion years before when I graduated, and decided, no, what I need is just a change of pace. So I went back to school at nights and got a master's degree, went back in '79 and finished up, I guess, in '84.

Refocused Priorities

What I was trying to do is get a theory base that would allow me to be a more effective federal manager and maybe bridge the gap between academia and theory and on-the-ground implementation theory in the workplace, bridge the gap between academia on the Hill and the Federal Building downtown.

I'd been exposed in 1964 to some management theory, Blake and Mouton's managerial grid.[10] I don't know if you're familiar with that. I went through their seminar and got kind of turned on. It intrigued me. Maybe there are some things we can do as federal managers to do a better job of managing Uncle Sam's program and managing people and dollars and things of that sort.

So I tried to keep the administrative machinery going in Salt Lake City during the day, and then I read books and wrote papers at night. That's how I spent those years. Then I

10. Blake Mouton Managerial Grid "was developed in the early 1960s by management theorists Robert Blake and Jane Mouton. It plots a manager's or leader's degree of task-centeredness versus her person-centeredness, and identifies five different combinations of the two and the leadership styles they produce." See "The Blake Mouton Managerial Grid: Leading People and Producing Results," https://www.mindtools,com. (Accessed 5/2016)

came to Washington and enrolled in a doctoral program and am now trying to finish the dissertation. My goal is to have a doctorate by the time I retire in a couple of years. My goal is to start a second career doing something.

Storey: In what field?

Knell: Public administration.

Storey: And the M-A was also the–

Knell: Management.

Storey: In public administration and management. Where are you going?

Knell: University of Southern California.

Storey: That's quite a commute. (laughter)

Knell: No. They have a campus here.

Storey: Oh, they do?

Knell: Public administration is a big U-S-C program. Way back to the turn of the century, they were one of the leaders in the reform movement, and they have three campuses. State and local government they had emphasized in Los Angeles. In Sacramento, they have a campus where they emphasize state government. And then back here they emphasize federal government.

Storey: What were the projects that you were supporting out of the Salt Lake office while you were the

Assistant Commissioner, projects that were coming over the horizon, I mean?

Knell: You mean Reclamation projects?

Regional Construction Projects

Storey: Yeah. Reclamation projects. New projects coming up.

Knell: In those days, like I said, the construction program was really winding up. Well, that's not true. The Central Utah Project was in full throttle.[11] Projects being completed out in the Uinta Basin.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 2. OCTOBER 6, 1993.
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 2. OCTOBER 6, 1993.

Knell: We had wrapped up finishing McPhee Dam down outside of Durango [Colorado].

Storey: The Dolores Project.

Knell: Dolores Project.[12] Right. Getting started on

11. The Central Utah Project (CUP) is located in the central and east central part of Utah. It is the largest water resources development program ever undertaken in the State. The project provides Utah with the opportunity to beneficially use a sizable portion of its allotted share of the Colorado River water.

12. The Dolores Project, located in the Dolores and San Juan River Basins in southwestern Colorado, uses water from the Dolores River for irrigation, municipal and industrial use, recreation, fish and wildlife, and production of hydroelectric power. It also provides flood control and aids in economic redevelopment. Service is provided to the northwest Dove Creek area, central Montezuma Valley area, and south to the Towaoc area on the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Reservation. A full and supplemental supply of irrigation water is available for 61,660

(continued...)

Animas.[13] Even in those early days, people were saying, "This thing will never fly. It's not a good project." We need to admit that. We haven't quite done it yet, but I think we will. (laughter)

Storey: Creative cost-benefit ratios.

Knell: That's right. If they want to build it, they ought to really, I think, be honest and say, "Look, we're doing this for the Indians. We owe the Indians a hell of a lot. We screwed them for years." Let's admit what we're doing and do it. Let's not say we're going to grow alfalfa in a 6,000-foot area where the growing season is about twenty minutes a year. It's ridiculous.

Storey: Where did you go after you left the Assistant Regional Directorship in Salt Lake?

Knell: Back here.

Storey: To Washington.

Transfer to Washington Office

Knell: Came back here into a job called Director of

12. (...continued)
acres. For more information, see Garrit Voggessor, "The Dolores Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 2001, www.usbr.gov/history/projhist.html.

13. Originally authorized as part of the Colorado River Basin Project Act, the Animas-La Plata Project was to provide irrigation water to farmers in the LA Plata River basin on the Colorado-New Mexico border. In 1988 the project was re-authorized to accommodate the Colorado Ute Indian Water Rights Settlement Act. Project has not been completed. For more information, see Jedediah S. Rogers, "Animas-La Plata Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 2009, www.usbr.gov/history/projhist.html.

Policy and Analysis, and worked in that job through June of '88, which was when Reclamation's big reorganization occurred. That job was abolished and I needed to stay in Washington to go to school. So instead of going West with the job out to Denver, I went to the Department [of the Interior] and was in an office here in this building down in the Department about six months.

One day the phone rang and the voice said, "Do you want to go to Phoenix?" And I said, "I can't get there much before noon tomorrow." I was very anxious to get back with Reclamation and grabbed the first opportunity. Spent a year and a half as the Administrative Officer in the Central Arizona Project [14] in Phoenix. Came back here probably in June of '90. Probably June of '90. Yeah, I've been back here three years.

Storey: What did you do as the Director of Policy and Programs?

Director of Policy Analysis

Knell: The job at that time included the issuance of

14. Authorized in 1968 as part of the Colorado River Basin Project Act, construction on the Central Arizona Project began in 1973 as a multipurpose water resource development and management project that provides irrigation, municipal and industrial water, power, flood control, outdoor recreation, environmental enhancement and sediment control. In addition, the project will eventually provide delivery of Tribal homeland water, partial settlement of Indian water rights claims, and economic benefits accruing from the leasing of Indian agricultural water rights to municipal entities. For more information, see Jennifer E. Zuniga, "Central Arizona Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 2000, www.usbr.gov/history/projhist.html.

Reclamation instructions. If that's done well, that really is a major role, because you're defining what policy will be. It really should reflect maximum input from those people who are going to be doing the work or going to be impacted by the work. I thought that was a pretty important role. It also included audit liaison, interfaced with the Inspector General and the General Accounting Office, overseeing and monitoring different reviews those organizations make in requests to Congress and their own work schedules or problems that are brought to their attention, through the hotline or however else they discover perceived problems.

But most of the time was spent in preparing for the big reorganization of '88. That was the era of Jim Ziglar,[15] Duvall. Those were exciting times.

Storey: So did you participate in the team that Joe Hall[16] had?

Knell: Right.

Storey: Well, I'm afraid we have reached the end of the time my appointment was set up for. I appreciate your talking to me.

Knell: That's quite all right.

15. James W. Ziglar served as Assistant Secretary for Water and Science under the administration of President George H. W. Bush, 1987-1989.

16. Joe D. Hall served as Lower Missouri Region regional director, 1975-1980, before becoming Bureau of Reclamation Deputy Commissioner,1987-1993. During that time, Mr. Hall briefly served as Acting Commissioner in 1989.

Storey: I want to ask you now whether or not you are willing for the tapes and the resulting transcripts from this interview to be used by Reclamation researchers and outside researchers who are interested in Reclamation's history.

Knell: Yeah. Is there anything there worth anything?

Storey: Absolutely. There's a lot.

Knell: I can't believe anybody would be interested in this stuff, but if they want to listen to it, that's fine with me.

Storey: Okay. Thank you.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 2. OCTOBER 6, 1993.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 1. OCTOBER 25, 1993

Storey: This is tape one of an interview by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, with Frank Knell in the offices of the Bureau of Reclamation in the main Interior Building in Washington on October 25, 1993, beginning at about one o'clock in the afternoon. This is tape one.

As I recall, at the last interview we had gotten you to Washington, just barely, sort of. And if you could pick up there, I would appreciate it.

Working in Washington

Knell: This is the story of my career, as I recall?

Storey: Yes, the story of your career so far.

Knell: I came back to Washington, August 1985, to head up the Office of Policy and Analysis, working for a Commissioner by the name of Dale Duvall.[17] My immediate supervisor was the Assistant Commissioner for Administration, a guy named Bill Klostermeyer.[18] I was responsible for audit liaison offices out West, determining policy issues, trying to capture the essence of what the administration wanted to do and Reclamation instructions and other bulletins and written directives. Also involved with the audit liaison function with both the Inspector General and the General Accounting Office.

1988 Reclamation Reorganization

Duvall had some pretty definite ideas on how he wanted to restructure the organization. I served on a task force which presented him with some ideas on organizational structure and delegations of authority. I would guess probably a year, a year and a half later, an Assistant Secretary showed up downstairs in Water and

17. C. Dale Duvall served as Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation under the administration of President Ronald Reagan, 1985-1989, and participated in Reclamation's oral history program. See C. Dale Duvall, *Oral History Interview*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interview, conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, January 26, 1993, in Washington, D.C., edited by Brit Allan Storey, www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html.

18. William C. Klostermeyer participated in Reclamation's oral history program. See William C. Klostermeyer, *Oral History Interview*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, and Donald B. Seney, California State University, Sacramento, from 1995 to 1996, in Washington, D.C., edited by Brit Allan Storey and Donald B. Seney, 2006, www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html.

Science, a guy by the name of James Ziglar. Unfortunately, Ziglar and Duvall didn't get off very well. So a lot of the work that had been done for Duvall in terms of long-range strategic planning was put in the garbage can and Ziglar did his thing.

Ziglar was really the driving force behind the big reorganization of June 1988 when the Washington Office was restructured from approximately 250 positions down to about 100. That was kind of a traumatic experience, a lot of packaging, preparation, explaining, selling, and implementing that reorganization. As a direct result of my involvement in that, I worked myself out of a job. I abolished my own job. Ended up in the Department as a Policy Analyst or Management Analyst, and that was not a good step. I found the Department a very bureaucratic and time-wasting organization.

So I had a chance to come back with Reclamation about six months later, on the first of 1988. January, February 1989, I moved to Phoenix, Arizona, and served as the Administrative Officer on the Central Arizona Project [CAP] for about a year and a half, came back here in June of '90 into my present position. It's been modified a little bit since then, but pretty much is the job I now have, and that is overseeing the administrative functions and also serving as liaison with Denver administrative functions. That about summarizes it, I think.

Storey: You came to the Denver Office from Salt Lake, is that correct?

Knell: Right. Way back in 1970, as I recall. I was in Denver from 1970 through 1974, maybe '75. I spent five years in Denver.

Storey: And then you went to Salt Lake, back to Salt Lake.

Knell: Back to Salt Lake. Worked there from '75 through '85, and have been in Washington since '85, with the exception of the year and a half in Phoenix.

Closing Down Lower Missouri Region

Storey: I believe you were detailed, maybe, to assist in closing down the Lower Missouri Region of Reclamation?

Knell: Yeah. That happened about the time I was transferring back to Washington from Salt Lake City, and one of my first assignments in the new job in Washington was to oversee the merger of the Upper Missouri and Lower Missouri regions into the Missouri Basin Region. Later, most of the Missouri Basin Region was merged into the current Great Plains Region when the Southwest Region, headquartered in Amarillo, was abolished as part of the 1988 reorganization.

Storey: And were you involved in that also?

Knell: Yes.

Storey: Did you go to Amarillo to do that?

Knell: Well, yes and no. The merger of the Lower Missouri and Upper Missouri Regions occurred,

I think in '85-'86, and I simply served as the chairman of the team that oversaw that effort, head of the task force or team, to just make sure that was pulled off and done correctly and appropriately in accordance with Civil Service rules and regulations, combining organizations, RIF [Reduction in Force] procedures, and all that sort of stuff.

The other team members were Jim Malila,[19] who was the Assistant Regional Director for the Lower Missouri Region; Don Glaser,[20] who was Assistant Regional Director for the Upper Missouri Region; and the Personnel Officer, Ray Beghle, who was then in the Lower Missouri Region; and a fellow who has since left the Bureau of Reclamation, and I can't think of his name right now. So the five of us would get together periodically and critique how we were doing and lay out plans and explain it to the Commissioner and his staff, kind of oversaw the process.

Storey: Were you involved in making the decision to consolidate the regions?

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19. James O. Malila served as Assistant Commissioner for Administration, 1992-1994,and became director of the Reclamation Service Center in Denver in 1994.

20. Donald R. Glaser worked for Reclamation in a number of high-level positions: Assistant Commissioner, Administration and Liaison, 1989-1990; Deputy Commissioner, 1993-1994; Director of Policy Analysis in Denver, 1994-1995; Mid-Pacific Region Regional Director, 2008-2012. Mr. Glaser also participated in Reclamation's oral history program, see Donald R. Glaser, *Oral History Interviews*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, from1993 to 2013, in various locations, edited by Brit Allan Storey, and further edited and desktop published by Andrew H. Gahan, 2014, www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html.

Regional Consolidation Necessary

Knell: Not too much. I thought it was a very necessary action. It was logical. The program had declined to where we could no longer afford the overhead of two regional offices. But that was the core. The planning and the strategy that had been developed that led to that decision occurred before I was part of the Washington Office. So I wasn't involved in it.

Storey: Do you happen to know the thinking behind moving the office out of Denver and putting it in Billings?

Knell: It was purely politics. And I don't mean that in a negative sense. It sold on the Hill and it sold in Denver, because we were able to tell congressmen and congresswomen in both states, Montana and Colorado, that you weren't losing that much. Colorado still retained the Engineering Research Center. A lot of the people in the Lower Missouri Region were placed in the Denver Office. So Colorado did not lose that much.

Billings was selected simply because it made sense politically to do that. You could pacify the people in Denver by moving their employees, their constituents, down the street to the Engineering Research Center. In Billings you simply added areas of responsibility and the name of the office. So there was very little trauma, very little change there.

When I say that, I don't mean that in the negative sense. Part of the consideration that

has to be made in decisions like that is spreading the goodies, having jobs spread throughout the area where you have congressmen and senators who support your program on the Hill and give you appropriations. I think that was the primary reason. I also think in this day of high tech, with satellite communications and computers and fast airplanes, you don't need to have offices centralized or headquartered in major metropolitan areas.

Every Thursday at one o'clock, the Commissioner sits at his conference table in here, and by a teleconference, can talk to literally hundreds of people out West who are sitting around a conference table at the Regional Director's office or in Denver, and they can discuss issues pertaining to a report in Yuma or Bismarck or Salt Lake City or Provo or Boulder City or wherever.

Storey: Then were you involved in the decision to close Amarillo?

Closing Southwest Region

Knell: Again, not too much. I was a staffer. That occurred in '88, as far as that reorganization. I was involved primarily as a staffer in consolidating reports, making assignments. There again, I don't recall being actively involved or debating whether or not to close the office. I certainly agreed with the decision. Once again, it was program-driven. Reclamation just did not have a dollar program big enough to justify administrative costs, the large overhead administrative organization in

the Southwest, and I think that's still the case.

Storey: What about the way it ended up with Great Plains Region, being a huge region from border to border of the United States? Do you think that's a logical organization?

Knell: On the face of it, probably not. But I'm not aware of any problems that have arisen because of that. Again, it's because of the high-tech logistical technology we now have. We have an office in Oklahoma City, I think. Neil Stessman,[21] the Regional Director in Great Plains, has a large area to cover. I know he's very busy. But I'm not aware of anyone who can say the Reclamation program has suffered because of it. Yeah, there may be problems. I may just not be aware of them.

Bill Klostermeyer

Storey: The name Bill Klostermeyer comes up repeatedly as I talk to people. Could you tell me who Bill Klostermeyer was? What was he like to work with and for?

Knell: He was very knowledgeable about the Reclamation program. He was a jovial guy to be around. He had a lot of interpersonal skill. He used that skill especially in meeting with Congress and promoting the Reclamation

21. Neil Stessman served as regional director of the Great Plains region, 1991-1998 and participated in Reclamation's oral history program. See Neil J. Stessman, *Oral History Interview*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, from1994 to 1996, in Billings, Montana, edited by Brit Allan Storey, 2009, www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html.

program on the Hill.

His critics–and I'll be perfectly honest with you, I'm one of them–I was not impressed with his ability or willingness to make tough decisions that were program-driven or that were personnel-driven. He was political to the point of being political when he really didn't have to. When tough decision needed to be made, he was very reluctant or unable to make them.

I think it might be fair to say that he was a power broker in Reclamation during an era that has now ended. He was part of that era where we promoted projects that probably–not probably. I don't think they were justifiable. I think the federal deficit, critically looking at what we're doing to the environment, those things need to be looked at. We're in a new era, and I don't think Bill could survive very well in this era.

Storey: I believe you said that you worked for him.

Knell: Right.

Storey: How was he to work for? Was he an old-style manager, a new-style manager, and what does that mean to you?

Knell: Okay. I'll just respond. An old-style manager in terms of not being data-based. Bill was personality-based. He did favors and expected favors in return. He cut deals in the smoke-filled back room. He was a glad-hander in an era where that was required. That was how business was done, and he was very good at it.

He was not necessarily impacted or influenced by factual data. He was not data-based. So I like to think that part of the new management is being data-based, looking at the facts and figures and impacts and then trying to make rational decisions based upon what is best, as tough as that is, and that personalities take a second seat. Bill was not a data-based manager, in my opinion, and, as a result, the relationship between he and I was not that solid on a continuing basis. We were able, on the surface, to get work done, but beneath the surface there was conflict.

Reclamation Leadership

Storey: Did he serve as Acting Commissioner while you were here? Am I confusing him with somebody else?

Knell: He very well could have been, but on a periodic or a short-term basis.

Storey: No. I'm thinking of–

Knell: You're thinking of Bob Olson?

Storey: Okay.

Knell: There was a guy by the name of Bob Olson who was Acting Commissioner for a long period of time.

Storey: That was before Broadbent.

Knell: Well, it was after [Robert N.] Broadbent.

Broadbent[22] was Commissioner and then moved into the position of Assistant Secretary. Had been Assistant Secretary and Olson served as Acting Commissioner and Broadbent was downstairs as Assistant Secretary of Water and Science, whatever it was called at that time. In effect, he, Broadbent, as Assistant Secretary, was Olson's boss. I was out in Washington at that time. I might have come in at the tail end. Have you got a schedule there with the years?

Storey: Yeah. It was '84 that Olson was acting.

Knell: Okay. As I recall, he moved out. He was replaced as Acting Commissioner by Duvall, who became Commissioner about the same time I arrived.

Storey: There's a Cliff Barrett that was acting in '85.

Knell: Okay. I recall that, yes. Cliff Barrett was my supervisor in Salt Lake City. A good man.[23]

Storey: Who was the Commissioner when you came to Washington?

Knell: Well, I'm trying to recall. I showed up in

22. Robert N. Broadbent served as Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation under the administration of President Ronald Reagan, 1981-1984.

23. Clifford I. Barrett worked for Reclamation in a number of high level positions including, Assistant Commissioner, Planning and Operations, 1977-1981 and regional director for the Upper Colorado Region, 1981-1989. Mr. Barrett also participated in Reclamation's oral history program, see Clifford (Cliff) I. Barrett, *Oral History Interviews*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, in 1996, in Salt Lake City, Utah, edited by Brit Allan Storey, 2009, www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html.

August. I think maybe Duvall showed up in December, and that during that interim time we had acting commissioners, and it could have been Cliff Barrett, because I remember working with Cliff on some issues which were very, very sensitive. It was a very comfortable relationship for me because I'd work for Cliff as Assistant Regional Director in Salt Lake City while I was there.

Storey: What are your impressions of the various Commissioners with whom you've worked?

Dan Beard as Commissioner

Knell: I'll start with the present and move backwards, and you help me if I get them out of order. First impressions of Dan Beard. This is October of '93. I'm impressed with the guy. I'm impressed with his openness and his honesty in spelling out what his agenda is. Now, a lot of people don't agree with that agenda, but there's no question about what it is. I find him very easy to do business with, very comfortable to have a discussion with. He has good people skills. He's got a good sense of humor. I'm optimistic. A lot of future historians will decide whether or not he's successful based on what happens from here on out and, to the extent he can, how adept he is at surrounding himself with high-quality people. It's too soon to tell if he has done that or he's in the process of doing it. But initial impressions are very positive, as far as I'm concerned.

Dennis Underwood. Hardworking guy who worked twenty hours a day. A terrible manager.

Unable to delegate. Unable to separate significant from insignificant issues. Drove people crazy with nitpicking. Not an effective Commissioner, in my opinion.

Storey: Before we go, let's go back. You talked about Underwood's work habits and his long hours, and you talked about Beard's interpersonal skills. How does that cross over? How about Beard's work habits and so on, and how about Underwood's interpersonal skills?

Knell: Beard moves paper very fast. I'm very impressed with his ability to move paper and to keep machinery moving. He's a quick study. He is able to separate significant from insignificant issues. If it doesn't matter that much, he will say, "Let's move it." And I think, in my opinion, that's the correct attitude to have. If it's a significant problem, we'd better talk about it. But don't sit on something that's insignificant simply because there's a typo on page 47. Underwood did that and it caused problems. It blocked and frustrated a lot of people.

Beard's work habits are not like Underwood's, but nobody was like Underwood. Underwood showed up at 6:30 in the morning and was here until midnight, and loved it, thrived on it, could not get enough of it. Beard shows up, what? Eight o'clock. Probably here until six, seven, eight o'clock at night. But the difference is whereas the next morning those of us who were waiting for stuff to come out of the front office, we'd come to work, say, at seven o'clock the next morning, and you'd find that

Underwood had doubled your workload and that he had all sorts of nitpickey questions about the typos on page 47, whereas Beard decided and is ready for more. So as far as making the bureaucracy operate, Beard is much more effective, in my opinion.

Storey: Before Underwood was Dale Duvall.

Commissioner C. Dale Duvall

Knell: Dale Duvall, right. He was the Commissioner I worked with when I first came to Washington through the big reorganization in '88. He had been during [Ronald] Reagan's first campaign, as I recall, the chairman of his campaign in California or on the West Coast, the most political in terms of political ideology of all the Commissioners I've seen operate. He was a Reaganaut, a true believer, and it permeated his decisions and his agenda and the way he did business.

He was kind of overshadowed, because, like I mentioned earlier, Jim Ziglar, the Assistant Secretary down on the sixth floor, kind of took over Reclamation, and there was a lot of conflict between Duvall and Ziglar. I was sheltered from that most of the time. It didn't affect me one way or the other, but I certainly knew what was going on.

Duvall was very good to me personally. I had his ear. He was helped immensely by having a person that he appointed or was appointed for him by the White House, a guy named Roland Dolly, who was his special

assistant, a young fellow out of South Dakota. He left Reclamation in about '88, '89, '90, maybe, went back to South Dakota and was appointed to be the economic development czar by the Governor of South Dakota, and here in the last three months was killed in an airplane crash with the Governor of South Dakota. It was a real tragedy.

Roland Dolly

Roland Dolly had a skill that I have never seen equal in terms of bridging the gap between political appointees and career people and developing credibility and trust so that work can be done and decisions can be reached, debates could take place and decisions made on how to proceed and then proceed. He was able to play that role very well for Duvall. As a result, Duvall was much more effective than he would have been otherwise.

Storey: When you say a young man, how young?

Knell: Very young. Amazingly young. I think when he was Duvall's assistant, mid- to late twenties. It's just a guess. I think he was mid-thirties when he died. Too bad. He had an excellent future in front of him. He could have been elected to Congress, serve as Governor or something like that. He was that good.

Storey: You speak as if the political appointees tend to have a problem bridging the gap to the professional staff or the Civil Service–

Knell: Career staff?

Storey: Career staff, right. Could you talk a little more about that and how it's affected Reclamation from your perspective?

Problems between Political Appointees and Career Staff

Knell: Well, yeah, but I need to emphasize that this is my perspective. I am not an engineer. I am not an economist. So I never worked in those areas, and I can't talk about how the political career interface affected the Bureau program in terms of appropriations and dams and canals and power plants and those things. I've spent my career on the administrative side trying to provide administrative support to the program side, so that those dams, canals, power plants could be built.

What I have seen is–and I see it right now under Beard, unfortunately, and I guess it's too early to tell how it's going to play out. Generally speaking, the new Commissioner will come in with an agenda, a set of things he wants to do. The Schedule C or political appointees of the previous administration clear out. The new appointees come in once they're cleared by the White House, and they get their jobs because they paid the price by being active in the campaign, usually. They get these political plums. Usually they bring–they, the political appointees–bring with them a negative stereotype image of career service. Career service types, like me, are expecting negative stereotype political hacks. So from the very beginning, there is apprehension or a tendency to mistrust.

Right now one of the hottest things I have to resolve around here is who gets parking spots in the basement, for example. It may sound like a minor issue, but these folks like their perks, and it's a status symbol and it's also a very convenient and money-saving proposition to have a free parking space in the basement. They want them and people will kill for those spots, almost. So I'm now trying to work with Beard to help him decide who gets them and who doesn't, because there aren't enough parking space to accommodate everybody. So these people show up and they like their perks, they like their pecking orders. When people like myself explain the process and the procedure to them, sometimes we come across bureaucratic hacks who are getting away from getting the job done. That can be bridged if people on both sides have the interpersonal skill and courage to confront the issues and try to get them spoken to and decided.

I mentioned Roland Dolly earlier. That's where he really shone, because he had the skill to do that. You could go into a room with him, and in a very sophisticated way he would help you get issues on the table and speak to them, a very open approach to conflict resolution, problem-solving, and decision-making. He was excellent. That does not always occur.

Parking would be an example. We have a couple of government cars in the basement that we use to take the Commissioner and the Assistant Commissioner to the Hill or to O-M-B or wherever they have to be, as does other government agencies. Subordinate staff like

those perks. They like to have chauffeurs. So when they ask for a car and you have to explain that, "No, that's reserved for the Commissioner or Secretary," then that causes problems. Once again, we get in the way of progress, things of that sort.

Rules and regs on property management. Explaining why you can't have a computer at home.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 1. OCTOBER 25, 1993.
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Rules and Regulations Concerning Political Appointees

Knell: Explaining travel procedures and how, if you're traveling–as we had to do with Underwood a couple of times–if you're traveling from Washington to Boulder City to do business and you travel from Boulder City to Los Angeles on personal business, then Uncle Sam isn't going to pay for personal travel. Now, I'm not saying that Underwood tried to do that. He maintained a residence in Los Angeles and it was something we had to work through and make sure we understood what he could and what he couldn't do. And, in fact, in his defense, we, the administrative people, screwed up and allowed him to do some things we shouldn't have done and the I-G [Inspector General] picked up on it and got his name in the newspaper. That was really our fault, because had we done a better job of monitoring what he could-couldn't do, we could have protected him.

That's a line I use quite often in dealing with

these people on some of these administrative restrictions is, "I'm really not trying to be a pain in the ass. I'm simply trying to keep you from getting your name in the newspaper in a negative sense, because you have violated some rule or reg." And that happens quite often, as you know if you read the *Washington Post*.

Storey: Is that one of the areas where we differ from private business, for instance?

Differences between Public and Private Employment

Knell: Very much so. I think so. I think so. And justifiably so. If you're an executive with Ford Motor Company, you can pretty much do what you want. And the bottom line is if Ford is getting their money out of you and you're still competitive with General Motors, that's fine. The problem with Uncle Sam is, since we don't have the profit motive upon which to base a bottom line, we have to do it by regulation. We have to control excesses by regulation, and then some of us have to kind of play the role of cop to make sure the regulations are violated. The extent to which we can do that in a professional, non-threatening way, in my opinion, makes this effective or ineffective. But you're right. It's much different than the private sector.

Storey: Yeah. And a lot of people, I imagine, have trouble transitioning.

Knell: That's right.

Storey: Between outside the government and inside the government.

Knell: That's right. Some of them pick up on it immediately. An example would be Jim Ziglar. Ziglar, a multimillionaire, Wall Street attorney, more money than he'd ever know what to do with, was probably the most understanding person I've ever worked with in that area of understanding what he could and couldn't do and why the regs were there and why they needed to be there.

Storey: Did he work for Reclamation?

Knell: No. He was the Assistant Secretary. He really, with Duvall there, was the Commissioner, because he took a shine to Reclamation, and part of the conflict I mentioned earlier between Duvall and Ziglar was that Ziglar did his job. He called all the big shots for Reclamation, attended the management meetings, worked directly with regional directors, assistant commissioners. He was a very effective administrator. They liked him, he liked them.

Storey: Were you responsible for his travel?

Knell: Not in the technical sense. But when he would attend Reclamation functions, we would process travel. We would fly him on Reclamation planes, which could be another dramatic experience, explaining to people when you can use a government plane and when you can't. You have to run a cost study analysis to see if it's cheaper to take United than it is to fly somewhere and then deadhead the plane back to the original point.

Storey: Do we still have planes?

Knell: Yeah.

Storey: Oh, we do? Keep talking. I'd like to hear more about these areas. How about office locations and office furniture and computers, who gets them, who doesn't get them, and whether that's changed over the years, those kind of things?

Integrating Computer Technology

Knell: Well, the computer era has certainly impacted those of us on the administrative side. I'm a fairly recent convert to office automation and seeing how computers and local area networks [LAN] can really affect productivity. The year and a half I spent in Phoenix was pretty enlightening to me, because it was a highly automated office. When I came back to Washington, I brought some of that new knowledge with me. So in my opinion, we've done some things here in the Washington Office in the last three years and getting computers and that new technology into the mainstream of organizational life and decision-making.

We don't have, that I'm aware of, a lot of people now blocking automation or new technologies, and we're doing a better job of getting basic decision-making on costs into the mainstream. There was a time early on when the computer freaks were at war with the managers over budget items, because computer people understood what could happen and that managers didn't budget dollars for it. I think most managers now accept that as an ongoing way of doing business, and it's got to be budgeted and managed like other resources.

Dan Beard's entrance on the scene has impacted us because he's very computer-literate. He uses the LAN [local area networks]. He uses e-mail. He uses Internet. He communicates with people throughout the organization on his computer. So we've had a few diehard, old-fashioned non-computer people scrambling here to get on board, because he's been sending them computer messages and they haven't had computers to which they could receive their messages. (laughter) So his personal emphasis has changed some of their thinking.

Storey: What about office space? I know in the Denver Office we have a much different situation. Everybody wants a window. Not everybody gets a window. But here you have everybody's got an exterior office, but some of them are on the corners and some of them are on the wells. Does that come up?

Allotting Office Space

Knell: Very definitely. We took that on as a project here two years ago. We had office space here for about 100 people, and Underwood indicated that he would be increasing the size of the Washington Office considerably. So we went to the Department and said we're going to need more space. The Department said, "I'm sorry, you can't have more space."

So we looked at options, the cost standpoint, the convenience standpoint, the option of moving out of the building, and decided that it really doesn't make much sense. It's very convenient. We're established here. What we

need to do is better utilize the space we have. So we entered into a conversion to systems furniture project, which allows us to establish workstations, and in these cubicle rooms we can have two or three people in one room and still provide an element of privacy and noise control, air flow and air-conditioning, things of that sort.

That was a big investment. Probably with the design and the furniture, installation, comes to three-quarters of a million dollars. We now have that virtually completed, and it's worked out very well. We had some people who were very adamant against it. We had some people writing letters to the Secretary complaining about the money we were wasting. But in the long term, I think it's a good investment to the taxpayer, because we were able to be flexible. As the staff goes up and down, we can assemble and reassemble and reconfigure the furniture.

Office space, you're right. Office space can be somewhat difficult because corner offices are perks. Some division chiefs, higher-grade people, think they're entitled to those. There aren't always enough to go around. So we try to diplomatically resolve differences. When you can't do that, you just go to the boss and get a hammer and decide.

Storey: So the Commissioner is really sort of the final say on–I've forgotten. Oh, the parking places.

Knell: Right. That's right.

Storey: Who has their own parking place. Frank, how do you relate to the people out in the field who

have comparable functions?

Knell: In the administrative areas?

Storey: Yeah.

Liaison between Regional and Washington Office

Knell: I have right now kind of a unique position in that since the '88 reorganization, all of the delegated authorities in the various administrative areas are out West. We have two assistant commissioners right now. Jim Malila is Assistant Commissioner for Administration, and Margaret Sibley who is the Assistant Commissioner for Human Resources. Sibley has personnel management, equal employment opportunity, and youth programs. Malila has property, procurements, I-R-M, computers, budgets, Administrative Services Center. I'm probably leaving out a couple, but the traditional administrative functions.

The role I play back here is primarily liaison for those people. They have delegated responsibility for those programs bureau-wide. At the same time, they need to maintain liaison and contact with their counterparts in the Department. In other words, the departmental personnel officer needs to maintain close contact with the Bureau personnel officer. The Bureau personnel officer is in Denver, two thousand miles away. So my job is to make sure that in all of those areas that liaison is maintained and is open, the conduits are open.

So what it means is that I, and the people

who work with me, have to know enough about all those functions to help maintain that liaison: by getting the paperwork out there, by attending meetings here, by going places. And get answers to questions, helping them decide if something is important enough for someone to fly in here for a meeting or if we can cover it and send them the notes or the minutes or the handouts, things of that sort.

That is unique. I'd like to think we do a pretty good job of that. I've got thirteen people covering all those areas, plus the basic administrative functions we have here like all organizations have like mail room, procurement, property management, impress fund, that sort of stuff

So I like to think I'm an expediter and a conduit and a liaison. I'm not necessarily a controller, although there are times when I have to call the division chiefs and say, "Hey, I think we need to check into this, because I don't think your staff understands how important it is, and I want to beef them up a little."

Storey: One of the things that we talked a lot about last time was your function in personnel, and one of the things that I've been finding as I've talked to people is that we've had a lot of RIFs [Reduction in Force] and reorganizations, little ones here, big ones overall, and so on and so on. This is sort of a multilayered questions, so why don't we start with the first question. What's your perspective on RIFs and what they're for and their uses?

Knell: A RIF, to my way of thinking, is just an organized way of resizing an organization as the program fluctuates. And Uncle Sam has established very rigid rules which are designed to protect certain groups of people. Veterans preference would be an obvious example. Retention registers based upon seniority is another example. This system is good or bad depending on how it's administered, and good or bad depending on how competently managers prior to the RIF have dealt with nonperforming or problem employees.

The latter area, I think, is the real problem in Uncle Sam's service. Reclamation certainly has its share. We don't do a good job of confronting nonperformers, and that is a harsh term. I don't mean we invite them outside and punch them out, but I think by confronting, just honor the data, just sit down with people and talk about their performance and their behavior and their conduct and whatever the problem seems to be: not performing, tardiness, alcoholism, whatever, and dealing with it.

So as a result, when you get a reduction in force, quite often you will have good people going out the door and the marginal performers getting the jobs because they hadn't been dealt with prior to the RIF. Once you go into a RIF, you're locked in, for the duration of the RIF, based on things like years of service and veterans preference. It's a very mechanized way of downsizing an organization.

Storey: I was once faced with a RIF, or actually I was faced with having to move from Denver to Washington by a congressional action.

Knell: Edict, right. It's been known to happen.

Storey: So I looked into this a little bit. And my understanding is that outside a certain radius of your office, you don't have to be offered a job. I think it's maybe fifty miles or eighty miles or something like that.

Knell: Okay, that could be. I've been out of this stuff a long time. I think you're talking about the competitive area.

Storey: Yeah. In a competitive area.

Knell: Competitive area. That's right.

Storey: That's the phrase that was used.

Knell: Right.

Storey: From your perspective, does Reclamation have a particularly–how should I put this–an enlightened approach to dealing with personnel matters where RIFs and things are involved?

Reclamation Approach to RIFs

Knell: Well, I spent the first part of my career in personnel and have been involved in personnel decisions all my career, so you're probably not talking to somebody who's entirely objective. I would say yes. And, again, it's effective and fair and equitable to the extent that it's managed that

way.

The Washington Office reorganization of '88, let's use that as an example. I was involved with that. I wasn't a personnel officer, but I was in the Policy Office and helped assess decisions, make decisions, and implement the reorganization.

We spent a lot of time and effort in making sure that maximum outplacement occurred, that the organization did everything it could, including retaining an outside consultant to come in and talk to people, help them fill out applications. We kept a roster of people who were getting jobs elsewhere and people who were scouting around for jobs, found a job they didn't want, tell us about it, and we'd see if somebody else would be interested in that job.

RIFs, under the best of circumstances, are not pleasant, because people are getting hurt. But, like you say, when Congress says do it, you have to do it. So RIFs can be as effective and fair and equitable as people in charge want to make them, in my opinion. I'm not aware of Reclamation having not done a good job.

"Personnel management ... in Reclamation is at a low point"

But let me comment on the broader aspects of your question. Personnel management right now in Reclamation is at a low point, and that's too bad. I think we have some very marginal performers in very high positions right now. And I fear for the future because I'm not sure

these people will be dealt with.

Storey: You mean in terms of RIFs, if there are any in the future?

Knell: RIFs are just one aspect of personnel management. I'm talking about the overall broad-range human resource management and personnel management of recruiting, retaining, training, developing, taking care of the human resource, the people in the organization. Reclamation is in trouble right now at the highest levels.

Storey: Okay. You wouldn't care to name names, would you?

Knell: Certainly. Margaret Sibley is in over her head and should not be in that job. Ray Beighle is retiring. Ray has had some health problems, he has had trouble relating to Margaret, and that has hurt the organization. John Jones in E-E-O has been unable to put together a meaningful program. That area, with all the emphasis and dollars it gets, is in real trouble, and I think one of Beard's big tasks right now is to look at that critically and make some tough decisions and get some top people in those jobs so we can straighten it out.

Storey: Does the Denver Office fulfill personnel functions for the Washington Office?

Denver Fulfills Personnel Functions for Washington Office

Knell: Yes. That's right.

Storey: Out of the Personnel Office?

Knell: That's right. See, that's very unique and it's difficult to explain to people. I do some of that. I have a lady on the staff. Her name is Janice Johnson. Her primary job is liaison between department personnel in Denver, and that's difficult for some people to understand, but it works like this. If departmental personnel gets a directive from the Office of Personnel Management, implementing a change in a program, Janice makes sure that that written policy or the notes of the meeting or the minutes of a telephone call, whatever it might be, is communicated to the Denver Personnel Office from the Department. Then Bureau personnel in Denver will write some implementing instructions saying, "in Bureau of Reclamation, this is how this new program will be accomplished." It then sends them out to all the offices in Reclamation, which means a copy of that is coming back to Washington for implementation.

So it's the liaison function on top making sure that Denver gets the word from the Department, that we do simply because we're in the same building as Department. And there's the implementation of policies and programs that we oversee when we get the word from the Denver personnel shop.

Storey: But if you need a secretary, you do that through the Denver Office?

Knell: The Denver Office processes the personnel action. The recruitment action is initiated here.

The people are interviewed here. The supervisor will make a selection, and Janice would help them, in her liaison capacity. But the paperwork and the actual appointment is processed in Denver. That's correct.

Storey: Now, I presume you have a direct supervisor.

Knell: Joseph Austin Burke, yes, Assistant Commissioner, Program, Budget, Liaison.[24]

Storey: Okay. Not ACA?

Knell: No.

Storey: Not the Assistant Commissioner for Administration. Let's go back to the Arizona Projects Office.

Arizona Project Office

Knell: Okay.

Storey: You were the administrative officer there?

Knell: Uh-huh.

Storey: That means that you were doing a counterpart function to what you are doing now, personnel, procurement, and those sorts of things?

24. J. Austin Burke served as Assistant Commissioner Program, Budget and Liaison, 1991-1994 and went on to become Director of Program Analysis in Denver in 1995. Mr. Burke also participated in Reclamation's oral history program, see J. Austin Burke, *Oral History Interview*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, from1993 to 1997, in Denver, Colorado, edited by Brit Allan Storey, 2008, www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html.

Knell: Different setting, basic functions. And also a counterpart to the job in Salt Lake City the last five years. The Assistant Regional Administration, that's a fancy title for an administrative officer.

Storey: However, there is a difference in that the Arizona Projects Office, I believe at that time, was a major construction office.

Knell: Very much so.

Storey: A very major construction office.

Knell: Well, it actually peaked, though we were still running three shifts, the New Waddell [Dam][25] and finishing up at Tucson, and the bridge was being constructed at Roosevelt [Dam]. So we had a lot of construction work going on.

Storey: What I'd like to explore is the difference between regional responsibility and a major construction office responsibility, and how the size relates to one another. Are you following what I'm asking?

Major Construction Responsibility for Administration

Knell: I think so. I'll answer it this way just to start with. Grassroots work is much more fulfilling, rewarding, and tangible than at the regional, Denver, or Washington office. And I'll try to explain that. Sitting in Phoenix–and I never

25. New Waddell Dam, constructed between 1985 and 1994, stores Colorado River water for the Central Arizona Project, and also stores Agua Fria River runoff and provides flood protection by controlling river flows.

worked in the project office before, but I've certainly seen projects in operation through the years, so I was not completely surprised by the difference–but sitting in Phoenix and having the phone ring and it's the Construction Engineer in New Waddell saying, "The computer just went down and we're holding up the contractor," is different than sitting in Salt Lake City, Denver, or Washington and reviewing reports. At the grassroots level is where the rubber meets the road, where the Reclamation work is actually being done. It's much faster paced. It's fly by the seat of your pants. It's less bureaucratic, less paperwork, and a lot more fun. The pressures are there, but the climate is such that you're just finding ways to get work done. I'm not saying this very well, but I found the grassroots-level work to be very satisfying.

Organizational Effectiveness

In terms of organizational effectiveness and efficiency–and I have made this statement many times–having worked at the project level and regional level and Denver level and the Washington level, if you were to graph out organizational effectiveness and compare it to offices in terms of productivity ratio, work done per employee or however you want to title it, the curve would be 80 percent efficiency at the project level, 60 percent at the regional level, 40 percent at the Denver level, and 20 percent at the Washington level. It's not that people in Washington are only 20 percent competent or bright, it's just that the setting is different. There are different expectations.

We talked earlier about managers not doing a good job of identifying and working with marginal performers. At the project level they do a better job of that because they can't afford not to. You just don't have the luxury of accommodating marginal performers at the lowest level, because you have work to be done. At the regional level or at Washington or Denver, you've usually got a slot you can assign to review reports or put them in a corner or do something with them. At the project level, generally speaking, everybody has to pull his or her weight. So you deal with problems, and I like that. That's kind of a rambling answer.

Storey: No, that's okay. But I'm interested in this concept of what work is. The way you're talking, is part of what you're talking about the fact that the nature of the "work" changes as you move to the different levels of the organization?

Knell: That's true. That isn't quite the point I was trying to make. But you're right.

Storey: Well, I'm trying to get an understanding of what you mean by "work." Of course, I'm from the Denver Office where we only do 40 percent. You're from the Washington office where you're only 20 percent. So I don't quite understand what you're saying.

"People at the project level are more productive"

Knell: In my opinion–and this has certainly not been proven scientifically–based upon my experience, if you could measure the productivity per employee at each of the four offices, generally

you would find that people at the project level are more productive, effective, efficient, more competent. They have more work to do, and they do it better than those other offices.

And there are reasons for that. One, the incompetent people have a tendency to leave the project level because they get pressured from management to either put out or leave, because you don't have the luxury to put up with incompetence.

At the other extreme, at the Washington level, if you were to go up and down the hallways here, you would find people who have been here for twenty or thirty years who probably haven't done a lick of work in the last ten. If you started to ask why, you'd find out that they had connections. They got their job initially from Senator Jones or Congressman Smith, and they've been here, and there is no real pressure to deal with or resolve those problems. Bureaucratic inefficiencies are much more pronounced at the Washington level than they are the project, and in between are the Denver Office and the regional offices.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 1. OCTOBER 25, 1993.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2. OCTOBER 25, 1993.

Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Allan Storey with Frank Knell on October 25, 1993.

Knell: . . . a year and a half. The first of '89 through June of '90.

Storey: So it definitely was sort of reaching an end. But

how large an office was it at that time?

CAP Staff Totals

Knell: I should know this. C-A-P and total F-T-Es, I'm drawing a blank. Eight hundred comes to mind. But I really don't know if that's–

Storey: If that's correct or not.

Knell: Yeah. Yeah.

Storey: How many people, say, in Salt Lake when you were Assistant Regional Director at that time?

Knell: In the regional office? You mean regional office?

Storey: Well, that you had responsibility for doing the–

Knell: Providing administrative services for?

Storey: Right.

Knell: Well, 1,500 maybe.

Storey: Okay. So the project office, even though it was a major project construction office, was small but more active, is my impression.

Knell: Oh, much more active. It's program-driven. We had contractors working three shifts a day. You don't have the luxury to not keep up with the contractors, and that permeates the whole climate or atmosphere. It's a very proactive, energetic office, and I've seen that wherever I've seen project offices. That's not certainly unique

to the Central Arizona Project.

Storey: And who was the project manager at that time?

Knell: I worked with a guy named Bob Towles, who is now the Regional Director. I've known Bob for years. I was in Denver when he was in Amarillo.

Storey: What was he like to work for?

Knell: He was an excellent manager. He was very good. Very personable. A lot of people skills. He's primarily a construction man, had been a construction engineer. He had high expectations, he expected people to do their jobs, and he communicated that to them. He's one of the better managers in the Bureau, in my opinion.

Storey: Had he been there long?

Knell: Yeah. He had been there, prior to going to Phoenix to run that job, he was the Assistant Commissioner of the Engineering Research Center under [Darrell] Webber. Towles went from Denver, the number-two man to Phoenix to run that job. He'd been down there, I guess, maybe, two, three years before I showed up.

Enjoyed Project Office

Storey: How did you like Phoenix for a project office?

Knell: We liked Phoenix. Tolerated the heat fairly well. My wife developed some severe allergies. That was one of the factors that led to us coming

back, one major factor. Phoenix is on my list of places to retire to in a year and a half from now.

Storey: You enjoyed it. In a year and a half from now, did I hear you say?

Knell: June of '95 is the current date. I'm eligible now, but I still have kids in college. So I need to stick around to give them a hand.

Storey: What were the major issues that you had to deal with at the Arizona Project Office, from your point of view as the Administrative Officer? Any big problems?

Administrative Officer Issues in Phoenix

Knell: Yeah. There was one that was very unique and I'd never been faced with before and it probably doesn't happen that much in Reclamation. The project was in the process of being turned over to the Central Arizona Water Conservancy District [CAWCD]. They occupied the same building as the Reclamation people. Their boss sat on one wing and Bob Towles sat in another wing, and then they came together and worked together. So we had two systems.

We had the C-A-W-C-D system and Reclamation system, and many of the people working at C-A-W-C-D were former Reclamation employees. And the plan is, of course, when Reclamation phased out, that all those people would go to work for the district and maintain and operate the project features.

They had much more flexibility in their

administrative procedures than we did. They could write their own. Their manuals were very short and brief. We had Uncle Sam's multi-volume, hundreds of thousands of pages and legal precedents and things of that sort. So working with them and trying to make sure we were merged and copacetic and working well together was kind of an interesting experience.

We handled some things very well and some things we didn't handle very well. Looking back, there are two especially difficult administrative areas Uncle Sam serves right now. One is procurement and the other one is personnel management, which we've spent a lot of time talking about. Procurement is very difficult because of the need for competition and justifications. It's very slow, it's very ornate, very cumbersome. The district was able to, like I say, write their own manual, and do pretty much what they wanted to do in procurement. We were saddled with a very archaic system and couldn't keep up with them, and that caused problems.

Storey: You've raised an interesting topic to me from a historical point of view, and that's the issue of turning projects over to the districts. Historically what we seem to have done in many instances is to have simply walked out the door and handed the folks the keys and they got everything that was in the building. It included the furniture, it included the records, it included, you know, just the facility, which they thought was "theirs" or "ours," I should say. Of course, legally, unless Congress says that stuff belongs to the district now, that isn't the case. At least

that's my understanding.

Knell: That's my understanding also.

Storey: Did you ever run into any instances when this issue came up for discussion in any of your years?

Negotiating Transfer to CAWCD

Knell: A lot of discussion, but, fortunately, that portion that I was involved in in Phoenix, that was well understood. There were discussions, there was negotiation, there were conflicts, but there was no automatic turning over and walking away. They were negotiated and the solicitor was asked for legal opinions on what we can do and we can't do, and if we can't do it, how do we do it to protect the interest of Uncle Sam.

In terms of the Phoenix operation, I think it's covered. There are certainly problems, because the district, of course, wants the best deal they can get. They always do. And that led to conflicts that had to be resolved.

Storey: What about when you were at the Salt Lake office on any of the older projects?

Knell: I'm drawing a blank. I can't respond on that.

Storey: It's just an interesting topic.

Knell: Yeah, it is.

Storey: It keeps coming up, because the districts seem to believe that they own it.

Knell: That's right. That's right.

Storey: When push comes to shove, they don't own it. (laughter)

Knell: Where it becomes a problem is years later when the project starts deteriorating, if it's not maintained, and they come back and want us to pitch in. They want the best of both deals.

Storey: This came up with an historic property in Montrose where the Uncompahgre water group–I've forgotten the name of it–got the old headquarters building. It turns out to be the oldest building built by Reclamation as an office, and they wanted to tear it down and build a nice office building there or some such thing. And that became an historic preservation issue.

Let's see, I would like to discuss further. Somehow I think we have a blank between when you went to Denver and when you were the Assistant Regional Director for Administration. I don't remember us discussing that before. Do you happen to remember whether we did?

Knell: I thought we had. Where's the blank? Where's the gap?

Storey: Well, I just don't remember that. What projects were active while you were doing the administrative responsibilities as Assistant Regional Director in Salt Lake?

Glen Canyon Dam Emergency

Knell: That would have been from '78 to '85. One of the most exciting periods was in 1983, super water year, when we thought we might blow Glen Canyon [Dam] or the canyon walls. 1983 was a tremendous year. Snow pack, early spring, high runoff for a short period of time, a wet spring with a lot of rain. We were spilling water in all of the projects, and then started using the spillway in Glen Canyon, it cut through the concrete and gouging out the sandstone. So you had red water coming out of the base of the dam, and it scared the hell out of everybody.

That led to some very significant administrative decisions. We declared an emergency, bypassed the competitive aspect of procurements, went to San Francisco and got this Guy Atkinson, a contractor, in there almost overnight and fixed it.

Working the administrative end of that from Salt Lake City was kind of frightening at the time, but it was also kind of fun. Crisis management is always fun, because you can do what you what to do. You're not bound by rules and regulations. You've got a lot of freedom. Then you try to explain to people afterward, you explain to the Inspector General afterward what you did. But at the time, you're just interested in getting the job done. And we covered that and covered it well.

Storey: I think I've seen pictures. It looked like a cavern.

Knell: That's right. That's right. Again, I'm not an

engineer, but the hydrologic phenomenon that causes cavitation is not water pounding into the concrete and gouging it out, it's the vacuum that is created by the water passing so fast over the surface that it actually sucks out pieces of concrete. They thought they were going to suck out the entire left embankment there on that spillway. I was able to go down there on a couple of occasions and walk through the operations. It was astounding to see the damage that had been caused by that. But we plugged it up, got it fixed, and went about our work.

Storey: You did it in very short order, I take it.

Knell: Very short order. That same year. Because if you keep having spillways out of commission, they're very risky in case you had another wet spring that following year. So it had to be done that year so it would be ready in case you needed it the next year.

Storey: But you rode out the flood season.

Knell: Yes.

Storey: And then did the repair.

Knell: Right. That's right.

Storey: Of course, I imagine there are a lot of folks who would have liked to have seen Glen Canyon go down until they saw the problems that would result.

Knell: And it may come down someday. A hundred years from now when Glen Canyon–

Storey: Oh, you mean we may take it down.

Knell: Yeah. When desalination technology is providing Southern California with potable sea water and solar power is producing electricity over hydroelectric plants, we turn Glen Canyon to its original sight that we have.

Storey: Actually, I was talking to the man last night, flew in with him, who is supervising the Glen Canyon Project, I believe.

Knell: Oh, Rick Gold?

Storey: No. Tim. I want to say Shouster [phonetic], but I'm not sure that's the correct–or Sherman–the correct last name, from the Denver Office. He's working for Rick. He was saying that the flood of '83 had major influence on the archeological sites downstream.

Knell: Yeah. I bet it did.

Storey: It took out a lot of them. But Glen Canyon has completely changed the sedimentation regime, and they thought that what was going on was that it was the river doing all the damage. And it isn't the river at all. It's the fact that the sediment doesn't get down. But, anyway, that's another issue we don't need to go into.

I'd like to hear a little bit more about Roland Dolly, if you would.

Knell: "Rolly Dolly"?

Storey: What that his nickname?

Knell: Rolly Dolly.

Storey: Did anybody call him that to his face?

Knell: Very much so, yeah. He had an excellent sense of humor. He referred to himself by that. Specifically, do you just want me to ramble or–

Storey: No, I'd like you to talk about him. What was he like? Did he have any peculiar habits? Examples of the way he handled meetings, anything like that.

Roland Dolly and "the Dirty Seven"

Knell: I'll probably be repeating myself. I forget what I said earlier. He showed up with Duvall. Duvall appointed a group to look at the organizational structure of the Bureau, and we called ourselves the Dirty Seven. I'm not sure I can remember all seven of us, but I'll try. Roland Dolly, who was special assistant to the Commissioner; Darrell Webber, [26] who was Assistant Commissioner in Engineering and Research; Dennis Schroeder, [27] who is now head of the Phoenix Office, Central Arizona Project, but at that time was up in

26. Darrell Webber participated in Reclamation's oral history program. See Darrell Webber, *Oral History Interviews*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, Denver, Colorado in 1993, edited and desktop published by Andrew H. Gahan, 2012, www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html.

27. Dennis Schroeder participated in Reclamation's oral history program. See Dennis Schroeder, *Oral History Interviews*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, Phoenix, Arizona in 1996 and 1997, edited and desktop published by Andrew H. Gahan, 2013, www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html.

Bismarck, North Dakota; Rick Gold, who is now Assistant Regional Director in Salt Lake.[28] At that time, I think, Rick was Project Manager in Durango. Roger Patterson, who is now Regional Director in Sacramento, and at that time was in Billings.[29] Maybe he was still down in El Paso–I can't remember–as Project Manager. That's five. Myself, Head of Office Policy Management, I think it was called, here in Washington. And Terry Lynott, [30] who is now Assistant–

Storey: Director of Policy and Programs.

Knell: Whatever he is in the ACRM [Assistant Commissioner Resource Management] organization. I think we probably would all say that it was a highlight in our careers simply because of the chemistry between the people on

28. Rick Gold went on to become regional director of the Upper Colorado Region, 2000-2007, and participated in Reclamation's oral history program. See Rick Gold, *Oral History Interview*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, in Salt Lake City, Utah and Denver, Colorado, edited by Brit Allan Storey, further edited and desktop published by Andrew H. Gahan, 2014, www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html.

29. Roger Patterson participated in Reclamation's oral history program. See Roger K. Patterson, *Oral History Interviews*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation oral history interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, from1994 to 2000, in Sacramento, California, and Lincoln, Nebraska, edited by Brit Allan Storey, 2011, www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html.

30. Terry P. Lynott participated in Reclamation's oral history program. See Terry P. Lynott, *Oral History Interviews*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation oral history interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, in Lakewood, Colorado, edited by Brit Allan Storey, 2012, www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html.

the team, the significance of what it was we were up to, and it was just a good experience. I think the report we came up with, although it never went anywhere because it was, like I indicated earlier, it was Duvall's study. And when Ziglar showed up, he wanted to do it his way. But a lot of the basic findings–the data-gathering, the recommendations, and the recognition that Reclamation had reach the crossroads and needed to start reforming itself–came from that report. We worked on it for several months. I worked very hard on it. Dolly was our link to the Commissioner. A very young guy, but a very skilled individual, a good listener, a tremendous sense of humor. Just a very competent, professional public servant.

Storey: When you were going through this planning effort for the Commissioner, were you going out and talking to other people, to our constituencies, or was that all internal?

Knell: No, it was external and internal. We gathered data from in-house, and we did a lot of work in getting data from water users, governors, governors' staffs, other agencies. It was the first really significant analysis by the Bureau of Reclamation directed toward finding out what it should be doing in the future and how to get from here to there. It really was a sequence of chronology.

Reclamation's Reorganization a Long-Time Coming

At the time, I remember a lot of us thought, "God, we're wasting a lot of time because we've already done this." But looking back now, you

can see that it was a sequential operation. The realignment team effort that I was talking about, the Dirty Seven, and then the two reports by Ziglar, the study itself and the implementation study, those were realignment team probably in '85, and Ziglar's efforts in '87-'88–the reorganization was in '88, and then Underwood's *Strategic Plan*,[31] and now Beard's *Blueprint for Reform*[32] or whatever he's going to call it when he announces on November 1, so that's from '85 to '93, an organization looking at itself and trying to redirect and redefine what it is and what it should be doing in the public interest. And the first of those studies is the one I'm talking about.

Storey: Right. The realignment.

Knell: The realignment.

Storey: And you went out. Were you consciously saying, "How should we change?"

Knell: Right.

Storey: Or were you saying, "What do you guys think we should be doing?"

31. For more information on the *Strategic Plan*, see United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, *Reclamation's Strategic Plan: A Long-term Framework for Water Resources Management, Development, and Protection*, June 1992.

32. Reclamation published Commissioner Daniel P. Beard's *Blueprint for Reform: The Commissioner's Plan for Reinventing Reclamation* in 1993 as one of the vehicles for his reorganization of Reclamation in 1993-1994. Another of the vehicles was the "Commissioner's CPORT team report–"Report of the Commissioner's Program and Organization Review Team" which Reclamation also published in 1993.

Need for Change

Knell: There was recognition that change needed to occur, and what we tried to come up with was recommendations on what that change should be and how we should do it. The big thing we were writing about was getting costs down. See, everybody can see in the future. The dollar program was no longer there. The Central Arizona Project was going to be wrapped up. Central Utah Project was going to be wrapped up. There were no more big projects, no more cash cows. So if you want to be viable, we assumed, we still assume, that there is a federal role in water in the West. Water is a pretty important resource. We had to position ourselves where we are able to do what needs to be done in the public interest in water in the West.

Storey: And what did the realignment study conclude?

Knell: Well, as I recall, we needed to cut down the number of regional offices, because we couldn't afford them anymore. We needed to professionalize ourselves and get into water quality and other areas of water that really hadn't been emphasized. Construction as we had known it in the past was going to change. There wasn't going to be the large projects there had always been, that we'd always had.

I haven't looked at that report in several years. I should go back and read it and what is in there.

Storey: Was it ever officially circulated?

Knell: I don't think so. I think copies were made available to the P-M-C, the Permanent Management Committee. It had a red cover, I recall. But as I've indicated sometime before, it was superseded or caught up in the Ziglar effort, and a lot of the findings are repeated in the Ziglar report.

Storey: Do you suppose we might be able to get a copy?

Knell: Oh, I'm sure there are copies around, yeah. All those team members would have copies.

Storey: And that was called what the Realignment Study?

Knell: Realignment Team Study.

Ziglar Study

Storey: What happened then? What did Ziglar do once this had come out basically in draft, as I understand it, and he saw it, and then he went ahead and did further studies? What did he do specifically that you're aware of?

Knell: What Ziglar did is, in effect, he said, "Yeah, this is good, but it's not enough and it's not professional." And he was right. This was a team of seven in-house types who did a study and made some recommendations. What he wanted and what he got was a massive organization-wide study with a very slick professional product that he was able to take up on the Hill and take to the private sector and take to the administration and get support. The two-volume study that he oversaw was much

more sophisticated, more in depth than the study we put together.

This started when you asked me about Roland Dolly. We're talking about his contribution to that effort. That's where I worked with him most. That's where I formed the friendship. It was–I'm repeating myself–a quick and dirty in-house effort, where the Ziglar report was a long, drawn out, in-depth, very sophisticated study.

Storey: Did he take the Dirty Seven and use that?

Knell: Much of it, yes. Oh, the personalities?

Storey: The people.

Knell: I think we were all involved in one way or another, not as a study team, but in the positions we held.

Storey: Who was on his team?

Knell: The Ziglar study team?

Storey: Yeah.

Knell: I'm not sure. But it could have been the Permanent Management Committee, which has pretty much always been the Commissioner, Assistant Commissioners, and Regional Directors. There was a group assembled to do some initial planning, and I have forgotten who was on that group.

Storey: We've come back around to Ziglar. You're not

the first person who has mentioned that Mr. Ziglar and Mr. Duvall did not get along very well, and that Ziglar was actively involved in Reclamation's business. Was there somebody in Reclamation to whom Ziglar was talking on good terms that you're aware of?

Ziglar/Duvall Feud

Knell: That Ziglar was talking to?

Storey: Yeah.

Knell: My impression was that he was talking to everybody except Duvall. That was part of the problem. Jim Ziglar was very unique, dynamic, assertive, humorous, competent, quick study. People liked to be around him. He was fun to be around. He was energizing. Dale Duvall was kind of stuffy and slow and just did not have the interpersonal competence or dynamics to compete with Jim. I think that's part of the problem. Jim was so much quicker and faster and brighter than Dale, that they couldn't relate. So Jim just worked around Dale directly with the assistant commissioners and the regional directors.

Storey: Well, I think we've pretty much covered most of the topics that I was planning to discuss with you.

Knell: Okay.

Storey: Is there anything I should have asked you that I wasn't aware of?

Knell: I can't think of anything else, and I can't believe anybody would be interested in this, but if they are, that's fine.

Storey: There are doing to be lots of people interested in this, I assure you. Once again, I would like to ask you if the tapes and the transcripts from this interview can be used by Reclamation researchers and outside researchers.

Knell: Yes. No problem there.

Storey: I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

Knell: You're welcome.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 2. OCTOBER 25, 1993.
END OF INTERVIEWS.