

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

**DONALD PRICE**



STATUS OF INTERVIEWS:  
OPEN FOR RESEARCH



Interviews Conducted and Edited by:  
Brit Allan Storey  
Senior Historian  
Bureau of Reclamation



Interviews conducted–1995  
Interview edited and published–2017

Oral History Program  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Denver, Colorado

SUGGESTED CITATION:

**PRICE, DONALD.** ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW. Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian, Bureau of Reclamation, in Boise, Idaho. Edited by Brit Allan Storey, further edited and desktop published by Andrew H. Gahan. Repository for the record copy of the interview transcript is the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland.

Record copies of this transcript are printed on 20 lb., 100% cotton, archival quality paper. All other copies are printed on normal duplicating paper.

---

**Table of Contents**

Table of Contents.....	i
Statement of Donation.....	iii
Editorial Convention.....	v
Introduction.....	vi
Oral History Interviews.....	1
Early Life.....	1
Working the Mess Hall at Boulder Dam.....	3
Waiting Tables in the Blue Room.....	7
Working Conditions.....	9
Frank Crowe.....	11
Reclamation Staff.....	12
Living in Boulder City.....	14
Riverton Project.....	18
College Education.....	20
Coming to Work for Reclamation.....	21
Going to Work on the Sun River Project.....	23
Transferred to the Boise Project.....	26
Anderson Ranch.....	31
Transferring to the Regional Office.....	35
Regional Issues.....	37
Moving into the Regional Planning Office.....	40
Role of Administrative Assistants.....	42
Secretary McKay Story.....	43
Personnel Matters.....	46
Problems with Procurement.....	48
Hu Blonk.....	49
Regional Office Accommodations.....	51
Soil Laboratory.....	53
Moving into the Planning Division.....	55
Snake River Investigation.....	58
Management Grid.....	61
Handling Personnel Problems.....	63
Difficult Situation for Reclamation.....	65
Moving from the Administration Office to the Planning Office.....	66
Planning Division Functions.....	69
Report Writers.....	71
Creating Regional Offices.....	76
Finding the Right People.....	76
Working with the Geologists.....	78
Administrative Role in Planning.....	79
Non-Engineers in Leadership Positions.....	81
PN Regional Directors.....	82

Columbia Basin Interagency Commission..... 89  
Robert J. Newell..... 91  
Pay Grades and Politics..... 96  
Work Background..... 96  
Regional Accounting..... 99  
Diamond Drill Operations..... 101  
The Last Promotion..... 103  
Scaling Back the Planning Division..... 104  
Retirement..... 107  
Ralph Lowry..... 108  
Socializing in the Region..... 109  
Doing a Little Extra..... 113  
Changes to Reclamation..... 115  
Pre-Reclamation Work Experience..... 116  
Conclusion..... 116

---

## Statement of Donation

### STATEMENT OF DONATION OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW OF DONALD G. PRICE

1. In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms, conditions, and restrictions set forth in this instrument, I, Donald G. Price, (hereinafter referred to as "the Donor"), of Boise, Idaho, do hereby give, donate, and convey to the National Archives and Records Administration (hereinafter referred to as "the National Archives), acting for and on behalf of the United States of America, all of my rights and title to, and interest in the information and responses (hereinafter referred to as "the Donated Materials") provided during the interview conducted on July 26, 1995, at the Pacific Northwest Regional Office in Boise, Idaho, and prepared for deposit with the National Archives and Records Administration in the following format: cassette tapes and transcripts. This donation includes, but is not limited to, all copyright interests I now possess in the Donated Materials.
2. Title to the Donated Materials remains with the Donor until acceptance of the Donated Materials by the Archivist of the United States. The Archivist shall accept by signing below.
3.
  - a. It is the intention of the Archivist to make Donated Materials available for display and research as soon as possible, and the Donor places no restrictions upon their use.
  - b. The Archivist may, subject only to restrictions placed upon him by law or regulation, provide for the preservation, arrangement, repair, and rehabilitation, duplication, and reproduction, description, exhibition, display, and servicing of the Donated Materials as may be needful and appropriate.
4. Copies of the Donated Materials may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the National Archives, including the Bureau of Reclamation. Copies of Donated Materials may also may be provided to researchers. The Bureau of Reclamation may retain copies of tapes, transcripts, and other materials.
5. The Archivist may dispose of Donated Materials at any time after title passes to the National Archives.

Date: 7/26/95 Signed: *Donald G. Price*  
Donald G. Price

INTERVIEWER: Brit Allan Storey

Having determined that the materials donated above by Donald C. Price are appropriate for preservation as evidence of the United States Government's organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, and transactions, and considering it to be in the public interest to accept these materials for deposit with the National Archives and Records Administration, I accept this gift on behalf of the United States of America, subject to the terms, conditions, and restrictions set forth in the above instrument.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Archivist of the United States

---

## Editorial Convention

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

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

While we attempt to conform to most standard academic rules of usage (see *The Chicago Manual of Style*), we do not conform to those standards in this interview for individual's titles which then would only be capitalized in the text when they are specifically used as a title connected to a name, e.g., "Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton" as opposed to "Gale Norton, the secretary of the interior;" or "Commissioner John Keys" as opposed to "the commissioner, who was John Keys at the time." The convention in the Federal government is to capitalize titles always. Likewise formal titles of acts and offices are capitalized but abbreviated usages are not, e.g., Division of Planning as opposed to "planning;" the Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992, as opposed to "the 1992 act."

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

## Introduction

In 1988, Reclamation created 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.

Questions, comments, and suggestions may be addressed to:

Andrew H. Gahan  
Historian  
Environmental Compliance Division (84-53000)  
Policy and Administration  
Bureau of Reclamation  
P. O. Box 25007  
Denver, Colorado 80225-0007  
FAX: (720) 544-0639

For additional information about Reclamation's history program see:  
[www.usbr.gov/history](http://www.usbr.gov/history)



---

**Oral History Interviews**  
**Donald Price**

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, senior historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing Don Price, in the Pacific Northwest Regional Offices in Boise, Idaho, on July 26, 1995, at about two o'clock in the afternoon. This is tape one.

I'm going to ask you, Mr. Price, where you were born and raised and educated, and how you ended up at Reclamation. From there on, I'm going to ask questions depending on what you say.

**Early Life**

Price: Okay. I was born in Gilman City, Missouri, November 4, 1909, and I lived on a farm.

Storey: Did you do any irrigation on the farm?

Price: No. My parents separated in 1918. In 1920, I moved to Riverton, Wyoming, which was a Reclamation project.<sup>1</sup> It was authorized in 1924. It was a dog. The people in Reclamation all recommended against it, but the politician in 1924 was elected on the basis he would get this project, and they went ahead and developed it, but it was always a problem. But it was irrigated, a diversion dam, storage dams, in the system. It was an area of land called Missouri Valley, which was land adjacent to, but separated with hills from the river.

I graduated from high school in 1927. I spent the winter of 1927-28 in Rochester, Minnesota. My mother was having medical treatment. I returned to Riverton in the spring of 1928. You know, there's odd jobs that I did. You don't want that kind of detail, do you?

Storey: That's fine. Go ahead and tell me.

Price: Until the fall of 1928, I worked in a drugstore as a soda jerk, as a clerk, and I did the janitor work. The pay was low, about \$15 a week, and I couldn't live on that, so I took a night job in addition to this, and worked nights. I got to sleep about six hours on the job, but I had to be there. But I got fired from the drugstore because I wasn't able to open up when he wanted me to open up, because somebody didn't come to relieve me at the garage.

I left Riverton. Well, in the spring, after I was fired from the drugstore, I decided I'd go to college. I left Riverton and went to work in Evanston, Wyoming, as a welder helper for the A-O Smith Corporation of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. By this time I was really making a little money.

---

1. The Riverton Project was originally authorized in 1918 as an Indian irrigation project. In 1920 the Bureau of Reclamation took over construction of the project, and with the completion of Wind River Diversion Dam water was delivered to project lands in 1925. In 1970, the project was reauthorized as a unit of the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program. For more information, see Robert Autobee, "The Riverton Unit, Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 1996, [www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=173](http://www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=173).

I went down to Denver to enroll in the School of Commerce at Denver University, but I found out I didn't have enough money to pay my board and room and tuition. I was on my own. I didn't get any help from my parents. I couldn't make it, so I went to work as kind of a trainee for Western Electric working on telephone company. I'd say they started me at \$16 a week. At the end of three months, I got a \$5 raise. At the end of four more months, that would be seven months, I had to say whether I wanted to stay with them, but I wouldn't get a raise that time. They don't guarantee anything beyond that. I decided I didn't want to make a career out of that, so I left them.

In the spring of 1930, I returned to Riverton and had several part-time jobs, herding sheep during lambing, various types of jobs like that. I enrolled in Denver. I'd saved enough money to go to Denver University, and I worked for the *Rocky Mountain News*. Because I had this job at the *Rocky Mountain News* delivering papers, I could afford to go to school. So I went and enrolled at the Denver University School of Commerce, and I went one year.

They went on a quarter system after that and raised the rates, and I couldn't afford it, so I went up to Westminster Junior College in Salt Lake City, on a working scholarship. I was there a year and a half. I wasn't getting what I wanted, I didn't think. The only reason I went back that half a year was I was president of the student body, and I wanted to finish the year. But I was losing time on my education, so I only stayed a half a year, and I went back to Boulder [Hoover] Dam, and worked in the lunchroom at the mess hall, wrapping sandwiches. I worked there for a year.

Storey: Now wait. You said you went back to Boulder Dam.

Price: I was in Denver and I went back to Boulder Dam. I was in Salt Lake City.

Storey: Then you went there for the first time?

Price: No, I was in Salt Lake City the first year of junior college. That summer I went down there. I knew a lot of people from Reclamation because of the Riverton Project. I'd been a Boy Scout, and the Lion's Club sponsored the Boy Scouts, and the Reclamation men were in the Lion's Club. So I knew a lot of these people, and went up to talk to them. They said, "Come on down there," but when I got down there, I could get \$60 a month, board and room and clothes. I couldn't find a place to live. It was expensive. It was a reservation, and if you didn't have a job, you couldn't be there. It was U.S. marshals checked you in and out at the gate. But I got on at H-S Anderson Corporation, who ran the mess hall, and I wrapped sandwiches between 15,000 to 18,000 sandwiches a day.

Storey: This was during construction?

Price: Yes. I went down there first in the summer of 1932. Then I laid out a year from college and worked there. That would be '32 and '33, half year in '33. But in January of 1933, I had enough money. I got a working scholarship at Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa. I got this through some people that I knew in Salt Lake City. I

---

worked that half year, and then came down. Each year I would hitchhike back and forth from Des Moines, Iowa, to Boulder Dam, and work, or I would catch a freight. I got pretty good at this. I graduated in 1935 from Simpson, with a bachelor of science in business administration.

Now, after graduation—well, graduation would have been June 10—and I got called saying they had a job with Reclamation if I could be there on the morning of the fifth. So I skipped graduation. Had a little trouble with the college over this, but I skipped graduation, and went down and reported for work June 5, 1935.

Storey: At?

Price: At Boulder Dam.

Storey: Tell me more about working in the mess hall. What kind of sandwiches were you wrapping?

### **Working the Mess Hall at Boulder Dam**

Price: Every kind that you could imagine. H.S. Anderson was a Jewish man, and I don't mean that derogatorily. But he had run mess halls for Hog Island during the First World War. He ran on-site feeding and sleeping services for the movie industry. He had his wall all plastered with movie stars and himself, and the credit he got. He loved to talk about it, but all these people flocked in down at the mess hall.

We would feed about 1,150 people in the mess hall at one time. Then they're gone to work. They came through a lunchroom, and we had the boxes that would hold four sandwiches in layers. The workmen would come through, and one man would fill a stack maybe of sixteen sandwiches; another guy would take nothing but fruit; another guy would take nothing but pie, dividing it up that way. They'd go out the door, and they'd try to stop that. Well, I was one of the people that was running through the line, and you had some pretty tough customers every once in a while, when you charged them for two lunches, and they were furnishing a whole shift with lunch room.

So Harold Nelson [believe Mr. Price is referring to H.S. Anderson] would tell the movie stars and people he was trying to impress, "We feed 1,150 men here, and they're in and out in fifteen minutes." Now, it was pretty near that fast, but it wasn't that fast. We had rows of tables. When I first when down, I waited tables. There's nine tables to a row, and a waiter waited on one section. The quarters were further away. You had to walk further, and the other would be five. The Blue Room, which was the contractors' men that ate in there, or Bureau people that ate there, like Frank Crowe, and a whole bunch of them—I'd have to think a minute if you wanted all the names, but they would eat there, and we had that as a special section.

Storey: It was much smaller?

Price: Four tables with six to a table, or eight to a table.

Storey: So this was the management types, I guess.

Price: Yeah. Yeah. I was picked to wait on that table when I was waiting tables. When I went back for the summer, before I graduated, that was called the Blue Room. That whole year that I worked, I worked in the lunchroom making sandwiches. Now, they had, oh, as many as ten different kinds of sandwiches. Good. The meat was twice as thick as you'd get in a sandwich if you went to a café. They took a lot of pride in that. They had fresh fruit all the time, all the year round. Pie, everything. Pies baked every day. It was a well-fed bunch. They came in at night and they had 1,150, and then they fed a night shift at nine o'clock, and another one at midnight. So they were feeding possibly 3,000 men.

If you were working for the contractor, and you had a family, you had to rent their house. There wasn't any private homes. Very few. There might be a few. They had, I guess you'd call it a—they sold everything in the store. You could charge anything if you had your badge number. But they tried to get you to spend all your money at their store, their pool hall and bar, the usual stuff.

There was a lot of criticism of the company for that. They were going to go on strike. They were having trouble. The union under [Franklin D.] Roosevelt was pushing, when Roosevelt's first term, they were really pushing, and the union was kind of throwing their weight around. They were going to strike the company. Frank Crowe—they had transport trucks that took them from the mess hall down to the dam, and Frank Crowe<sup>2</sup> held up all those transports and says, "Now, your pay is—" On dangerous work, they were getting seven dollars an hour for high scaling. An awful lot of low-paying, dangerous work.

Storey: Seven dollars an hour?

Price: Yeah. Now, this is depression time.

Storey: It sounds high to me, is why I asked.

Price: Well, it's four and a quarter minimum wage here today.

Storey: You don't mean a day?

Price: Oh, yeah, I'll have to take this back. It was seven dollars a day.

Storey: Okay.

Price: Okay, yeah. I'm sorry.

Storey: Yeah, okay. That's what I was wondering about. Frank Crowe did what?

---

2. Frank Crowe was the lead engineer for the construction of Hoover Dam for Six Companies. Crowe began his engineering career with the Reclamation Service and was instrumental in creating innovative construction techniques on concrete dams, most notably Arrowrock Dam. After Hoover, Crowe went to oversee the construction of Parker and Shasta dams.

---

Price: He come out and said, "This is what your pay is, and it's going to stay this way, and if you don't want to go to work, go on, get off the reservation."

Well, a few just straggled off, some didn't, most of them kept on working. But this was the attitude of the contractor, and he got by with it, because there was 5,000 unemployed men in Las Vegas. Las Vegas was only about 7,500 people. It was just crawling with unemployed people, hard up.

I'm just trying to think a little bit more on the mess hall, whether I'm giving you all that you want on that or not.

Storey: Well, you mentioned meat. What kind of meat? Did they serve cheese?

Price: Two or three kinds of cheese, pork, beef, ham, every kind you could dream of. They had fish, fish sandwiches, chopped up and made a paste out of it. Just every kind of sandwich you could think of.

Storey: Did you help make sandwiches?

Price: Well, we had a counter. We could lay ten pieces of bread this way on the counter, and every two rows of bread was covering with something. Somebody would come along and cover it up. I come along and wrapped all that, and we could make 500 sandwiches in fifteen minutes.

Storey: You and how many other folks?

Price: I did the wrapping. Well, there would be one of them putting stuff on, another one gathering the stuff and putting it in baskets and putting it in the refrigerator, and I was doing all the wrapping.

Storey: Somebody laying out the bread?

Price: Yes.

Storey: So I'm hearing at least four people.

Price: Charlie Zimmerman was the manager. Turn this off just a minute. [Tape recorder turned off.]

Storey: You say there were maybe four or five people working on the—

Price: On the lunch counter. There was about fifty people worked in the mess hall.

Storey: Now, when did you make the sandwiches?

Price: Every day.

Storey: What time of day?

- Price: After the line went through in the morning, we started right in. It would be about 8:30 we started making sandwiches, and we'd make them for probably six hours every day, and just the way I said. we'd lay out about 500—we could make 500 sandwiches. That's 1,000 pieces of bread. We'd box it up, and we had the refrigerator, they all went into the refrigerators.
- Storey: Where did your bread come from?
- Price: I don't know. That was all brought in every day from Los Angeles. It wasn't baked there. The pies were baked there. All of the bakery supplies except bread, I think. Bread was brought in there every single day.
- Storey: So you didn't work for the breakfast meal.
- Price: When I was working on sandwiches, I was there when they went through the line, just keeping the sandwich boxes full. No, I worked days that whole year. Previous to that is when I worked on waiting tables. I could have been on any shift, night or day.
- Storey: So you work, say, from 8:30 until maybe 2:30 or 3:00?
- Price: Yeah.
- Storey: How were sandwiches then delivered to the workers?
- Price: They just came through the line and picked them up in these boxes.
- Storey: So they came back from the dam?
- Price: Oh, wait. Now, at night, they didn't eat those sandwiches at night. They had a meal, wonderful food. Everything you ever thought you wanted to eat at a buffet lunch was there.
- Storey: But that was for the dinner?
- Price: That was at night.
- Storey: And the sandwiches were for lunch?
- Price: That was for taking down to the dam, to eat down at the dam.
- Storey: Well, when did they get the sandwiches to take down to the dam?
- Price: After their breakfast. They lined up and came through the line to go down. Now, the night shift went on about 4:30. That's about the time we quit making sandwiches and set up the line for them to take their lunches to go down to the dam for the night shift.
- Storey: Oh, so that's what you were doing, was making the night-shift sandwiches.

Price: Yeah.

Storey: The day-shift sandwiches would have been made earlier in the day?

Price: Yeah. All of the sandwiches were made at one time and put in the refrigerator and then brought out to serve these lines.

Storey: Oh, I see. Okay. And how long did you make sandwiches?

Price: We made sandwiches, depended. We might make sandwiches eight hours. We might. It'd be a little unusual. I would think we made them about six hours a day.

Storey: You were talking about people coming in, some of them took only sandwiches, some of them took fruit, some of them took pies. Was that because they were getting meals for a whole group?

Price: Yeah. They furnished the lunch for all of a crew. Now, these crews all went down in the same transports, they called them. It was trucks with seats in them. The morning shift got up from breakfast and went right down, then within half an hour started their line to get their lunches and go out and get on the trucks.

The evening shift would have gone to work, gone down there about an hour before their shift started, because they went down in the truck, and the truck brought them in on shift back out. They washed up and came in for the evening meal. That was fed about, oh, from 5:30 to 6:30. They ate pretty fast.

Storey: How did they pay?

Price: It was taken out of their salary, would be. There was a checker at the door that checked every man coming through with his number. He checked the number and that went right into the cashier, and was recorded. Basically, they paid a dollar and a half a day, probably. I don't recall what that was. But they were only getting, say, from \$4 to \$8 a day. So they got the food pretty cheap.

### **Waiting Tables in the Blue Room**

Storey: Tell me about waiting on table in the Blue Room.

Price: Well, it was about as interesting as anything you can see. I didn't have to recall names, but Frank Crowe ate at that table. Six Companies had bid on the San Francisco bridge, that Bay Bridge.<sup>3</sup> During that period, all their conversation was on that bridge, and Frank Crowe—Six Companies bid on it, but he had put an alternate site for the anchor on the San Francisco side. They went over. I've forgotten the town that's next to them. This went on for days. He was explaining why they made an alternate bid, and they wanted to put it over here, and they didn't get the bid. It wasn't

---

3. Six Companies is the name taken by the consortium of contracting firms which won the contract to construct Hoover Dam. Six Companies consisted of Morrison-Knudsen, Utah Construction Co., J.F. Shea Co., Pacific Bridge Co., MacDonald and Kahn, Ltd., Henry J. Kaiser, and Warren Brothers.

accepted. They discussed areas of work on the dam, but generally they stayed away from Frank Crowe's table. If he wanted to talk about something, he sat at the table and they all talked.

As part of this Blue Room operation, I went up and waited tables at the guest house. They had a special guest house for Six Companies officials. That's another story. They didn't stock up food like you could in a restaurant. I'd asked one of the fellows—their wives were there with them quite often—what he'd have for breakfast. Well, he'd asked for something and we didn't have any of it. So I'd say, "Well, maybe I should tell you what we have," and this would irritate some of them. One fellow, I wish I could—I may remember his name before we get through here, but he was nervous, and his wife said to me, "Don't pay any attention. His stomach is bothering him. The closer he gets to the job, the more his stomach bothers him." (laughter) So I told him what we had, and then they gave their order.

I didn't wait on more than twelve at a time, and that was very seldom. Maybe it would be five or six people. It wasn't an honor to be on, especially, but it was people that they could depend on doing what they told them, and I happened to be one of those people. They had some waiters on there that worked in high-class restaurants, and they couldn't get jobs, and they came up there and worked.

The guest house was interesting, primarily because it was built having in mind people like Frank Crowe, or people who associated with Frank Crowe. Now, there was Six Companies, and I can't remember the names of the Six Companies anymore. I'd have to sit and think a little.

Storey: Well, Bechtel, Morrison Knudsen, I've forgotten all of them.

Price: You're talking construction?

Storey: Yeah.

Price: Most of the stuff you raise came from Provo, Utah, and it was primarily because of the senator. If I'd known you was going into this, I could have thought of that before, but the senator from Utah was a powerful man. It wasn't Caine [phonetic]. Anyway, his grandson worked there in the lunch room with me for a while one summer. The big people that I met in the working end of this thing were probably students up there for the summer. And it was hot, but we had good quarters, air-conditioned quarters.

Storey: Where were those?

Price: Right next to the mess hall.

Storey: It was a dormitory?

Price: Yeah.

Storey: How many people to a room?



---

Price: One. There was I don't know how many dormitories for workmen, and they kept them full. Then there was, oh, probably 1,200 houses that they rented. Might have been more than that, but when I first went down, there wasn't. They were well taken care of except for the salary.

### **Working Conditions**

Now, the workmen on the dam, it was hot, and they would sweat the minerals out of their body, and muscles would get just as hard, and they'd be up in the hospital until they could—and they tried to give them salt tablets every day. Some took it and some didn't, but they had problems with that.

They head of the U.S. marshals down there was a tough cookie. He didn't take any guff off of anybody, but they had a lot of justifiable complaints by men who were injured in some way, and he set up a situation where a fellow couldn't perform sex. He lost all his powers because of the work he was on. They set up a thing and recorded with women, and the man says that he could, then they made a class-action case in court on this one or two or three instances, and people that really suffered from this thing, lost their job because they couldn't perform, didn't get a dime out of it.

The Nevada laws on mining and this high scaling, particularly, were stronger than the mining laws in Nevada [Arizona?], and they always left the body lie there until they determined whether it was in Nevada or in Arizona. Then there's a lot of stories that were told on this. Some were true and some were not.

When you get down to the dam, these people played all kinds of pranks, these workmen. They nailed some shoes to the form. The concrete was put in twenty-foot-square blocks five feet deep. They nailed some shoes onto the form, poured the concrete on them, and then pulled it off, and it looked like you'd buried somebody there. So the stories was all out, you know. They were anxious to make a record run on placing concrete each day, and if somebody was just buried, the didn't look for the body, they just kept pouring concrete. This type of story was prevalent.

I had a brother there. He was a rodman with Reclamation. He made more money guiding tourists at night, and then these tourists come in with the most outlandish stories you ever heard. The one crew had a fellow from Boise, was with the Utah Construction, I mean, Six Company, Morrison Knudsen, and this fellow was a gambler. He would take his crew into the gambling hall on payday night, and they had to help pay his gambling losses. Sometimes he won, sometimes he lost. But you could hear him a block away when he got to rolling the dice and they followed him, just because it was a show.

Storey: Where was this?

Price: This is in Las Vegas. One fellow there—

END SIDE 1, TAPE 1. JULY 26, 1995.

BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1. JULY 26, 1995.

Storey: You were talking about a guy selling Irish Sweepstakes tickets.

Price: Well, this fellow sold Irish Sweepstakes tickets, and so the fellow went into Vegas and sent this fellow a wire in Boulder saying, "Your horse has been picked to run." The Irish Sweepstakes was a paid a certain amount if the horse was picked to run. Then you got the big money if the horse won. But they sent him a wire and told him that his horse had been picked to win. He could bet on it from—the next thing they sent was that this—well, he took the whole crew in for an evening. It cost him a lot of money for gambling and drinking. Another one came out the day before the race or something, and he went in and was drunk through the race. He was sure he was going to win. Well, the horse won, and they didn't tell him until he had bought all the rounds of drinks, and then they told him he had spent all this money for nothing. The horse hadn't even picked. They were always pulling this kind of stuff.

Up under the head tower cable crossing, six cablers, well, it was the main cable. It was set up for all the heavy loads to go down into the canyon. That was the place where they have a tourist point, where guides would bring tourists out there and point out all this, 700 feet below you. It was very spectacular.

A fellow come running up there, the foreman was standing there, and he says, "Oh, we got a terrible accident down in tunnel two."

"What happened?"

"Well, it's a rock slide in there, and buried, I don't know, three or four men," he says, "and it'll take us all night to get them out of there."

His statement was, "Well, you get those flashlights. You remember we got hell last time we didn't save those flashlights."

Well, tourists would go away with this kind of stuff. You'd get all kinds of questions asked when the other people would come down there. Every day they had some of this stuff that was an amusement to the workers.

I think down at Boulder, and Hoover, if you want to call it, all this, it was Boulder, there was a dedicated bunch of people that took pride no matter where they worked. I've had a little fun with some of my friends saying, "Didn't you know I built Boulder Dam?" People that had worked on it would go away and say, "I worked on Boulder Dam. Where'd you work?" Well, I was all over that dam. You haven't gotten to that yet.

The class of people that worked on that dam, some of them college graduates, didn't have work. They flocked down to Las Vegas in hopes of getting work down there. It was a very tough time for everybody.

Storey: I don't understand how people would pay for their lunches when they would be taken

---

out for maybe five or ten guys.

Price: It would be my guess, and I think it's true, that some people did not live in Boulder City. The people that lived there could take all that they could get into that one box. When they came through the line, they showed their badge and they were charged. The checker used the badge number only, and they were checked off on that. The other people on the crew that didn't live there, didn't come through there, went down to the dam and ate part of their lunch. Didn't pay anything. But the man that took that food down there paid only roughly a dollar and a half. There never was a big point of what they ate and what it cost. We never talked.

Storey: Tell me what the badge was like.

Price: I can't tell you. It was just a number. But I can't tell you what it was. It's a number you couldn't tamper with. I belonged to an organization down there, they call it the Thirty-Oners. I was down there, and I think I went down to thirty-two first, but they're setting up a museum, and all the things like this, they're begging people to bring them in. Some of those things I don't remember.

Storey: Tell me more about Frank Crowe. What was he like? What was his personality like?

### **Frank Crowe**

Price: Well, Frank Crowe was an ex-Bureau of Reclamation engineer. He was well liked, but not probably by the men. He got a \$500,000 bonus for finishing that dam a year ahead of schedule. So he was a driver. He was a big man, oh, 6'2", 6'3", and he spoke with authority. Anytime he's around the group, he dominated the group in conversation. He was well liked by the Reclamation engineers.

There was a lot of controversy in extra work orders that were issued to do that job, different than was contracted, and this was little subcontracts, or it was part of the original specification, but they changed it in the meantime. They had a fellow down there that worked for Six Companies, and he was a kind of a whiner, and I can't remember his name either, but he was the one that always came in and argued these points. The comment was made that if he went in and argued with Frank Crowe, he'd always get his way, because Frank wouldn't allow that kind of talk. (laughter)

There's characters on any construction job. Frank Crowe was not a character. He was not a domineering man, but he spoke with authority. Morrison Knudsen was a dominating force, and Morrison Knudsen had done government work for the Bureau of Reclamation. In other words, there was an acquaintance between a lot of these different people and Morrison Knudsen people and Utah Construction. The two of them probably dominated Six Companies, because they furnished most of the men and most of the equipment. I don't remember the others, and I served them a lot of food in that guest house. But some of them just put in money, or some of them were experts on bridge-building, or some of them were experts on something else, and they were included in the company because of their expertise or because of the type of equipment.

Storey: Was the Blue Room part of the mess hall or was it part of the guest house?

Price: No, it was a down in the mess hall, but over down on one side.

Storey: And Crowe would eat there regularly?

Price: Yeah.

Storey: What about Brig Young, the Reclamation Construction Engineer?

### **Reclamation Staff**

Price: Let's see.

Storey: Did you meet him?

Price: Oh, yeah. I met them all. I might throw in at some point here, when I went down and worked in the mess hall, I visited all these Reclamation people that I knew, and particularly there was a Matthews, I.J. Matthews, and Mrs. Matthews had a bridge group. If she couldn't get a woman or was short one, she'd call me up and I'd fill in with these women bridge groups. (laughter) So I knew a lot about people that I never did meet. On one side of her was Williams, who, I don't remember his name, he went up as the second in command in building Coulee Dam. He had a daughter that was about fifteen years old. Mrs. Matthews was always wanting me to date Sue. But Mrs. Williams was part of this bridge group, too. But I knew, oh, half of the people in the Reclamation, a speaking acquaintance, but there was probably twenty of them that when I was a youngster—well, I was sixteen, seventeen, there on the Riverton Project when Comstock was construction engineer. You haven't gotten to the point where I started with Reclamation.

Storey: No. No. But you were with Reclamation, even though you weren't with Reclamation. But you don't remember Walker Young, Brig Young?

Price: No. I would want to think on it a little. He was an old business professional guy that you'd just meet walking down Wall Street. He dressed the part. He didn't look like a construction man, as such; that is, he wore a suit. I didn't know very much of him. John Page lived right next door to Irv, two houses from Matthews, and I knew them better.

Storey: Tell me about them.

Price: Well, John Page went back and became Commissioner of Reclamation, and he was a nice, fine man.<sup>4</sup> I don't mean that nobody else was, but anybody would enjoy him. Very efficient, and he was picked to be Commissioner from down there. He went into Washington. He may have gone through Denver to Washington, because Denver dominated all of our activities in that day.

---

4. John Page began working for Reclamation in 1909 and was Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation from 1936 to 1943.

---

He became Commissioner, and the first thing he did was fire Miss [Mae] Schnurr, who was [Elwood] Mead's secretary.<sup>5</sup> The story that they told back there was that you would come in with a question to Washington, and Miss Schnurr would answer it if she could, and most of them she could, and Mead didn't get a chance to discuss it. You had to clear Miss Schnurr. Well, a little later on, that's part of this story. I'm going to give you more of that later.

Her secretary came up and was secretary to the city manager, and I worked in the city manager's office part of the time, and we heard a lot of this stuff from her. They wouldn't even let her have a job in Washington. Miss Schnurr went over to become the head of the *Reclamation Era*, the magazine that was published.

Page made these changes with the least possible—he got what he wanted easy, without argument, but he got what he wanted. He was that kind of man.

Storey: When he went back to Washington.

Price: Walker R. Young went into the Chief Engineer's Office in Denver, and he was a driving kind of a man. Now, this is what I see and hear. Not as friendly, I mean, as Page had been. He followed Page, I think I have the right chronology, and people had to rethink how they went in with their problem.

Storey: You mentioned how Young dressed. How did Frank Crowe dress?

Price: Fifty percent of the time he would come in with khaki pants and a khaki shirt. He dressed like a construction man.

Storey: And the other 50 percent of the time?

Price: Well, he was with—I couldn't say. I could tell it while I'm here. But when he was up in the guest house, when the bankers and lawyers and the people that ran Six Companies was up there, he dressed just like they did.

Storey: Suits and ties?

Price: You bet.

Storey: Vests?

Price: Yeah. He was very conscious of where he was. Maybe that would be a good way to say it. But he looked the part wherever he was.

Storey: But when he went out in the field—

---

5. Mae Schnurr entered government service in 1915 and joined Reclamation in 1923. Ms. Schnurr eventually became secretary to Commissioner Elwood Mead, who in 1929 named Schnurr Assistant to the Commissioner. In 1930, Schnurr was designated Acting Commissioner whenever Mead or the Assistant Commissioner were absent. This was the first time a woman acted as head of a federal agency directed by a man.

Price: He went out with his work clothes on.

Storey: In khakis.

Price: You bet. You bet.

Storey: You mentioned H.T. Nelson. He was there?

Price: No. H.T. Nelson's background, he was a professor. I think he graduated from the University of—well, he graduated from the University of Idaho, because somewhere here I wrote up an award for the Secretary of the Interior when he resigned. I think I brought that with me. I think he worked in the Denver Office. I'm not sure. But he went up to Kennewick when they were building the Kennewick [Division] Yakima Project, and the Kennewick Project was 100 miles south of the Wenatchee where Hu Blonk came from. That's why I brought that picture. Hu Blonk was a reporter for the *Wenatchee World*. No, start over again. The man, Rufus Woods, owned the *Wenatchee World* newspaper, and Hu graduated from the University of Washington. There's a whole report on him. I'll just give you it if you wanted it. He used his influence through Rufus Woods. A lot of these people here, I'll get into some of the things I did. These are early people. Rufus Woods is one of them. He was the pusher behind Shasta Dam.

Storey: Behind Shasta or Grand Coulee?

Price: Grand Coulee. Oh, yeah. Anyway, Rufus Wood is in this, there on the back side. When they were going to appoint somebody as, I believe, Assistant Regional Director, Hu Blonk had a lot to do with that through the people that he knew, the pressure. Hu was a personal friend of mine. When I had problems, I'm not sure I'm going to tell you all of those problems, but when I had problems in the Regional Office, Hu always supported me. He didn't wait until you had a problem. He let me know there's a problem developing.

Storey: This man's name is spelled H-U and then Blonk, B-L-O-N-K, right?

Price: That's right. Right. But anyway, I got his version of how Harold got in here, and that was because of his public relations. Up there he was conscious of all the things that Hu Blonk was, as a newspaperman, and he worked on that, and he was working up there when he was picked to come in here as the Assistant Regional Director. Do you want to reach this point?

Storey: No.

Price: Because there's more people come into this now.

Storey: Well, let's go back and finish up down at Boulder Canyon, before we get so far afield. What was the dormitory like where you lived?

### **Living in Boulder City**

- 
- Price: They were two-story, and the outside stairs at each end, and then the middle stairs in the middle. The dormitories were rooms about probably not more than eight-feet by eight-feet, each room. There was room around the bed, and you had a single cot. It was all air-conditioned. Well, no, people improvised dressers and things like that. They didn't furnish them. You had a chair in it. The hallway was five feet, six feet wide. They had what they called battleship linoleum; that's real heavy brown linoleum. That was cleaned every day.
- Storey: In the rooms and out?
- Price: Yeah. No, in the rooms was not cleaned, but the hallways were all cleaned. In the middle of that thing, halfway from front to back, they had a little area where there's like a conference table and chairs where you could sit around and talk. Drinking fountains for ice water, or cold water. That's about it.
- Storey: What about bathrooms?
- Price: Oh, yeah. They had, let's see, one, two, three, four, probably four showers and bathrooms on each floor. It's two floors.
- Storey: So how many folks would be in a dormitory?
- Price: Well, there might be sixty men in each dormitory.
- Storey: Upstairs and downstairs, or just each level?
- Price: Upstairs and downstairs.
- Storey: Did the corridor have rooms on both sides or just on one side?
- Price: Yeah, both sides. Corridor went down the middle.
- Storey: You say it was air-conditioned.
- Price: Yeah.
- Storey: So it was fairly comfortable, then.
- Price: Very comfortable.
- Storey: You mentioned, off the record, that you didn't go to bed until late because of the heat, however.
- Price: Well, a lot of your friends didn't have that kind of accommodation. I'll give you an illustration. We had a young man that was a football player at Riverton, and he came down there, and I.J. Matthews was in charge of building the high school. I think he built most of the federal buildings there. He was the engineer in charge. This young man was the son of a bootlegger, famous up in Wyoming. But anyway, he came

down and he wanted a job. I told him to go see Matthews; I couldn't help him. He went to Matthews, and Matthews got him right on with Six Companies. He was a husky fellow, but he caroused around a lot.

One guy comes in, new fellow comes in, and he had a wife. So they rent him a house for husband and wife. Then he would take four or five men in there, into the house, with inadequate sleeping facilities, and they may not have air-conditioning. Those people sat outside, or drank beer. Beer had just been cleared for Prohibition about this time. It was a popular place downtown. Were you at Boulder City?

Storey: Yeah, I've been there.

Price: Well, do you know where the Administration Building is?

Storey: Yeah, up on the hill.

Price: They had that big lawn down below, there'd be two or three hundred people down there at night until ten, eleven, twelve o'clock. We might be with some of them, we might not be. It just depended on who you knew.

Storey: What about places to go, like restaurants or places like that in town?

Price: We were on a reservation, and the city manager had total authority. His word was law. The U.S. marshals were—well, there was probably eight of them, and they all reported to a chief. He reported to the city manager.

Let's see. How was your question phrased again?

Storey: Places you could go in the evening, for instance, hang out, sort of.

Price: They only allowed two businesses of one kind in the city: two cafes, two grocery stores, two mercantile stores, two beauty shops, two whatever. The theory in back of that was that if they had to control it, they didn't want all of those people roaming the streets that didn't have employment. They had a fellow named Brothers, who owned a theater, and it was well run, and it was a good one. They had the pool hall. But there wasn't anyplace there that could satisfy everybody. They had to go into Las Vegas. Las Vegas is twenty-three miles away.

The first year I got down there, there was an article in the paper that they licensed prostitutes in Nevada, and they had licensed 134 prostitutes on the road between Boulder City and Las Vegas. Now, that was Henderson. That picture changed later on. They built a water plant.

Storey: Magnesium there?

Price: Magnesium plant out there, and that changed a lot of that. That's about halfway between Boulder City and Las Vegas. Entertainment down there involved women and drinking.



---

Right on the edge of town, outside the reservation, was Railroad Pass, and that was two miles, maybe, out of downtown Boulder City, and they had prostitutes there, and you could walk out there and back. But if you were coming in drunk, the reservation guard was between Railroad and Boulder City, you're in trouble if you came through there drunk. It was just trying to make a model town out of Boulder City, is what it was.

Storey: Did you know the city manager?

Price: Oh, yeah. Simms Ely. I knew him real well. His appointment was renewed every year because he was over seventy, and he was eighty-two or-four, eighty-two years, I think, when I first went there. I'm not sure how he got his appointment, but Northcut Ely, his son, was the lawyer for Los Angeles Power and Light, and they came up one day. You think about this, you ought to cut this out, but he came up and met in his Dad's office with Bureau of Power and Light officials, and signed a contract, putting him on a retainer at \$120,000, just a retainer. The other guy, I don't know, you ought to cut this out, because it gets something that—we checked the carbon out of the typed agreement on this thing. We check that and that's how we found out about that. (laughter)

Storey: You saw the carbon that they had used? (laughter)

Price: Yeah. (laughter) Just curious.

Storey: So Northcut Ely would have been a grown man at that time.

Price: Northcut Ely, at that time, was rumored to be the next Secretary of the Interior. His job was with the Bureau of Power and Light. See, they sold falling water. They didn't sell electricity to Los Angeles. They sold falling water. Los Angeles put in their own generators and lines. He worked out the price agreement on that and reduced it in half. There's a lot of gossip on that, because, well, we were subsidizing Imperial Water District. Well, the first four generators was Bureau of Power and Light, and then they had one for Nevada; Metropolitan Water District. I don't remember just what they had.

Storey: What other kinds of places were there in town to sort of hang out? You mentioned a root beer bar or something.

Price: Well, no, that's just root beer, but there wasn't anyplace to sit. They served you the beer and they had seats out here. This was Mrs. Brader [phonetic]. She claimed to have Senator [James] Scrugham, or Congressman Scrugham, I think it was.<sup>6</sup> She claimed to have some kind of a pull with him. It wasn't evident. It didn't do anything except give her a license to sell this pop root beer. She didn't sell alcoholic drinks.

Storey: She sold root beer?

---

6. James Graves Scrugham served as Nevada State Engineer from 1917-1923, elected governor of Nevada in 1923 until 1927, was Nevada's sole congressional representative from 1933 to 1942, and U.S. Senator from 1942 until his death in 1945.

Price: Yeah. Well, it was called a root beer stand, but you could buy all kinds of cold drinks. I didn't realize we were going to get into this. The café there was a real fine café, and they went up to Coulee Dam and run the same outfit up there. Some of these people went right up to that, and some of the Bureau went from here right up to Coulee.

Reclamation was always a family, almost, of people, and they kept track of each other. When I left there and I took an assignment up to Sun River Project,<sup>7</sup> and three or four of them came around with me, "Well, we'll see you." Chief greeting was, "We'll see you on another project. Adios." "We'll meet again" type thing, and they kept track of each other. We still do, quite a few people. We'll get into that just a little bit later.

Storey: Okay. Let's jump back to the Riverton Project. You mentioned the chief construction engineer on the original Riverton Project, in what, '28, was that?

### **Riverton Project**

Price: Well, I don't think I know the first one. The one that was Construction Engineer was Comstock.<sup>8</sup> He became the Regional Director of Region Six.

Storey: What was his first name, do you remember?

Price: No, and I've tried to get that from several people, and all they ever called him, "Commy," they called him Commy. I don't know what—

Storey: They did?

Price: Yeah. These engineers at that time took a great deal of pride in what they were doing for the western United States. They had the picture, the big picture. Comstock, to me, was the epitome of that type of person. I'll jump just a little on this. He became Regional Director of Region Six. [Harold L.] Ickes told him to do something and he refused to do it. Ickes was the Secretary of the Interior. Ickes called him in there and kept him sixty days in Washington. He was going to teach him a lesson. I'm not sure of this, but it's my understanding that Comstock resigned. He didn't fire him, Ickes was going to have his way. "No matter what it takes, I'll have my way."

END SIDE 2, TAPE 1. JULY 26, 1995.

BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2. JULY 26, 1995.

Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey with Don Price on July 26, 1995.

---

7. Construction of the Sun River Project began in 1907 and consists of the Greenfields and Fort Shaw divisions in central Montana. Major features are Gibson Dam and reservoir, Pishkun Dikes and reservoir, Sun River Dam Diversion Dam, and Fort Shaw Diversion Dam. For more information, see Robert Autobee, "Sun River Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 1995, [www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=198](http://www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=198).

8. Harold D. Comstock was Region 6 (Upper Missouri) Regional Director when it was created in 1943 and served at that position until 1947.

---

You said that Comstock was highly regarded in Reclamation circles.

Price: And very outspoken on any subject. He went to the Lion's Club. I attended some of those Lion's Club meetings, because I was a Boy Scout, had to do with the Boy Scout program, and I heard him on numerous times. Well, they all listened when he talked. I couldn't tell you—I'm trying to think of a number of people that was up there at that time, engineers that was up there at that time, and for the life of me, I haven't come across them. If I get those, do you want me to send them to you?

Storey: Yeah, that would be nice. Now, when you were living in Riverton, were you living in town? Were you living on the farm?

Price: I was living in town.

Storey: Did the Reclamation project cause some excitement in the town when it was built?

Price: The city that serviced the Missouri Valley, which was the big area of land that was developed under Reclamation, was a town called Pavilion. Most of those people lived up at Pavilion. They had a Reclamation office in Riverton, and there was only four or five people in that.

I can't remember the name of the congressman that got that project authorized. There was a lot of excitement over the fact that they were going ahead with the project. It was in jeopardy in 1924.

Yeah, I think there was excitement there, but the economics of that set-up at Pavilion, where people lived and traded and worked up there, but the headquarters was in Boise, and that's where we lived, most of the people.

Storey: My impression is you were really aware—

Price: Oh, yeah, you bet.

Storey: —of Reclamation in town.

Price: You bet.

Storey: Well, it's interesting, because some of the people lived on Reclamation projects and weren't even aware of it.

Price: I know.

Storey: Things like that.

Price: Well, there was an original irrigation district down along the river, where all you had to do was divert water. People are used to that, but here is 100,000 acres, I don't remember the total acreage, that was coming in for development, and down the road it would have a big impact on the river. So the impact was really felt after I had left

Riverton. But the planning ahead was all at the time when I lived there.

Storey: I'm sort of interested in the way you picked schools. First you went to D-U [Denver University], then you went to Westminster Junior College, and then off to Simpson College. How did you pick these places?

### **College Education**

Price: Well, Denver University, in that day, had a real reputation for business. I wish I could have finished there. I was working my way through, and I had to do what I could do.

The preacher in our town had some faculty members on this junior college in Salt Lake City. When I decided I couldn't go back to Denver, a fellow named Drummond [phonetic], he rode up to Westminster, and Dr. Reherd was the president, and he told me to come ahead, that they would give me work to see me through. That's how I got there.

Salt Lake City was a good location once I started working at Boulder Dam. I could go down to Point of the Mountain, which was about twenty miles out, and hop a freight and ride clear to Las Vegas. People up there in that day would take any college student, pick them up and haul them. Salt Lake City was a good point for that purpose.

Now, while I was in my second year at Westminster, I was president of the student body, and there was a fellow came in there who had gone to Simpson and graduated, and he got to telling me about that it was a good school, and it had certain features. They would bring Chicago Board of Trade people down to lecture on business, foreign exchange, banking, money and banking, things that were close enough to Chicago that we could get them in there. Des Moines was the insurance center of the country, almost, in that day. There was lots of opportunities if you graduated from Des Moines. The insurance companies, it was a Methodist school, I had heard. It didn't mean anything at that time to me, but they got a lot of contributions from the businesses to run the school. As part of that, they got outside businessmen to participate. It was, oh, I suppose, 1,200 students. I got more out of that than I would at Denver because of the personal contacts with people.

The thing that I missed out on was I didn't get anything on the stock exchange. I went to work under the city manager's office. The fellow that was in there with me was a graduate of the school at Denver University. He was already making \$10,000 a year on playing the stock market. I just regretted that. But the fellow that taught that, the professor in Denver, was a Jewish fellow that had been in the New York Stock Exchange, and he got consumption or some kind of a lung infection, and he came to Denver, and they kind of drew him into this.

They had a lot of people in Denver in that day. I sure wanted to stay at Denver, but I got in Simpson, I got another side of that. I took money and banking, and the money in banking professor owned the bank, and he was part of the Bank of England. His name was—he was the third, and he had a son. I was on the track team, couldn't

---

sleep in the dormitory. I got a room up in his attic and babysat this little boy. So I had the contact here for questions that I could talk anytime with him on. I really felt I got filled in on things I wouldn't have gotten at Denver. And a smaller school. The School of Commerce in Denver was not on the campus. It's downtown on—

Storey: Yeah, it's downtown.

Price: —Lincoln and something. I had to get a room down there, and we had no social life. Well, I joined the fraternity. I pledged it, but I never did join. I couldn't afford it, in the first place. It was all business. The thing I got out of there, I got in with Reclamation at a later date here, on the fund control of appropriations, and cash flow-type stuff. Out of Denver, I really got a lot of stuff there that helped me. I wasn't getting that at either the Westminster or at Simpson.

Storey: Tell me how you got the job in Boulder City when you graduated.

### **Coming to Work for Reclamation**

Price: I had a brother that was a rodman on the crew, and he had a boss named Thaxton [phonetic]. Has his name popped up?

Storey: No, not that I'm aware of.

Price: "Cap" Thaxton handled the surveys, and he liked to talk to his people that worked for him. My brother got to talking to him. My brother got his job because Comstock knew—he became Chief Engineer.

Storey: Ray Walter?

Price: I got some of these names here.

Storey: Ray Walter or Brig Young?

Price: We're a little ahead of the story.

Storey: Ray Walter or Brig Young?

Price: No. No, he became Construction Engineer. Let's see, I've got his name down here. Let me see.

Storey: Well, I seem to have misplaced my list of the chief engineers. [F.E.] Weymouth, [R.F.] Walter, [S.O.] Harper, [W.H.] Young, [L.N.] McClellan, [Grant] Bloodgood, and [B.P.] Bellport.

Price: Bloodgood. Bloodgood was in charge of surveys.

Storey: Down at Hoover.

Price: Comstock called Bloodgood and put him on. Now, I get a little ahead of the story, but it fits in here. They were surveying the keyway that cut back into the rock bank at the top. My brother was a daredevil. He'd jump from parachutes, and if things looked impossible, he tried to do them. He could not go down on a rope and set rod for the instrument man. He couldn't go down that. This is 700 feet up here, looking right down that. But anyway, Bloodgood said, "Why in the hell did Comstock ever recommend you?" (laughter) Charlie was a good rodman for what he was doing, but Bloodgood said what he thought.

To get back, my brother got hold of Thaxton, and Thaxton said, "Sure, we'll give him a job if you get down here." So I missed my graduation in order to be there the fifth of June.

Storey: Did you have to apply? Did you have to fill out a form or anything?

Price: No. No.

Storey: You just showed up and started working?

Price: Well, I knew all these people, but this is how it happened. We were surveying the high-water line in the Virgin River Basin, which was the reservoir part of the project, and I got along fine in that stuff. In the summertime—the only point I'm getting up to, I was not a good rodman. We were surveying at 400 feet to the inch, and when you get out looking at the instrument man, John Cooney [phonetic] was the instrument man, and it was about 1,200 feet from you. In the summertime, when the weather got hot, we couldn't do this. The heat waves would interfere with your surveying.

Then we went down to the dam, and Cooney had a theodolite, which is a transit that records angles as much as a hundredth of a second. Our job was to survey set spots on the [unclear] the tunnels of the dam, and from the downstream side, on both sides, had a retaining wall, and it was about this wide, and up in the air.

Storey: Maybe two foot wide.

Price: We had to sit there and take shots on these targets, checking the movements of the blocks. The dam consisted of blocks. These were poured in twenty-foot-square sections, five feet deep. To see what would happen when the water started backing up, and they just started backing up the water.

Storey: So now this was your job when you came back after graduating from school?

Price: Right. Right.

Storey: Oh, I had the impression you went to work in the office.

Price: Well, this didn't last long.

Storey: Oh, okay.

Price: In the fall, there was a fellow pricing the requisitions for supplies out of the warehouse, and he quit. So I went to Thaxton and told him that I had an opportunity to get in. This was my line of work. So I went ahead. I went into the warehouse. Any key job was an engineer, no matter what kind of work it was, it was an engineer. Walter Sanford was engineer in charge of that, and he had been locating engineer for the canal from the north to south in California. I'll think of the name in a minute.

Storey: The Central Valley Project canal system.

Price: Yeah. So he was a good man. They put him up here running the warehouse. In that day, we were just clerks, no matter whether we had a college degree or anything. The title was clerk. I had, oh, 500 perpetual inventory-type cards for every product in the warehouse. Some requisitions came in, I priced those out, then I assembled that stuff based on the cost account numbers and sent them up to cost accounting. I was there from late '35 until '37.

In 1937, the fellow that was a graduate from Denver University, we were good friends by this time, he asked if I'd come in and work for him. But in the day, up to this point, the Bureau of Reclamation was run like it had been run in 1914, or later. It hadn't changed. We didn't have computers, I guess, is a good way to stay it.

Storey: Yes, it was static.

Price: Old-fashioned. Old-fashioned. The regulation that we operated under required that the minute we took in cash—we billed for leases of land, all the service disabilities and whatnot, from our office. Then we had payroll deductions for people on the government payroll, and then we had to send bills to all the rest of them. It was a billing procedure. But it required when you took the cash in to record it on the typewriter or on the typed sheet. We had three or four typewriters sitting there for different kinds, for leases, for services, for this or that.

An auditor, Henry Johnson, again went up to the Riverton Project as chief clerk, and he knew my family, I didn't know him. But he was a good friend of the cost accountant that all my work went to. He came down there and was reviewing some of the stuff, and he came into our office and was reviewing that. He said, "You know, to move ahead in Reclamation, if you're not an engineer, you've got to take every opportunity you can get to move."

### **Going to Work on the Sun River Project**

I followed that philosophy. He left and went down to Denver and turned my name in, and there was an opening up in the Sun River Project. He made that opening. He'd been a chief clerk up at Sun River. A.W. Walker, the engineer in charge up there, I'm sure—Henry never did tell me this—but he arranged with him. They didn't need me. They had a woman in there that was a whiz, but she was very jealous of everything she did. She wasn't going to show me anything.

I wrote to Henry and says, "You know, they don't really need me. I don't think

they want me out here." He called me and he said, "You're just up there to learn."

And boy, I learned a lot, of people. I learned a lot about Reclamation. That had been a project. The Gibson Dam was built up there in 1927, and they had a diversion dam down below the dam—a canal—that took it over to the Pishkun Reservoir, which was an equalizing reservoir. Got the water down close to the—and the people that came in there were Dust Bowl people, homesteading. We had the homestead opening.

I got into everything that was going on, reclamations, just like it was done in 1890. I even went through all the records up there and threw away, burned a lot of records. I just made it a project of mine when I didn't have anything to do.

But they had the C-C-C [Civilian Conservation Corps] camp up there, and problems with it, partly because Mr. Walker was old-fashioned.<sup>9</sup> He didn't believe in the program as such. The kids drove trucks and wrecked them. We were just supervising. We didn't have anything to do with that, except it was on our project. But I got into this thing because the inspectors or the auditors that came up there were looking for somebody to talk about why it was run this way. They got to talking about me, and when they got ready to go, they started quoting me. Mr. Walker was pretty angry about this. (laughter) But the project was moved, or the C-C-C camp as put under the direction of the Milk River Project. That's when I left. I left before that. I'd been there two years.

Storey: You went up there when?

Price: I went up there 1937.

Storey: So you left in '39.

Price: Left in '39, the fall of '39. But I sent this circular out, request for transfer. The Riverton Project picked me up. I was an old Riverton boy.

Storey: My recollection is that the Sun River Project wasn't doing very well before the Depression.

Price: They had a section of that, that was Fort Shaw Irrigation District, and that was down along the river. They weren't doing very well. Now, that became part of the Fort Shaw Division of the Sun River Project. This was the—I'll think of the division. We were all new land under this.

Storey: On Sun River.

Price: Homesteading, yes. There was a little town called Sun River at the lower end of the

---

9. For an excellent review of Civilian Conservation Corps on Reclamation projects see, Christine E. Pfaff, *The Bureau of Reclamation's Civilian Conservation Corps Legacy: 1933-1942* (Denver: U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, 2010), [https://www.usbr.gov/cultural/CCC\\_Book/CCCReport\\_ALLfortheWebADAaccessible.pdf](https://www.usbr.gov/cultural/CCC_Book/CCCReport_ALLfortheWebADAaccessible.pdf).



project. But this was a whole big bench of about 135 or 140 farm units. In the old days at Riverton, when I was young, Reclamation people used to say it's the third owner that makes money on a Reclamation project. The first one breaks it all up and plants it; the second one gets it fitting whatever he wants to raise; the third guy can make money. That's probably happened there. None of these people had had irrigation experience. They all came from the Dust Bowl with no irrigation. I left before that. They were still in the middle of that when I left there.

Storey: Was there a lot of interest in homesteading on the Sun River Project at that time?

Price: It's very difficult to tell, because the people who had preference were all the Dust Bowl victims. It would be hard to answer that. They were just tickled to death to get there, and in poor financial circumstances. Some government agency footed the bill for everything, including the house. Then they had to pay back some fraction of the cost.

Storey: Maybe the Resettlement Administration. Then why did you leave?

Price: Well, the Pishkun Reservoir, this C-C-C camp was working on dikes to raise the elevation of water in the reservoir. They had pretty well finished that work. The C-C-C camp was going to be turned over to the Milk River Project.<sup>10</sup>

Denver did a lot of our fiscal work. Our payrolls were done in Denver. We didn't have an office in that sense. Half of Mr. Walker's salary was paid by the irrigation district. It wasn't run like a normal reclamation at all. What I got out of that, personally, for my development, was introducing to people who I disagreed with. There was a lot of inefficiencies. Mr. Walker bought everything on the recommendation of a salesman from the Hall Perry Company in Helena or Butte, somewhere over there, and we had a P&H dragline, and it was a diesel engine.

Storey: A which dragline?

Price: P&H.

Storey: P&H. Yes, I see.

Price: It had a diesel engine, and a diesel engine cannot work on navy oil. They thought we had to buy all T-P-S, treasury procurement contracts, and navy oil. That was asphalt base, since I remember this. Every year after the season was over, they overhauled the motor on that dragline. I went out and talked to the—I had a lot of time. I went out and talked to the operator, and he had tried and tried and tried to get them to change the oil. We got into operating things on this dragline. I went in to Mr. Walker and told him these things.

"Well, you can't do it. We're bound to that navy oil." They called it that. It

---

10. One of the earliest projects authorized under the 1902 Reclamation Act, the Milk River Project supplies over 120,000 acres of land in north-central Montana. For more information, see Wm. Joe Simmonds, "Milk River Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 1998, [www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=136](http://www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=136).

didn't come from the navy at all, but the navy used most of it, I suppose. Anyway, he was getting his information from salesmen.

So I went in to the company, P&H dragline, and got the type of oil we should be using, and went back out and told him, "I'm going to buy our oil." I did quite a lot of purchasing. Then he talked to the dragline operator, so we got changed.

Now, he would buy—there's three kinds of cable on the dragline. The drag cable's where you're pulling your—you drop your bucket down and pull. I don't remember exactly these, but there's a left lay, the way it's wound left, and there's a right lay. Then there's a conventional way that you just pull this. But these others, as they go on this windless—not windless—drum—

Storey: A spool? A drum? Yes.

Price: They have to have either right or left lay. He was buying that in lengths that they use on it. He could have bought a reel of that cable at half the price, and later on, simple thing, cut that in two, using cable clamps. A lot of things like that. He prided himself on being a shrewd Yankee. He'd graduated from the University of Maine. He was a fine man. But I learned a lot. I learned to get over frustration, when you see something that needs to be done and you can't do it.

He had a son, Leland Walker, who became well known. He ended up at the consulting firm down at Rancho Mirage or Palm Springs, California, where we spent our winters. I didn't get to meet him down there, but he and I went fishing. I got to know his father because of talking to the boy.

The head of the garage cleaned irrigation district cars, and we had cars that we needed. We got into leasing of land adjacent to a farmstead, and they got first rights on the leasing. Otherwise we had to advertise for the highest bidders on the leasing of land. I handled all of that, which at a later date became part of my duties in this type of thing. As Henry Johnson said, "You're up there learning." I learned.

But when I thought I wasn't getting very far, I just made application to talk to Mr. Walker. I made application, and I went up to Boise, and Mr. Smith, Bob Smith, had been Chief Engineer, or Chief Clerk, on the Riverton Project, and I dated his daughter. A lot of social activities between our family and his.

### **Transferred to the Boise Project**

He transferred me up there. This was 1941. The war was just about to break out, or it had broken out. The fellow that had already been committed to there, they just didn't take him, and put me in the—I was the sole clerk for the whole thing, all by myself, typing and cost accounting. They liked me. It was a seven-days-a-week, twelve-hours-a-day job. The second year, they sent a young man, a stenographer, and he did the typing. We had lots of problems, if you want to hear them.

Storey: Yes. First, though, I'd like to know, did they pay your moving expenses, for instance?

---

Price: Yeah. Yeah.

Storey: Were you married at that time?

Price: Yeah. I was married in Boulder City in 1936, February 1st. When you get to moving around, in that day, the same now, when you get to moving around, you never acquire any money. You never save anything. Everywhere I went, I was in debt when I got set up and not paying off before I left. Up at Montana, especially, I had a son that had eczema real bad. They had to take his tonsils out when he was two years old—his tonsils and adenoids. Those bills just kept piling up on us. But if everything turns out right, you live with less income. Anderson Ranch threw me into a complicated personnel situation.

Storey: Anderson Ranch is in Boise, right?

Price: It was part of the Boise Project.<sup>11</sup>

Storey: Tell me about your Riverton experience first.

Price: Wait, I didn't go to Riverton. I told you he was Chief Clerk on the Riverton Project, but he was Chief Clerk at the Boise Project when he hired me.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 2. JULY 26, 1995.

BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 2. JULY 26, 1995.

Storey: —Riverton, and that's where you knew him from.

Price: Yes. Then he went to Boise, and was Chief Clerk up here.

Storey: That was Mr.—

Price: Robert S. Smith.

Storey: So then you came to Boise.

Price: Yeah. Well, I got to Anderson Ranch, which was part of the Boise Project. The only reason I make a distinction on that is that all the work, theoretically, that you do at a project headquarters, half of it was done by me up here without—handled by mail between. That's why it became a little problem.

Storey: Go ahead and tell me about that.

Price: Well, the Anderson Ranch Dam was approved, and it had a priority because of food

---

11. The Boise Project supplies full irrigation service to roughly 224,000 acres and supplemental irrigation water to another 173,000 acres in southwestern Idaho and eastern Oregon. The project consists of multiple facilities including Arrowrock Dam, Boise Diversion Dam and Powerplant, Black Canyon Diversion Dam and Anderson Ranch Dam and Powerplant. For more information, see Wm. Joe Simonds, "The Boise Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 1998, reedited and formatted, 2009, [www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=74](http://www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=74).

production in the wartime situation. Mr. [Robert J.] Newell<sup>12</sup> was Construction Engineer in Boise, and there's four or five divisions of the project out here, that he was superintendent of all of them. He put an office engineer and a field engineer up at Anderson Ranch. The Chief Engineer, basically, appoints construction engineers. They appointed John Beemer from Deer Creek, Utah, as Construction Engineer.<sup>13</sup> He brought up with him Ellis Armstrong<sup>14</sup>, who became Commissioner, as Office Engineer, and [unclear] Engstrom as Field Engineer. So we had two sets of people that started up there. The war broke it up, but it was a tug-of-war on everything that I did.

At Deer Creek, engineers had a lot of freedom. Mr. Beemer was not a strong administrator. Just for an example, I had a timekeeper, and he went out and saw everybody, and I got a daily timesheet for the payroll. Sometimes he couldn't find some of these people, and I would put them down as not working. If it happened to be Dr. Engstrom, who was Field Engineer in this case, he'd come in and say, "No, pinheaded clerk (that was the way he'd refer to us) tells me how to run my business."

I finally found the way to handle this is, "If you have Mr. Beemer write a letter that gives you this authority, then we'll do it your way." What he was doing, they had a test pit area up on the—two miles, three miles, up on top of the slopes. They were testing. They had four-foot-square test pits that went down as much as sixty feet. They used miners to put it in buckets. The bucket was pulled up by a little air tigger that was connected to a compressor. The compressor used gasoline. They had trouble getting miners, and they lived in Mountain Home, and they were on a ration card. Some of them had C-ration cards. He would tell those people, "You don't have to do this, you don't have to do that. Come over and fill your tank out of our gas tank." Just give them the gas.

Well, I'm doing the cost accounting, and this is just using more gas than that compressor could possibly use. So I goes up to the test pit area, and they had a machine shop, mainly blacksmith-type work for the digging instruments, for digging these. The test pits was to locate the right material for what they call number one, which is high clay, for the core of the dam.

Storey: The impervious layer.

Price: Yeah. They might have had twenty miners up there at a time. I went up there and found out what was going on, and I told this guy, "You are not to give away any of this gasoline, and I'll get this clarified." So I would go back down. That's when they started getting on me.

They had a fellow named, well, Waddell, who was in charge of the test pit

---

12. Robert J. Newell had a long and distinguished career with the Bureau of Reclamation and served as Pacific Northwest Regional Director from 1943 to 1949.

13. Deer Creek Dam and Reservoir are major features of the Provo River Project in Utah. For more information, see Tina Marie Bell, "Provo River Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, [www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=156](http://www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=156).

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

---

operations. He came down to my office, and with four-letter words, tells me, "You're not doing anything with my men up there."

I said, "Well, I've got your payroll. You're not going to get any payroll. I won't even put them on the payroll if you're going to do them this way."

A lot of these people were living in R-V vehicles or tents close by. He was giving per diem in some cases. It was not all applied to everybody the same way. Some of them got favored. It could have created a mess. So I went in. I reported to Mr. Newell and Mr. Smith. Mr. Newell could tell Mr. Beemer to do anything, but Mr. Beemer didn't have to do what Newell said. So we ran my end of the project the way the project operated, and we ran the engineering the way Mr. Beemer said.

Storey: Is that because Mr. Beemer reported to the Chief Engineer in Denver?

Price: That's part of it, yeah. Ellis Armstrong and Engstrom were strong personalities. The two people that Mr. Newell sent up, Mr. Newell had to pull them off eventually when the war broke out. Some of those people were in the service and had to go. That straightened us out pretty fast.

Ellis was always an easy person to work with, but he wanted to work the way he had at Deer Creek. They didn't have an office staff there, so they each were allowed to do things in place of an office. It took a while to iron this thing out. Anyway, I really learned something that got me ready for the Regional Office.

Storey: What was that?

Price: Well, you have to treat every individual different, because he reads the instructions different than you do—every individual. We'll get into a little of that on this other big—we didn't have a lot of transportation, and I had a car. I would go in with the payroll every two weeks. Well, when we first come up here, the Bureau of Reclamation had always operated on monthly payments, monthly salaries. Somebody made a change, and in December of that year, it was the start of January, and this would have been about 1942, and the project says, "No, we're going to pay by the month."

It went to May before they had to change around and go back and refigure on two weeks. It's easier to do it on a two-week basis, because every year has fifty-two weeks. That's twenty-six pay periods, plus one day, every fourth year. If you have a thirty-one-day month, theoretically at least, you're not paid for the thirtieth or the thirty-first. Gees, that variation in the number of days in the month, some days you work for the same money, you got twenty-eight days in January, and anything beyond that is extra work with no pay. But when you go to twenty-six pay periods, you only have one day every four years that's the difference in it.

Anyway, when they caught up with that, Mr. Smith had always bought Burrough's adding machines. When I got up there, they had one of these ten-bank Burrough's adding machine. We had a lot of this a little later. We inventoried. I

didn't get into the inventory. They sent auditors up to inventory everything that the contractor had on November 1, 1942, and went to a cost-plus-fixed-fee contract. So we had to inventory, and we paid them for all of that stuff. We paid Morrison, Shay, Twaits, Winston. The main one was Morrison Knudsen.

The auditors that came out were friends. They had been C-C-C auditors. I knew both of them who came up here. I didn't have to take orders from them at all, but they had to take orders from me. The contractor had a time clock that everybody going into the machine shop had to punch a time clock. They didn't punch a time clock. The corpsmen punched the time clock for the individuals. So the auditors got to talking about this.

Now, this came under our jurisdiction in a way, so I got the Acting Construction Engineer to write a letter to the contractor telling them that if he had the time clock, he'd have to use it. Under the cost-plus-fixed-fee contract, it tells everything that the contractor should do, then it says, "The operation of his operation shall be the same as it was under the contractor." In other words, he could do anything he wanted to do. We couldn't do it. We couldn't tell him anything.

Well, he had a farm, a ranch, over here. As it cleared the reservoir, he let contracts out to his employees in the wintertime to cut all the trees and whatnot, and cut them in fence-post lengths. He stacked them up out there. Mr. Beemer knew this was going on. Mr. Newell knew this was going on. But I was supposed to keep track of the truck mileage, and the trucks that were hauling this was contractor's trucks. So I went to him and told him I needed to know what the mileage on these trucks that are hauling on Saturdays and Sundays, and they're hauling out there. He built a big house in Boise, and the rumors was that a lot of it came out of our warehouse. It was something that the auditors knew about. Everybody knew about it but did nothing about it.

Anyway, I worried some about this, just how do you go about—what's my responsibility? Mr. Smith was telling me, "You don't do anything, you just keep track of it." I can't keep track of it unless—I can't have a man down there checking those trucks on weekends. Well, on our timekeeping for our people, some of those, Engstrom particularly, was letting his people go on weekends, theoretically, to get their R-Vs to live in or to get it fixed and come back, and was paying them for this.

So I got Mr. Beemer on this one and told him, "We've got to have an understanding on this." So Mr. Beemer got Mr. Karrer, who had been the Field Engineer under Mr. Newell. He was still working there, and he got him in.

I said, "I'm going to have to report this, what you're doing. I want to know what you want and what you're authorizing."

So he [Beemer] turned to Mr. Karrer and he said, "How do you see this?"

He [Karrer] said, "Just exactly the way Don tells you. The project runs this way. You're running something on the project a different way entirely." Well, that pretty

---

well changed, I guess you'd say.

But this was approaching a place when they started to form the Regional Office, and we brought a fellow in here to be Chief Clerk. I was grade nine, I think, here, and I was going in there two grades higher, as Acting Chief of the Administrative Services.

Storey: You were being moved from Anderson Ranch to the Regional Office here in Boise?

#### **Anderson Ranch**

Price: Right.

Storey: That would have been '44 or '45?

Price: '43. No, '44.

Storey: 1944.

Price: Yeah, but the action was started in '43, getting ready to make this change.

Storey: So you were moved in as the acting—

Price: Acting Chief, Administrative Services.

Storey: At a GS-11.

Price: Yeah.

Storey: Is there anything else about Anderson Ranch we ought to talk about? Of course, at the time it was the highest earthen dam in the world, I believe.

Price: I didn't particularly bring these things to show you. I brought them. I have a point I'm going to make, but it's fascinating to see. This was our camp. This is the foundation of the dam.

When I came up here, I lived in a shack right under the draglines. It was loading trucks, and the stuff would rattle on the road. I was there two months before my wife could get up here. Then we moved into a house that we couldn't live in for two months, because they had plugged up the sewer line. We ran water in there, didn't knowing the sewer was plugged up. It flooded the floors and it buckled them.

Storey: Oh, my. What was the house like?

Price: Well, the first one we lived in was a temporary. That's on this side of the street. It was a two-bedroom, a front room, a kitchen, and a closed back porch, and a little basement, kind of a cellar more than anything else.

Storey: You had how many children then?

Price: I had three by this time.

Ellis Armstrong took leave—I think he took leave, he didn't retire—and went to the Lawrence River Power Authority, New York.

Storey: Yes, the St. Lawrence Power Authority. He did that much later, after he was in the Denver Office for a period of time, I believe.

Price: No. It was the reverse.

Storey: Oh, he went from here?

Price: Yeah.

Storey: Oh, okay.

Price: I got his house. It was right across the street from me, and it was a Fernwood house. Now, it had a full basement with a closed garage and two bedrooms, and a front room, and a kitchen. The water tank set up on a hill here, and when they poured the concrete for the basement, our basement would have six inches of water in it because of the leakage from underground water that came into that basement.

Storey: From the water tank, you mean?

Price: No, but the water tank had something to do with it. They dug a trench from the water tank down to service these houses. In the digging there, it focused the water into the back of the houses underground. We had trouble with that.

Anyway, this was our staff. That's Mr. Beemer fishing at a later date. [Referring to photograph.] He retired.

Storey: That's quite a fish.

Price: Yes. He retired, and that's taken down off of San Diego somewhere.

Storey: Which one of these is you?

Price: Right in the middle with the hat on.

Storey: Right next to Mr. Beemer on his right hand.

Price: Yes. Mr. Beemer was a gentleman, a very fine person. He didn't raise his voice for anything. I think his relationship with those two men he brought with him was close that he accepted the things they did.

Storey: So this would be Mr. Armstrong.



---

Price: That's Mr. Armstrong. Did you meet him?

Storey: Yeah, I've met him.

Price: Ellis was a nice person. I got a letter from him. I wrote him a letter when he got to be Commissioner, because they'd always—when I would complain about some things he was doing, I wrote him a letter, after he got to be Commissioner. He answered it.

Storey: "I'd like to get my hands on those friends at Anderson Ranch Dam whom you recall in your letter of October 28th, who forecasted that some day I would be Commissioner of Reclamation."

Price: They did.

Storey: "I could use their prognostic ability right now to tell me how the Bureau will shape up in future years under my administration. Seriously, when I returned to the Bureau of Reclamation last year in Salt Lake City, I expected to make that my home, but the challenge of the job was too much for me and I went after the big apple. Looks hectic, but I expect to get on top of the job and will do my best to justify your faith and confidence in me. Our last two at-home children expect to stay there until the end of the school year, but Florine [phonetic] will be living here with me and shuttling back and forth until we get located. Hope you will keep in touch with me. Those were great days at Anderson Ranch Dam. Sincerely." And dated November 10, '69.

So Mr. Newell chose you to move to the Regional Office, is that correct, from Anderson Dam?

Price: Right.

Storey: Was Anderson Ranch still under construction?

Price: Yes. They had an original contract, and they closed the contract and we bought them out, bought everything. Then they had two years cost-plus-fixed-fee.

Storey: We bought them out because of the war? Is that what was causing it?

Price: Yeah. Right. Well, no, we kept on. M-K had a good—

Storey: M-K is Morrison Knudsen, right?

Price: Yeah. They had a good lobbyist, and I don't know how they rationalized Anderson Ranch on the food business, which was why it was kept going.

Storey: War food supply, yes.

Price: But maybe down the road they would have needed it, because they weren't going to get anything out of that for that long a time. But the cost-plus-fixed-fee contract, as I remember, was written for two years. At the end of two years, there was a provision

in that that they could buy back this equipment at cost.

Storey: The contractor could.

Price: Yeah. So we paid for that in advance. So I set up accounting to identify the cost of that equipment at the end of two years, used. There was some objection to me leaving here because they needed continuity on that part of it. Now, they brought the two auditors out there and they audited everything, every piece of equipment. We didn't hear from them. I don't think we ever heard from them directly, but Charlie Winters was one of those auditors, and the Chief Engineer had specified that he wanted a different type of accounting on Anderson Ranch Dam. Charlie had all this information, and didn't give it to me for two years, didn't until he left. Then he says, "Well, you know more about it than I do, anyway." All it was, the specification items under the contract, broken down by principal features and physical features, principal features like spillway and dam and power plant, and the—

Storey: Diversion tunnels and stuff.

Price: Yeah. That's principal. Then you have the physical features under that that's broken down into whatever you want. For instance, well, we had the warehouse we put up there. All I did was to have them send me a typewriter with eighteen spaces, and I columnized this stuff for each of these things. Then we had to keep separate the engineering costs, our force account, engineering costs and overhead costs, was 209 and 212, and one other cost. They sent me all of the vouchers and I worked from those vouchers to put this thing together.

So bad part of it was, you're two years late in getting your costs by months. It had to be done by months. I had part of that and didn't have all of it until they left. It was a complicating thing that wasn't any big problem. All Charlie needed to do was tell me that this is what we're going to do and just turn it over to me. But he got into some things with the contractor where he was talking and telling them to, "Do this and do that," or say, "It's all right to do this or do that," and that caused some problems.

We had a warehouseman, a Bureau employee, and two or three men working there, one clerk, and those requisitions should have been costed out as they occurred, because they got problems on those and it was hard to answer two years afterwards.

Storey: How were we paying them if we didn't know how the money was being spent?

Price: Paying who?

Storey: The contractor. Does this have anything to do with that?

Price: The engineers gave me an estimate; we called them estimates. It was estimates in case of excavation that it was yards, and I put the dollars on it. No, they put the dollars on it. That's all engineering. They gave me that. I made up a voucher based on that estimate, went in to Boise, and they paid it.

- Storey: So what was this accounting that was two years late? How as that affecting Reclamation?
- Price: Well, that's Bureau accounting. It would have only gone to Denver and the Boise Office.
- Storey: Oh, so we were two years late on our internal accounting.
- Price: Yes. It didn't have anything to do with paying.
- Storey: Do you remember how it came about that you were transferred to the Regional Office? Do you remember what happened?

### **Transferring to the Regional Office**

- Price: They're all dead, so I can go ahead and tell you, I think. Henry Johnson went in as Administrative Officer in Region Six, with Comstock. I was told by somebody in the Boise Office that they wrote and wanted me. They asked for my transfer to the Regional Office.
- Storey: Region Six would have been—
- Price: Billings. I was told by somebody in the Boise office that they said, "Well, if he's good enough for Region Six, he's good enough for us." (laughter) In my opinion, the old Bureau of Reclamation, there wasn't any room for deviation on a little project or a big project. They were all run the same. They were rooted into a system, and they never once changed the system. I'll get into that.
- You're going to stay until tomorrow?
- Storey: Well, let's talk about that. [Tape recorder turned off.]
- Price: I met a guy named [Lyle] Cunningham, Assistant Regional Director, he was brought in by [Frank] Banks, and put in our office.<sup>15</sup> There was a fellow in Washington by the name of—anyway, they had—
- Storey: Banks was who?
- Price: Regional Director. He was up at Coulee Dam all the time. See, he didn't come into the Regional Office, but he was the Regional Director. Mr. Newell was Associate Regional Director. The Commissioner brought a man in there, and they were going to expand the whole program, and they were saying, "Engineers don't have good administration. We need more administration." So this fellow, I've got his name here somewhere, I'll have it tomorrow, and this fellow got Cunningham out here, and he had been—

---

15. Frank A. Banks began his career with Reclamation in 1906 and worked as Construction Engineer of American Falls Dam in Idaho (1917), Owyhee Dam in Oregon (1920), and Grand Coulee Dam in Washington (1933).

- Storey: This was the Assistant Commissioner got Cunningham to come out here?
- Price: Yeah, Cunningham came out as Assistant Regional Director, because Banks agreed to it, not because Newell did. They went into Washington for a staff meeting and Cunningham stayed close to Mr. Newell, because everybody loved Mr. Newell. He's an old-timer of considerable renown as an engineer. He went over to China for five years on the Yellow River Project. He got to meet everybody. Well, Comstock sat across the table from Mr. Newell, he says, "How's my friend Don Price doing?" Mr. Newell spoke in glowing terms, and Cunningham and I were really crossing swords. Every time I turned around, I run in—because Cunningham wanted all administrative matters, incoming, to come to him direct. Mr. Newell's instructions to me was, "Don't send him anything. I'll give him what I want him to have." Cunningham was taking it out on me.

He got up, a guy who thought he was an admiral in the navy, is why, and brought him in as a purchasing agent. Everything that I was doing. We were putting out planning reports and plant pressure stuff, politically. Harold Nelson, as Regional Director,<sup>16</sup> was very conscious of the politics. He would call me, and only because he knew I'd do something. He gave me all kinds of assignments that ought to have gone to other divisions, but he gave it to me because he would get results. I don't want to say that, but I don't mind telling you that.

- Storey: I'm becoming confused, because I thought Banks was the Regional Director.
- Price: Banks never did stay in this office.
- Storey: He never did come in. How long did that last?
- Price: Officially, it was that way until Mr. Banks retired. I think it stopped then, and I don't know what year that was. It wasn't a problem until you get into this thing like Washington making decisions. They came back from that, and we had ninety-six people in the Regional Office. I was running this thing. We had an office in the Sonna Building, which—
- Storey: How do you spell that?
- Price: S-O-N-N-A. That was good for maybe forty people, or thirty. So we went out into a county building. I've got pictures.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 2. JULY 26, 1995.  
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 3. JULY 26, 1995.

- Storey: This is Brit Storey interviewing Don Price on July 26. This is tape three.

Go ahead.

- Price: Well, where do we start?

---

16. Harold T. Nelson served Pacific Northwest Regional Director from 1949 to 1972.

- 
- Storey: You were talking about the Sonna Building and having to move out to a county building.
- Price: Yeah. Well, when I came in in August of 1944, we were in the Sonna Building. The Regional Office was in the Sonna Building.
- Storey: With three times as many people as it was designed for.
- Price: Yeah. Over a period of time, Mr. Newell was acquainted with the county commissioners, and we got that county building because of that.
- Storey: Where was that located?
- Price: That's located on Orchard and Fairview, which is out where there's plenty of parking and in and out for visitors. That would house ninety-six people. Crowded, but they were talking 250 people.
- Storey: Why were they talking 250 people?
- Price: Well, the story we got was that the Bureau of Reclamation's going to have to expand to take care of returning servicemen, give them work-P-W-A [Public Works Administration], or W-P-A [Works Progress Administration] money. There was other money put into it. They didn't identify how it was going to be used, just that you have to do it. So we got out there and there wasn't enough room.

That was when this guy Cunningham was beginning to make himself felt. I told you about Banks came down in one of the few meetings that I attended with him, and Cunningham accused me of not cooperating. Mr. Banks says, "Who?"

And he says, "Don Price." Well, it was handling the routing of mail, and I had my instructions.

So my answer to that was, "I don't have authority to do what Mr. Cunningham is asking me to do."

So they postponed, and I had the meeting at two o'clock in the afternoon and made the decision, which was, "Just go ahead and do what you're doing. Don does a good job." But I wasn't attending. They didn't let me in there.

### **Regional Issues**

Anyway, Cunningham, in a sense, he was trying to get into the job that they'd given him, and he wasn't accepted. But he got a supply officer named McCool, and Mr. Jim McCool was a man that had to have everything in writing. If the manual says, "You squat three times before you take your pants off," he did that. You know, ridiculous stuff.

We had stencils. Well, at that time we had multilith that had sensitive paper,

and you had to use special ink. It was very sensitive. We were getting out reports, straining to get this stuff out, and having to do it over because of the equipment we had. Well, they wouldn't buy me open market multilith sheets and tapes. I bought them myself. I had five field officers under me. I was out planning that time, and I had them buy stuff that I couldn't get under McCool.

We needed K&E imperial tracing cloth, and that's expensive, high-end, quality stuff, to make four or five overlays on maps that was going to be used by Blonk in the Information Office. We had 4,500 copies printed by the Printing Office and couldn't use any of it because the humidity back there was so great that it stretched the tracing cloth, and the dams were on mountains, and the potential irrigated wasn't on areas where as what it should be. So I made an issue of that, and they called me over at the supply. They had about thirty or forty pieces of paper about that big square, and there was a number on each of them.

Storey: Four or five inches square.

Price: The purchasing agent kind of laughed and he says, "If you can pick out that K&E imperial tracing cloth there, we'll buy it."

I said, "What in the world? How do I have to justify anything?" But I knew my tracing paper. We had a cartographer in our shop, I bought all of his stuff. I went through, picked out, gave it to him, and they went in the other room and they didn't come back.

I sat there fifteen minutes, and I said to the secretary, "Will you find out what's going on?"

She went in and she came back and she kind of laughed. She said, "You picked that K&E paper and they don't know what to do." (laughter)

I only give that as an illustration. This was a man who was trying to do a good job, but he was oriented to the way navy did everything. This gets ridiculous in more ways than one. We had a regional soil laboratory that was under us, and for buying purposes, was under me. We bought Bon Ami to clean the flasks and whatnot. McCool insisted, "You don't need that. We can get you this half that price." I went back to this guy, had a doctor's degree in soils, and he insisted on cleaning his flasks with Bon Ami. I wasn't going to argue with him. I went back to McCool and says, "You write down why we can't do it, and then we'll start from that." Well, he wouldn't do that. We kept right on buying Bon Ami. These sound like little things, but this is day after day after day. Everything is—

Storey: It really wears you down, doesn't it?

Price: Yeah. He decided that we didn't need to collate and bind this stuff by a binder. So we had our annual contract. He objected to me taking it down there before he wrote a purchase order.

---

On some of these things, Mr. Nelson would call me and say, "Don, I got a call from some politician, and he wants to know when this report can be in."

I'd say, "Well, I'll let you know."

I'd go back and see where it was in our shop, and I'd go back and tell him, "We can get it out on Friday for Monday's arrival," or something. I couldn't take the time to go over there. We had a contract. It's all tied in. I wrote a requisition that gave them all of the references they needed to make a purchase order. But he insisted on me having that purchase order first.

So anyway, they had a meeting, and they were going over this, somebody from our report section, and Mr. Cunningham and two people from purchasing, and they went through all the things they objected to me, and I listened to them. They reached a place where they couldn't say any more. I said, "Well, is that all?"

They said, "Yeah."

I says, "Well, I agree with everything you're saying, but there's one man missing in here. Mr. Nelson. The Regional Director makes the deadlines that I meet. So if you get Mr. Nelson in here, let's talk to him, because he starts me doing what I'm doing."

They sat there looking at it, and one of them said, "Well, I guess that's right." I got off of the hook that way.

During the war, I bought photographic equipment or supplies, was on priority. I used the Denver priority number and ordered direct, because Denver made us send all of our Treasury procurement requisitions to Denver, and they issued the purchase order. This is old-fashioned. This is what I meant by they were locked into a system that you couldn't live with during the war. Well, I just send orders in with their priority number and it was a Reclamation priority number, it wasn't Denver, and we got all we needed.

Well, some guy came down from Coulee Dam, and they were using a lot of publicity. They needed pictures and they couldn't get photographic equipment. So they went to Blonk. That's why I brought that picture of Mr. Blonk. "Where'd you get this?"

He says, "I don't know. Don gets it for me."

So this guy comes to me, Major Hutton, and says to me, and I said, "Well," I says, "I'll buy you anything you want, but I won't give you the number. I'll take the responsibility for this, but I won't be responsible for you using this priority number." So I bought their photographic equipment, but they paid for it.

Things like this just piled up day after day with this supply. And a nice guy. Now, at one time he wanted me to quit planning. I ended up as a thirteen. I'll get into

that a little later. I forgot what I was going to say.

He wanted me to come back and work for him in running the Office Services.

Storey: Where is that?

Price: Everybody in the office wanted me to drop back out of planning and come back to the old job I was doing under administrative services. I just had to tell him. I says, "No, Jim, I can't work for you."

Anyway, when he left, when this guy left, he went up to Billings as Administrative Officer up in Billings, and Frank Clinton, who had been my boss here, was Regional Director out of Billings. They had a conference, and my boss, the chief of our division, was at a meeting, and Clinton says, "I had to fire McCool." What he had done, he had cancer of the voicebox, and he used the Bureau plane to go up to Rochester, Minnesota, for an operation. Russ Sparks had been here and went up there as personnel officer. He says, "Frank, you can't fire him. You can't fire McCool. You signed a travel order that sent him to the place," and showed him.

So Frank says, "Okay." So he abolished the job and put McCool back on supply.

Now, if I'd made any statements like this and was picked up, I would be pointing my finger at Mr. Newell, because Mr. Newell could have straightened that out, but he wouldn't straighten Mr. Cunningham out on anything. He may have done it, but I was never privy to this.

The Superintendent at Burley sent in a letter and said he wanted to retire in thirty days. He was an old friend of Mr. Newell's. The letter came in, blue envelope. Mr. Newell said, "If he gets blue-envelope letters, you don't open them."

We opened everything and put routing slips on. You send it in. That came in under a blue envelope and went to Mr. Cunningham, and it was a week before that guy retired before Newell found it out. Oh, he was mad. He came in to me and said, "Why didn't this come to me?"

I said, "There's no routing slip on it. We didn't open it. It had the kind of envelope." He just looked at me. This went on up to the day I left and went into planning as an Administrative Officer. But I don't want to tell you that way to get into the record. I don't mind telling you about the problem, and I'm not going to tell it just exactly this way if you want to know.

Storey: When did you change from administrative officer to planning?

### **Moving into the Regional Planning Office**

Price: Well, we had a fellow—I'd have to repeat every time I turned around, to say the Bureau of Reclamation was a family. There was an administrative review of someone in the



---

Region. I don't know what it was, but there was a fellow showed up with me. There was this engineer from Denver and somebody else from Denver and somebody from Washington. The fellow from Denver had been a chief clerk, or had been a clerk with Robert S. Smith on the Belle Fourche Project<sup>17</sup>, early Reclamation. They made a review. Cunningham went with them over to the Deschutes Project.<sup>18</sup> Clyde Spencer was a character. We wanted to get rid of the chief clerk over there. Call them administrative assistant in this day.

This fellow came in to me and he says, "Why don't you get rid of that problem over there?"

I said, "What problem?"

He says, "Well, Anderson is Chief Clerk, and Clyde's not getting along."

I said, "Who went over on this trip?"

He said, "Well, Cunningham and me, and somebody else." Cunningham is blaming me because I didn't do something about that.

I says, "Look, you've got an Assistant Regional Director out there with you talking about a problem, and he could handle this. I can't. I can go out there and talk all day. That's not my problem."

But that's the kind of thing that Cunningham was throwing at me, and this fellow talked with me a little bit. I says, "I'm not going to let Cunningham run me out. He thinks because he's a bigshot from Washington that he can treat me—he's going to find out he can't."

He said, "Well, it isn't going to get any better." He said, "These administrative assistant positions are becoming real powerhouses." He says, "I think you'd be better"—He knew Cunningham told me, he was trying to push me off into planning.

But anyway, planning had, going back again to old Reclamation, a guy named Debler, who ran the general investigations program for the whole western states.

Storey: Erdman B. Debler.

Price: Yeah. Debler was a character. Don't put down I said he's a character. He's a strong-

---

17. One of Reclamation's oldest project, authorized in 1904, the Belle Fourche Project is located in western South Dakota and serves over 57,000 acres. For more information, see Christopher J. McCune, "Belle Fourche Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 2001, [www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=214](http://www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=214).

18. The Deschutes Project lands are in the vicinity of Madras, Oregon. Principal features include Wickiup Dam and Reservoir, Crane Prairie Dam and Reservoir, Haystack Dam and Reservoir, North Unit Main Canal and lateral system, and the Crooked River Pumping Plant. The project furnishes a full supply of irrigation water for about 50,000 acres of land within the North Unit Irrigation District, and a supplemental supply for more than 48,000 acres in the Central Oregon Irrigation District and Crook County Improvement District No. 1. For more information, see Robert Autobee, "Deschutes Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 1996, [www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=112](http://www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=112).

minded person. But they were transferring this to the Region, and they sent us all of the accounting record. I had to go into Denver because of a circular letter that came out, 3310, I think. Instead of having a manual, we had one manual about that thick, and then we had circular letters that gave you all of the directions.

Storey: A manual a couple of inches thick.

Price: Yeah. This talked about how you ruled off as non-reimbursable, costs that had been accumulated as reimbursable. The way you did this was through an accounting process that went to the Secretary of the Interior, and he could declare them non-reimbursable. The Bureau at that time was trying to get a prior authorization cost, which the Corps of Engineers did, as non-reimbursable, and we couldn't do it.

But anyway, I had to go into Denver. I went into Denver and I found out a lot about the Bureau. Everywhere I went, I was asking questions. There's a guy named Joe Sater in there who had been—they always called them clerks. The big objection that I had with engineers was they didn't call us administrative assistants, or economists, or engineers, or something. It was just a clerk. My record here is indicative of this.

### **Role of Administrative Assistants**

Well, we went through a whole lot of things. I went back, I was in there three weeks getting all this data. I'm going to come to this. The reason I'm telling you this, I wanted to talk to you about something I did. A controller told him, "Harold Nelson, you can be fired because of what Don Price has done."

My answer to him right there, there's twenty people, was "Then Harold will be fired if he doesn't." Because [Floyd] Dominy had a problem with Secretary [James Douglas] McKay, and it got into the project over here. I'm only telling you this because I was in the midst of some things. Washington didn't play fair with us, with the field. But anyway, where was I? I diverted from that.

Storey: You were talking about going to Denver.

Price: Anyway, I came back, and about three later, the Administrative Assistant down there called me and said, "Joe Sater is retiring. You and I talked a little about some things that we do, and you had made some awards and things like this." He says, "This guy started on the Arrowrock Project—Arrowrock Dam, Boise Project—in 1906, and he's retiring."

I says, "I'll take care of him."

So I got a picture of Joe. He's just an unassuming, little, bald-headed guy, never was noticed anytime in the Denver Office. I got a picture about this big, and a letter to the *Idaho Daily Statesman*. "I worked on Arrowrock Dam during construction." You'd have thought he built it, the way the letter read. "I did this, and I did this, and I did this." So I sent it in, and it was signed by Joe Sater.

---

So I went in to Denver and give them to the Chief Engineer, and they had a banquet for Joe. It started off, the Chief Engineer says, "I was going by here and I got this in the 'out' basket. It's a letter to the *Idaho Statesman*, and I want you to know what Joe is doing." (laughter) He read this. It just brought the house down.

Well, Joe wrote me a letter, right from the heart. He never was anybody in Reclamation. He was just a clerk, until the day he retired. He said, "It made me want to go to work again." (laughter)

### Secretary McKay Story

Well, I got into that in this office with Harold Nelson. And the things we did. I've got some pictures here I'll show you. Anything he was going to do with the Idaho Reclamation Association, we put on programs for them, and it was all done after hours. Somebody retired, Harold wanted special recognition. If it was somebody coming from Washington, he wanted special recognition. I got involved in that. Now, the only way that helped me was, and I did it partially for this reason, Cunningham knew that he wouldn't dare—if I went to Harold Nelson, he'd give me anything. That's the only way I could combat him. He was doing everything to get me fired—not fired, just transferred out, but he didn't want me in the office.

Well, they me got over to the planning, and they needed all these special things. McCool—and Jim was a conscientious man, he actually believed this junk. Well, I went over to him one day and I said, "Jim, I'm going up to the Regional Office and I'm going to talk about you, and I don't want to talk behind your back. If you want to come on, you come on, but I want you to know I'm going to tell the Regional Director that I can't work with you."

He got right up and followed me, and we met with Glen Draper, the Administrative Officer, at the top of the stairs. The Secretary had called ahead. He got us in there and talked, and I said, "Glen, I don't have any animosity toward McCool at all, but everything we're doing in procurement has to be done the way I'm doing it."

One of these was this project at Prineville [Dam].<sup>19</sup> We got three calls from three different people in the Commissioner's Office, and one of them was "Buzz" Benton. You may have—you haven't run into him. He's an old-timer in planning. Each one of them said, "You've got to start drilling on that spillway at Prineville Reservoir." The third talking, the chief of our division came in to me and they were kind of wringing their hands. What do you do? Dominy was the Commissioner.<sup>20</sup>

---

19. Completed in 1961, Prineville Dam, now referred to as Arthur R. Bowman Dam, is part of the Crooked River Project in central Oregon. For more information, see Toni Rae Linenberger, "Crooked River Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 2001, [www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=99](http://www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=99).

20. Floyd E. Dominy served as Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation from 1959 to 1969, and participated in Reclamation's oral history program. See, Dominy, Floyd E., *Oral History Interviews*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, April 6, 1994, and April 8, 1996, at Bellevue Farm in Boyce, Virginia, edited by Brit Allan Storey, [www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html](http://www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html).

I said, "Well, it's obvious that there's something going on there. They don't want Dominy to know that they're calling us."

The problem was, they had to change. They were going to raise the dam level to store more water at Prineville. They found out that the foundation on the side where they designed the spillway wouldn't hold the structure. They wanted to check the other side—just drill. They needed \$50,000. We sent in a program change order to Reclamation, Boise. Something happened, and we never did know what happened. But Secretary McKay<sup>21</sup> was from Portland, and he called a conference. He got the President of the National Reclamation Association, who was a member of this Prineville Irrigation District, and he got those people into his office and gave a news release that he had given them \$50,000 to check this spillway thing, and now we're going to go ahead on this. Well, this had come out two or three days before. There had to be something between Dominy and McKay. You can guess any way you want to guess, but it had to be.

So I said, "Well, we can do this, but it's ticklish to do it."

So I went over to Salem. McAllister [phonetic] was the Area Office. That was one of my offices. We called. We checked a few things there with the survey people. Then we called this fellow over at Prineville and asked him, did he put anything in writing. No, he didn't, but the newspaper had headlines. This *Portland Oregonian* had headlines, "McKay's given this money. We're going ahead." This put McKay right on the spot if it ever hit the fan.

Anyway, I says, "Well, I can take care of this. This is not any problem." And that's why I'm going over there and seeing him.

Water in the storage was allocated 75 percent, had been reallocated, and the other 25 was not allocated. So I split the cost on an acreage basis, on the reservoir capacity, to two things, and that got \$50,000 out. In the accounting system, you have a line for past action. I moved that action out of the fiscal year, down under the other one, and while we're talking, it's ceiling. We weren't talking money, we were just talking ceiling. Where do you put the cost?

So anyway, in two or three days, Roscoe Etter, the auditor—and this had to be something, because he shows up here to audit this thing. The journal vouchers where I made my debit and credit entries all told the whole picture. The way I was looking at it, if that work order goes through, I'll just reverse this thing. If it doesn't go through, if they fire me, McKay's going to be on the spot.

Roscoe called the controller, Bramwell. He came out. He went through this whole thing, and there had to be about twenty people in there. Bramwell says, the end of his statement was, "Harold, you could be fired for what Don's done here."

---

21. James Douglas McKay served as Secretary of the Interior under the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953-1956. The information Mr. Price provides is confusing. Commissioner Dominy did not serve, as Commissioner, under Secretary McKay and construction of Prineville Dam did not begin until 1958, two years after McKay left office and a year before Dominy became Commissioner.

---

I says, "Yes, Harold, and you could be fired if we don't do it, and Bramwell won't tell me how to do it." (laughter)

We're friends. I've known him a long time. Anyway, he went back to Washington. They wrote a report on this. About thirty days later, the guy calls, the finance officer, he got me on the line. He says, "Look," and he read me what was said.

I says, "That's exactly the way it was."

He says, "Well, what'll I do about it?"

I says, "I don't know what you do about it. I didn't know when I did it what you were going to do about it."

He hemmed and hawed, and didn't know what to say, but he was trying to not point his finger at me.

I said, "Go right ahead and do it, but if I go down, the Secretary of the Interior's going down, too, because he's the one that put out the order, and I thought, when I saw that in the headlines, that somebody had approved my change order."

"Well," he says, "I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I've got an offer for another job over here in sixty days, and this is going to be in my 'in' basket when I leave." (laughter)

We didn't hear a thing. You didn't get back into anything there. McKay left office just about this time. Who took his place?

Storey: Not Guy, no. There was a man that Floyd Dominy had a lot of trouble with.

Price: I've got it here somewhere.

Storey: Oh, no. That was the Secretary. Was it Oscar Chapman?

Price: Well, I've got it here somewhere.

Storey: Chapman is not right.

Price: Oh, I know where it is. I went down to the library and looked this up because I didn't know what I was going to tell you on this. McKay was Secretary from '53 to '56, and Frederick [A.] Seton took his place in '56.

Storey: Seton's the one who announced Dominy's appointment as Commissioner.

Price: Oh, is that right?

Storey: Yes.

### Personnel Matters

Price: Well, they had another problem. They had a fellow, and I don't think I've got his name, but he was an Assistant Commissioner [Warren D. Fairchild], and he came out here in about '73 or '72, and he says, "We're going to have to consolidate all this planning stuff in the Regional Office."

He talked to the Regional Director, and the area engineers all came in. They called me into the meeting, and they were studying this, what they would do about it. The statement that he had made was, "You've got to do this by June 30." This was about January or December. At a later date I got in with those people, and they'd made all the plans to do this and to circularize it regionwide, to make an R-I-F [reduction in force] regionwide of the planning organization.

I said, "You guys are crazy. This is civil service, and the R-I-F system has to be followed. You'll lose every man that you've got that isn't a veteran, because the veterans have preference on everything. It isn't a bumping process, except in those two categories."

Over the years I became an expert in civil service classification. The gist of this, the way it turned out was, we moved the people we wanted into the Regional Office, and civil service would have criticized us for this. Then we RIFed in each office separately, of the three planning offices at that time. I basically controlled that. I didn't really, because where you set in what grades you're competing in, that was a factor. But I set up a position and called it a project leader or some kind of a coordinator. When we wanted to keep a man and we couldn't justify it as an engineer, we made him a project coordinator. There isn't any classification in civil service. But you can get by for a year before somebody hits you up. So I sold personnel on letting us do this thing. Now, I was going to leave June. This is December. That worked slicker than a whistle. He came out and he says, "You can't lay anybody off that's gone overseas." It was impossible things that he told us, and they were going to let him go.

We were in a meeting, and I said to Harold, "You tell him go to hell. You're talking civil service, and this guy can't dictate anything that civil service controls."

Now, the only reason I'm telling you this is I reached that place in this office where it was good for me to leave. (laughter) Some people, because they weren't getting good advice on what to do. The circular 3310 gave the classification on all types of planning work, and I set up the cost system to identify that. Then I set up columns to identify field—

END SIDE 1, TAPE 3. JULY 26, 1995.  
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 3. JULY 26, 1995.

Price: —accounting. I got away from bookkeeping.

Storey: An accounting system. Okay. That would show regional costs, project costs, and

---

what else?

Price: Well, it would show area and office. It would show the classification of work by Area Office. Our division, the rest of the Regional Office, Denver costs, and all these costs. In doing that, I could justify almost anything if I could go to the Secretary of the Interior and tell him this should be a non-reimbursable cost. It was spent with reimbursable money. That letter gave you an opening. So I wasn't worried about the Regional Director. I would have just to shift it and declare this a non-reimbursable cost and send it to the Secretary for his approval.

Well, earlier in the years, we got into problems with girls, and we had reports coming out that our girls had to proofread the Government Printing Office printouts before they ran the copy. We had to keep the girls. I spent six months.

We got a civil service guy in here, and they were classifying stenographers, GS-3 stenographers, from a 1924 classification, and this was 1946, probably. So I set up a clerical editing stenographic, and then I pulled stuff out of the editing, and report writers, technical writers, because they were responsible for much of the way that the report is made. We got graded up, so the civil service guy comes in at a later date. They sent word, "You've got to reduce these girls." One of them was two grades and the others was each a grade.

I said, "Who said so?"

They said, "We've got a civil service inspector over here."

I says, "Well, he doesn't know what the job is. All he knows is what's on that paper. Just tell him to come over here."

So I laid out—we just happened to have, right in the middle of a very complicated thing, and the girls were doing maps for geology, coloring and stuff.

Anyway, he came over, and I said, "Just give me five minutes. What should I ask for if I want you to send me a list of available people, qualified people? What do I ask for?"

He went through that and in about five minutes he said, "Certainly not stenographic."

Now, I did this two or three times with personnel. Now, personnel was going by the book in what they did, but the book isn't necessarily up to date. So we got in soil classification. Our top grade was a grade nine. We had fifteen or twenty out in the field. The top grade was a grade twelve in the Regional Office. I worked on that for three years and got it set up so that it paralleled engineering and economics and the scientific grades, and I sent it in to Denver. Everything had to go through Denver. And Denver they refused to pass it on. Well, we had a fellow down there, John Stuger [phonetic] in Denver, had worked with me here in Boise. He called me and said, "You're not going to get this out here unless you come in."

So I called and said, "Set up a meeting and get the civil service into it," which they did.

I went in to Denver and they started arguing on this thing. They were arguing people and grades, they weren't arguing jobs. They were arguing the person. Denver had a [unclear] man who they didn't like at all. They just fatly refused to agree to anything because he could be qualified for a grade thirteen. I mean, the position was classified as that.

Anyway, the civil service guy, after about an hour of this, he says, "Well, it sounds to me like you folks don't have your story together." He says, "I'll come back at one o'clock," and he left.

Now, the people involved was the Chief Economist. In that day, land classification was part of economics because of the growing of crops, but it was written around like Forest Service classification of soils, or erosion problems in soils. I think it's around physical characteristics, and we're talking how much clay is there and what chemical is in the soil. We had a reasonable soil laboratory. The fellow, he died in a plane crash. But he was an economist. The soils man there was for this. I think everybody was for it, but they didn't want to fit it into the people they had. But anyway, we got that guy back there, and it went right through. I got an award and they gave four or five other people in the Denver Office, and they didn't do a thing.

Storey: Now, when was this?

Price: Well, this was 1958.

Storey: This was when you were in planning, then.

### **Problems with Procurement**

Price: Yeah. The reason I'm telling you this is we go from my problems with that supply officer, Mr. McCool. McCool went up to Region Six, and Clinton wouldn't stand for stuff like this. He abolished the job and put McCool back into procurement where he could do less damage. McCool got that operation. I sent him a bunch of stuff about our people, when he was in the hospital. He learned to talk, and he came back, and came in and he says, "You don't know how low I was when I got that first—" We had a little newspaper I put out called the *Reclamation Trash Rack*. I'd sent this up to him, and he said, "You don't know how I felt." Well, he didn't apologize for the way he had acted, because he was sincere. He thought he was doing his job. He was talking economy, not quality. I'm talking quality.

But when they got into things in my job, and you're just hitting it now, I found out a long time ago, when I was in Boulder City, when I was at Boulder City, with those requisitions, that we had an inventory of transformers, and we couldn't find one or two transformers. I got hold of one of the electricians, and he went out and checked the transformers in the city, and found the numbers of these two transformers. I wrote a requisition, nobody would sign it. My boss was an engineer,



---

and he didn't feel that he could have—anybody could have, I could have signed it. All I was doing was getting him into the cause.

So I went up to Ralph Lowry, who was project Construction Engineer at that time. I think he followed Brig Young. I went up to Lowry and I says, "You know, I hate to bring a simple little problem like this, but in my book, it's a complicated problem and only you can answer it."

He looked at me, "Well, go ahead." So I told him this, and I said, "I can't get anybody to sign that requisition, and it shouldn't go into cost without the signature approving."

He laughed and he says, "Yeah, I get funny questions up here, and this is one of them." He says, "I'll sign it."

But two or three or four years later, I'm in the Regional Office in Boise, and [unclear] saying, "I know you." It was Ralph Lowry. Again, I come back to this old saying, in my experience in Reclamation, the old Reclamation, the day I became old Reclamation, I could do anything. (laughter) And these people felt that way, too.

Storey: Well, our time is up, I'm afraid. I'd like to ask you if you're willing for the material to be used to researchers.

Price: My concern only is that don't make it look like I'm trying to be a big shot, because people won't believe that I did the things I did.

Storey: Well, I don't think there's that problem.

Price: Government people just don't believe that.

Storey: That's why historians cross-check their material. But is it all right?

Price: It's all right with me.

Storey: Okay.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 3. JULY 26, 1995.  
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 1. JULY 27, 1995.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, senior historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing Donald G. Price, a retiree from the Bureau of Reclamation, on July 27, 1995, in the regional offices in Boise, Idaho, at about one o'clock in the afternoon. This is tape one. [Tape recorder turned off.]

This is Hu Blonk, yeah. Go ahead.

**Hu Blonk**

Price: The power company, he was our congressional–

Storey: This would be Idaho Power Company?

Price: Yeah. Our Idaho representative in Congress was instrumental in getting Hu fired. He went several places to get jobs that several people offered, and the power company followed up on this and killed these offers. A sugar beet company wanted him. He was a good man. He put on a one-day show that built a Reclamation Project in one day, houses and everything.<sup>22</sup> The union up in that area, it was in a farming area, it wasn't at Wenatchee. He did this in between his job here and the job with *Wenatchee World*. An excellent—he was pro-[unclear]. Let me show you something.

Storey: What had Mr. Blonk done to upset everybody?

Price: Well, he was giving the Bureau's public power program exposure, and the power company was for the private dam building, and gotten the Hells Canyon issue.<sup>23</sup> He was so effective on this, that he visited the Chambers of Commerce, that the power company just couldn't match it, so they wanted to get rid of him. That's the way they did. It was done politically.

The Secretary of the Interior, when Hu Blonk retired, the Secretary of the Interior wanted to do something for him, and I think that title—what's that title?

Storey: Nomination for Public Service Award.

Price: Award of the Interior Department to Hu Blonk. They called out, and I wrote this for him. I just want you to have two or three things that wasn't on the job description.

But I went up to his retirement, and the four members of the Supreme Court of the state attended his funeral. He was an invited member of the American Bar Association at their annual meetings, to discuss the public at trials. The first one was this Kennedy deal at—when the girl died, you know.

Storey: Chappaquiddick.

Price: Chappaquiddick. That was the one that he went back there and talked to those people about having—if there was a trial—well, there wasn't any trial because [Senator] Ted [Edward M.] Kennedy, apparently they bought that family off. I don't know what happened. But anyway, he was a part of Reclamation after he got up there with

---

22. On May 29, 1952, Reclamation participated in the "Farm in a Day" promotion to advertise the opening of the irrigation phase of the Columbia Basin Project. Activities included the construction of a house and the laying out of fields in preparation for receiving water. The beneficiary was a World War II veteran chosen by the Veterans of Foreign Wars. For more information, see Paul C. Pitzer, "A 'Farm in a Day': The Publicity Stunt and Celebration that Initiated the Columbia Basin Project," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 82:1 (January 1991): 2-7.

23. In 1948, Reclamation submitted a proposal for the construction of a 607-foot dam at Hells Canyon on the Snake River along the Oregon-Idaho border. The proposed dam would create 93-mile long reservoir and, most importantly, produce an estimated 900,000 kilowatts. The Hells Canyon became consumed in the public v. private power debate and in 1956 the Federal Power Commission granted Idaho Power a permit to begin construction of three small hydropower dams in Hells Canyon.

---

Wenatchee. He pushed our programs everywhere.

Storey: How long had he been with Reclamation?

Price: Well, he was in the Regional Office from about 1946 to '54. Then he got fired and he didn't work. He took jobs that I told you about. He built a farm in one day, houses and everything, and there was 100 people working on it all at once, and that took a lot of effort, a lot of ability. I think that's about all. When [Harry S.] Truman toured the Pacific Northwest, Blonk wrote most of the stuff on the West/Northwest for him. After that, he toured with the congressional committee that was making a tour with that train. He pulled stunts, same kind of stunts on them. Well, they got down to Las Vegas and they brought a bunch of showgirls out, and they needed somebody from the audience to participate. They got Blonk up there, and they practically—they didn't undress him, but they come close to it. They got a dog pile with them on the bottom, with these chorus girls. (laughter) It was quite an event.

Storey: You mentioned in this picture that you were showing me, this complex of buildings.

#### **Regional Office Accommodations**

Price: This little batch here. See, this was the county building that we moved into.

Storey: That was Fairview and Orchard, did you say?

Price: Yes. This is the fairgrounds. The bad part of this was, the entrance to the fairgrounds went right between those buildings into here. That created problems for the county. But we just hung tight and put our buildings up, and we lived with it until we built the Federal buildings.

Storey: Well, the county building was already there, and we moved in there.

Price: Yes, it was a concrete building.

Storey: But it was small, right?

Price: Yes. It housed maybe sixty people.

Storey: So we needed more space.

Price: And we were going to have 250 people. I looked up the name there and I got it. Have you run across the name of Ellsworth, as an Acting Commissioner or Assistant Commissioner in the Washington Office?

Storey: It's just vaguely familiar.

Price: Ellsworth, I'm sure. The old Bureau of Reclamation didn't stress administration, they stressed engineering. Every key job was headed by an engineer. In the reorganization which they were making of the Bureau in 1946, Ellsworth was brought in as an

administrative man in the Commissioner's Office. He was the one that was instrumental in sending Cunningham in here, into our office, to, in a sense, put administrators in charge of it, instead of engineers. Cunningham was pushing to achieve this, but he never was successful.

In the broad sense, my comments about Cunningham, and I felt sorry for the guy, because he never did make any progress on that. I don't know how his boss looked at that in Washington.

Storey: Tell me when you moved into the county building here.

Price: Started that in 1946, probably in 1947. This is the last thing I did before I moved into planning. I was in the process of doing this when—

Storey: Of getting the buildings?

Price: No.

Storey: The additional buildings?

Price: Yeah.

Storey: Tell me that story again, would you please?

Price: Oh, okay. We needed twice as much space as we had in that building. We had a regional soil laboratory, and it was very inadequate for what they had to do, and it was in one end of it. The other end of it was high windows, a warehouse-type building, about half of that was.

Storey: The county building.

Price: Yeah. There was lots of complaints about people that had an office and didn't have an outside window. I found out something, that they were going to release these war relocation buildings, Japanese camped down at Jerome Idaho]. I went down there, and the people down there said that they were all through. They moved everything out and they were all through, and they were declaring it surplus, but it hadn't cleared the paperwork.

He says, "If you want to come down and get it, we'll give it to you. We won't wait for the paperwork."

So I went back up to Mr. Newell and told him about this. I said, "We could build on the back side of this." It's a temporary building, because they're already talking about a Federal building. But I said, "We may run into difficulties. We've got to go down there and beat somebody else to those buildings." Four or five cars, and [unclear] linoleum through all those buildings. They had rolls of it.

Mr. Newell says, "Well, I'd rather be criticized for not doing something than for

---

doing something. Let's go ahead."

So I started in, and we got a contractor. We didn't have money. Are you familiar with the Central Project activities, how they funded that?

Storey: No.

Price: The Washington Office gave us, let's see, they called it—anyway, it's non-reimbursable money. I'll tell you in a minute what it was. We had a little bit of that, but we didn't have enough to run the office. So we, in a sense, took money from each of the project appropriations in the whole region. One of them was—Coulee Dam was being built, so there was a lot of construction money there, and most of that money came out of construction funds for Coulee Dam. That's called C-P-A funds—Central Projects [Central Project Activities].

We charged each of those buildings to a different project. In other words, they paid the cost of moving it up here, and to do that, I kept it as low as I could, and didn't use the Davis-Bacon Wage Rates, which is normal in any government operation. That came in under the Roosevelt Administration. We had that building, practically all of the materials were up there stacked before we got a contract, before we cleared it with the county. They went along with this because of Mr. Newell's relationship. He was an old-timer there and they all knew him, and he was able to work this out.

We got the specifications to set those buildings up just about the time that the guy hauled it in here, so he went right ahead, and in sixty days we had that building up and ready for occupancy.

Who was going to go in it? Well, McCool insisted he had to be close to the Regional Director, and again, I come back to McCool. He was trying to do a good job, but he emphasized economy and competition. If you wanted to get a pair of pliers, you had to get three bids. You had to come to him and he'd get it. Anyway, he got involved in this.

I was back getting furniture from Don Field [phonetic], went back to Washington to clear it. They made a big thing of me not including in the Davis-Bacon wage rates in that contract. In my book, if we hadn't taken the houses when we got them, we wouldn't have gotten them. The urgency of this carried right on to getting the building, getting in it. I suppose it was maybe late '47 when we moved into this building. It's a whole group of buildings, this whole group here.

Storey: It looks like a U-shaped cluster with one building across the U. Well, it looks like an A, doesn't it?

### **Soil Laboratory**

Price: Yeah. Now I'll go on with this. The back end of this thing was built special for the laboratory, because they used centrifuges and things that had to have solid—these were on temporary blocks. They didn't have concrete foundation, it was just blocked up

underneath it. All the underside was special. I was the storehouse man, the money changer for a diamond drill program, as part of our division, because the geology people were part of our division.

This building out here was loaded with \$500,000 worth of diamond drill equipment. In my office I had the bits. I'll go into that in a minute. It got a hodgepodge of things in these buildings, because it got the overflow from the main building.

My association with that drill, I was the person in the office who the geologists would call in and say, "Send this core barrel of such and such," or "Send this special part of anything," and I would go out and take care of it and ship it to them. This went to an extreme sometimes. They called in from Hell's Canyon and they were building a road so that they could have a contract to drill in the canyon at the dam site. They called in and they wanted a ton of dynamite. They needed it before they ever got down there and didn't know it. So I got a ton-and-a-half truck, and loaded the dynamite on and two culverts, thirty-six-inch diameter, twenty-feet long, and drove down there. You can't do that on a public highway without identifying this as dynamite.

So I went early in the morning to dodge that, and got down to beyond there, Ontario, Oregon, I went off on the side road, and going on the side road is just tracks, almost. That went all the way down to Homestead, where the bridge crossed into Washington from Oregon. Some of those turns were so tight that the bed of the truck was dragging on the bank as we made the turn, the wheels was spinning to get us around. The young fellow with me, he got pretty scared. Two or three times, if I hadn't been driving, I'd have been scared, too. But this was typical of part of the job I had that never was identified.

We got into something at a later date, in this drilling thing, and I have a picture here. This is the Appaloosa Dam site. I'm going to take this up a little bit later, because we got some awards on that. This is the lathe. He sets up his drill on the canyon wall, and there are sliding arm deals that you could screw in and make this level anywhere here. Instead of having to level everything, you don't have a grader or anything. Instead of doing this by hand, which the Bureau drillers did, this guy used these things and didn't have to do anything to the land. When he pulled out, it was just as it was before. When he wanted a path across to another location, he just stuck a half a stick of dynamite in and blew it out. Our people didn't do that; they shelved this. I'll go into that a little bit later on.

But part of my job, I went out and saw this and took pictures of it to take to our drillers to say, "Why in the world don't you start doing this?" We got into safety features. That was part of my job.

I brought my job description, and the only reason I brought it here was, after I got in planning, they had successive changes as chief of the division. My job grew to this, but none of those engineers would admit that I had that responsibility. It didn't detract from them, but they thought "That's my job, and why in the world should I

---

allocate it to Price?" I think that most of them, they appreciated the things I was doing, but they didn't want to admit that what I was doing there wasn't part of their job.

We brought a fellow, Francis Warnick, in 1966, and in a couple of years he put this job description through which gave me authority. I didn't have authority before. I just did what needed to be done, or what I saw needed to be done.

When we ran into problems on this office space, I took care of the problems to keep the contractor going. I was there working with him in a sense all the time, to make sure nothing stopped. We made changes, and I was going to use the extra work orders system to make those changes. The way it turned out, they rewrote his contract and opened it for bids after the whole building was built up. The price he quoted me on this stuff was \$30,000 less than what they paid, by rebidding the contract. My goal wasn't economy; in a sense it was time. We were buying time.

In addition to the drill operations, we had a regional soil lab in the back building there. He needed all kinds of special equipment. He had a doctor's degree in chemistry, physics, and had a young man there who, I guess, had a high school education. He went to Boise State University for three years, just nights and weekends. We changed his work schedule so he put in forty hours a week, but he might do it all on three days. He had to attend class.

When Dr. Bushnell left, this fellow came in and did half of the—the extent to which you check samples for chemical contents in clay, your number one, two, or three type of soils, Doc would go to an extreme to get them a huge percentage in any sample he tested to identify these things. They didn't need that for land classification. You couldn't change him. He made those decisions. But when he left, this young fellow took over and did just as good a job, but in half the time and half the cost.

Now, they had a fellow named Malitic in Denver who was a soils man, and Fogarty, who was an economist. Dr. Bushnell was always arguing with those two people over the extent to which he made these tests. You had to have this, you had to have that. This argument went on until "Doc" finally died. I don't remember, he had something wrong with him. [Everett] Williams took over.

Let's see if there was anything else related to that. I don't think there was, relating to the office.

When I finished that office, I moved into project planning, with a two-grade raise and an unidentified job description. I was Administrative Assistant to Mr. Torbert, who was head of the division.

### **Moving into the Planning Division**

The division was headed up by Mr. Torbert, who was a geographer, graduate of a Dartmouth, and a professor at Dartmouth College. His assistant was Frank Clinton, old Reclamation man. Torbert was put in by a fellow who was politician, background

in, I don't know, I guess you'd call it social planning.

The Columbia Basin Project was coming in with 4 or 5 million acres. They didn't know exactly how much. They had to buy up all the land, and they were setting up a whole structure of farm up there, with new towns and everything.

This fellow—and I don't remember his name—but [Goodrich W.] Lineweaver was the Assistant Commissioner that worked with him and worked directly with Torbert. Frank Clinton went from there to Assistant Regional Director, and then he became Regional Director of Region Four, and eventually went up to Region Six.<sup>24</sup> But he was a good administrator. Dr. Torbert was never quite accepted as an engineer. He had the title of engineer, planning engineer.

The whole concept in the Bureau in this Region changed during, oh, five or six years, between 1947 and '52. It changed only to the extent that—you want to go on with this?

Storey: Keep going. Keep going.

Price: In 1952, when Eisenhower went into office, they came out with instructions that we could only have one economist in any office, and certain limitations on personnel. That caused a major upheaval in our planning organization. Mr. Cunningham's office entered into this, only to the extent that one of his men ran the R-I-F [reduction in force] procedures, instead of personnel doing it.

In our division, we had three girls that I've told you a little bit about, who were basically responsible for getting a report out in a format and all this type of thing. The way it was written by the technical, or the professional people, but they, in a sense, edited and typed all of that stuff. One of those girls was—and I had recruited her and put her on temporary because she didn't have Civil Service status. Bill Rapp sent her a notice that she was terminated under the RIF procedures—reduction in force. I learned not to argue with those people. We went right ahead and RIF'ed her and then gave her a temporary appointment for thirty days, and he couldn't challenge it somehow. Then after that thirty days, we gave her another thirty days.

In the engineering, we had a lot of older—well, they weren't old in that sense, but they were long-time Reclamation people, and they were bumped by latecomers who had been in the military. The RIF procedures gave preference to people with military backgrounds. As an example of this, we had a fellow name of McGregor, who was a GS-11, was considered journeyman level at the Area Office. He was bumped by a man who couldn't have done the job that he was doing, but he was bumped because, on record, he was a professional engineer. He graduated in engineering, and because he was in the military, that gave him preference.

---

24. In 1943, the Bureau of Reclamation implemented a reorganization that created seven geographical and autonomous regions: Region I, Boise, Idaho (Pacific Northwest); Region II, Sacramento, California (Mid-Pacific); Region III, Boulder City, Nevada (Lower Colorado); Region IV, Salt Lake City, Utah (Upper Colorado); Region V, Amarillo, Texas (Southwest); Region VI, Billings, Montana (Upper Missouri); Region VII, Denver, Colorado (Lower Missouri).



---

So I worked with each of these people to give them reduction in grade, and then six months after this was all over, returned them to their former. This wasn't a popular thing to do, but it was kind of left to me.

Every time we ran into an argument on any of these people, I had to do the arguing. It was not handled by the planning division as such. It's a place where I learned that if you worked under Civil Service, you'd better know the classification system. In McGregor's case, we put him in the hydrology. He was qualified, a good man. Six months later, we gave him his grade back and put him down as Assistant Area Engineer. The only people that—well, you were RIF'ed within grade, and the people that were Grade 12 or 13 were, in a sense, protected on this.

The second economist in that was Don Street [phonetic], and he was just laid off, because we didn't have any other opening where there could be two economists. He laid around for six months, didn't do anything. When we needed an economist up in Spokane, I got him back. I didn't make all these decisions, I did all the paperwork. We got him back on the rolls in the Regional Office so that he could get his move to Spokane paid for. He went up to Spokane, and he was a good man. He was up there as top man in economics. But he didn't get his grade back to 12, we only gave him 11. The reason for that was to leave an opening. If we had an opening, we could call it a promotion, even though he had had this before.

In the Denver Office, there was an old Reclamation man named Randy Riker [phonetic], who could have been commissioner at one time if he had wanted it. He didn't want the politics. But he was in the Washington Office. Earl Fogarty, who was an economist, and in charge of land classification and economics at that time, came into the office and said that their economist wanted a year's leave to do something, and they needed an economist for one year. So I immediately put Don Street's name in to get his grade back. We called him—he was at Spokane—and asked him to come in. He came in and talked to these people. Mr. Brown, who was planning engineering at that time, talked to these people.

He came up to me and he said, "You go in and settle this." He said, "You can't do anything for that guy."

Well, Don had gotten in there and said, "Sure, I'd like to go down there, and I'd like my grade back, but I'm not going to work under that guy when he comes back a year from now."

This stopped everything. So I went in and we talked this over. I said, "Well," to Fogarty and Riker, "we'll take him back at the Grade 11," which is, again, if he doesn't want to stay in there when this—he won't work for this guy. This irritated everybody. But Don was probably the best agricultural economist that the Bureau had. He believed that economics was a science, just like engineering was a science. He argued his points far beyond where you—a difficult man to supervise.

But anyway, he went into Denver. He was given the job of the economics of the state of Arizona, setting up a public power distribution system, a state-owned public

power distribution system, for all the power they were getting out of Boulder Dam. They were in the midst of that when he went in there, and they assigned him to that, and he did a magnificent job. In the end, when they got that finished was about six months—

END SIDE 1, TAPE 1. JULY 27, 1995.

BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1. JULY 27, 1995.

Storey: So anyway, Street did this Arizona project and got an award and everything.

Price: He went up as a representative from the Secretary of the Interior to Passamaquoddy Project. It wasn't a project, but this was a seashore, probably a harbor-type thing, where the tide rose and fall as much as four feet, and they were considering building a dam across there so that at the high tide, they'd close the gates and release it for power production. He got an award on that for his work on that. He was good.

But he was in with people there who were higher rated, and he worked well with people of a higher grade, but he argued with any engineer on repayment, the irrigation districts' repayment. Anyway, he came back. Our economist left, and he wanted to come back to the Regional Office job which he had left, to be the top economist. A lot of people didn't want Don back. I went in to Brownie [phonetic] and we talked about this thing. He admitted that Don was probably the best economist. He says, "I can handle this. Let's bring him back." So we brought him back, and two months later, Brownie died of a heart attack. Mr. White was Assistant Chief, now he's Chief, and we had some problems with that. They were just personality problems. Well, I sat in the midst of these things, sometimes making the decisions that a chief would have made.

### **Snake River Investigation**

In 1966, Secretary [of the Interior Stewart] Udall wanted a plan for the Lower Snake River that included all of the possible developments to identify them as to whether it should be kept as primitive area and undeveloped, or whether we should have dams here and there. The power company had built Brownlee Dam on the Snake River upstream, and they were releasing water for power production, and during the high water, you could run boats up the river. During low water, you had to know what you were doing to dodge the rocks.

The feeling that we could build an equalizing dam at the Appaloosa Dam site, and we were given the word about the twentieth of August, and we had to have an answer to the Federal Power Commission by their meeting on September 25. We were given \$37,000 to determine whether or not that dam site would support a concrete dam. This was about 3,600 feet of drilling, and there's a picture. That's what the picture I was going to show you. This was the dam site, and this is the drill [unclear].

Storey: With the portable drill platform.

---

Price: This was about 60 miles up from Lewiston, Idaho, on the Snake River. Well, we've got another picture of that, but that's good enough to show you. It's rugged.

We had a meeting, and everybody says, "We can't do it for \$37,000."

I said, "Well, we all agree it has to be done, don't we?"

"Yes."

I said, "Well, everybody stays out of this but me. I'll make all of the decisions. The geologist can set up wherever they want to drill and do that. I'll get a drill up there, and get it drilled, and back out in this time period."

They had a river boat. I don't remember the name. But a fellow named Rivers ran the boats up there, and he had a camp for fishing, \$50 a night, and I went up there and arranged with him to house the drill crew, put the contractor drill crew on the government payroll. The drill foreman was on our payroll, so he could buy things. We gave him the field purchase requisition and arranged for gasoline and oil delivered to the dock. Whenever they called down, they would deliver it. The only thing we had under contract was the rental of the drill and supplies.

There was all kind of manipulations there. We used the transportation request for pickets. To rent a boat when they're out when they're drilling on the river, they had to have a boat for safety there in case of accident. All of this I arranged, and they were drilling within four or five days.

I got a call from the fellow that owned the river boat and he says, "Come up and get this son of a bitch off. I'm going to kick him out."

I said, "What's the matter?"

He says, "Well, they've taken over some of my best cabins."

So I thought this over and says, "Well, don't do anything. I'll be up there."

I got a fifth of whiskey. He was a drinker. I'm not. Most of the drill people drank a little, at least. I went up there, drove up at night, and the following morning six o'clock we had to get up early to catch the high water for the power production releases. All the way from Lewiston to his camp, which was in the neighborhood of this dam, he told me all the stories about this guy. The two cabins he gave them didn't have stoves in them. These people were working twenty, twenty-three, twenty-four hours a shift, almost, in order to get this finished on the scheduled date. The drill foremen, they needed to dry their clothes out while they slept, and they couldn't dry them out because they didn't have a stove. There was two other cabins vacant, \$50-a-night cabins. He just took over two of them and moved his crew into that. Anyway, I got talking to him.

I went over and talked to the drill foreman and he says, "Well, this so-and-so."

He was a nice guy. "So-and-so dropped one of my drills in the river taking it off of the boat onto land." He says, "It was just stupid, what he was doing."

See, this started at that point. Anyway, I stayed up there, I think a day only, and I got them to agree that they would go until the twenty-fifth of September, and not let anything interfere with it, being we were paying the drill crew per diem to pay for these \$50, what you call it, nights, and we had a maximum we could pay them. We had to bridge that, so I bought two stoves for the two cabins that didn't have stoves. I bought stoves and put a little money into fixing those up a little bit. That made the captain happy.

Let's see, there was another complication. Oh, yeah. On the 23rd of September, the Regional Director says, "Stop drilling." Now, we had not agreed—we had an agreement with the drill foreman, he thought for 1,600 feet of drilling, and that would take more than that time, but he didn't put in the contract that he would have to be paid for umpteen number of days. This cut that off. He couldn't do it. We had bought all of this rigging that you saw in that picture, and we gave him all that stuff. Well, that made him happy. We paid to take it back down to Lewiston. He was from Spokane. He picked it up there. This was the Leaf Drilling Company. At later dates, when our drill crews were busy, we tried to use him. I don't know that it was done that way. We got back to Boise and stayed away from procurement.

They could come over if they wanted to know what was done, and I just said, "Well, I did what I had to do to get the job done, and the less you know about it, the better off you are."

There wasn't anything illegal in anything I did, but in the sense that I'm just an Administrative Assistant, it wasn't engineering charging—there's all kinds of comments.

Well, to take care of that thing, I wrote a commendation for myself. I brought those here. I don't know whether you want to look at it or not. I got one of these things for the Appaloosa Dam site.

Storey: A Certificate of Meritorious Service.

Price: Yeah. This was a key part of do you build more dams on the Lower Snake. Udall wanted a report on this while he was still in office. In 1968, we got practically an order from Udall, he wanted that in by March, and this was in maybe September of '67.

You'd have to read this to appreciate what was done. We got a unit citation from the Commissioner. We got one from Udall, and this was Udall's. I was the one that had to write up all these, including my own. It pretty well takes care of the things that I fell into that wasn't necessarily a part of my job, but everybody was willing to let me have it because they didn't think it could be done. I don't mean that to glorify my own position, but it's pretty well documented there.

---

## Management Grid

The Regional Office was going through a period of psychological—we called it management grid, where you take six people and put the six people, we don't know each other maybe, in the same room and you go through play-acting things to see how each people reacts to the others. This was overdone. This was just in the beginning of this thing.

The personnel fellows that was in charge of this picked the Area Office three top engineers during this period, to meet in one of these sessions. I went over and told him we can't do it. He said, "Letter out."

I just says, "I'll write a letter out if you want, but we're not going to participate in that until after we get this report out." He got pretty hostile over that, and in the end I says, "Well, I'll go to Spokane."

So he got six people to participate. None of our people got into that because of these reports that had to be met. I went up to Spokane for this week, and Ed Sullivan, the Assistant Regional Director of Region Two was in this, and people lower graded than me: engineering technician, one of them; one was an engineer; two of them was from Coulee Dam.

About Wednesday or Thursday—this is the way it works out. Wednesday or Thursday, they focus on somebody who may be weak and a good man to get production, but weakens his relationships with his people, and that was what this was to do. The grid that they set up is ten squares each way, and zero to nine on the bottom and the top. Ideally, you land up in one of these squares. If you're nine-nine, which is impossible, you'd be at the top of both production and personnel relations. I can't remember what the problem was, but the Regional Director took one position, and I was under him. It was set up as a conflict, and he got to saying, "I think you—"

I said, "My goal is production, meeting schedules, and to the extent that people fit into it and help you get this done, that's fine. If they don't, I'd be pretty hard to get along with."

He says, "I don't think that." Everything I said, "I don't think that."

So finally I says to him, "Well, Mr. Sullivan, do you know, I don't give a goddamn what you think."

Now, this is the way it's set up. Well, this kind of stopped everything, because he is an Assistant Regional Director. Two years later, he came in as our Regional Director, and he didn't hold it against me.

The only point I was making there, I wasn't supposed to be in that, but I took the place of those three or four area engineers that just couldn't show.

Now, the fellow that was running this from personnel, I had watched this for, I

guess, a year and a half, and he had a terrible temper. I thought, after I'd had this little run-in with Mr. Sullivan, I ought to—he had said in the midst of this thing—his name was Joe. Sullivan said to me, "What do you think of Joe?"

I says, "I don't know Joe."

He said, "Oh, yeah, I think you do."

I said, "No, I don't know him."

"Why don't you know him?"

I says, "He's got a temper. He came into my office and he had already written a letter to these people to come in at this place, without clearing with us, and when I said we couldn't do this, he just exploded."

The Regional Director looked at Joe and he said, "Joe, what did I see you doing down there this morning?"

He was standing there ordering coffee and a roll. He was reading the paper, and some guy comes along and started to take this. Joe just grabbed his hand this way, and they had some words.

The only reason I'm giving you all of this, that dominated our regional operation for three or four years. The Regional Director should have—it might be a good thing. We had to make a speech in this. I made a speech that it's just a cover-up for management to not solve the personnel problem. When I got through, Sullivan says—he had said before, "I don't understand you." He says, "I understand you now." (laughter) But wherever anything interfered with the program, I got the problem to take it away so they could work on these.

The Area Office in Boise had crowded office space. They had a room that was maybe twice as big as this. They had four Grade 11 engineers and one calculator among the four of them. Dave Crandall's [phonetic] father was Upper Snake River watermaster. He was an engineer. Dave Crandall was an area engineer for this Boise Office, and he wouldn't do anything about that. He made no move at all. But he was promoted because of who he was, to superintendent of the Minidoka Project.

The minute that papers went in on that, we started action with G-S-A [General Services Administration] to get office space for that office. I was pushing it. I was pushing it for another reason. We were going to have to vacate that office, and I had no place to put all the drilling stuff. We had to have a place for the soil lab. So I was pushing to get those two things included in the Area Office, and then I'd get rid of all of these problems. Crandall didn't know we got the approval for this and sent the drawings to us for checking. I had checked all the space we needed, both for the soil lab and the drill. Crandall just hit the ceiling. You can't spend money that way. It wasn't economical at all.

We ended up buying a calculator for each of those engineers. See, he just wouldn't order things. When they came out with the computers, I had an awful time. It wasn't McCool's fault, but I had an awful time getting the computer we wanted, because we were asking for special type. In hydrology, where they were running groundwater capacities from pumping on the north side, the man that was doing that said, "If you get that, I can do it in a half a day, what it takes me a week to do now with the mechanical type of calculator."

This went on until this guy came in, Mr. Morton [phonetic], who came from Region Four. He was a good Mormon. He had never been in the type of position that our planning was.

I controlled all of the general investigations money by the way I set up the budgets and the amount of money we allocated to the C-P-A operation. Finance and the administrative officer was continually trying to get us to change that allocation. I was in the administrative—Mr. Draper was Administrative Officer, and he and I were going over this, and Mr. [Harold] Nelson, the Regional Director, come in, and he waited until we got through. He says to Draper, "What's that all about?" He says, "Don's got a good point, and I'm going to agree with him," which was, they were going charge the planning money into C-P-A on the basis of the percentage of people in the Planning Division than the rest of the Regional Office. [It] Had no relation to work. It's just one way to get money because we had money.

When I first went in planning, they had ordered twenty new Ford station wagons, and those station wagons arrived, and I had already arranged to have our people at the area offices in there to pick them up. They were gone when property management—McCool was there at that time—called me over, and was just as mad as he could be, because I had not let supply handle that. I told him, "I know. I could see what was coming. You guys are going to take some of these cars at our expense, and you're just not going to do it."

A lot of people got involved in this argument. The Finance Officer, Gus Empie, settled this thing by saying, "Project planning has paid for it. If you want to take it from him, you've got to pay back. You've got to pay that money."

Well, they had no money for Regional Office operation. Anyway, up to the day I left, almost, the only guys that ever acknowledged that I should have the authority to do this was the guy that signed that, and it's Mr. Warnick.

Storey: Francis M. Warnick, with an N-I-C-K.

### **Handling Personnel Problems**

Price: Yeah. The other fellows saw me as an expediter. Yet for personnel problems that came up, they would call me before they went to personnel. I had a list of people that I was keeping track of in the whole planning organization, and when there was a vacancy come up, I went down the list to see who would be the best qualified for that. I called the Area Office to ask them to file an application. Now, I was on the

promotion board for most of these positions. I didn't do anything except vote one person. There was three people on it.

In one of these years, we had a personnel exchange in our report writers. Jerome Anderson and Norman Moore in the Washington Office, exchanged jobs for one year. When the year was over and they went back to their respective places, the was a vacancy came up in our department that's an Assistant Chief of the Division. Moore called me, he didn't call the Chief of the Division. He called me and said, "What would I have to do to get that job?"

I said, "Go direct to Harold Nelson. Don't let it be misguided by—" Harold was a person that was conscious of the people that was over him all the time. Harold just brought him right out. Normally, we'd have listed that position and circularized it and people would apply and then picked out of that group. Norman came out and he ended up, when [Edwin P.] Sullivan came up to be Regional Director, he went over as Assistant Regional Director.

Personnel—we had lots of problems. People in Civil Service should read classification materials for the position they occupy, because the grade factors are specific in engineering and whatnot. When I wrote this stuff for the soil scientists, and we got them up to where—and I have a letter here if you wanted to read it—I wrote the transmittal from our office to the Commissioner, and I wrote the transmission from the Commissioner to the Secretary, and the Secretary to the Civil Service. Now, these were drafted and sent in to Washington to approve this, and gave the specific reasons why this should be done. And one of the interesting things, in the Secretary's letter to Civil Service was that we need to give professional status to soil scientists, the same as we have for engineering.

All through my career, the engineers have dominated, not because of administrative ability, and not because of—well, sometimes, I suppose, personalities, but engineering abilities dominated appointments. By the time I had left—the Bureau has totally changed now. It was changing when I left. It was trying to change when Cunningham came out, but it never did. It took, well, twenty years elapsed before—and When Warnick came in here, he wanted somebody doing this pick-and-shovel work. The other people wanted it done. They didn't care who did it, but they didn't want to put it on job description.

So the Civil Service Commission came up with wanting comments on the title management—let's see what that title is. Management Assistant. I was an Administrative Officer up until—

Storey: That was 1970, I think.

Price: Okay, yeah. I wrote comments on that, and the classification officer read these comments and he says, "You know, you could get another grade. If they would recognize what you're doing, you could get another grade on that."

I said, "Let's try it." I didn't expect it to go through.



When it went up to the front office to sign, to send to Washington, Norman Moore was the one that was up there that signed the letter that went out. He called me and says, "I'm just signing this letter, and I'm glad to see that they're acknowledging the full range of your duties."

As my boss said, Mr. Warnick said, "We were fortunate to live in the Golden Age of Reclamation." You could see what was needed, you could set schedules, and you could achieve them. You could reach your goals. Along at the last part of my work in '73, we were getting away from irrigation. We were getting away from emphasis on the engineer. They had environmentalists, recreationists. Jerry Anderson, who was head of our report section, went down to Atlanta, Georgia, as head of the recreation for the country. It was time of change for Reclamation.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 1. JULY 27, 1995.

BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2. JULY 27, 1995.

Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey with Donald G. Price, on July 27, 1995.

You were saying Reclamation is now in a difficult situation.

#### **Difficult Situation for Reclamation**

Price: They built this new office building, and they had an open house. There were six or seven displays in there—recreation, fish and wildlife, power energy, and not a thing on irrigation.

Storey: This building?

Price: Yeah, that building.

Storey: When was it—

Price: Well, this was opened, I think, three years ago. Historically, in Reclamation, the farmers were the backers of Reclamation, a terrific backing. The irrigation in California dominated changes in the Reclamation law. There was several, but one particular was the Small Project Act. This was a project that could repay all of it. It was a small project. We footed the bill, and it excluded farms that was more than 160 acres, under the original Reclamation Act, the 160-acre limit for getting water. Now, California got around that by forming family corporations, or they started out as families. They each owned 160 acres. As a corporate farm, you might have 1,200 acres.

They fought that thing in Congress every year and never did get that changed. They tried to get that changed, and the powerhouse of California, with all of their congressmen, kept anything from changing that.

The thing that is difficult for me to understand when I read a lot of what goes on

in Congress, that they keep talking about subsidizing agriculture, and Reclamation does subsidize agriculture, but no individual gets it. It's a whole bunch of people that gets it.

I was in Denver in 1954, I think, and Don Street was President of the Gladiolus Society for Colorado. They had a meeting there, and they had the whole First National Bank Building, displays and whatnot set up there. I went down with him at nighttime. One woman came from eastern Kansas, drove all the way over there, and was going to leave the same day to get back to milk the cows. But those are the kind of people that supported Reclamation. They were dedicated people.

The treasurer of this outfit was a C-P-A from northern Texas. I don't remember the town. He represented cotton growers in that county. They had gone in with a bill to Congress. The cotton growers were subsidized \$1 million that year, the ones that he was making income tax reports on. They had gone in to Congress to ask for a water depletion, the same as oil depletion. In the congressional—well, in the field that supported the oil industry, they had allowed some write-offs because of the level of oil dropping from, say, thirty feet to fifty feet, or from 100 feet to 300 feet. Depending on those things and the production part of it, they got a write-off. Now, I don't know just what the write-off was, whether it was on income tax, or whether it was a company, bigger thing than that.

They didn't get that through, but when they talk of subsidizing farms, the only ones that they should quit on are the corporation farms. We need the small farm. We're running the small farm out because the little man has to compete with the corporate farms, and the only way he can do it is to join those other people. And Reclamation has lost the backing of those people politically.

Now, we're in a situation in Idaho right now where they're going to adjudicate water rights. In so much of the articles in the newspapers, which is strictly for sensation, mostly, but in the articles that come in there that has to do with—I don't know quite what you'd call it, except they're going to have to prove that they're using the water right, or it's going to revert to the state, because they want to release water to downstream Columbia River salmon. It's a big issue right now. The state of Idaho water rights are tied up by the farmers, mostly. There's others. In Fish and Wildlife, there's a dead storage space at Everett [phonetic] Dam, so that you can't—still owns water for fish. That has come up in the last few years, and it's a strong lobby. We didn't have those problems in the old days.

Storey: Tell me about your change. You were Administrative Officer?

Price: Yeah.

Storey: To the Planning Office. How did that come about?

#### **Moving from the Administration Office to the Planning Office**

Price: Well, I told you a little of this. Maybe we didn't get it recorded. I was Acting Head of

---

the Administrative Services Division, and I had all the service functions in the Regional Office. I came into the Sonna Building and I was part of allotting space when we moved to the county building. I wasn't all of it, because Mr. Cunningham had come in, and he dominated things, and I had to show him necessity in order to change it. I was able to do that in some cases. The Planning Division and the O&M, Operation and Maintenance Division, had the predominant number of people, maybe thirty each out of ninety-three or ninety-six. We got into that building. Cunningham was trying hard, and I'm not—he was just trying to establish himself. Every time he'd come up with something that I didn't agree with, I didn't go to Mr. Newell, but then any meeting we were in where I spoke, they supported me.

Cunningham went over to—well, there was a review team came out, one from Washington, one from Denver, or two from Denver. Cunningham and they went out and visited all the projects, and that was part of changing administration in Reclamation. They got out to the Deschutes Project at Bend, Oregon. Clyde Spencer was a character. He spoke his peace, shooting off a little bit sometimes. He didn't like the chief clerk. I mean, he liked him personally, but he wanted a different chief clerk. They discussed some of the things that the project needed to change, and they came back into the Regional Office. The fellow from Denver had worked with my boss on the Boise Project, Chief Clerk Robert Smith. He came in to me before he left, and he started talking about my job. I could sense that there was something in the wind. So then he told me, he says, "You're never going to satisfy Mr. Cunningham."

I said, "No, I know that."

He said, "Well, the new title changing from old Reclamation to new administrative assistants, you're assistant to somebody. Because of the title, it has more power."

I listened to all this. When he got through, I said, "Now, what you're saying is that I'm going to have troubles with Mr. Cunningham."

He said, "Yes."

I says, "I've been having trouble. I understand his position, and to the extent that I can, I agree with him, and to the extent that my boss, the Regional Director, won't let me, I'm not going to help."

He said, "Well, he's got a lot of [unclear]."

I said, "Yeah, I know that."

But after he left, I got to thinking about that. Now, he brought up the fact that he had known Mr. Smith, and Mr. Smith was real high on me and had spoken—Mr. Smith at this time was demoted down to the Area Office as Administrative Assistant.

Storey: This was Bob Smith?

Price: Bob Smith. There was a period of change, a lot of change, a lot of new people coming in. I just happened to be one that was a focus point for several. Anyway, I went up to Mr. Newell, and Mr. Newell had given me a performance rating as outstanding in everything but getting along with people, and he had marked that weak. Now, if it had been anybody else, I wouldn't have gone in to them and asked, "Explain it," but I knew Mr. Newell.

When I came into the Regional Office, I was told by Mr. Newell, "Now, don't put a lot of money into a house, because this isn't going to stay." He says, "The Washington Office people have been moved to Denver and back to Washington." He says, "This thing the Chief Engineer's going to dominate, and we're going to set up these regional offices, and it'll last a little while and it'll go back to Denver."

All through this thing, this was the emphasis I was getting from Mr. Newell. Now, I could see the need for change. No matter who it was, there was a need for change. One of those was the report writers, which we haven't discussed.

Anyway, Mr. Newell says, "Well, Don, we're just going to have to live with these people."

My comment was, "Mr. Torbert has offered me a job. Cunningham went to Torbert and got Torbert to offer me this job. I think I'm inclined to take it, because basically, I'm in accounting and a physical person."

The main contribution to planning has been this fund control, and particularly with five field offices and everybody butting into it, I kept tight control of the money.

I got a letter from the Regional Director somewhere saying, "You're the only one. You had a 94 percent accomplishment." Which meant that we spent 94 percent of the money. "Everybody else is down 60 and 70. Why?"

I said, "It's the nature of the thing. These other places have contracts, and if they don't award the contract and tie up the money this year, it might be tied up in July. We don't have contracts. We're personal service, and it's predictable, most of this stuff."

Anyway, he said—well, he implied that I [unclear]. "If you want me to stay in this job, I'll stay. I have no doubt at all that Cunningham doesn't want me, but I can weather that. I'll be here when he's gone."

He said, "Okay."

So I went back to Mr. Torbert and I said, "I'll take this job (I was Grade 11 then) if I get a Grade 12."

He says, "Well, I'll set it up in Grade 12."

Mr. Clinton was in the room, they were in it together, and they said, "These are

---

the things that we need to get on right away," which was outfitting five area offices with people and space and whatnot.

So it was a real challenge for me to go over there. He brought in McCool, took the job that I had, but they called it—they didn't call it Administrative Services Division. They had another name for it.

While I was still in that job, they got material on organization, organization charts and functional statements, from Washington, sent out. I think from Ellsworth, I think was his name, in the Washington Office. I didn't get to see any of that stuff. So he was talking to these three guys on this Administrative Review Program from schedules and things. This fellow asked me about wanting to see an organization chart. I said, "I don't have an organization chart as such. I've got a list of the people and where they sit, but the functional statements and some of that stuff are missing, and I've been told this is coming out of Washington."

He says, "Well, didn't you get copies of that?"

I said, "No."

Well, Cunningham had used this, you see, as a discussion, at least. In another sense, in an established office, I could not have moved from the position I had into an established office and done a good job, a top job, because when people are established, they are defending their territory, so to speak, and when there's a little turmoil, you're building something. Everything's open to discussion.

When we got down to how we did things, I had everybody in that office on my side. The routing of mail, that was the—everybody recognized the shortage of space and problems we were having. When I told them I agreed to take this, that's when I was working on this building thing. I said, "I'm going to finish this job. Where do you want to sit?"

Torbert looked at Clinton. He says, "Well, maybe we'd better get to the design group and list our petitions and rooms," so he did that while I was still an administrative officer.

Then when I went over as Administrative Assistant, Cunningham blocked that Grade 12 for me for, I don't know, maybe a year. I finally went up to him and had it out with him a little bit. It went right through.

### **Planning Division Functions**

Now, I occupied a position, probably the only—our Planning Division was different than any one of the Bureau of Reclamation, for a number of reasons. In 1966, a fellow named Hudson came in as the Interior Department, and I don't know what his job was, but we were notified that they were going to put all of our accounting documents on computers in the Secretary's Office. Harry Sult was the program man in Washington. He and I settled a lot of problems between us, just

without anybody knowing, primarily because it was an interpretation of how do you see this, how do you see that.

In Region Two, the soil scientists were agronomists, because of the crops that were raised and that type of thing. Instead of having virgin soil that you're classifying, they had developed soil and row crops and insecticides and fertilizer. They had a different kind of problem than we had up here. But we all met at one place and talked it over. Every office was organized not to work independently like we were, like I was.

I'll go clear to the end of that thing. Harry Sult and I were to put this thing on the computer, and we worked for a year and a half on this, and got it ready to take to Washington, and Hudson moved out. They didn't want him.

So I got hold of Bramwell, the Solicitor, and I said, "Where does this thing—"

Well," he says, "we don't know."

"Why in the world didn't you tell us?"

He says, "Well, we don't know what's going on. We don't know what to say." He says, "Why don't you just send it in here, and we'll take it—"

I never did send it. I was going to give it Harry Sult when he retired, as a going-away present.

Anyway, I don't know that I've answered your question.

Storey: About the transfer to planning.

Price: Yeah.

Storey: What was your new title when you were in planning?

Price: Assistant. I was Administrative Assistant. Then that last one, when I got a thirteen, I'm a Management Assistant.

Storey: Well, how did you get into—am I to take it that you supervised the report writers—

Price: No.

Storey: —in planning?

Price: Well, let's get into that. In the administrative—of the Grade 12 job there, it was all there but it wasn't stated specific. But there was a development in '66. This was, what, '58 or somewhere, that we hired those report writers.

Storey: I don't know. When did you actually move over to the planning program? '47?

---

## Report Writers

Price: '47. Here, for instance, "Contingency reviews, project development programs, identify problem areas and improve functional programs performances in the regional offices, for non-technical questions relating to management services in the program." Now, that's one I was actually doing. "Is responsible for review of current operations."

Now, the old way of doing it, when the Regional Office was formed, they had no report writers, and the technical people wrote up, and it was the hardest part of their job was to write it in a form that could go into legislation. Torbert had hired a woman, about a Grade 6, as a report writer, and nobody would use her. They wouldn't let her write this. Maybe because she's a woman, but nobody could write it, it had to be a technical man.

In this particular time frame, we had one report writer in the Regional Office, and we had a report writer in the Salem Office. We had reports being written by economists and soil scientists, but it was holding up the whole program, the writing of the reports. So I went to my boss. Gib Schirk was the head of reports. It was called Programs and Reports in that day. But the program documents came from my accounting stuff. Gib Schirk wouldn't do anything about it. Every time you tried to get a man in assigning her, he wouldn't use her.

We had a young man, Bob Riley, who had a bachelor's degree in history, graduated from the University of Idaho, and he wanted to go to the Park Service. He couldn't get in there and he came to us. He sat there not doing much. Now, he took assigned work here and there, but he wasn't given the job and run it through to its finish. In the midst of this thing, after about six months, he got an offer from the Park Service and took it, and he went back to Wisconsin first to a Canadian training station, then back to Connecticut. His daughter had fungus growths in her ear from the dampness. He called me. I can't emphasize as much, there may have been a little bit of a problem for planning, but they would all call me when they wanted something. He called and asked if he could come back to his job.

I said, "Well, we've hired these report writers, but if you're willing to take a position at a lower grade, or we'll take back the grade you had, but we've got to shuffle people around to get you in where you fit. If you're willing to do that, you can come back." So he wrote a letter.

Now, I went down to McGregor, who was head of the Area Office here in Boise. Fred Stillings was one of the people we had recruited, and he was doing a good job down there. He'd worked up to a Grade 11 in two years or something like that.

McGregor says, "Yes, we could use him, and I'll take him, providing you'll promise me that Riley will never be in competition with the job that Fred Stillings is in competition with."

We discussed what he meant by that, and I said, "Okay, I'll do that. So we'll assign Riley down to you." Now, Stillings, an 11, we assigned Riley as an 11 down there.

The report writer at Salem, everybody knew he was an alcoholic. I didn't know it. The reason, the area engineer liked him and was covering it up. But in the shuffle here, he said, "Why don't you take Stan Akerson [phonetic] into the Regional Office. He's capable of doing this work, and give us one of the new men."

So I arranged that. Now, Akerson got in here for two years. I pulled him out of every bar in Boise. A good man, but he just had—he was discharged from the military, honorable discharge.

I'm just trying to think at what point we decided that we should go up. It started with, "We'll go out and see what's available at the universities." So one person from personnel and Harry Toll [phonetic], who was a program analyst. He was a graduate from Yale, or one of the Ivy Leagues. He was a good man. Well, he wanted to come over and supervise me at one time.

We went to Washington State University, the University of Washington, Oregon State, and Oregon University, and we interviewed these people primarily in geography. Then if we had a good prospect, we went to the professor or somebody that they recommended to discuss his strong and weak points. When we got to Oregon, we had a schedule with the university, a half hour for each of them, at these places.

Terry Lynott was the first one that I got talking to, and I was with him for two hours. Everybody was, "Come on. Come on." Terry was working on his master's, and I think we hired him as if he had a master's. That made him a Grade 9 starting salary. I'm not just sure that that's true.

My recommendation in each case was to these people, "You'll fit in this office," or that office best. "Is it all right, if we want you, that we assign you to this office, or do you have a preference?" In Terry's case, I recommended he come into the Regional Office. They all took my recommendations. The area engineers accepted this. We hired four people, and Akerson was the fifth one.

Then we had Gib Schirk, was the head of Programs and Reports. Gib was an old Reclamation man, a soils scientist background, but he had a terrific mind for Reclamation and Reclamation problems. He'd worked in the field. When he talked, it's hard to get any—and nobody would argue with him, in a sense. In this report-writing thing, the area engineers gave me feedback on this, that, "We don't know how to start these guys." You can't put them in and put them anywhere. So I set up a training meeting, probably a day long, I don't remember how long, in each of the offices. I took the report writers with me, and we talked to the heads of the divisions in the office. "If you've got any questions, [unclear]," so that the report writers had a feeling of being accepted.



---

We got back into Boise, and then if a problem arose that came to me, I went out and talked with the report writer and whoever was responsible.

Chuck Laythe went to Salem, and the area engineer picked him because of what I said about him, that this is what the professor said.

Fred Stillings was a little bit of a problem, which I didn't realize. They covered it up for years. But he came to Boise. He was an English schoolteacher. Fred was a good one, in that sense, but he had something physically wrong with him. I not just sure what it was. He retired early, and nothing was ever said as to why. But he worked out, and then Riley went in with him, and they had a strong report section.

Spokane was the other one. Let's see, we had Stillings. Somewhere I wrote that down.

Storey: Here's your notebook. Is that where it is?

Price: Yeah. David Dunahay [phonetic], and he lasted about a month. He was a good man. He went in to personnel, and some of the top—

END SIDE 1, TAPE 2. JULY 27, 1995.

BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 2. JULY 27, 1995.

Storey: No, absolutely. You were talking about the reports writers. What were you looking for? Why did you go to the Geography Department, and what were you looking for in reports writers?

Price: Because you had to understand what the Bureau of Reclamation consisted of, and geographers covered all of the landforms, and that type of thing. Mr. Torbert was a geographer. He was the guy that started our Planning Division.

In the time that I worked with these people, the report writers couldn't do much in engineering, but when you get into economics and soil science, there's a lot of writing, and the professional people would write it, and then all you had to do was put the English correctly, use the right nomenclature.

Now, we went out looking for people that could write, but this is what we asked the universities, "We'd like to set up a meeting with people that you would recommend, and we are interested in people in these categories," and one of them was geography. I think probably the University of Oregon made the best pitch for that. They had a real strong geography group.

There was a fellow that we had hired, not at this time, that came in at a later date, who, Terry said, is the best writer of the bunch. But he didn't stay long. At the time we interviewed those people, we didn't interview him. As I worked with these young people before, I would have said, in Terry's case, I even cut out something, I don't remember. It was a quote from some famous person on, you didn't know anything until you knew how to write intelligently, or something along that line. His

professor just couldn't say enough good things about Terry. But when I got to interviewing him, he was better in talking than he was in writing. I mean, this I think, has turned out that way.

Storey: This is Terry Lynott.<sup>25</sup>

Price: Yeah. But we had to start somewhere, and David Dunahay left us and went into personnel. I took along with me on this trip a personnel man and, Ersalt, [phonetic] who was good at writing. He was good at about everything. We didn't analyze your ability to do this, but your interest. What are they interested in? What have you done? What have you read?

In Terry's case, his professor brought out some stuff that he had written, and well done. In Fred Stillings's case, he was good at writing, but not as good at understanding the whole picture, in a sense, fitting it in, dovetailing all of the different aspects of a planning report. In putting a report together, the professional man wrote his report and it was given to a report writer. The report writer had questions, he went back to him. In going back to him, the conversation between them might change that. So it was a talking point; the ability to talk this thing was important. Engineering didn't enter into this. The design plan was so detailed that you couldn't say it wrong, so to speak.

We got into putting the thing together in final form, then these girls became real important, because the final language and some of the word usage was their responsibility. Two of the people, I had one for sixteen years, one for twenty years, which is a long time. One of them went on to be a report writer at a Grade 11, but she, when we hired her, she had been doing manuscript work in a lawyer's office. Her use of words was just outstanding. She became the head of the unit.

If they had a question, then they went back to the report writer. The technical professional people could be out somewhere working all the time, and it was a joint effort between the girls in the final report, final analysis, of paging, locating pictures on pages and how it's used in the report to identify it, that type of thing, ended up as a final check from these girls.

But when we went to the university, we stressed writing first, and then we said that the work that we do is predominantly geographic-type stuff, and geographic in the sense of landforms and its effect on the landforms and its effect on classification.

I'm trying to get economics. Well, let's just leave it at that.

It worked out. Ackerson came into this office and he was a big help in breaking in these report writers. But occasionally we'd go out to the field, I'd go out to the

---

25. Between 1986 and 1988, Terry P. Lynott served as Assistant Commissioner, Resources Management for the Bureau of Reclamation. Mr. Lynott also 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](http://www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html).

---

field. Gib Schirk accepted these people, finally. Oh, it must have been a year. He was the only one writing final stuff in here. He was way behind and he knew it. That pulled us out of the slump.

Storey: So you worked for Mr. Schirk?

Price: No. Mr. Schirk was head of Programs and Reports. I did all of the accounting, physical work that went to the report, to make up the program documents. It was made up of this. The reason it was in his office was we had to schedule those reports with flagged actions, and the preliminary report is flagged on his program schedules, the preliminary report at such a date; the final report at such a date. I don't know whether it went in to the Secretary of the Interior or not before it went to the—what, that handles budgets in Washington.

Storey: I don't know. Budget office of some sort.

Price: Well, this Harry Sult was the program man in Washington, and he didn't do much helping us or working with us. He was working more with the political aspects of the due dates of reports, and the problems of reports, and the questions that the Commissioner's staff would have on the reports.

The ability to understand and use words isn't necessarily a writing job, but when you require production of a report, writing of a report, there's a lot of pressure. They're still arguing repayment economics.

My introduction to Reclamation programs at the Sun River Project was that there's lots of controversy when you've got geographic areas of benches that you have to pump up on top of, or that you cut across a neck that comes out here, or whether you contour this. We had a couple of engineers, early days, one named C. C. Ketchum, and Clyde—well, these two guys argued on a point. They ended up contouring [unclear] they built it, and it washed out. In this thing, the guy that had said, "Cut and cover," which was—I thought I never would forget him. I'll have to think a minute. That carried clear through after the project was operating as to some of the design features that should have been different.

This Walter Sanford that I worked for, he ran the warehouse operations down in Boulder Dam, and he had been the locating engineer on what they called the All American Canal. He had changed the design of that canal in some places. It saved millions of dollars. He had a good reputation for that. Here he's working in the warehouse into this, instead of out somewhere where he's very good.

The old Reclamation was old-fashioned in a lot of ways. I think all those people would have been. But you never met a more dedicated bunch of people, and I think these report writers, once they felt they were part of Reclamation, would tell you the same thing.

Storey: Did they ever have special assignments?

Price: I don't know. When America began to really get into helping other countries, this Reclamation crowd was pretty thin, because they picked those Reclamation people to go all over the world.

### **Creating Regional Offices**

I was going to tell you how I ended up in this. In 1952, when the Eisenhower Administration came in, they cut an awful lot. We changed a lot of people's jobs. We downgraded them, and then six months later just popped them back up to where they were before, except the economists. It might have been a year before we did that with them. In the sense that Reclamation changed, it broke up some of the old cliques, or maybe it wasn't a clique, but it was a relationship between people. I sat in the middle of that with a lot of friends that I knew, and people that I knew, only because I played bridge with that women's group down in Boulder City. (laughter) And I watched this.

The other thing was, in 19—I'll tell you in a minute what it was—19—well, at some point in this, Mr. Newell had told me this is going to go back into the Denver Office. Don't buy an expensive house; don't spend a lot of money; don't do this; don't do that. The people that still believed that way, and that still wanted a chief engineer answering these questions, probably fought that. The best thing that ever happened to the Denver Office was that in setting up the regional offices, they broke up a—we had a \$7 million laboratory in there where they made models in any complicated structure. They made models of it in order to test out their science. They had some tremendous people in there.

One fellow, who'd been at the Riverton Project, and I went up to talk about coming down to work here in 1932, and he says, "Don't go." He took me down to his basement, and he had a \$20,000 lab in his basement. In his spare time he was making these models and checking his designs. He just lived Reclamation.

Those people, there was probably a hundred of them in the time when I first knew Reclamation, and those people, in 1940, were still there in the same positions. Change is good in some ways. The change to the regional, we didn't have to send things direct to Denver, and through Denver on everything. We'd go out and buy things anywhere. We could do things on our own without them passing on everything we did. That broke that up, and I think it was good for Reclamation.

The bringing the report writers in, we got a letter when "Buzz" Bennett was head of planning in Washington. We got a letter that year. The reports from this region was 60 percent of the work of all regions that they received. So we got a unit citation for the Regional Director and I think somebody got some awards out of that.

### **Finding the Right People**

One of my jobs that just grew, was knowing everybody in planning and all the area offices and their abilities. Now, I did this only—I didn't go out and do it, I just picked up here and there from the area engineers, or I would call out. Somebody from

---

the Washington Office who was scheduling overseas work for these people came out to our office, and he ended up with me. I was not headed—somebody else was acting head of the division that day.

We talked about it, and he says, "Well, I've had got a soil scientist named Garland and he went overseas and he did a great job." He says, "I found out that I could get people from you, and I couldn't get them from anybody else."

The economist wouldn't recommend a good economist, or one that they wanted to keep, because they would have to do more work, or they wouldn't get their work done—some reason that they would have.

That same thing applied to reports. I could name off fifteen, twenty people that went on to higher offices. Reclamation—and I think any of them would have agreed with this—we had a fellow named Kirkpatrick that had graduated from Oklahoma State and taught at the University of Wisconsin to pay for his master's work. He was just great at analyzing these people. We got an application from a fellow from Wisconsin with a master's degree in hydrology. It's the same thing that he was working on, design of structures in relation to stream flows. This fellow was a four-point, straight through his master's work.

So on my own, I said, "Send him out here."

"And where are you going to go?"

"Well, let's put him down with Kirkpatrick." Kirkpatrick had taught at Wisconsin. In, oh, maybe a month, he came up to me.

He says, "Don, I can't do any more with that guy that knows more than I know. He needs to be challenged, and I can't challenge him with what I'm doing."

So I went out to Salem. John Mangen was there, the engineer, and I said—John told him about this fellow. John didn't want him. In my opinion, an engineer would not hire a four-point engineer. Why, I don't know, unless he didn't want a man that was smarter than he was. I mean, you can look at the obvious things, but I wasn't close enough to see the obvious. I said, "I'm not going to send him out here unless you agree not to have him work under Dick Henry."

Dick Henry had gone up to Alaska, and John had brought him back down to Spokane. John was transferred to Salem. He transferred Henry. He was a favorite son. Dick Henry was an excellent employee, but he made all the technical decisions, professional decisions. John said, "I don't believe you."

I said, "Well, you've got an assistant in there. Ask him."

So we got and brought in his assistant, who's a fellow named Fulcher—Kenneth Fulcher. We just put it to him that way, and he says, "Well, John, what I see of Dick, I agree with Don. He's an excellent man, but he makes all the decisions."

Well, we talked that over a little bit, and John says, "Well, I'll take him, but only for a limited time."

So he took him, and he had him about a year. I don't know, I wasn't aware of him wanting to leave, but he applied for a transfer and he went over to South Dakota. They had districts over there. We didn't have districts here. He was there a little while, and he's in the hydrology, head of it, in the Washington Office. I can't tell you his name. I looked last night at all the things I had.

So my job, as I saw it, was to identify people of talent, and get them in, and see that they had challenging positions. I ended up at a Grade 13. Has that written in. That was what brought me into the report-writing field. There was a need there, but how do you arrive at all of this? Well, you can change your mind after you talk to professors. In the Dave Dunahay case, his comment was, "He has a lot of ability, but he hasn't really reached his level of interest," I guess would be a good word.

Now, the thing that I learned in going around there, these guys all had girls and they wanted to get married, and this affected what they said to you. They wanted a job. You had to sort those out a little bit as to—it's just kind of interesting.

Well, over the years, the fifty-sevens for people that wanted employment came in, and they came to me. I did not screen them like this sounds, but I would call the Area Office and say, "We've got this or that, would you like to see the fifty-seven?" If so, we sent it out. Then I tried to follow up to see if they actually developed this man. These area engineers pretty generally recognized the talents of these people by moving them.

Storey: Were you involved in the development of any project plans?

Price: No.

Storey: For instance, Third Powerhouse you weren't involved in?<sup>26</sup>

### **Working with the Geologists**

Price: No. There's an interesting thing over there. In the beginning phases of building that, they had a geology problem with the high releases of water from the dam building up on the banks, maybe forty feet. Then when you had a low period, the banks drained out, and it was sloughing off the banks. They had a geology problem that they needed to check real quick: what do we do to stabilize the bank?

The construction engineer came into our office, and he was going to talk geology, so I attended the meeting. I attended the meeting for a couple of reasons. The geologist referred questions to me in equipment and that type of thing.

---

26. In June 1966, President Lyndon Johnson signed the law authorizing construction of the Third Powerplant at Grand Coulee Dam, which began in 1967. By 1980, the powerhouse was complete and all six generating units were installed and in operation.

I bought all of the diamond drill bits. The McClintock Company sent diamond bits with sharp points. The Diamond Drill Contacting Company in Salt Lake City, these were two major suppliers of what they called block diamonds. You had a lot of loss in diamonds with the sharp points, and you had very little loss with the block type.

I had trouble with personnel, and I don't blame them. I don't know how I would have, if I had to sit there. When we got into some of that thing, I was always in geology.

Anyway, we had a meeting with the construction engineer, and I don't remember his name. He says, "Well, I don't want to put anybody on the payroll until Sam Ray [phonetic] gets here. He's my administrative assistant."

So after we had talked a little while, I said to this fellow, I says, "I knew you down at Boulder Dam. I don't know whether you remember me or not."

We talked a little bit, where I had worked. So he got up to go, he turned to me and he says, "You go ahead and hire those geologists."

Now, Boulder Dam established relationships between people. I told you, though, we started recruiting geologists, but the question came, "That's a kind of a simple geology problem. What are you going to pay and what are you going to promise them?" They ended up not hiring as many as they said they were going to. I don't know how they worked their problem out.

But in those areas, I got in on that Third Powerplant because of people. They took some of our people at our recommendation. They had a personnel officer that had been in the Regional Office, and was the personnel officer up there, and he had some problems that we helped him out on. It was just a one-shot deal.

Storey: I seem to be hearing that when you transferred over to planning, you transferred over to planning in order to do administrative things for them. Is that right?

### **Administrative Role in Planning**

Price: That's probably 90 percent right. Ten percent of it was I would not have fit in Cunningham's organization. I didn't look for anything, but this was offered to me and it was an incentive.

Storey: You still did requisitions and all that kind of thing?

Price: Yeah.

Storey: Got projects scheduled out?

Price: Yeah.

- Storey: Work done.
- Price: Yeah, but I did only the things relating to planning. Before, a lot of it had been done for all projects in the region as a regional's job.
- Storey: So, for instance, you talked about this thing at Appaloosa Dam. Was that while you were in planning, or was that before?
- Price: Yes.
- Storey: It was in planning?
- Price: We went through two or three stages. We went out to develop the data and recommend authorization of a project. That was with planning money. That was reimbursable money. After it's authorized, there's a pre-construction period. You might get it authorized without knowing the condition of a dam site. But under pre-construction, you then come up with a preliminary design to put price tags on and to let contracts.

Now, in the old days, that was planning money, so the organization was planning. They reached a place in, I suppose, the late 1950s, where the appropriated pre-construction funds. We did not have control of those funds. They used some of the planning people, but we were reimbursed for costs on that.

The thing that attracted me to planning was Mr. Clinton and Mr. Torbert. I could have gone a number of places and worked. It didn't bother me a bit. If I didn't want to work for Cunningham, I'd have had a job somewhere. It wasn't that. But in the sense that you enjoy what you're doing, Torbert and Clinton convinced me that they were people I wanted to work for.

- Storey: Tell me more about Clinton.
- Price: Well, Frank Clinton was a strong personality. He worked under Debler's direction, and developed a plan for the upper Snake [River]. Jackson Hole had a reservoir, and then we had the Palisades Reservoir for storage.<sup>27</sup> Downstream from that we had an equalizing reservoir that never was built, but that was called the Crandall. That was Dave Crandall's father, named after him—the Crandall Equalizing Reservoir.

Down from this was the Teton Dam which washed out.<sup>28</sup> The Teton Dam was

---

27. Constructed in 1957, the principal features of the project are Palisades Dam Reservoir, and Powerplant. Palisades Dam is on the South Fork of the Snake River at Calamity Point in eastern Idaho about 11 miles west of the Idaho-Wyoming boundary. The project provides a supplemental water supply to about 650,000 acres of irrigated land in the Minidoka and Michaud Flats Projects. The 176,600 kilowatt hydroelectric powerplant furnishes energy needed in the upper valley to serve irrigation pumping units, municipalities, rural cooperatives, and other power users. For more information, see Wm. Joe Simonds, "Palisades Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 1995, [www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=150](http://www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=150).

28. Teton Dam was the major feature of the Lower Teton Division of the Teton Project in eastern Idaho. Authorized in 1964, Reclamation completed construction of the dam in 1975. In June 1976, after filling for the first  
(continued...)



built, and that's another story, but I got involved in the geology on that one, in a sense. That was authorized shortly after I moved in there. I suppose it was authorized about 1948, and went right into construction.

When his report went in to—before it went in to Denver, he had a report writer work on that, and we had three report writers in that day, Jim McBroom, Gib Schirk, and a fellow that left us and went with the outfit that takes the census.

Storey: The Bureau of the Census?

Price: Well, it wasn't [unclear]—

Storey: Commerce.

Price: But anyway, we had those three, and they were top people.

Storey: And they were engineers?

Price: Yes.

Storey: Yes, this was the old days of report writing. Okay.

#### **Non-Engineers in Leadership Positions**

Price: Well, Gib Schirk could have been an engineer. He had so much Reclamation in him and the different places he worked. He wasn't an engineer. And McBroom wasn't. McBroom came out on a recommendation of a professor in Chicago, and I tried to find his name, because he dominated appointments in the planning field in the early days. The planning division in Washington had a man in it by the name of—this is forty years ago, fifty years ago. I can't remember his name. This guy was instrumental in getting him in there, and that fellow supervised Lineweaver, who was kind of a field man that came and went in these different areas. The thought was that they would develop a whole social activity on the pro—

END SIDE 2, TAPE 2. JULY 27, 1995.

BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 3. JULY 27, 1995.

Storey: This is tape three of an interview by Brit Storey with Donald G. Price, on July 27, 1995.

Price: Only because he occupied an engineering position. He was called a planning engineer, and he wasn't an engineer.

Storey: This was—

Price: This was Torbert. He wasn't an engineer.

---

28. (...continued)

time, the dam failed, causing over one billion dollars in property damage and taking eleven lives.

---

Storey: So the engineers resented him.

Price: We didn't have any problem with that. Clinton handled most of the engineering stuff that I viewed, and Torbert was a good leader, excellent leader. He got everybody into the act. If it took a team discussion, they had those discussions day after day in his office, ten or twelve people.

Clinton—well, the reports, anyway—reviewed this thing, and they made three changes on three pages, just word changes. He took it after they'd gone through, and he brought it in to me, and he says, "Have them pull that report apart and change those three pages the way I wrote it."

Storey: This was Clinton.

Price: Clinton was an excellent man. I don't think there's any question. You put him anywhere, he was good. He went from us to Assistant Regional Director, and then Director in Salt Lake City Region Four.

Storey: Was he Frank or Francis?

Price: Frank.

Storey: So he wasn't ever really Regional Director here.

#### PN Regional Directors

Price: No. The only Regional Directors here was Banks, who never did work here, and Newell, and H.T. Nelson, and Ed Sullivan, and he came from Region Two. That was after I left that that was changed. But he went with the World Bank on a project. He left here, and a guy named [Rodney J.] Vissia, I believe—

Storey: Rod Vissia.

Price: Rod Vissia, was Regional Director.<sup>29</sup>

Storey: Then Bill Lloyd.

Price: Then Bill Lloyd.<sup>30</sup>

Storey: And then John Keys.<sup>31</sup>

---

29. Rodney (Rod) J. Vissia was Pacific Northwest Regional Director from 1974 to 1980 and went on to become Assistant Commissioner, Engineering and Research from 1980 to 1982. Mr. Vissia also participated in Reclamation's oral history program. See, Rodney (Rod) J. Vissia, *Oral History Interviews*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation oral history interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, in Ocean Shores, Washington, edited by Brit Allan Storey, 2011, [www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html](http://www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html).

30. Lester W. (Bill) Lloyd was Pacific Northwest Regional Director from 1980 to 1986.

31. John W. Keys III was Pacific Northwest Regional Director from 1986 to 1998 and went on to become Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner (2001-2006). Mr. Keys also participated in Reclamation's oral history

(continued...)

---

Price: Yeah.

Storey: Well, tell me about these guys that you knew who were Regional Director. Did any of them have nicknames that were used for them by the staff?

Price: They always called Harold, H-T. His name was Harold T.

Storey: Somebody told me they also called him "High Tension Nelson" behind his back.

Price: Well, it might have been behind his back. A lot of people criticized Harold. He didn't operate organizationally to pass out these things to get done. He would call a staff meeting for a particular point, and after he'd made that point, he wasn't interested in the results of this, only what he would say, if he had to write a letter or something. He wanted to be clarified.

He was public relation oriented to an nth degree, in that they had an office in the Idaho Power Building that they called Harold Nelson's office. The supposition—this is gossip. The supposition was that when he had Bureau problems that would conflict with the power company, he went up and discussed it with them before he went in with the Bureau. When Hu Blonk got in dutch because of his activities for the high Hells Canyon Dam, he didn't defend Hu, because he wanted to be in the good graces of the local people that was anti-high dam. His handling of people, I think he was uncomfortable around—he couldn't call somebody in and say, "I want you to do this different." He'd have somebody else call you in and tell you.

I'm trying to think of an instance that I could refer to. We got down on the high Hells Canyon Dam and I was involved only in—we had a crew down there and I hauled stuff in to them, and I did the things just to expedite the work. When we weren't going to build the dam, he made us take out those three twenty-foot culverts and remove the little warehouse that we had hauled in and erected. He didn't want anything to show that the Bureau of Reclamation had had anything to do with the high Hells Canyon Project, because that was not a popular thing with the local people.

My boss, Torbert, left us. I was going to tell you this and I forgot. Torbert left us in 1950 and went to Haiti for six months, I believe for the World Bank. He left us again. He came back and he left us again about two years later, and went to Afghanistan. Primarily, he was doing—this guy in Washington, his name was [Rex] Reed. I can't remember his first name. But his job there was more social. It was an economic thing that he was talking about, but he had the cultural aspect built into it, which he was good at. He developed pulmonary polio and died over there.

His widow, when he came back, they shipped all his furniture there he'd taken with him, or not all of it, but some of it. She called me up and said, "I don't want

---

31. (...continued)

program. See, John W. Keys, III, *Oral History Interview*, Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, senior historian, Bureau of Reclamation, from 1994 to 2006, in Denver, Colorado; Boise, Idaho; Washington, D.C.; and Moab, Utah, edited by Brit Allan Storey, 2008, [www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html](http://www.usbr.gov/history/oralhist.html).

anybody to drive a Reclamation truck up in front of my house with this stuff." Some of it came to our office had to be delivered.

I says, "Oh, why?"

She says, "Well, I live amongst a bunch of Idaho Power people, and we don't want Reclamation cars stopping."

I said, "Well, I live amongst a bunch of Idaho Power people, and I just love to drive my car up there in front of them, and leave it."

She says, "I know, that's why I called you." (laughter)

Her comments were typical of the way Harold would have liked that.

Storey: This was Mr. Nelson's wife?

Price: Yeah.

Storey: Okay. This was not Mr. Torbert.

Price: No, this was Nelson.

Storey: So Mr. Nelson is the one who died?

Price: No, Torbert died. Nelson was Regional Director, and when they brought Torbert's stuff back, it came to the office and had to be delivered to Mrs. Torbert. And that's Mrs. Nelson's. Now, what she did, they had some stereo stuff, and the Nelsons bought it. She didn't want me to deliver that in a government truck.

Storey: Oh, I see. What was Mr. Torbert's first name?

Price: Nathaniel. They had a bunch of his personal stuff for sale. They said, "We know you thought a lot of Torbert, you just come over and take your pick." So I got the Bible that his mother had given him when he went to college. I don't know, three or four, just put it on the bookshelves, three or four things. I think he was liked by everybody. The fact that he occupied an engineering position, an engineering title, was all some people objected to.

Storey: How was Nelson to get along with?

Price: People didn't understand. I say people, the majority of the people, didn't want to go up to him. Now, I had no problem with this at all. But I was in here, and before he came in, he was at the Kennewick Project, and as he was getting his stuff done up there, he had contact with me. I don't ever remember meeting him before, but some of the stuff to Kennewick I had to deal with. He was hard to understand.

We had a problem in our geology with buying drills that would go horizontally

---

on a 45-degree slope. You had to have the skids. They were pulled on skids, and it was a cable on a windless. You anchored the cable and it pulled itself up these slopes. We put in an order for the drill and put specifications down, and procurement was having problems with this. It had nothing to do with McCool. They didn't like the way we had said "similar to" Diamond Drill Contracting Company something or other manufactured this, or McClintock or somebody. The drills were hydraulic-driven—were diamond drill. This rig that you saw—slopes—you could run it on any slope straight down or slope this way.

Storey: Straight, horizontal.

Price: The feed was hydraulic because you needed a constant turning of the bit to get the maximum core recovery, if you run into a seam and that type of thing. This was all in the specifications, see.

The procurement says, "We can't buy it the way that's written."

I said, "It has to be done that way."

So it reached a place, I just took them up to Harold. Now, they didn't like to go in to Harold, because maybe they thought he didn't understand them; maybe they didn't understand him. I don't know. And this was common among some of the people. A lot of people were glad to see when he left.

But anyway, Harold said, "Well, let's do it without them. Take these things off you object to and put it that way."

I said, "Harold, we won't accept that."

He says, "Why not?"

I says, "It's going to be topheavy. The skids are not far enough apart. The height of this thing makes it topheavy and we've got to have a low center of gravity."

He said, "Well, what those other regions do?"

I said, "That specification came from Region Two, with some modifications we want, and procurement says we can't do this."

Harold says, "Well, okay, we won't." Harold says, "Buy it," to procurement. "Buy it the way you want it there."

I says, "Harold, that'll set on a vacant lot and we'll never use it. We cannot take a topheavy piece of equipment on that kind of slope."

I don't remember how that came out, but he was an engineer. He couldn't help but know what we were talking about, yet he would not make the decision. That was typical.

Now, I don't know how he was in engineering plans or anything like that. His first look at what you came in to talk about was, "How will it look to the public? How will they accept this?" And his position. Now, Hu Blonk thought that Harold made good decisions engineering-wise and public relations. But in the day-to-day work or this type of thing, I had no problem with him. I'd go up and discuss it. He was a guy that could take a letter half that big, all of this right here, and glance at it, and in ten seconds give you an answer.

I told you about this Joe Sayre [phonetic], a guy in Denver, and I developed a letter from the Regional Director thanking Joe for all he had done for the boys in the office. I took it in and he was going to sign it. I started to tell him about it and he'd already read it. Just laying there, he could—in an instant almost.

He went down to Colombia, and Gib Schirk went down with him. It was recommending on a project that Colombia was going to do. He made a great name for himself. He went over on the Nile River, and I can't remember—

Storey: We're talking Columbia University?

Price: No, the country of Colombia in South America.

Storey: Oh, I see. Yeah.

Price: He went down to Egypt, something to do on a dam on the Nile Project, and he got an award from the Secretary of the Interior on that. So he must have had engineering ability.

Storey: Was that after he left here?

Price: No, that was in the midst of this thing he took on. He went over there.

Storey: Why did he leave? When did he leave?

Price: I think he thought it was time to quit. I don't believe he had a health problem. No, he did have a health problem, but I don't know whether that was the cause of it or not. He resigned. He had a problem with [Commissioner Floyd] Dominy. I don't know that that caused him to leave.

But I told you, didn't I, about—I know I told you about the Prineville Reservoir they were raising the dikes on it to get more storage. They needed money. I had solved it the way I had to solve it, where the controller came out and reviewed this thing and says to Harold, "Now, Harold, you can be fired for what Don's doing."

Storey: Right.

Price: He made one further sentence that I should have told you. "This was not on the program that we sent to Congress." In other words, it's in opposition to the congressional approval.

---

Storey: This was the \$50,000 exploratory work that the Secretary had announced.

Price: Now, Harold was getting along all right with Dominy. He had some problems there because the design of the electric lines for generators at Coulee Dam was taken up over the bank, and Dominy was adamant, "We're not going to do that, we're going to put that in a tunnel and take it up there," aesthetics and something else. He had a problem with Harold on that, but his comment was that engineers, in general, don't have an appreciation of the aesthetic aspects of construction.

Storey: Dominy said that?

Price: Yeah. When he said it, we had people that went into the Washington Office and they had problems, Carley [phonetic], an economist, was one of them. Dominy would come to work at ten o'clock in the morning and drink all day. Now, this isn't every day, but he drank a lot. He didn't leave until ten o'clock at night, and he wanted his staff to stay there while here's there. They'd come at eight o'clock in the morning and couldn't go home until ten o'clock at night. This didn't happen all the time, but this was the stories that they didn't like the Washington Office—didn't like Dominy because of that.

But Harold came over to me and he said, "Write that up and I'll send it to Dominy."

I says, "Harold, don't do it. There's three different people called us saying, 'We can't tell you what it is, but you've got to go ahead with this work.' There's three different people calling us."

He says, "Well, I'm going to do it."

So I wrote it up and gave it to him. He sent it blue envelope, private, to Dominy. Nelson's secretary, a little gal named Bobbie, told me afterwards. She says, "I heard Dominy's voice clear off from Harold thirty feet away yelling at Harold." From that day on, he was down on Harold.

Storey: Because he was going to proceed and do what the Secretary had announced?

Price: Dominy's statement, she said, "I heard him say it, 'I sent you out there to solve problems, not to dig up problems and send them in to me.'"

That's just what I told Harold. I don't want to sound like I criticize anybody and everybody, because that isn't true. But where I sat and got into these things, I was the contact in the Planning Division that got involved in these things, and because we had the regional soil lab and the regional drilling, I got involved in that.

Ed Sullivan came in after Dominy and immediately turned the geology into construction and took that stuff away from us, which I was tickled to death. But they had problems, quick answers needed, where they had to go out and get a contract to do the drilling. Their comments that came back to me was, "Well, we lost that when

Don Price left." That's the only reason that I'm telling you this this way.

Storey: Well, what I don't understand, you told about three people from under Dominy calling you and saying, "What's going on?"

Price: No, calling and saying, "You have to go ahead and do that drilling on that spillway."

Storey: Okay. Why was Dominy then upset? What was the signal to you that was going on? What was going on?

Price: We don't know. We never did know, and no one ever told us. But there had to be something between him and McKay, who was Secretary.

Storey: But how did you feel or sense that there was something wrong?

Price: Because these three people—if only one man had called us and talked about this, we wouldn't have thought so much of it. But three different people called us all saying the same thing. Now, they didn't talk to me. They called—"Brownie" was head of our division, O. M. Brown. They called him. He was on the line with somebody, and they talked to somebody in finance. I'm trying to think of the third one. Three different calls.

I don't know why they didn't call me, because when they needed a special man and a special project, they got to the point where they called me on all of them, "Do you know anybody that could do this, or do that?" The head of division was a little bit irritated at me at times because they called me on this, but I gave them answers. I thought it was just part of my job.

We mulled over that, I'll tell you, a long time, and when I wrote that stuff up for Harold to send in, I tried to get those three calls that we got, and I put it in there. We got these three calls that said we had to go ahead on this. Dominy didn't tell Harold anything. All he told Harold was, "I sent you out there to solve problems, not to create problems for me. If you can't do it, I'll get somebody that can."

Storey: Tell me about Mr. Banks. What was his first name?

Price: Frank.

Storey: What was he like?

Price: Very quiet, sure of himself. He had respect of all engineers. He had good political support in the state of Washington, and the end product of what he did was just passed in Congress without any question. He was a man about my size, weighed about my size, and he always dressed in a suit. Whenever I saw him, he was dressed in a suit and a tie.

Storey: Tell me about how tall you are and how much you weigh.



- 
- Price: Well, 160 pounds, and 5'9". Might have been 5'10".
- Storey: What about as Regional Director? I would have thought that him being clear up at Coulee, instead of here in Boise, would have been a problem.
- Price: It was. No, I shouldn't say it was. It wasn't a problem, because Mr. Newell accepted it, and he made it work. But anybody else, having the problems that came in the formation of the office, lack of space, and things like this, anybody else as Regional Director would have been in the middle of that—anybody I know. The Bureau of Reclamation was being pushed to market the power from Coulee Dam, and Banks is the one that killed it. Now, I've read that. The way it was, we got Bonneville Power [Bonneville Power Authority] to market, and he did not want the problems that come with marketing the power. So he had tremendous confidence, I guess you'd call it, among the engineers, and with Denver.

### **Columbia Basin Interagency Commission**

- Now, in that day, Denver dominated every decision, to a certain extent. One thing we have not discussed, our region had a member on the Columbia Basin Interagency Commission, and that was set up because there's so many government agencies and state agencies involved in the things that are going on in the Pacific Northwest. Each of them had one representative. That representative reported basically to the Chief Engineer when this started. They were technical problems mostly. Denver wouldn't have been involved in that. But our representative had been chief of our division, E. L. White. He went over to Portland. He lived in Vancouver, which is right next to Portland.
- Storey: Vancouver, Washington.
- Price: Yeah. And sat on this. Now, he became a Grade 14 over a period of time. He was a 13 here and he went up to a Grade 14.
- Storey: This was, again—
- Price: E. L. White. He was an engineer, but his major was physics, and in some of our work, just a simple answer, he gave a physicist's answer to an engineering problem. (laughter)
- Storey: (laughter) Does that mean it was terribly complex, or what?
- Price: No, not necessarily. He handled this real well. He had a health problem of some kind, and there was a lot of tension in that. He got out of it. He retired.

The guy that took his place was George van Santen from the Salem Area Office. He knew a lot of these people over there. He was a Grade 12, because Harold Nelson never would let us give a Grade 13 to him, because the area engineer was a 13. So he remained a 12. But he took this job.

I'll go once again. That guy was on the Commissioner's staff, but he was on our payroll. In some of the areas I got involved in this, and this happened to be one of them. I believe van Santen was at the top of the Grade 12; I'm not sure. But he got a 13 when he went over there because he couldn't get a two-grade jump.

At the end of that year, I was arriving with a fellow from the Washington Office who had just come back from one of those meetings, and he liked George. George was a good man. He liked George, and was commenting on him. I said, "Well," I said, "who's going to see that he gets a Grade 14?"

He didn't know. This was news to him. It had never occurred to him.

I said, "He's on our payroll, so I'll write you a letter telling you that we want a 14 for van Santen."

"That's fine. You do that."

So at the end of the year's time, I wrote a letter to the Commissioner and they gave him a Grade 14.

Storey: Which Commissioner?

Price: Well, into the Washington Office.

Storey: Oh, okay.

Price: They weren't involved in that. But while he was over there, Ed Sullivan came in as Regional Director. John Mangen had progressed from area engineer at Spokane to Salem when McAllister retired, and he ends up head of our division. Sullivan treated everybody like staff in the military. He was in the military at one time. If I was a sergeant, I couldn't deal with any problem higher than the sergeant's. If you're a captain, you got that kind of attention from him.

The Bureau was going to sponsor the annual meeting for that over at Vancouver, and the Chief Engineer was involved in this, the date principally.

Storey: The annual meeting.

Price: Yeah.

Storey: The program meeting?

Price: Columbia Basin Commission meeting, had an annual meeting, but they also had staff over there that worked. Van Santen was on the staff.

Started to go down pretty low. They had a question. I'll tell you before I'm through with this. They had a question. Van Santen took it up with the Chief Engineer, and the Chief Engineer was mad because somebody didn't like it because

---

they hadn't been advised of all the things that's going on there, and they were sponsoring the meeting.

Van Santen called me and said, "The Chief Engineer's mad about this."

I said, "Well, I'll find out."

Well, we had a fellow in our office—

END SIDE 1, TAPE 3. JULY 27, 1995.

BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 3. JULY 27, 1995.

Storey: There was a guy named Ron Gullus in your office.

Price: Yeah. I called Ron and said, "What's the matter with this problem, and why is the Chief Engineer mad?"

He and I got together on that, could we give an answer to van Santen to answer the Chief Engineer. John Mangen was down in this managerial grid stuff in California, in Sacramento, and said, "Don't bother me with any problems." Ron and I both decided that we'd alert John, primarily because I knew what someone was going to do.

Then he and I went up to the Regional Director, Sullivan, to tell him the problem. He listened to all of this. "Well," he said, "I'd better get hold of John Mangen."

I said, "Well, you don't need to, I just got your secretary and told her to get John on the phone. I knew you wouldn't take this answer from us." (laughter)

If Harold Nelson had been there, he'd have handled that personally. See, there's a difference. Sullivan was undoubtedly a good man. I didn't have anything to do with him. When he moved in, when Harold left, I didn't get these contacts. But John came on the line and did exactly what we had told him in the beginning. They had to do something to get the word to the Chief Engineer because of the dates or the time or something. It was scheduling. The Bureau of Reclamation and the Chief Engineer were sponsoring the next meeting. Sponsoring meant they had something to do with it, they wanted to take up with. That's all.

As you can guess, it was a good job. I mean, I loved it. You're in many things, and you could achieve something. It wasn't something that you're frustrated about at all.

Storey: Tell me about Mr. Newell. What was his first name?

**Robert J. Newell**

Price: Robert. Robert J. Newell.

Storey: Was he related to Frederick Newell?

Price: No. No. Tom Newell, his brother, was head of the Geological Survey in Boise. They had an office, I don't know what. In the beginning, the Bureau of Reclamation was the Geological Survey.

Storey: It was, yes.

Price: Geological Survey, because they started out to identify waters. When they got to the place where they had to identify lands, that's when they changed to the Bureau of Reclamation, water and land, the land available for irrigation.

Tom Newell came in early. He was an older man. He came in early and was in Geological Survey. The only contact that I had with him was, we paid them out of the Reclamation funds for geologizing or for identifying the waters—the stream-gauged waters—and they did it where we wanted. We gave them our schedules and they worked on that. The only thing I had to do with it was putting in our cost.

But Mr. Newell, I'm not sure where he started. But early on, a group of Reclamation engineers went over to China to—well, I think to make recommendations. I was going to say to discuss the Yellow River.

Storey: Yeah. Jack Savage was involved in that.

Price: Jack Savage was one of them. He came back from that. I don't know where he went at that point, but he was up in this Region, the Ellisberg [phonetic] Project in Washington. It's part of the Yakima Project.<sup>32</sup> He came over and was Superintendent of the Boise Valley Water Districts. The Bureau of Reclamation built a lot of things, the Black Canyon [Diversion] Dam, Owyhee Dam, and he was a construction engineer, when they wanted to use that title. He was Superintendent in the operation of the districts. He was here in the Boise Project when the Regional Office was opened. He was a quiet person. You would explain your problem to him, and if he got all of it, he was known throughout as a check. Until you knew him, you didn't know what check meant.

Storey: What did it mean?

Price: "Well, I understand your problem." He didn't tell you what to do, he just says, "I understand your problem." That's what it meant.

---

32. The Yakima Project provides irrigation water for a comparatively narrow strip of fertile land that extends for 175 miles on both sides of the Yakima River in south-central Washington. The irrigable lands presently being served total approximately 464,000 acres. There are seven divisions in the project: Storage, Kittitas, Tieton, Sunnyside, Roza, Kennewick, and Wapato. The Wapato Division is operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, but receives most of its water supply from the Yakima Project for irrigation of 136,000 acres of land. Over 45,000 acres not included in the seven divisions are irrigated by private interests under water supply contracts with the Bureau of Reclamation. Storage dams and reservoirs on the project are Bumping Lake, Clear Creek, Tieton, Cle Elum, Kachess, and Keechelus. For more information, see Timothy A. Dick, "Yakima Project," Denver: Bureau of Reclamation History Program, 1993, [www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=211](http://www.usbr.gov/projects/pdf.php?id=211).

---

When he retired, Hu Blonk was down here, and we put on a program. I was always the punch guy for Hu Blonk's programs. We put on a program where he had talked about Debler and some other well-known engineer, and they went out somewhere and they had pancakes for breakfast. He talked about this for quite a long time. Apparently, a lot of people know it. Hu got to that part of it, I said, "Well, you order pancakes, you go ahead and we'll bring the life of Bob Newell."

Hu got a baby buggy, and we had an engineering aide, I guess, he dressed him up like a baby and put him in this baby buggy. As he came into Reclamation, this was his mother bringing him into Reclamation. Something was said by the mother, and he raised up, "Check." He'd go on through this thing. I don't remember all of the details of it, but we got it down to where they were up camping and he was baking the pancakes. I had taken some of the cushions that you use on sofas, it's a springy type. I cut out the pancakes about this diameter, and I soaked them in pancake batter and cooked them. We had about a half a dozen of them. Hu got to the point where he baked the pancakes, and, boy, he was a great cook. He pulls these out and started throwing them out in the crowd. Well, they bounced, you know, and came up. (laughter)

Well, Newell liked that. He never took part in anything. He was reticent, I guess you could say. But he was the kind of person that kind of grew on you. I was a novice in some ways.

I had a girl running a duplicating machine. What they called for, you had to cut stencils, put them on, ink the roller.

Storey: I've forgotten.

Price: Well, I have, too.

Storey: A duplicating?

Price: Yeah.

Storey: I've forgotten.

Price: Anyway, before the multilith machine.

Storey: Was this the stuff that came out purple-colored?

Price: Yeah.

Storey: Yeah. I've forgotten the name of it.

Price: Anyway, this girl was trying to get out of this. I had her on it and I had personnel ceiling of thirteen people to do everything in this, the stenographers, everything. She was riding me a little bit, she wanted a different kind of a job. I went up to personnel and talked to them and came back down. I said, "Well, there isn't anything that they

know of to put you on, but," I said, "you go up to personnel and talk to them."

She went home. Now, her husband had worked for Newell. She told her husband, and I think he called Newell and said I fired her. Well, I should have gone up to personnel with her. That's what I meant, by I was a novice. I found out, if you don't know how anybody's going to tell you [unclear] be awful careful.

So Newell called me over there. He says, "Ellen tells me that you fired her."

I said, "Oh? I didn't fire her." And I gave my version of it.

He says, "Ellen says you fired her."

I said, "Well, I'll go tell her."

He said, "She went home."

I said, "Well, I'll go over."

"No," he says, "I'll go over." But he says, "You didn't fire her?"

I said, "No, I didn't fire anybody."

I went up to personnel and talked about it and there wasn't anyplace to put her. So all I did was go up and say to her, "Go up and talk to them, see where you can go, and I'll get somebody else."

Now, he was that way with all the people he knew in his life, was his friend. I don't know of a soul that ever disliked Bob Newell. This girl came back, ran that duplicating machine until we had found a place for her, and went into finance and was a good employee. The only thing that I've got him off of my back was, "Mr. Newell, I have given her outstanding performance ratings every year. You wouldn't fire anybody that's doing that kind of work for you." That got him off my back.

But again, in the sense of his relationship with people, they picked, to start off in there, as his assistant in the office, W. W. Johnson, who worked for Debler in soil science. He was just a misfit in the Regional Office. I told you I went over to Hayden and Clyde Spencer—

Storey: Wait, again, the initials on Debler.

Price: What did you say?

Storey: What was Debler's name?

Price: I don't know his first name. Debler was the original one man running general investigations project planning.

- 
- Storey: Here in the region?
- Price: No, for the whole Bureau of Reclamation.
- Storey: This was Erdman B. Debler, then.
- Price: That's him.
- Storey: Okay. Go ahead. I just wanted to make sure that we were talking about the same person.
- Price: How did I use that Debler?
- Storey: You were beginning to talk about him in the Regional Office, I believe.
- Price: Oh, yeah. Johnson had worked with Debler. He was a soil scientist. They never did get out of the organizational structure of the early Reclamation. They didn't fit somewhere in this.

Johnson was replaced with a fellow that was an old hand on the Boise Irrigation District, and friend of Newell's, named Tuller [phonetic]. Tuller couldn't talk very well, he stuttered a little bit. But he knew everything about irrigation projects. But he didn't fit.

The Regional Office, the way it was going, which everything new, it's all in change. A good example of this, I needed an atomic absorption unit for the laboratory. They needed it. They came in to me with specifications on it. This is \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000. But it's an electrical analysis of chemicals in your soil, and you could make a solution out of the soil and pour it in the machine and you got a reading on gauges that showed you different chemicals. We needed this real bad. So instead of going to procurement with this, I went up to Tuller and just explained we needed this and why we needed it. He says, "So why are you bringing it up to me about it?"

I says, "I want you to sign this, authorize this."

He looked at me and started laughing. He said, "Well, that's one way to get things through." (laughter) They went ahead and bought it. See, it was the Assistant Regional Director's name on it.

But Tuller was good on things like that. But in the long plans, looking ahead, a lot of these old Reclamation people were still looking back to Denver answered all the tough problem questions. They were looking back, just like Newell telling me about, "Don't buy an expensive home, we'll be under Denver in two or three years. This whole thing's going to go back." Newell operated under that assumption with a lot of people. Tuller, as an interim, fit in fine.

We brought up a C. N. Moore from Minidoka Project, and we brought him into

the Regional Office. He thought that he was going to be an Assistant Regional Director. Mr. Newell announced his retirement before that ever took place, and Mr. Moore told me, he was mad at Mr. Newell, because he told Mr. Newell, "As long as you're here, I'll come into the Regional Office, but I'm not going to come in if Cunningham or some of these other people are Regional Director." So Moore retired before Newell did.

When Tuller retired, Harold Nelson was picked to be his Assistant Regional Director, and from that he moved in as Regional Director. Then after him was Sullivan and Vissia, I think, followed. I don't remember how they went after that.

Storey: You were promoted again in '70 to a 13. Do you remember what you started at in 1935?

### **Pay Grades and Politics**

Price: At fifty cents an hour.

Storey: Was there a grade structure or something?

Price: No, but then there's a little history on this. It's pertinent if you're just looking at my history. There's a little history on this that old Reclamation would not—they were all Republicans, all of them. There wasn't any exceptions. Down on the Boulder Canyon Project, you couldn't wear a Democratic button in the office. They'd just tell you right out.

Storey: You could wear a Republican one, though, huh?

Price: Well, yes, they wouldn't say anything. But they didn't want you to—this is interesting, as early Reclamation, how we all started. I was classified as a laborer to start with.

Storey: Laborer, unclassified. Now, here it says you worked for Parks at Rocky Mountain National Park.

### **Work Background**

Price: I worked there. I was going into school at Denver, and I didn't have enough money. I left that stuff out. I didn't tell you all of that. I went up to Veterans Hall, where they were hiring people, and they come in and Parks wanted three or four people building trails up in Teton National Park. That's Estes Park.

Storey: Yes, that would be Rocky Mountain National Park.

Price: I took that job and worked up there until snow run us out, just building the trails for winter.

Storey: This was in '29.



- 
- Price: Yeah.
- Storey: September 25 to October 23, I guess.
- Price: See, I went in to go to Denver University, but I didn't have enough money. I didn't have a job. When I went to Denver University, I did have a job. If you want that information, I'll bring you up to date on all of that.
- Storey: Then you were employed as a laborer for twenty-two days, June 6 of '35. Then there was a change rate to \$110/pm. What's that?
- Price: Per month.
- Storey: Per month, beginning July 1 of '35. Then a senior laborer, materials checker.
- Price: Yeah. That's located—you want to know what went with those jobs?
- Storey: What do you mean?
- Price: What I did.
- Storey: Sure. Tell me what you did as a materials checker.
- Price: As a laborer, I—graduation from college was the tenth and twelfth of June, and I got a telegram saying I had a job if I could be there the fifth of June. So I skipped graduation and went down and started as a rodman, as a laborer.
- Storey: And that's where you were surveying the blocks on the dam, the tunnels and so on?
- Price: Yeah. Yeah. All of those titles at a point there, and think it was that July 1, we had to get the Secretary of Interior endorsement—they called it a secretarial appointment—from Ickes. There were sixty-two people involved in this thing, and Clark County Democratic Committee had nine people. We had to contact each of those people, get them to endorse us for this secretarial appointment. We had to have a political endorsement. So we got a secretarial appointment at that point.

Then I took a Civil Service examination. I filed for it and got it. One fellow got ninety-four-five, and I got ninety-four-three on the grades. We went to Scrugham. Congressman Scrugham had a young man in his office that—this fellow that started this little move to get political approval, turned out he's a federal judge down in Yuma or Phoenix now. But he was political-minded. He went right out to Scrugham's office, and a guy came out to see us, and he endorsed four of us. We didn't get everybody on it, we just took these four people. Pretty soon comes through a letter saying, "These four people have secretarial appointments," and there was sixty-two involved. Fifty-eight people were mad. (laughter) We didn't do this deliberately. He was just contacting people and we didn't put all the names in the hopper.

To jump down on this, one of those people was Rupert Spearman, who ended up

as area engineer in Spokane, Washington. If you want to get into that, I'll tell you a little about it, because I got involved in that.

As rodman, I worked until—that 110, what date is \$110?

Storey: July 1.

Price: What's the next one?

Storey: July 16. There it says 130/pm. That's material checker.

Price: I started in doing the accounting work in pricing out requisitions from the storehouse at that point. I worked on that until—you don't have the next move—until 1937, when I moved in as Assistant City Clerk.

Storey: Clerk, grade eight, \$1,800, presumably a year.

Price: Okay. Okay, that's it. Yeah.

Storey: In the meantime, you have July 16, '35, 130/pm; April 1, '36, 140/pm; October 1, '36, 145/pm; March 1, '37, 150/pm; then you go to the 1,800 with clerk, Grade 8, I believe.

Price: Yeah. That was after I got my Civil Service status.

Storey: Then you went, evidently, reappointed or something, Clerk, Grade 8 on July 1 of '38 at 1,800.

Price: Yeah.

Storey: Then May 27 of '39, 2,000, Senior Clerk, grade nine.

Price: Yeah. Now, that's when I went to the Sun River Project.

Storey: Then Senior Clerk, Grade 9 on 4/1/45, at 2,200. It says Boise, Anderson.

Price: Yeah.

Storey: Anderson Dam, I guess. Then Clerk C-A-F-5, whatever that is, 2,200.

Price: Well, they changed the designation from F-C-S [Field Civil Serviceto C-A-F. This is Federal—F-C-S. Anyway, they changed the designation, and they went to that. Then they went to G-S later on.

Storey: Then Accountant, C-A-F-7, \$2,600, 4/16/44. Then Assistant Chief Administrative, Management Division, C-A-F-9, \$3,200, 8/16/44. Then some salary increases to \$3,640 on 7/1/45, and to 3,750 on 8/27/45. Then Regional Office Manager, 3,750, on 10/8/45. Then Administrative Assistant General, C-A-F-11, 4,300 on 4/8/46. Then a

- 
- couple of salary increases, 4,902 on 7/1/46, and 5,152.80, on 10/19/47. Then in '47 you moved over to the planning.
- Price: Right.
- Storey: So that's where this record drops off.
- Price: Yeah. Now, the reason it drops off there, at that point, they asked, in Washington, they asked for these to be sent to the—it had to do with the health program. They had to [unclear]—
- Storey: Oh, it says, "Forwarded to C-S-C Form 2806 Revised."
- Price: That's the reason it stopped there.
- Storey: Is that when health insurance started?
- Price: Well, I think it was. Let's see. That's '47, '46. They asked to bring this thing up to date. It either had to do with that or retirement, clarifying your retirement. Health was involved in that, but I believe it was clarifying the record for retirement purposes.
- Storey: So then you became a 12 when?
- Price: Well, when I went up and talked to Mr. Nelson [Newell] about my grade, about taking this job, I went to Cunningham after that and told him, "I'll take that job over there, because it could be a Grade 12 job, and I'll want your support, because I'm not going to take it if I don't have your support." Boy, he was just tickled to death to get me out of there.

That's how I got the 12. Anyway, I was in there six months or so and he hadn't done anything. I went to Torbert, and Torbert initiated the action, because he had told me this Grade 12.

At that point, my job principally was helping in the formation of the organization and getting the area offices set up. I had done that in the Regional Office, that's why they wanted me. They liked the way I had done it. That's what it was intended.

### **Regional Accounting**

But in '47—well, Cunningham, to train people, sent a C-A-F Administrative Assistant to each area planning office. Then I didn't have the accounting. The records that they sent in to finance to put together there lacks \$300,000 of being actual fact when they went into the budget. Now, this is the past costs or it had to do with the budget presentation. So I was called up. I didn't get into it right at that point, but this caused some problems in budgeting in Washington. They couldn't tie the G-I budget together because of this discrepancy.

Gus Empie was the Finance Officer over there. We were on good terms. He and Glen Draper, they both come from the Indian Service [Bureau of Indian Affairs]. So they come over and talked to me about taking this whole accounting system, just turn everything over to me and get this straightened out. Well, after the second month or third month, I took all the accounting away from those five people who Cunningham had appointed out there, and we laid them off, all except one. The area engineers did this. I didn't. There wasn't any way to train those people out in there. They didn't need it for other work. They'd rather have a girl that would type and do this kind of work. So we pulled them all off of that stuff.

Then we got this circular letter which I told you about, 3310, if I remember correctly, which set up a different classification of work, and the cost by classification. I transferred the men out that had come over from finance and got in two women, because they didn't know enough about it to—the other guys were trained in the old way of Reclamation, that I couldn't get heads not tails out of it. The new ones come in with an idea that we've got to set this up, and we set it up the way I wanted it. In my meritorious award from the Secretary, it's in there, that I set up fund control.

In the C-C-C [Civilian Conservation Corps] camps, they had a fund control that I think was just to train these kids in something. I don't think they really used it. But on one sheet they had six columns, and the first one was encumbrances, debits and credits. The second was obligations, debits and credits. The third was expenditures, debits and credits. In pulling those men out of those offices, we took all the responsibility on us to keep those people informed on their costs, and the funds that's available, and where it sets.

We had each Area Office pay their own bills. They want to do this. They want contact with the local merchants. They paid the bills. They sent them into the Disbursing Office to pay, but a copy came to us, and from the Dispersing Office came direct to us, so within two or three days of anything they did in the money end of it, we had it in our office. Then we had a sheet for each office and a combined sheet of all offices. So within a week's time—well, it was just automatic that everybody knew the flow of cash, they knew how you were running.

Well, the projects didn't do that. I don't know why the Bureau never did adopt this thing of recording encumbrances. When you issue a purchase order, that's encumbered. If you've got a paycheck for the month, they paid—I mean, by the month—

END SIDE 2, TAPE 3. JULY 27, 1995.  
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 4. JULY 27, 1995.

Storey: This is Brit Storey, interviewing Donald G. Price, on July 27, 1995. This is tape four.

So you had to mark the encumbrances on your books when you made the commitment to spend the money, so that you knew that you would have the money when you got to the end to the bill being due.

---

Price: That's right. Now, the reason we did this in this type control, we, say, 70 percent of our expenditures were personnel services. We had to have that all the time. The travel vouchers—now, in the government service, I think all of them in Reclamation, you had to program your money quarterly. If you got a million dollars, you put 350,000 your first quarter, some in here, and some in here. And you had to spend that money, stay within the figure that you had in there. You had to do a little bit of work sometimes to get that.

Now, a lot of people were always fearful of the last quarter and they kept money there. The Assistant Regional Director in Boulder City was fired because he wrote letters out to their offices saying, "Go ahead and spend it, and if you run out of money, we'll get it for you." You can't do that. That's the Anti-Deficiency Act—violates the Anti-Deficiency Act.

In having five offices, and having the control separately for the information for each office, and consolidating them for us in order to live with those commitments, well, if I had any money in the fourth quarter, surplus, I bought diamond drill bits. I never had any money. We'd come up to the end of the year with practically nothing. Well, the Regional Office, I wasn't fighting with them, but I never let them tell me how much they're going to give me. I always told them how much money I had left that they could have. That was a bone of contention all the time.

Nelson supported me on this. The problem got into the front office three or four times. Each time, Nelson supported it. When he wrote my award there, on one of those things, he says for fund control, then he would go into a Regional Office meeting where they're talking about money and funds, and he would quote Don Price. "Why can't you folks here do—" They couldn't do it because they had all contracts and everything else, but I had personal services and things that we could project. It worked out to everybody's satisfaction.

Now, in 1953, the Washington Office, for some reason, got hold of Harold Nelson. He was back there. They says, "We want you to get rid of that accounting. We don't want it as a part of our organizational set-up."

So Harold called me over and I said, "Well, Harold, it's no problem if finance will let me tell them how I want that done."

### **Diamond Drill Operations**

The diamond drill operations was a separate operation. The projects were charged and were reimbursed for expenditures spent by projects on drilling. In the drill accounts, where we had capital costs of buying old machines, drill machines, things like that, we depreciated that and got into cost. The rods, the bits and all of this stuff, which was most our money's tied up in that, we put in a suspense account, and we charged it out to the cost of drilling on the basis of the hours that they drilled. Drill rods, drill bits, core barrels, that are all separate, and we had cards on all of them. The value might be \$100,000 in this account. As they drilled, we got the drill report every month, so many feet, we charged so much per foot out of that suspense

account, plus the depreciation was the cost to drill.

This worked real good, but it took constant care. The geologists, they had a lot of work that was unrelated to the drilling, and this was just an item they didn't want to be bothered with, and I ended up with it. I don't remember any time that we ever had a problem except in procurement on some of these things. McCool got involved in that.

Now, when McCool left, the fellow that took over after that read the manual, and if it didn't cover it in the manual, he wouldn't do anything for me. So they had a review of supply. I suppose every region, I don't know. We got in here and talked to him and criticized him, and he was conscientious. He came in to me and said, "Do you see me the way they have written this up?"

I said, "Well, the thing that you do that I don't do—now, I'm a Grade 12." I was a Grade 12 at this time. I said, "I'm a Grade 12, and with that goes a sense of judgment and initiative, and doing things on my own." He had a Grade 13. I said, "You've got a Grade 13, and I come in and I want something, and if you can't put your finger on what it is, you don't buy it. I do. If I have to do something in order to get it done, maybe people say I'm violating."

This is what McCool used to say to me. "You don't have authority. That manual is my authority."

I'd say, "That manual is a guideline."

This was my philosophy all through this. It got me into problems, but as long as I was getting results, everybody accepted it. In my way of thinking, every engineer that we brought in got this little speech from me at some point along the way. "Read your job description and look at the job you're doing, and if it isn't what you're shown, get it changed. Your career depends on that job description and the way you use it."

I got involved in personnel problems that personnel wanted me to handle. We sent to the Civil Service and asked for a drill helper. They sent us a list. The top man on the list had done nothing but churn drilling. I went up to personnel and said, "We can't use this man. We want to take somebody that's presently working as a helper." You can't do that.

So we had the Civil Service office on the seventh floor, and I went up there and asked—

Storey: Now, wait a minute. What happened to the County Building?

Price: We were in the Federal Building part of this time.

Storey: Oh, okay. This was the new Federal Building over by the V-A?

Price: Yeah. We weren't in there very long before I retired. But I went up to the Civil

Service. They said, "You can do anything you want to do, but you've got to have a record in the file that supports what you did. If we look at your file and it doesn't support it, then you've got to find a way to correct it."

So I went back down and sat down and wrote the type of work that the drill helper does. The Bureau of Reclamation drilled to obtain core. We were concerned with the permeability of the site of the dam. What kind of a structure would this support? If it was broken structure, it had to be an earth-filled dam or something. If it had a certain consistency, it would be a gravity dam. If it was like Boulder Dam, you have a gravity and a—what did they call it? Curved, anyway.

Storey: An arch.

Price: Arch. Anyway, the drill helper was the guy that, when they emptied the core barrel, classified all of this drill [unclear]—the core barrel was five feet long, and the amount of core that you could save in that was a factor in the quality of your foundation. These people had to have a little training on this type of thing. A churn drill, all you're doing is you're getting footage.

The Teton Dam went out for reasons that anybody could have foretold, if there hadn't have been pressure to finish, and if they'd have finished the spillway so that when the water came up, it could be released through that spillway. The Bureau should have done it. It's the Bureau's fault in that sense. It was about a Class Two reservoir bottom soil. It didn't have good clay in it, so the core was leaking. When it leaked, it leaked around the dam, because there was cracks. It was volcanic material. There's cracks that were not granite. On one of their drill reports, they had ninety-nine sacks of cement in this grout machine, put it in one hole, never did block it up. That's why it went out.

My cousin was the Chief Geologist for the Bureau of Reclamation, and his report to the congressional committee said it just this way. So the Bureau stood the damages on it. The government [unclear] the dam.

As any of those things came up, if I wasn't satisfied with the personnel's answer, I went to the Civil Service to see what they're telling our office. Now, Wendell Phillips was the Personnel Officer. He knew this, and he didn't stop me. The clerks that handled it in his office would give me answers, and if I didn't like them, I went up to Civil Service.

Storey: What precipitated your last promotion to a 13?

### **The Last Promotion**

Price: Francis Warnick came into our office, and I had a summary sheet on him. He didn't have Regional Office experience. Now, he was a Mormon, and as my wife said, "Francis lived his religion." He'd get mad at somebody, but he couldn't tell them that he was mad at them. But he came into our office in the midst of, I believe, this Lower Snake report that we needed for Udall. I believe he came in in 1966. That was a rush

period. I would go in and tell him these things.

Storey: That's the one you got the certificate of recognition for.

Price: Yeah. I would go in and tell him the situation, and, "I would do this if I were you," and he accepted a lot of these things. We had some personalities in the office. Don Street, Gib Schirk, some of these people that every once in a while you had to let them know who's boss, and he couldn't do it. In the sense that I could see these develop, I would go in and talk to him about them, and half the time I would give the answer that came out of that.

The Civil Service Commission came out. The personnel office sent me copies of Civil Service requests to review these potential classifications, a lot of different things. One of them was this Management Assistant. The Classifying Officer there and I—when I wrote this up, it just identified exactly what I was doing. So I said to him, I said, "Wouldn't you classify this the way my job could be a 13?"

He says, "If your boss, if Warnick says this is your duties."

Well, it went in to Mr. Warnick and he was a little concerned that it would look like he wasn't doing his job, but he had to admit that I was doing all these things. I said, "Well, I'm going to leave here in two years." I was at the top of a Grade 12, and it would mean \$5,000 to me in retirement. I never once, in my whole life, I never asked for a raise. We set this up and tested it to see if it would go through. He classified it. My recollection is he sent it into the Denver or Washington classification. The Washington Office used me in identifying people that could be sent overseas or whatever.

Well, I'll stay with this to finish. It just sailed right through. Harold Nelson would have signed that in a minute, but Norman Moore was the one I told you, Assistant Regional Director, signed it and called me. He says, "I'm tickled to death." He says, "I only came out here because you agreed to it," and true, he called out to ask if there was anyplace he could fit in.

Storey: So at that time in '70, you were planning to retire soon?

### **Scaling Back the Planning Division**

Price: Well, the Commissioner, and this is part of this thing, the Commissioner, and I can't remember his name, the Assistant Commissioner, came out of Washington, and he visited our projects, and he talked with the Regional Director and the head of our division, and maybe other people, that you've got to consolidate planning back into the Regional Office. You've got to cancel out all these area offices.

So we started doing this in 1934, planning this. And I had, over the years—

Storey: No. You said '34.



---

Price: Oh. Wait, '72. I'm sorry. I'm thinking when I-'72.

We were working on this, and they brought a young man, a good engineer named Lankey, who became Assistant Director. John Mangen was the Area Engineer. They said, "You can't lay off anybody. You have to RIF regionwide. You can't lay off anybody that's been on Bureau assignments overseas," and three or four other little things. That if you had a RIF regionwide, it would have taken us a year to bring about. "You have to have it effected by June 30." So they had meetings and got the area engineers. They agreed on everything they were going to do. They made a mistake in calling me into this after they had agreed to everything. They says, "Do you have any comment."

I says, "I've got a comment. You'll never finish that in two years' time, because in the RIF procedure, the first grade is a veteran. If you can disqualify a veteran, then you can consider anybody not a veteran. The second thing is, the bumping process that goes with RIF procedure, they have thirty days to answer you. We're talking about laying off fifty people. This can't be done in that length of time. But," I said, "the thing that bothers me about what you guys have decided on, you're going to lose every good man in a key position, because all of them are non-veterans. What are you going to do about that?"

Now, we had a guy named McGregor that was their engineer, and all through this thing, he was not a veteran. He had argued against what they were doing.

So Mangen says, "Well, you know so goddamn much about this, you come up here." We had a blackboard up there.

So I said, "Well, the first thing I'd do, I'd pick out the key people you need to bring into this office for a team, to operate regionwide. You've got to have those people to have an effective program. The second thing that you've got to do is, if they don't qualify, you have to find a classification that you can put them in, to bring them into this office, and that's hard. Civil Service can tell you anything they want to tell you on it, you probably wouldn't lick them on it.

"But the next thing is, you have to have a RIF procedure in each of those area offices. Before you RIF them, you've got to transfer in the people in the Area Office that you want in your new organization." I said, "You could be subject to criticism all the way along. The last thing, you've got to tell that Commissioner to go to hell. If he is dictating the way you say he's dictating, you cannot do what he says, because it violates the RIF procedure under Civil Service."

Anyway, everybody was mad at me. (laughter) Not mad, but just frustrated. So I sat down with them and worked out the people we would save, and we transferred these people in, and we had a promotion procedure, and each one was exempt from promotion procedure. We weren't promoting anybody, we were just bringing them in at the same rate.

Storey: Lateralizing them in.

Price: Yeah. When we got that done, we took a look to see who of those people could we minimize disruption of their lives, do we have to consider that, and we did. The next thing was, we start the RIF procedure. John's statement, he's the only one that talked to this Commissioner, but his statement was, "He'll never let you do this."

Storey: John who?

Price: John Mangen. He was head of our division at that time. Anyway, he came out in our division and told—there was thirteen of us, old-timers—he says, "You've got to give up your position so we can put some of these people in it." Well, everybody accepted this. That's when I decided to retire.

Everybody accepted this except one fellow, and he was head of the reports. He was out of place. He'd been an economist, and he worked under Warnick, with Warnick. All of these report-writers disliked him, primarily because he was just not fitted for the job he was in.

We got a statement from each of them as to when they would retire. We retired me, Don Street, Hafterson [phonetic] in charge of hydrology, Gib Schirk in charge of reports, Don Street in economics, all the chiefs. Then we could fill those positions, which we had to bring them in laterally or open it up to the promotion process. We couldn't do that because of the time factor.

This guy Lankey came in as Assistant Chief of the division, and he was a real help. He'd been in the military. He had a good idea of organization. My recollection, he went to Region Seven as head of planning.

Storey: Do you remember his first name?

Price: Yeah. I'll tell you in a minute.

Storey: Maybe Bob?

Price: Bob Lankey. Did you know him?

Storey: No, I've never met him.

Price: Yeah. Bob Lankey. Now, we had to write up a new organization with functional statements and job descriptions for the whole organization. I did all of that. I had done this from the time I went into planning. As we got each of those, when we had a problem, we called a team leader, or team coordinator. It could be a soil scientist or an economist or anybody. I went in to personnel with my problem and said, "Within one year we have to reorganize this because of the titles we've used as team leader. There is no classification for it." The Regional Office accepted that because it was one of these things that is a momentary thing that will correct itself over time. We brought the people. On January 1, or the first part of January, three of them, Gib Schirk and Hafterson and Bushnell retired, mid-January.

---

Storey: Which year?

Price: Of '35.

Storey: No. '70–

Price: '73.

Storey: '73. Okay.

Price: I had a little fun in this. I didn't get much fun out of it. Lankey would come in and say, "How are you progressing?" If I had a problem, he took the problem, and I'd go on. He'd come back and help me solve it. This is why I said he was a good man.

In March, Don Street retired. They came out at that time with a change in schedules. I went in to Mangen and said, "I can't quit. I can't quit, John. Just look how much money I'd make if I stayed on."

His face turned red. (laughter) He resented—he came in as head of our division and resented me giving all these answers. Now, as Don Street said, "John's gone a long ways with his little ability in administration." But in the sense that he was the kind of guy that went out just like I did, I went out to the problem and talked to the people. If I was doing this, he couldn't do it. I just laughed. I said, "I didn't mean to scare you, John, I'm going to leave the third of June." But after I left, some of the things I left in my desk, he would call me about. He had instructed his secretary not to ever call me for anything.

Well, personnel called me once about—a lady that was in personnel had worked for me, and she had typed something on a classification of a position. I don't remember what it was. She called me and said, "Where's this stuff?"

I said, "It's in my desk drawer. There's an envelope in there."

She said, "Would you come up and get it?"

I don't know why. So I went up there and John come out of his office the minute he saw me. My office was right next to his. He turned to his secretary and says, "I told you not to call him under any circumstances."

So I just laughed, but I says, "Don't worry, John, she didn't call me. Personnel called me and they wanted this information because they need it for something they're doing." He turned and went back in his office.

Storey: How many years of service did you have when you retired?

### **Retirement**

Price: I had thirty-eight years, plus a year of annual sick leave that they paid me for. During

---

the war, we were allowed to carry up to ninety days of sick leave—I mean, of annual leave. I was the only one up at Anderson Dam—for two years I didn't leave there for any vacation at all. I had ninety days, and they came out and paid you for accumulated sick leave, up to thirty days, I think—

Storey: Annual leave.

Price: No, sick leave.

Storey: Sick leave. Okay.

Price: So I had thirty-nine years figured in my retirement pay. I told you about the Appaloosa Dam site dam, didn't I?

Storey: Yes, going out and setting up the drilling and all of that.

Price: Yeah.

Storey: Was that the high dam in Hell's Canyon?

Price: No. No.

Storey: That's a different program.

Price: Yeah. The high dam was never built, and the power company built at the Brownlee Dam site, which was an earth-filled dam upstream from that. They needed an equalizing dam down below in Udall's plan, which was to keep it a primitive area. They didn't want that Appaloosa site. It didn't fit into the plan. I'm sure it was killed before we even did the work on it, but they wanted to show they were considering all aspects of the case.

Storey: Did you ever meet Jack Savage?

Price: Only to come into the office. Up at Anderson Dam, the earth-filled dam and spillway slope was unstable and it slid in the spring. They had to unload that whole hill in order to hold the spillway. Jack Savage came out as a—what'd they call it? Some kind of a team, Savage and geologist and one of his engineers. That's the only time I've met him.

Storey: So you don't have much of an impression of him?

Price: No.

Storey: What about Ralph Lowry you mentioned? What was he like? I think you said he was a character, maybe.

### **Ralph Lowry**

Price: No. No. Ralph Lowry was likeable. Everybody liked Ralph Lowry. He was not nervous. Anybody could go in and talk to him on a problem. When Walker R. Young left, Ralph Lowry became Construction Engineer there. Lowry–

Storey: This was at Hoover?

Price: Hoover. Yeah, it was Boulder to me. It was the Boulder Canyon Project authorized. Anyway, Lowry tried to do everything by the book and he would deviate anytime he needed to if he saw that some other way was better.

I don't know whether this fits what you're asking, but the unions were getting organized under Roosevelt. The unions were getting organized on the dam, and one of the workmen was head of this type of organization, and he was sleeping on the job one day. Lowry was the kind of guy that went out and reviewed his–checked with everybody to come back into the office. And Lowry fired him. He took it up with the union, and they made Lowry hire him back. He just took everything in stride. He did what he thought was the right thing to do, and "If somebody overrode me, okay, just go ahead and do it." Some of those engineers would argue for years afterward we ought to have done something different. He was a good man, very stable. He was a good man in difficult situations that he could get the people in, and talk about, and come up with a consensus. Many of these engineers–

END SIDE 1, TAPE 4. JULY 27, 1995.

BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 4. JULY 27, 1995.

Price: . . . the Denver Office. But he stayed until retirement time. I don't know what he was.

Storey: What about socialization in the office here in Boise? What was it like? And what was it like up at Anderson Ranch?

### **Socializing in the Region**

Price: There was very little socializing at Anderson Ranch. It was in the Christmas of 1943, the contractor gave the Bureau of Reclamation employees a case of liquor. Our office engineer was Vert Schlapkohl. He was of the old school.

Storey: Can you spell that?

Price: S-C-H-L-A-P-K-O-H-L. The old Reclamation did not accept gifts from contractors or anything. This was a strict thing with them. He opposed this. The liquor was delivered to the soil lab, and the head of the soil lab brought it down to the camp where we were. They all wanted to take it, and they took a bottle over to Schlapkohl first. He took it, reluctantly. Everybody got a bottle. Now, maybe half of the crew was out for the winter, where they couldn't place fill. So they were gone. So there was probably twenty-four bottles. I don't remember whether it was twelve or–no, it's twelve in a case. That was passed out to everybody.

That night they had a–I'm just trying to think of how it started. Somebody came

to my office. My house was across the street from Schlapkohl, and said, "Come on, we're going up and have a party at Schlapkohl's house." They did this deliberately so that he would be part of the party. It wasn't a drunken thing at all, but there was a lot of drinks and merriment and fun. He never forgave some of those people.

Now, among that crew was Ellis Armstrong. Ellis lived down at the end of the row of permanent houses. No, he didn't, he lived next to Schlapkohl, but he wasn't there when they went in Schlapkohl's house. Later on, he caught up with us in the house down at the end of the line. He drank two or three glasses, just straight whiskey.

Storey: Ellis did?

Price: I found out he's a good Mormon. But Ellis, it was the Deer Creek crowd in there felt they weren't accepted, and in a sense they weren't. It was a case of duplicate positions from the Deer Creek crowd and the Boise crowd.

Storey: So the Deer Creek crowd is Deer Creek Dam or the dikes over here?

Price: In Utah.

Storey: In Utah. Okay.

Price: It was unfortunate. The Chief Engineer set this up. He didn't want Mr. Newell to be the Construction Engineer, and he sent Beemer in. This was done a lot of times for a special job to come out of the Denver Office, and do this, and go back, and the project keeps on operating. But Ellis wanted to be one of the crowd, and he was late getting there. He obviously didn't think this was going to affect him. I don't remember how much he drank. Nobody paid any attention to it. But we walked home with him. He was embarrassed about this forever. He's a good Mormon. His wife was daughter of the politician, I think the highway districts in Utah. A lovely family, they had two boys.

That's the only—well, one more time. The only times that I remember socializing. Now, the women played bridge and did these things.

Storey: This is at Anderson Ranch?

Price: Yeah. Still at Anderson. Dan Applegate was an engineer with this crowd. He was the first one called out. He was in the reserve. He went up to Washington somewhere. We gave him a farewell party. It was just a farewell party. There was bottles of beer, cans of beer. As those people started and went off to war, we always gave them a farewell party. We hadn't done this up to that time, up to the time we had this party. The following Christmas we didn't get any liquor. (laughter) They wouldn't have, if that had been brought down to our camp, it never would have gotten out to the people. But it was delivered to the lab and they passed out some to people there, and they came down here and had to get rid of it.

---

But in the Regional Office was a different thing entirely. We had a Reclamation Employees Association, and it was for social activities. We had our first party down in the Owyhee Hotel in Boise. One fellow spent at least forty dollars on drinks. They set up the bar. We didn't furnish anything. I was the president the next year of this, and when they talked of a Christmas party, I brought this question up, "I don't think we should have anything like that. Let's have punch and spike it." They always had a picnic party type thing, put on a skit or something. That's where this quartet I mentioned to you got involved in the singing and whatnot.

Storey: This would be a summer event?

Price: Winter, Christmas.

Storey: A picnic?

Price: Well, inside. We rented the American Legion Hall, but it was an informal-type thing. I think about everybody in the Regional Office went to those things if there was a party and somebody was leaving. One of the fellows wasn't too well liked. He was in the Irrigation Division—Larry Swarner [phonetic]. They were not going to give him a party. He was an old Reclamation hand, but he pushed his ideas too far on people. The Irrigation Division just weren't going to do anything for him. I said, "You don't do that for anybody," so we had a party in the office, with coffee and punch and cake. He came around afterwards and saying that he knew he wasn't too well liked in there. He didn't think they would do anything for him. He appreciated me doing it.

Again, I got loaded with some of this stuff because Harold Nelson always used me to set anybody who came to the office. If you wanted something special, he always came to me. "Will you set up this? Will you do this for me?" People expected me to do it. But it was strictly social, didn't carry into the working at all.

But in the Planning Division was a different thing. We had these girls that I mentioned to you.

Storey: The three editors?

Price: Yeah. The people that came in weren't congenial with each other. They hadn't formed a team in their relationship, and there was kind of walls between economics and engineering in the way that they acted. Now, we had a coffee pot in the, I'll call it stenographic pool. It was a pool of people, but we didn't call it stenographic pool. But this was where the girls were. They made the coffee. You could come in anytime for a coffee break to pick up a cup of coffee. They did this. It interfered with their work and I moved it out of there once. I didn't tell them. I just said, "It's interrupting your work and we've got to get this done."

So one of them came up to me afterwards and says, "Don't do that." Says, "We'll work overtime and make up for this, but these people come in to us and we're talking about family and anything but work." It does take time, but they didn't take coffee breaks at all. Every Wednesday they went out for an hour lunch. Our lunch

was half hour. Most people brought lunches. All they wanted to do was, on Wednesday, I went out quite often with them to lunch. Then they would tell me all the things that they thought would be beneficial.

Now, one of the things they started was, you draw a name and you buy a gift for somebody. You put everybody's name in the hat. You buy it and you have to write a poem. That was a scream. It carried that thing for years. If anybody had a problem, we'd give his name to somebody and write a poem about him, or fit it in and get a little perspective, you know, and people got along from then on.

Now, the only time we had—that was after work at Christmas. It maybe lasted an hour, maybe lasted a half an hour. Some of the people didn't stay. But we got a reputation in the office: don't miss the planning Christmas party.

Among them, at that time, we got a gal who became secretary to the Regional Director. She started in this working for me. I insisted that when we hired a girl, I'm going to test her. Personnel kept telling me, "You can't do that. If Civil Service certifies her, you have to take them."

I said, "I don't have to take anything. This is special."

I got this girl anyway. She was very efficient and good, but she had a knack for taking songs and putting words to songs. When we began to do that, we had a song about the Regional Director not getting along with Dominy. We could do anything with a song, you know. (laughter) So they started pulling some of that stuff into this regionwide thing, but it didn't work. We only did that one year. We're back again.

Socially, the people did a lot with each other, but it never was done as part of the regional activity.

Storey: But there were occasional events?

Price: Anytime somebody left. If somebody got a promotion and we wanted to recognize it, it was a small thing in the office. Anybody could come in get a cup of coffee or cookies.

Harold Nelson came over to me one time and he said, "Don, we're having a group of people in." I don't remember all who they were. But he said, "I went down to Region Four to one of these meetings and they had some old stuff that they fed us at the coffee break." He says, "Why can't we do something like that?"

I said, "Okay."

So one of the girls that was in there was a tremendous cook. I went to Audrey and told her what the Regional Director had said. I said, "They're going to have this at 9:30 in the morning. Why don't you stay home and bake one of your cakes," she was famous for. It cost you \$15 for the ingredients to go into that cake. I said, "You let me know what you need and I'll buy it for you, or you buy it and you bring me a



---

bill."

She went home and baked this and kept it until 9:15 and brought it in hot. My boss knew we were doing this—Mr. Warnick. They served this, and, boy, you should have heard the comments. It was just a tremendous reception. Harold never comes back and tells you how the outcome of these things was, but Francis Warnick went to this, and he says, "I want to pay you for this. They'll be talking about this cake forever." Some things like that Harold would spring on you.

When we were investigating the high Hells Canyon Dam, there was a little town called Cuprum, and there was a little hotel there run by a man from Denmark and his wife. This guy was a graduate engineer in Denmark. Harold went up and stayed there when he would go down to see what was going.

### **Doing a Little Extra**

At a later date, he came in to me and he says, "Don, can't we find something to give this guy to do? He's an engineer." He said, "I'd like to do something for him."

I says, "What do you want to do?"

He says, "Well, why don't we put him on the staff."

I said, "Okay."

Now, he didn't go to personnel with this. So I got hold of this fellow, and he wasn't a naturalized citizen. The state of Idaho gave us cooperative money for some of the studies. We gave them the results of the study, which they used. We had \$30,000 that year. I put him on the state's payroll in our office, out of this \$30,000. Harold says something later. Well, he thanked me later for getting this guy in.

Now, the head of that office was George Carter, who had been in the Bureau of Reclamation since year one. He was put in there. He didn't have any respect for planning at all. "They're needless." But he retired and became the Reclamation State Engineer, was what they called him. He got transferred. He got this fellow and put him up in his office, so he must have been a good man.

But Harold says to me, "What did you do?"

I said, "Well, Harold, I would just as soon not tell you."

In other words, I thought there might be some repercussions. You never know what kind of repercussion you get on a thing like that. I didn't tell him. Fine.

On the Appaloosa Dam site, after we had finished all of this, they sent auditors out to check whether we had overrun our money or not. They checked Denver. Denver had \$75,000 to set up the design. Somebody called Harold or something, if you spent that money, and he called me up there. Norman Moore, the Assistant

Regional Director, went in with me. He had this call. He says, "Apparently they're auditing this stuff. Did we run over on this?"

I said, "No."

Norm shouldn't have said what he—Norm says, "Don't ask, Harold."

Well, on that whole Appaloosa drilling thing, we didn't charge any overhead. I don't know whether I told you this or not. In order to stay with these figures, we used only the direct charges that could be—

Storey: Oh, you might have mentioned this earlier.

Price: Yeah. I never did say anything like that to Harold. Never did a thing in all of the things I did that would reflect on Harold. If that came up, I wanted him to be totally ignorant of what we'd done.

Now, at some later date, shortly afterwards, the accountants had a meeting over there. One of the accountants raised a question. Glen Draper was the Administrative Officer. He called me over there. He said, "What do you do in the Regional Office when you get Washington costs handed down to you to take into your accounts? That's a problem. You take Denver costs in. You have the Regional Office overhead costs. You have the field office overhead costs. How do you handle that?"

I said, "Well, I have a program, and in that program we have a percentage factor for overhead under each of the program items. If I get a bill from Washington, I distribute those costs on the basis of how we program, not how we reached the cost. If I get something from the Regional Office that comes in that way, and if we don't do the work on that project, I use the program figure to put that overhead in." I said, "In other words, I'm assigning overhead costs, basically. On all of the things that are overhead within our Planning Division and field office, we take it as the cost accrues. We charge the project for it. We keep individual time sheets."

This guy just hit the ceiling. He says, "In accounting, overhead is overhead, and it's a percentage factor of all your direct costs." He was, in my opinion, clear out of line in what he said.

I said, "Well, you do it your way and I'll do it my way." This wasn't going anywhere. But in the sense that we had to live with the program figures, you had to do something. I could defend that to anybody in that sense.

The finance officers from all regions, I think, came into Boise to our office. One of them was the fellow I worked for. He was the city clerk when I was down there. He ended up as finance office. Bob—I'll tell you in a minute. He went in and sat in this meeting, and he came over to me and said, "You know, I think you told me once when you went through Boulder City that you had devised a system for running your area offices in this fiscal and accounting operation."

---

I said, "Yeah." I said, "What I did was, the field office does all of the work, and disbursing office sends all of this back to us and we keep all of the record in the Regional Office."

Well, they were going to open an office in Phoenix. They were doing most of this type of work out of the Regional Office, and it was a problem to him. We discussed this a little bit. He said, "Where did you get this idea?"

I said, "You just have to apply anything that has to be done, you find a way to do it, and that's how I arrived at that."

He was the opposite kind of a person. He was a Finance Officer down there and he went by the book. It depended on who the Regional Director was, or who it was that he worked under. He had to shift his weight if the Regional Director went into his business. My Regional Director didn't get into my business at all. There was that difference. He went back down there and set up the whole thing so that his office in Phoenix paid all of the bills. The disbursement office sent it direct to him, and that just worked like a charm. But if I had a criticism with the Bureau—I don't criticize it. It's been a golden age, a good job. The variety is interesting and I don't criticize it. But when they shifted from the old time to the new time, it took them ten or fifteen years to do it.

Storey: When was that?

### **Changes to Reclamation**

Price: In about 1950, there was changes, new people coming in. There was changes being forced on us. But we didn't have electric computers. We didn't have computers. We didn't have electric typewriters. When I went back to the Regional Office, I suppose in 1975 or '76, there's computers on everybody that could tie into a computer in Denver. Ron Gallus, who was kind of a catch-all guy with problems, the lab, anybody there, could work their computer and get an answer off the Denver computer. That brought about tremendous change. Now, I don't know whether you could have anticipated something like that and taken less than ten years to make the transition or not.

I went into hydrology to this Kirkpatrick that I'd mentioned to you, was great, and told him, "I believe we can get some computers. How would you like it?"

He came back to me in about an hour and he says, "If we could buy this computer, we could do a week's work in an afternoon."

The work he was talking about was, they were test pumping drill wells or production wells on the northside pumping division. A computer could have done this, on a computer, without having to take field notes and send it in.

Storey: What else should we talk about?

Price: (laughter) I think I've pretty well covered it. We didn't get into other work that I did, and you've commented you'd like to know what I did between going to college.

### **Pre-Reclamation Work Experience**

In 1927, I graduated from high school. That year, '27, '28, I went up to Rochester, Minnesota, with my mother. She had a medical problem. Stayed there all year. I came back down and I committed myself to work in lambing, during sheep lambing. There was an owner of a drugstore there that knew me real well. He came and offered me a job, but I already promised to go with this other one. So I went out and I worked in lambing for two months.

I came back in and I went to work in the drugstore. I worked about ten months. I was only getting \$15 a week, and I didn't have a home in that sense. I didn't have a home after I was sixteen. We had had a house, but my mother—I had a sister that had cancer of the bone, and she was up at Mayo's, in and out. We just foraged for ourselves. I took a night job in a garage. I had only had to work about two or three hours, and then I could sleep in the garage. I had to be there. But the one that relieved me in the office didn't get to work on time, and after about a couple of months of that, the drugstore man fired me, because I wasn't opening up and getting the janitor work done before eight o'clock.

Storey: I think you mentioned this.

Price: That was 1929. My brother and I went over on the pipeline out of Rock Springs, Wyoming, fourteen-inch gas pipeline to Ogden, Utah. I went out as a welder helper, and I saved money. This is where I decided I was going to college. I saved money and I went into Denver. I didn't have enough money without I got a job, and I couldn't get a job. So I went to work for the Western Electric Company as a trainee. It was telephone company work, but by Western Electric. They paid me \$16, but at the end of three months we got a \$5 raise, and at the end of three more months, we got a \$5 raise. But then you had to make a commitment, "Are you going to stay with us?" By this time I had decided, no, I'm not going to do that. I'm going to college.

So I left that work and I went back to Riverton. There was a preacher there that had a friend who was president of this Westminster Junior College. I got talking to him, and he says, "I can get you a working job up there if you want it." I didn't have a job. So I went to college there, the junior college, for one year.

That summer, I went down to Hoover Dam and went right to work. I worked during the summer and I would have gone on working, but I was President of the Student Body. I had to show up, I felt, so I went back to the junior college to the fall semester and quit then. Went back to the dam and I worked the whole year. In January of '32, I went back to Simpson College. I had a work scholarship there. I went that half year, hitchhiked back to Boulder Dam, and worked in the lunchroom until fall. Then I went back and spent the whole year to graduate.

### **Conclusion**

---

I had four children, and if they wanted to go to college, I wanted to see they got there. If they didn't want to go to college, then they had to explain to me why they didn't. Three of them graduated from Oregon State, and that was a financial strain.

My oldest was a girl, and she got married after she left the junior college at Boise. There was a junior college there. She got married there and went over to Oregon State. He was going to go to Washington State, and I talked him into going to Oregon State. He took engineering and they, as I told her it was going to happen, she had a baby. So he stayed another year so that she could graduate. She was an A-student in biology sciences leading to medical. She was a good student.

He was a hard worker. He was a veteran. He got pay, and occasionally I helped with them financially. But he got out of there and with a master's in heat control. Went right to work for the energy at Richmond, Washington. His boss transferred to Louisiana. They were evacuating those salt domes and filling them with crude oil, and it was supposed to be an emergency-type thing. I don't think it ever would work out the way they did it. When [George] Bush was in, they used part of that and never told anybody. It was supposed to be emergency type. When [Ronald] Reagan went in, they were going to contract everything. Everything was going to be—

END SIDE 2, TAPE 4. JULY 27, 1995.

BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 5. JULY 27, 1995.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey with Donald G. Price on July 27, 1995.

So he was working for them there.

Price: Yeah. Department of Energy. This guy was transferred down there to start that work, and he told my son-in-law, "I'm not going down if you won't go with me." Now, my son-in-law had lots of ability, but he was a perfectionist. He didn't get along too well with people, but the bosses loved him. Under Reagan, they privatized that thing, and Boeing got the contract for doing the same thing that he was doing. He used the same desk, the same car, the same telephone number, and went to work for Boeing. He got retirement, thirty-five-year or something like that, retirement. With a \$10,000 raise, he's up now to \$70,000, \$75,000. They loved him. But half his time was spent in Washington, D.C. It was getting political and he just couldn't stand it. He told them, "I'm going to have to leave you." They gave him a job right there to keep him. He drove sixty miles a day for years in his car. They paid for it.

Storey: Commute to and from work?

Price: He lived at Kenner, Louisiana, which is a suburb of New Orleans. This field was sixty, seventy miles away. He did that until about two years ago. Well, he went in and told them he was going to have to quit. There was some reason for it, and they transferred him to the Safety Engineer. He got the same pay, because the government reimbursed Boeing for all these expenses. You got the same pay, so he's getting \$150,000 a year or something. Still there.

I was enough of an economic student to never accept Reagan's economic philosophy. Privatizing may have been the way to go on the capitalistic system, but in the sense of accomplishment and cost, the other way was twice as good. But there was this whole feeling against government employees. Reagan had more employees on his staff and in Washington, by 500,000 people, when he left office than when he went in. He was going to cut the whole thing. Part of it was the S&L [savings and loan] scandal which was—Congress bought this. Reagan proposed it, and the Congress bought it. So they're responsible, too. But they wanted to put controls on that in 1984, and he was the one that blocked it. They never would have had that problem if they'd have put those controls on in 1984, or they'd have had a smaller problem.

Storey: Let me ask you again whether or not you're willing for the information contained on these tapes and the resulting transcripts to be used to researchers.

Price: Yeah.

Storey: Good.

Price: As I told you before, if it's the truth, if I have to do something, I want it done the way it actually happened. I don't know this research thing, how they're going to research types like this, but if you say you need it, boy, I'll buy it.

Storey: Well, I appreciate it. Thank you.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 5. JULY 27, 1995.  
END OF INTERVIEWS.