

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW ROLAND ROBISON



**BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

ROLAND ROBISON

September 27, 1993
Salt Lake City, Utah



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OPEN FOR RESEARCH**



Interview Conducted by:
Brit Allan Storey
Senior Historian
Bureau of Reclamation



Oral History Program
Bureau of Reclamation

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ROLAND ROBISON**

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INTRODUCTION

In 1988 Reclamation hired its senior historian to create a history program and work in the cultural resources management program of the agency. While headquartered in Denver, the history program was developed as a bureau-wide program. Since 1994 the senior historian has been on the staff of the Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation, in the Program Analysis Office in Denver.

Over the years, the history program has developed and enlarged, and 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); and making the preserved data available to researchers inside and outside Reclamation. It is also hoped that the oral history activity may result in at least one publication sometime after 2000.

The senior historian of the Bureau of Reclamation developed and directs the oral history activity, and questions, comments, and suggestions may be addressed to the senior historian.

Brit Allan Storey
Senior Historian
Office of Water, Land, and Cultural Resources (D-5300)
Program Analysis Office
Bureau of Reclamation
P. O. Box 25007
Denver, Colorado 80225-0007
(303) 236-1061 ext. 241
FAX: (303) 236-0890
E-mail: bstorey@do.usbr.gov

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW: ROLAND ROBISON¹

This is tape one of an interview by Brit Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, with Roland Robison the Regional Director of the Bureau of Reclamation in the Upper Colorado Office in Salt Lake City, Utah, on September 27, 1993, beginning about one o'clock in the afternoon in his offices.

Storey: Mr. Robison, could I have you discuss your early life and your education and how you eventually came to the Bureau of Reclamation, please?

Robison: I came to the Bureau of Reclamation by a rather circuitous route. I joined Reclamation in 1989 as Regional Director for the Upper Colorado Region. Prior to that time, however, I had been in the Department of the Interior for some ~~eighteen~~ [twenty] years. I had served in the Department as Deputy Director, ~~the~~ [and] Utah State Director of the BLM, [and as] an attorney in the Solicitor's Office where I served both in the Regional Office in Salt Lake City and in the Washington Office.

In the Washington Office, I was Associate Solicitor for Energy and Resources for a time, and in that capacity I worked very closely with the Bureau of Reclamation. I also served ~~for a time~~ in the Department in the 1970's as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Land and Water, and in that capacity I had responsibilities that related to the Bureau of Reclamation.

So although I was not a part of the Bureau of Reclamation per se during my early time in the Department of the Interior,

Came to Reclamation in 1989
as regional director

Served in the Department of
the Interior for eighteen years

State Director of BLM
Solicitor's Office in Utah

Associate Solicitor for Energy
and Resources

Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Land and Water

1. Unless followed by the notation "ed.," all clarification in the text is provided by Mr. Robison.

I was either an attorney who had as a client the Bureau of Reclamation, or I was in the Secretary's office with some policy and direction responsibilities relating to the Bureau of Reclamation. So I did not come to my present position with the Bureau without some previous, rather considerable, involvement with the Bureau. Although it perhaps was not the customary or usual type of involvement.

I have been in the Department of the Interior since 1969, a period of twenty-four years. Prior in time to that, I was on Capitol Hill in Washington. I served for some five years up there as Administrative Assistant to a Utah Congressman. And before that time, I was in Utah State Government. I served as Administrative Assistant to Governor George D. Clyde of Utah, and was also for a time the Deputy Attorney General for Utah. I'm a graduate of the University of Utah, College of Law, and I've got a Bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University with a major in political science.

Relationship to Reclamation before coming to the bureau

In Department of the Interior since 1969

Worked on Capitol Hill

Administrative Assistant to Congressman and Governor George D. Clyde of Utah

Law degree from University of Utah

Attended Brigham Young University

Storey: Brigham Young, you said.

Robison: Brigham Young University, yes.

Storey: So you came to Reclamation right at the reorganization that was occurring in '87, '88, '89.

Came to Reclamation during reorganization in late 1980s

Robison: Yes, I did. It was really one that had all been pretty much put in place but it was in the early implementation stage . . . that effort that prompted removal of some Bureau of Reclamation functions and attendant personnel from Washington to Denver and the establishment of a Deputy Commissioner position in the Denver Office.

Storey: Did your appointment have anything to do with the reorganization that you're aware of?

Robison: Not that I'm aware of. I was concluding my two-year stint in Washington as Deputy Director of the Bureau of Land Management and was wanting to return to my home in Salt Lake City. And I was actually approached by Bureau of Reclamation personnel as to an interest I might have in the vacancy that had occurred only just prior to that in the Office of Regional Director of the Upper Colorado Region for the Bureau.

In 1989 was completing two years as Deputy Director of the Bureau of Land Management in Washington, D.C.

Storey: You happen to remember who approached you?

Robison: I was approached by then-Commissioner Dale Duvall in Washington, also by Deputy Commissioner Joe Hall, and also by Assistant Commissioner Billy Martin.

Storey: Yes, Joe and, everybody's retired I'm afraid (laughing). While you were, you said Deputy Assistant Secretary ...?

Robison: Yes, in 1974, '75, and early 1976.

Involvement with Reclamation as Deputy Assistant Secretary

Storey: What involvement did you have with Reclamation at that time, if any?

Robison: Well, the Assistant Secretary for Land and Water had responsibility within the Department of the Interior for several agencies within the Department, among them was the Bureau of Reclamation, also the Bureau of Land Management, those two principal agencies. And so as a Deputy Assistant Secretary, I had some particular oh, policy and direction responsibility for the Bureau.

Storey: For Reclamation.

- Robison: Yes, for Reclamation.
- Storey: Were you assigned specifically to Reclamation, or did your Assistant Secretary do things that way - by assigning people to specific agencies?
- Robison: Oh, I probably had more responsibility as relates to the Bureau of Reclamation than to other agencies, but it wasn't exclusively Bureau of Reclamation because I did a considerable amount of work in connection with the Bureau of Land Management.
- Storey: What kind of issues were confronting the Assistant Secretary's Office at that time as far as Reclamation was concerned?
- Robison: Well, that was still in the time of considerable construction activity. We were concerned with pushing a number of projects at that time, the Central Utah Project was one of them, the Central Arizona Project was another. Work was going on in connection with projects on the Missouri: we were looking at the Oahe, the Garrison was one that was being pursued, there were other smaller projects that were being looked at and being prosecuted. There was considerable work in the Upper Colorado as I recall, because that was the time when after passage in 1969[8 - ed.] of the Colorado River Basin Project Act, construction of Ridges Basin Dam [Animas-La Plata Project - ed.] was being planned for and considered. The Dolores Project was under active consideration[.], ~~back then even Animas-La Plata was being looked at.~~ It was a time of active construction in the Bureau of Reclamation.
- Storey: And how did the Assistant Secretary's Office

become involved in that construction program?

Robison: Well, only that whatever happened in the Bureau of Reclamation from a political standpoint . . . from a policy standpoint . . . was under the aegis, if you will, of the Assistant Secretary. That was part of his portfolio.

Storey: Yeah, one of the things I think is a little confusing to people who haven't been in the Washington scene is the way different offices interrelate and interact and overlap, if you will. And one of the things I'd be interested in talking about is where the Assistant Secretary's responsibilities sort of begin and end in relationship to the Commissioner's: where they sort of overlap, where the gray areas are, and so on. What's the difference in responsibilities there?

Relationship of responsibilities of Assistant Secretary and Commissioner

Robison: Well, the Bureau in former times, in earlier times, generally was led by a Commissioner who was a career Bureau of Reclamation employee. And the people who worked for the Bureau in the Washington area at that level — the Commissioner, there wasn't a Deputy Commissioner at the time that I was back there in the '70's, the Assistant Commissioners were all generally career people. Floyd Dominy was the Commissioner when I went to work in the Department of the Interior. He was succeeded by Ellis Armstrong, and in turn Ellis was succeeded by Gil Stamm, and it was when Gil Stamm was Commissioner that I left Washington, and so I wasn't involved with the Bureau for some time during a period there in the 1980's.

The policy and political direction given the Bureau of Reclamation came from the Secretariat and the Secretary had, to

assist him in the Department, and still does, a number of Assistant Secretaries. And the various disciplines and Bureaus associated with those disciplines were in effect parceled out for responsibility purposes to, oh, I suppose about five Assistant Secretaries. So you had an Assistant Secretary whose responsibility largely was the direction, for example, of the National Park Service. His portfolio also included, in those days, the Fish and Wildlife Service. You had an Assistant Secretary who had responsibility for the Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines. You'd have another Assistant Secretary with responsibilities for Indian Affairs and the BIA. When I was Deputy Assistant Secretary, we had an Assistant Secretary who was in charge of both the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Reclamation and some smaller agencies, but those were the two principal ones. And frankly, those were and still are two of the bigger agencies in the Department, two of those with the biggest budgets, and two of those with the most personnel, and two of those with the most responsibility.

Since that time, a change has been made and portfolios have been determined on different bases, and today, you don't have one Assistant Secretary responsible for those two agencies. But in that particular time, that was the way it worked. And so the policy direction, approval of not every bit of minutia of course that took place in the Bureau of Reclamation, but the big policy issues - matters relating to the budget, matters relating to direction that the Bureau would take, the programs that it would undertake, the issues that it would present to the Congress, all of the things that really related to the broader policy direction of the Bureau of Reclamation were matters that

were of concern to the Assistant Secretary, who in effect was the representative of course of the Secretary himself.

So that's how it worked. Now a bureau could be somewhat autonomous depending upon who the Assistant Secretary was. Some Assistant Secretaries labored to rather actively manage, if you will, the bureaus under them; others were more content to lay down broad policy direction and leave the operations to the bureaus themselves.

It was always a contention in the Department, and I suppose it still is, as to what real purpose the Assistant Secretary served. Why did you have to have an Assistant Secretary? Why couldn't the Commissioner of Reclamation be directly responsible to the Secretary? Well, I guess it's just a matter of span of control, a matter of trying to give the Secretary himself some assistance in the form of Assistant Secretaries.

Storey: So I suppose if you had a strong Commissioner and a strong Assistant Secretary, you would get some tension between them sometimes?

Robison: Oh, I suppose tension arose every once in awhile in those particular areas. The Assistant Secretary came from the outside, he was largely a political appointee. That doesn't mean that he wasn't a person with background and competence in the particular area in which he operated, but he was not a career Federal person, and so he represented the political side of the house and gave the policy direction from the standpoint of the administration to the agencies. I think when I was Deputy Assistant Secretary, we had very strong Commissioners - at the same time the Assistant Secretary for whom I

worked was a very strong Assistant Secretary as a matter of fact. But I think the relationship was quite good as between the agency itself and the Office of the Assistant Secretary.

Storey: And the Assistant Secretary for whom you worked would be ...?

Robison: The Assistant Secretary for whom I worked was Jack Horton who was a Rhodes scholar; a geologist; very, very bright; an engaging and interesting personality. And for whom it was a pleasure to work as a matter of fact.

The Commissioner at that time, for most of the time anyway when I was a Deputy Assistant Secretary, was Gilbert Stamm, who was a career Bureau of Reclamation employee and who was very able and competent. I felt at the time that I worked there in that particular capacity that I was privileged to work with two very able individuals. And two people who represented the interests of the Bureau, and the Department of the Interior, and the American public very well.

Storey: How about staffing for the Assistant Secretary? Was it a small staff, a large staff, what was it like?

Staffing for the Assistant Secretary

Robison: It was not a large staff; there were two Deputy Assistant Secretaries. One had come over from OMB, as a matter of fact; his name was Donald Walden. He had a good grasp of budget concerns; he had a strong water background, if you will. I came out of the Solicitor's Office, I was a lawyer. He was much more involved I think in the political sense of things ... or, I'm sorry, in the technical sense of things; whereas with my background, I was more involved in

relationships with the Congress and the political side of things and the broader policy perspectives, I suppose.

There were several career people on the staff of the Assistant Secretary. One that I remember very clearly was Dr. James Flannery, who'd been there for a long time. He had a great institutional memory and was very familiar with the operations of the Bureau of Reclamation going over a long period. He was an advisor to the Assistant Secretary on water matters and particularly things that related to the Bureau of Reclamation. There were several others on the staff, but not many in number. I suppose besides the two Deputy Assistant Secretaries, all told, the staff wouldn't have been more than eight or nine more people.

But there were specialists like Flannery who had particular knowledge about water or about land matters, and who could perform analyses; if you will. Papers would come up to the Assistant Secretary that we felt independent analyses was required on, and it was not a question of accepting everything that came up from the Bureau of Reclamation. If you signed off on it, why you wanted to make sure what it was all about, and you might want to submit it to some analysis by a staff member and that frequently happened.

But the level of trust was very good between the Bureau of Reclamation and the Assistant Secretary's Office, and I think that we did not look askance or look challengingly, if you will, at all of the things that came up to the office from the Bureau. It was one of working with the Bureau in trying to accomplish what were rather common ends, I think. The relationship, I think, was quite a good one at that time between the Office and the Bureau.

We did have some help from the Bureau itself. An arrangement was frequently entered into that would allow an up-and-coming Bureau of Reclamation employee an opportunity to come and serve for a year or a year and a half or two years, something like that, on the staff of the Assistant Secretary and provide him with analytical capability and be somewhat of a liaison, if you will, between the Office and the Bureau. That happened with the Bureau of Land Management, it happened with the Bureau of Reclamation, that kind of thing.

Storey: So there was some interchange between the different offices.

Robison: Oh, there was a lot of interchange and again, it was an atmosphere of good will, I think, and of cooperation and coordination. There was a job that the Assistant Secretary had to do — he had to make sure that what was being advanced and proposed, recommended by the bureaus, was in keeping with the policy concerns of the administration and his own interests and concerns. It was somewhat of an oversight arrangement, and then of course the Assistant Secretary would develop initiatives, too. But I think the way the bureaucracy works, the initiatives largely would come from the bottom up, from the Bureau to the top as opposed to the other way around.

Assistant Secretary was responsible for coordinating policy with the current administration's positions

Storey: But you mentioned that things would come up from the Bureau to the Assistant Secretary. What kind of pressures are then exerted in terms of, say, projects like the Animas-La Plata or the Garrison and so on when they reach the Assistant Secretary's Office for review and discussion? Was there a lot

of interaction with potential irrigation districts or water users and so on?

Robison: Oh sure, there was a lot of activity that related to the Congress. There was the obligation of testifying on bills up there, of providing reports on bills, of listening and talking to members of the Congress with respect to proposed legislation, dealing with the Committees, and so on. A lot of the work of that office has to do with dealing with the Congress, as a matter of fact.

But then you had project sponsors or project beneficiaries, people who had interests of some kind or another out in the Reclamation States who were frequently in Washington, and particularly at times of budget hearings and so on, who would have some interplay with the Office of the Assistant Secretary. We were concerned at that time with ~~the~~ repayment contracts. Terms and conditions of repayment contracts would be of concern to water user groups — they'd be concerned with the starts and schedules and construction activities. They would be concerned with ~~sometimes~~ possible modification of projects to suit certain interests and concerns, all of the kind of things that have to do with building projects and utilization of the water was of interest. And brought people to Washington.

There was frequent contact with people like Carl Braun who was the ... he was the Executive Director of the National Reclamation Association, now the National Water Resources Association. He represented, of course, [Western] irrigation and Reclamation interests in Washington.

That was a time shortly after passage of the National Environmental Policy Act and it was when we were first feeling our way, if you will, with respect to drafting

Dealing with the Congress from the Assistant Secretary's office

Contacts with project sponsors or beneficiaries and project opponents

NEPA

Environmental Impact Statements. It was really quickly on the heels of the passage of that Act. And the whole Department was trying to figure out the direction in which it should go with respect to compliance with NEPA. That was something that occupied time and attention, and there was more dealing with environmental groups at that time than there had been previously, I suppose. Environmental groups were not noticeable on the horizon particularly, at least in such force and with such effect until after passage of NEPA. They were certainly around, the Sierra Club and others. It was after the Government got into the business of under NEPA [of] writing environmental impact statements that oh, the force, the effect, the clout, the power, what have you of environmental groups became much more of a reality.

Storey: However, when you were Deputy Assistant Secretary, that would have been about six years after NEPA's passage in '69. Were they coming to the Assistant Secretary's Office?

Robison: Well, I became Deputy Assistant Secretary in 1974 (Storey: Five years then.), I left in 1976, but my recollection is that while NEPA carries a 1969 tag, it really didn't become operative until about 1970, as a matter of fact. So, I had been in the Solicitor's Office before that time, and so I was really there at what took place following the passage of NEPA, yeah.

Storey: And what was the response to NEPA in say, the Solicitor's Office and the Assistant Secretary's Office?

Robison: Well, something like that really hadn't quite ever been done before, you know, having to write an Environmental Impact Statement and assess the environmental consequences of a Reclamation project or any other major Federal action. And there was some uncertainty with respect to what the responsibility was. What did an Environmental Impact Statement look like? And what did it have to address, and how extensive did it need to be, and all of those things. I don't think the Bureau or anybody else was in a unique position in that regard. I think the whole Federal establishment was somewhat groping around for answers.

Of course, CEQ was established and guidelines were issued, etc., and it just took some on-the-job training I think to really get that whole process in a workable kind of operation. And you know that didn't happen overnight, that's still happening, as a matter of fact. And I think it would be fair to say that there were some in the Bureau of Reclamation, as there probably were in other agencies of Government, who looked upon a NEPA statement as a bother and a vexation. And I heard more than one person say, "We're just going to give this a lick and a promise," and I think that probably happened in some instances. But it soon became apparent to those who were realistic that [it] was a real responsibility there, there was an obligation imposed by the Congress of the United States]...

Council on Environmental Quality established

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START OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

[Some agencies came - ed.]... slowly to that realization, there were others who grasped the significance of it right away. I guess the law of normal distribution applied there.

Some were more able to foresee the consequences of the Act better than others, but it was an interesting time.

Storey: What about . . . I don't know how exactly to describe them, but for lack of a better phrase, ceremonial appearances, if you will, of the Assistant Secretary and the Deputies. Maybe dam dedications, building dedications, those sorts of things — was there much involvement in that kind of activity for any of the . . . especially for the Bureau of Reclamation?

Travel in the Assistant Secretary's office

Robison: Oh, there was, and still that's the practice today. If you have a dam dedication, you generally invite the Secretary, and if it's a big enough dam, he may come or if it suits his agenda he may come, but generally he will ask an Assistant Secretary in the particular area involved to represent him. And the Assistant Secretary may or may not participate. The Commissioner of Reclamation always makes an appearance if it's a big enough event.

The Assistant Secretary, Jack Horton, with whom I worked, participated in a number of those activities: groundbreaking, dam dedications. He was very active insofar as speaking to Reclamation groups and other groups in the West — he was from Wyoming. But those things weren't mutually exclusive — if the Assistant Secretary spoke, the Commissioner of Reclamation also spoke, you know. And in my time, at least, that wasn't a matter of contention or competition.

I'm trying to remember how many of those things I may have participated in . . . a few. I remember going to California to give a speech at a dedication out there, but that one related to the Bureau of Land Man-

agement not the Bureau of Reclamation. There were some others, but generally the Assistant Secretary handled those chores.

Storey: Rather than the Deputy Assistant . . .

Robison: Yeah, generally, that was the case. I mean he was the guy who was confirmed by the Senate. He was the one who had the responsibility.

Storey: And after you left there, you went back to the Bureau of Land Management?

Robison: No, after I left there in 1976, I returned to my home in Salt Lake City and to a job as Deputy Regional Solicitor for the Department of the Interior. I [first] went into the Department in the Solicitor's Office as an attorney — I served in that capacity for about five years. And I had "status" in the Solicitor's Office, and when I became a Deputy Assistant Secretary, it was really largely on loan from the Solicitor's Office. And I had reason to want to return home in early 1976. My wife was quite seriously ill and this was home to us, and so we arranged to come back, come to Salt Lake City with the Solicitor's Office.

Returns to Salt Lake City in 1976 to become Deputy Regional Solicitor for the Department of the Interior

So I served from 1976, early '76, through almost 1981 as an Assistant Regional Solicitor here in Salt Lake City. But my assignment largely was to be the attorney for the Bureau of Reclamation, so mostly the work I did while I was here during that five- - six-year period was legal work for the Bureau.

Assistant Regional Solicitor in Salt Lake City from 1976-1981

Storey: Now why would it have been Salt Lake because the Regional Office for the Bureau of Reclamation is here?

- Robison: Yeah, the Regional Office for the Solicitor is here and the Regional Office for the Bureau of Reclamation is also here.
- Storey: I thought there was a Regional Office for the Solicitor in Denver.
- Robison: There is . . .
- Storey: Oh, okay (laughing).
- Robison: There are several Regions for the Solicitor's Office: one out of Sacramento, California; one in Portland, Oregon; one here in Salt Lake City; one in Denver; and there are some others. Those are the ones in the West. Those are the Regional Offices and then there are Field Offices and Field Solicitors in a number of other locations: Boise, Santa Fe, Phoenix, and so on. But the Regional Office, one of them, was located in Salt Lake City.
- Storey: Which projects would you have been involved with in the Solicitor's Office then in the Bureau?
- Robison: Only those that deal with the Upper Colorado Region. Our jurisdiction from the standpoint of the Solicitor's Office would have only dealt with the Upper Colorado Region, so we had the Projects in Colorado, in New Mexico, Wyoming, Utah, largely. Those that have to do with largely the Upper Basin of the Colorado, the Projects that were authorized under the 1956 Colorado River Storage Act, and then the 1969[8 - ed.] Colorado River Project Act. Those are the ones we were concerned with.
- Storey: Okay. I'm not sure I know how to ask the next question but what I want to get to, I

Organization of the Solicitor's Offices

Reclamation and the Solicitor's Office

guess, is what was the bulk of the types of cases that Reclamation became involved in that required the Solicitor's Office to be involved?

Robison: Oh, we were concerned with all of the repayment contracts. We were concerned with all of the activity that related to land acquisition — Solicitor's Office has to essentially do that. And as relates to the numerous projects that were then underway, there was considerable land acquisition activity. We would serve as counsel to the Bureau in connection with the way the Colorado River is managed, the mainstem reservoirs, the storage of water, the release of water, the equalization of storages between the Upper Basin and the Lower Basin. Concerns over meeting the requirements of the Lower Basin under the Colorado River Compact, and any number of questions that might arise. We also provided legal assistance in connection with procurement. Oh, things like that.

And of course we would be involved with lawsuits, but this is not to say that there were a lot of lawsuits. But one particular vexing problem was the ownership of the bed of Utah Lake, as a matter of fact. The Feds claimed it, the State of Utah claimed it, there was a lawsuit that came about as a result of that that this office was very much involved in in preparation for that lawsuit. But there would be other kinds of lawsuits — there were some lawsuits brought by environmental groups over failure to comply with National Environmental Policy Act, things like that. The Solicitor's Office does not try those suits, but it prepares the litigation reports and assists the United States Attorney in his appearance in court.

Storey: Okay. So I think what I'm hearing you say is that there were two different large groups of activity that you'd be involved in. One was non-litigation matters where what you were doing is providing advice and assistance and the other was preparation for litigation.

Robison: That's essentially what the Solicitor's Office does, yeah.

Storey: When you said for instance that you advised about equalization of the Upper and Lower Basin and all that kind of stuff, I presume you're talking about — you're advising about the legal aspects of that?

Robison: Sure, the interpretation of the 1956 Act or the interpretation of the Colorado River Compact or the Upper Colorado River Compact. And there is a whole body of Reclamation law which you may be familiar with ...

Storey: Yeah, five, six volumes ...

Robison: ... which is the Bible, if you will, as far as Reclamation law is concerned, and much of that simply requires interpretation and the Bureau of Reclamation comes to the Solicitor's Office for aid and assistance in those kinds of matters.

It used to be in the early days of the Bureau that the Bureau had its own lawyers but oh, I think it was probably in the Eisenhower administration although I could be mistaken in this regard, it was decided to set up what amounted to an office of General Counsel in the Department of the Interior so that all of the lawyers representing all of the agencies would be in that office, the Solicitor's Office. And they would then not be on

Why Reclamation doesn't have its own lawyers

the payroll of the individual agencies and thus not beholden to those agencies, that was the theory, so that the advice they could give would be more independent than might otherwise be the case, and it would also serve better the interests of the Secretary himself. So since that time, there have been no lawyers working as lawyers per se in the various agencies. It is the Office of the Solicitor that provides that counsel.

Storey: And is it the Office of the Solicitor of the Department of Interior?

Robison: Oh, yes.

Storey: So each Department would have its own Solicitor's Office.

Robison: Well, the term "solicitor" is a little bit anachronistic. We still use that in the Department of the Interior. Labor did have a solicitor, whether they've changed or not, I don't know. But in most departments today, the legal advice . . . the legal duties are carried out by an Office of General Counsel. But the Office of the Solicitor which is the same as other agencies' Office of General Counsel is the arm of the Secretary that provides legal assistance to all of the entities within the Department of the Interior.

Storey: And then the U.S. Attorney who would represent Reclamation in court is a Justice Department employee? Is that correct?

Difference between Solicitor and U. S. Attorney responsibilities

Robison: Yes, yes.

Storey: Why is there that distinction? What safety valve or whatever is represented in that separation of counsel and courtroom appearance?

Robison: Well, basically under the old English system, you know, you had lawyers who were barristers, if you will, and then lawyers who were solicitors. And not all lawyers could really go into court and argue cases. That's kind of how this has evolved in our Federal system.

Each of the agencies or departments has lawyers to draft contracts or interpret contracts or interpret the law or acquire property or offer any kind of general legal counsel and advice to keep their clients out of trouble.

But when it comes to lawsuits involving the United States of America, and when you sue the Bureau of Reclamation or the Department of the Interior, you sue the United States of America, [and] our system requires that the United States in those instances be represented by the Department of Justice. ~~and~~ The Department of Justice lawyers may not know as much about a given case . . . the background, the nuances of the law that apply to the case, etc., as do the lawyers in the various agencies. And so they require help and assistance in prosecution of those lawsuits, but they are the experts with respect to trial procedure, with respect to examination of witnesses, with respect to all of the things that relate to trials per se. Whereas lawyers working for the various Departments are not necessarily trial lawyers.

Storey: And these folks are, licensed I believe is the term, to practice in various States and before the Supreme Court and so on?

Robison: Well, you need to be admitted to the Federal Court before which you practice, and Justice Department lawyers have obtained that admittance. And they may from time to

time, although it's rather rare I think, make appearances before State courts, but it's largely before Federal courts that this occurs. And in order to be a practitioner before a Federal court, you have to be a lawyer who has been admitted to practice before at least one State court.

Storey: Does this work out so that people, for instance in the Solicitor's Office, become specialists in an agency?

Robison: Oh yeah, sure, sure.

Storey: And they might make a whole career doing that?

Robison: Oh, when I was in the Department, my legal work mostly pertained to the Bureau of Reclamation. Reclamation law. The Blue Books. Now when I became Associate Solicitor for Energy and Resources, why my responsibilities expanded, and I had to know more about the Bureau of Land Management and its concerns.

Work in Solicitor's Office related mostly to Reclamation

But the way it works in the Solicitor's Office is while some people may be generalists to an extent, it usually happens that a given attorney will specialize in Reclamation or he'll specialize in Land Management or in Fish and Wildlife matters or whatever. And while during the course of his career he may shift from one to the other, which happens with some frequency, you tend to work in that part of the Solicitor's Office in Washington, for example, that has to do with Fish and Wildlife or has to do with Reclamation. Now when you get out into the field, where you don't have as many lawyers, why a guy may have to be more of a jack of all trades.

- Storey: And how large would the Salt Lake Regional Office have been when you were here, for instance?
- Robison: Oh, I don't remember exactly, but we probably had six or seven lawyers.
- Storey: And then a few secretaries . . .
- Robison: And yeah, an Office Administrator and oh, about three secretaries. That's my recollection.
- Storey: And legal aides of any kind?
- Robison: We did have some legal assistance. It largely was an arrangement with the local law schools whereby we would offer legal clerkships to students at the law schools, and they would come in and they would assist us with research and drafting of memoranda and examination of documents and so on. And they in turn would gain invaluable experience that would be worthwhile to them as they were proceeding with their legal training and careers.
- Storey: Did you happen to work with anyone there who is still active and does Reclamation work?
- Robison: Oh gosh, we worked with one young attorney who later joined the Solicitor's Office and did specialize to a large degree in Reclamation-type activity. Unfortunately, he died rather prematurely a couple of years ago. But I can think of a number who came through the Solicitor's Office in that kind of arrangement who did not pursue Federal careers but who pursued careers in the private practice or in state government, as a matter of fact, that were in the area of natu-

ral resources — not exclusively Reclamation but in the area of Natural Resource Law and activity.

Storey: What about water rights in the Solicitor's Office?

Robison: Well, I didn't even mention that and should have. We were very much concerned with water rights. We would appear at hearings of the State of Utah, or the State of Colorado, or the State of New Mexico, as the case may be. And defend water rights when there would be stream adjudications or we would make appearances in order to apply for and obtain water rights. The protection of water rights is, was, a rather important aspect of the Solicitor's Office. Yes, I made many appearances before proceedings, hearings of the Utah State Engineer, particularly in connection with water right activities.

Water rights activities at the Solicitor's Office

Storey: Water rights is one of those areas that's very volatile and emotional in the West, of course. I'm sort of fascinated - what your perspective is about Reclamation projects. Wayne Warne who was, I think, an Assistant Secretary (way) back when, has written this book on Reclamation and he says that we build the project, and we own the project even after it's repaid, and what that gives is the right for the use of the water by the irrigators. I'm interested in an attorney's perspective who's had a lot of experience with Reclamation law on who actually owns the water rights and so on? How does that work in a Reclamation project, generally, one where there aren't legal complications in the laws and so on?

Robison: Well, the Bureau of Reclamation in some jurisdictions would apply for the water right

and would hold the water right. But then its contracts with the District would provide for the District to utilize that water through a sale or repayment or whatever so that in large measure, the Bureau of Reclamation would hold the water right as trustee, if you will, for the beneficiaries of the Project. Now there can be some instances where the water right is larger than the needs of the beneficiaries. It would depend upon the contract, it would depend upon how the water right was secured and the terms and conditions under which it was obtained.

But where the Bureau of Reclamation could, [it would] dedicate water to newfound purposes ... Fish and Wildlife concerns, in-stream flow concerns, Recreation concerns, etc. The old contracts didn't ever allow for that, and Reclamation has been somewhat hamstrung in that it hasn't had a lot of flexibility in connection with those. The water right was either owned in some instances by the irrigation or M&I users themselves or the United States held it in such a way that all the water essentially was available for them and exclusively for them, as a matter of fact.

There is no single way that water rights have been obtained. In some jurisdictions, the Bureau owns them, in other jurisdictions, the water users own them, and they sort of transfer them to the United States for purposes of safekeeping, if you will. But under the older theories, generally the water users either owned them or the United States owned them in trust for the water users. Now, in more recent times, we have attempted to obtain those water rights and allow for ourselves greater flexibility for application for uses beyond the more narrow ones that Reclamation was originally concerned with. But I don't think there's any hard and fast

rule, it depends to a great degree upon the jurisdiction and the State law that applies.

Storey: And each State is different in the West? Or are there groups of States that use the same law?

Robison: Oh, I'd be unable to compare them except to say that generally, they all had their own bodies of water law and there was a time when instream flows were not recognized. That the only water rights you could obtain would be ones that would apply the water to so-called beneficial consumptive use . . . that any use that was made of water for fish and wildlife purposes or for instream flow values, endangered species, what have you, was all incidental to the beneficial consumptive use and you couldn't have a primary use for those particular purposes.

Instream flows and water rights

States in recent times have come around to the view that, "hey, you don't have to consumptively use the water in order to beneficially use it," and so in some jurisdictions, they now will recognize a right to just leave the water in the stream. In Utah, that's a right that can only be claimed, though, by the Department of Natural Resources. I think — I don't — an individual himself can't obtain a right for that purpose and that would vary from State to State, and some States don't recognize such a right, as a matter of fact.

Storey: And the Colorado Water Conservation Board has that right in Colorado, for instance.

Robison: Mm-hm, but it's generally a right that's recognized in a State entity and not in a private party, where it does obtain.

Storey: It's very common among Reclamation employees, I think, to believe . . . among some Reclamation employees to believe that once a water project is paid off, the project belongs to the water district. Could I have your perspectives on that from your lawyer's seat, your experience in the Solicitor's Office?

Ownership of paid-out Reclamation projects

Robison: Oh, I think after the Reclamation Act was passed in 1902 that the general understanding among those involved at that time was that the works would pass to the water users, once the payoff had been achieved. I don't think anybody at that time really foresaw the United States continuing to control either the water right or the works after payout had been achieved.

Later, I think it was the Factfinders Act, 1924 Act, language was written into the law that provided that the works would remain in the name of the United States until Congress should decide otherwise. So, an out was given for obtaining the works under that Act, provided that payout had been achieved, and Congress ~~then had enacted legislation that~~ [could] allowed for transfer. And here in Utah, some agitation has occurred to accomplish that but in more recent times, there is a reluctance on the part of water users to take over control and ~~ownership~~ title to the works, because they realized that there may be some liability that would attach to them in case of a failure or some kind of harm or injury done to somebody, and the fervor for obtaining title to the works at least in this Region is somewhat abated.

Storey: Yeah, one of the . . . I think I'm correct, a lot of people believe that turning over O&M, the O&M contracts that are generally negoti-

ated, and it seems like historically a lot of them were negotiated, say in the last half of the '20's and in the '30's — turn over ownership, But I believe I'm correct in saying that's not the case.

Robison: Very few have been turned over as I understand it, at least I'm not familiar with where that has taken place. Within the last three or four years, bills have been introduced in the Congress that turn over ownerships of the works . . . where they are single-purpose projects. Where it's only an irrigation project and the water users own all the water and the interest of the United States is somewhat negligible ...

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE.
START OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO.

This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey with Roland Robison on September 27, 1993.

Robison: ... But there's been reluctance on the part of the Congress to turn them over, too, with the idea that the interest of the United States is broader than that of the water users. And down the road, that interest will become manifest in various ways and means I think, I think that's been the attitude. It just doesn't happen very much any more if it ever did happen extensively and I don't think it did.

Storey: I've never found it . . . the Projects that I've found historically that were turned over were Projects that were very small and not very successful.

Robison: And ... strictly single purpose, yeah.

Storey: What about . . . I think I've got the numbers right, Public Law 102-575 that was passed

last year? Do you see a trend in the way water is going to be reappropriated from its historical uses that may be manifesting itself there?

Robison: Well, in that particular bill the Congress, at least as relates to the Upper Basin here, said if we're going to favor you with appropriations and allow you to construction ~~of~~ the Central Utah Project, then you water users have got to place into effect a very meaningful water conservation regime. So the Federal muscle has been used to accomplish that, and I would think, as a matter of fact, that wherever something like that can be accomplished, the Congress will be somewhat inclined to do it.

Water conservation

I don't know how much more money is going to be made available in future years by the Congress for large-scale water resource development activities. That day seems to be pretty much ~~be~~ passing, but I would suspect in any case where Federal dollars are proffered, that the *quid pro quo* will be that water conservation measures be carried out, that more concern and attention be paid to environmental considerations, fish and wildlife considerations.

I'm not an expert on the Central Valley Project situation, but what Congress in effect did there was sa[y]id, "Some of this water, irrigators, that you've been using in the past is now going to be dedicated to Fish and Wildlife concerns and interests." And I would think wherever some kind of agreement, assistance, the furnishing of money, or whatever, is asked of the Congress, part of the price for getting that is going to be the imposition of water conservation, using [of the] the water for fish and wildlife, for endangered species, for recreation, for ecological interests, etc., that's just in the cards.

- Storey: It is going to happen. Are you familiar with Wilkinson's book, *Crossing the Next Meridian*? [Charles F. Wilkinson, *Crossing the Next Meridian: Land, Water, and the Future of the West* ((Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1992). ed.] Charles Wilkinson, *Crossing the Next Meridian: Land, Water, and the Future of the West*
- Robison: I am.
- Storey: What do you think of it?
- Robison: Well . . .
- Storey: The water part (laughing). Let's not do the whole thing.
- Robison: Professor Wilkinson I think can make some very, very good points and I think he accurately charts the directions in which we're going to go. I think what you have to say about him is that he takes a rather fair and balanced approach to things. He recognizes that much of what was done in the past was good, some of it was not, that mistakes have been made that have to be corrected, and that we're not going to continue on the same path now as we were on some time ago with respect to water development. But he is not one of those who gets on the soap box and decries the fact that dams have been built, or that water has been used for irrigation purposes, and those kinds of things. And he recognizes clearly that much of what was done if not all that was done was done pursuant to national policy as articulated by the Congress of the United States, if you will. And so I take some comfort in that.
- I am not very comfortable with those who decry all that has been done in the name of Reclamation, because my own personal view is that much of what has been done in the name of Reclamation has been

good. I would tell you that we probably have built some projects that were more monuments to engineering than they were to public good. The idea that "boy, we want to build more dams, and divert more water, and put more land under irrigation, etc., regardless of the cost" — it was a bad one and in some instances, that kind of thinking occurred, you know. We all have to recognize that, but if you look here at this valley [the Salt Lake area -ed.], this valley would still be a desert and nobody would live here if it were not that we tried to make wise and beneficial use of the scarce water resources that there are here. Now in doing that, some mistakes may well have been made. Hopefully, some of those can be rectified, but I think by and large what was done here in this area was wise.

Wilkinson is just saying that we've got to change our ethic, that we've got to conserve water, that the era of big dam building is over with, that we've got to use more of our water in an ecologically sound way, that we've got to address fish and wildlife concerns, endangered species concerns. We may have to go without watering lawns in a desert environment. We may have to pay more attention to the health of our streams and our lakes, and we've also got to come to a conclusion that not every damned acre out there has to be irrigated, because some of it can't very practically be irrigated, at least from an economical standpoint, and from the standpoint of the value of the crops that are grown. All of those things. That's how I read him. I've listened to him speak. He spoke to a Bureau of Reclamation group here only a month ago, and I think he was well received.

"much of what has been done in the name of Reclamation has been good . . ."

Storey: Good. Well, we've strayed a little away from the Solicitor's Office and I'd like to move along chronologically. Is there anything else about the Solicitor's Office and its relationship to Reclamation that you think ought to be talked about?

Robison: Oh, I don't think so. My experience in both the Bureau of Reclamation and in the Solicitor's Office has been that generally, there was a good relationship between the two entities. At least my experience in dealing with Gil Stamm, particularly, when I was in Washington, was a good one with Maurice Langley was a very good one.

I think the Solicitor tried to be helpful and we didn't always give the answers that the Bureau wanted, and that sometimes caused some concern on the part of some. But we had to give the best advice we could give whether it was what they wanted to hear or not. That's part of your job. And I personally think the idea that you have a Solicitor's Office that's independent of the agency for whom it provides a service is a good one because it does help bolster that very necessary element of impartiality and objectivity which I think is important.

I don't know as there's anything more to add along those lines. I for one appreciated looking at the situation from both sides of the fence. I have achieved, I hope, a better appreciation of the points of view of both sides, but the Bureau did need the lawyers, and the lawyers I suppose needed the work (laughing).

Storey: I think one last question does occur to me. Is there an art to asking questions of your legal counsel? Is there . . .

The art of asking questions of your legal counsel

Robison: Oh, sure there is! And sometimes when you can see in advance what the answer is going to be, you may want to withdraw the question and that's happened before, too. Sure there is. You can ask the question in such a way that you'll get a narrower answer than otherwise might be the case, and you may want a narrower answer. And I think that the Solicitor's obligation is to provide a fair answer and an honest answer, but in some instances, he may not have to supply a universal answer — if you appreciate that distinction. I have never heard anybody in the Bureau who really understood the workings of the Solicitor's Office and the value of the legal advice ~~or~~ express the idea that he wished he didn't have legal service, because it's important, you do have to have it, and the smart people in the Bureau of Reclamation know how to use the services of the lawyers. And the smart lawyers know how to provide that service effectively.

Storey: When you left the Utah Regional Office of the Solicitor, what was your next career step then?

Robison: Oh, early on, after I got out of law school, I served in the Office of the Utah Attorney General. I was an Assistant Attorney General and later as the Deputy Attorney General for a time, and that was an invaluable time in my career. I was there maybe 3½ years . . . three years, I guess. And I established some friendships there that later on turned out to be somewhat influential in the later course of my career.

Assistant Attorney General
in Utah

One of the attorneys with whom I worked there and with whom I became fast friends continued his career with the State of Utah and he became an influential advisor to the then-Governor of Utah Scott Matheson.

and As he reported it to me, Governor Matheson was not happy with his relationship with the Bureau of Land Management here in Utah. And there were a number of things that the Governor wanted to do if possible in connection with exchanges of land . . . the blocking up of land relating to public lands in Utah — forty-two percent of all the lands in Utah are under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management. And the State holdings that it had received at Statehood were generally surrounded by those Federal lands and it made their management rather difficult, and some blocking up was desired by the Governor. And he had met with some resistance from the then State Director. And the long and short of it is that it was recommended to the Governor that he might approach me about seeking that position, because there was then a vacancy in the Office of State Director of the Bureau of Land Management in Utah. And I knew the Governor and I knew his advisor really well, and because it's a Federal position, and it's within the Department of the Interior, and because I was in the Solicitor's Office, and because I had also worked formerly with the State and therefore had some considerable knowledge about these matters, the Governor asked me if I would consider seeking the position. And he said if I would, he would lend his support.

And I said, "Well if you can get the members of the Utah Congressional delegation, particularly the Utah Senators, to go along with that, and give me my [their] support, I'll seek the position." They did and I did and so in September of 1981, I became the Utah State Director for the BLM, and I continued in that position for about six years here in Utah, in Salt Lake City.

Governor Scott Matheson approaches about seeking position of State Director for BLM

Becomes State Director of BLM in Utah in 1981

Storey: Yes, I remember, now that you mention it, I remember the land consolidation effort because I was on the staff then of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and reviewed to all of those things. I presume that you didn't have a lot of direct activity during that period with the Bureau of Reclamation. Is that a correct presumption?

Robison: I did not, as a matter of fact. I had very, very little contact with the Bureau during that time. Essentially, when I assumed that position in 1981, until I took my present position in 1989, I was out of the loop insofar as Bureau of Reclamation activities are concerned.

Storey: However, there's an interesting crossover that I'd like to explore a little bit. And that is the National Performance Review and the idea that agencies within Departments might sort of specialize. For instance, BLM might - one scenario, become a specialist in managing land whereas Reclamation might become more a specialist in engineering and so on. And there have been discussions about turning over Reclamation project lands to the Bureau of Land Management, rather than us retaining them. I don't want to back you into any corners from a policy point of view, but I'm interested in your perspectives from ... with that experience with the Bureau of Land Management. Whether you think that's workable and/or whether we should continue on with the current system and so on.

Robison: Oh, I think as relates to some of the large acquisitions that were made whether it was withdrawal [of] ~~from~~ public lands or actual purchase of lands from landowners for purposes of project construction where the

land is clearly excess to Bureau of Reclamation needs — there's no reason why we should hold that. For example, up here at Strawberry Reservoir, a large acreage was taken surrounding that reservoir, and it was largely taken with the idea that the water users could help defray their costs . . . help pay back their costs associated with the development by lease of those lands for grazing purposes and, if there were minerals that could be exploited, they could also use those revenues for that purpose. That was kind of the tenor of the thought going back to the 1908's and 1910's and so on, and so, in some instances, so-called grazing lands surrounding projects were taken. Far more than what was needed for project purposes . . . sometimes they were called watershed lands, sometimes grazing lands, etc.

In connection with Strawberry up here, those lands have now been turned over largely to the Forest Service, which surrounds the taken lands. In other instances where that has occurred, it doesn't make sense for the Bureau of Reclamation to retain those, and in large areas, in the Lower Colorado here in this Region, those lands have been turned over to the Bureau of Land Management, if the Bureau of Land Management happens to be the agency that is contiguous to our holdings. [On the other hand,] I think what we're essentially talking about are smaller areas surrounding our reservoirs, and I have generally opposed the idea that those should be turned over to the Forest Service or should be turned over to the BLM. I don't know as they have any greater expertise in managing recreation that's shoreline related than we have. I suspect they don't have as much, as a matter of fact. I don't think they can do it more cheaply, I don't think they can do it better,

and I don't think they can do it in conjunction with our own reservoir operations as well as we do.

I think that the Bureau of Reclamation needs to also maintain in the minds of the public that it is not simply a dam building agency, that it is a water storage and conservation agency. And in connection with those two activities there is an ancillary, if you will, and very important recreation and fish and wildlife activity that takes place. And we should not only manage those in conjunction with our own operations, but we should get the credit for managing them. I've always felt it was crazy — and I argued with the Bureau of Reclamation going back years ago on this — that the Bureau of Reclamation should consider itself only an engineering entity, and it should construct things and then it should walk away.

Up here at Strawberry, we've got a remarkable, wonderful recreation complex. And the Forest Service manages it, and the Forest Service gets all the credit — and we provided all the money and built all the facilities. Now, I'm parochial enough to think that the Bureau of Reclamation ought to get a little bit of that credit and I'm also, I think, fair enough in saying that the Forest Service can't manage those facilities any better than the Bureau can, and the Bureau's got ~~another interest~~ [other interests in the project that] the Forest Service doesn't have. And all of those interests can be meshed together in a management operation. And so I say no! Let's not turn over the recreation facilities, let's not turn over the fishing activities, let's not turn over any of those within that area that really is necessary for our project activity. Now if it's something

that [is] purely surplus, then let's turn it over.

Storey: That's very good. And I believe after you left the State Director's Office, then you said you became a Deputy Director in Washington for BLM?

Robison: Well, they asked me if I would leave my Utah State Director's job and go to Washington and be the Deputy Director . . . the number two man in the operation, and I was reluctant to do it. I still had kids in school — two kids in college and one in high school. My wife had died. And besides, I liked the job I had very much. But the Director in essence told me, "You can do it voluntarily or else you can do it involuntarily, but you gotta come back."

Forced to move to Washington, D.C., as Deputy Director of BLM

So I thought well, okay, I'll go back. So I went back for almost two years — it was never my intention to stay there longer than that. I had served in Washington the first time for eleven years, then I went back for two more, so I've served two stints in Washington . . . thirteen years. And for any Federal bureaucrat, that's fair, but I don't know as a guy needs to do it more than that. So I had a very interesting time back there, I enjoyed it very much. I had a great relationship with the Director of the BLM. And he was one who generally liked to stay in Washington, so he gave me all of the outside assignments.

So I spent two years traveling all over the West in pursuit of BLM interests and activities. But at the end of the Reagan administration, I simply wanted to come home. I had to for family considerations and other reasons. I had no interest in staying longer. As a matter of fact, I only lived out of a suitcase back there for two

years — I never even had a car back there.

And then that brings us up to where we are now. I was approached to take the vacancy here. I took it. It worked out to my advantage, and I hope it worked out to the Bureau of Reclamation's advantage, but that's where we are.

Storey: Well, we have arrived at the end of our time, I think, for today. If we could close down and pick up tomorrow, I'd appreciate it — if that's all right with you.

Robison: That's fine.

Storey: Okay. I would like to ask you whether or not you are willing to have your interview, both in terms of both the tapes and the transcripts that we will eventually do, be used by Reclamation researchers and outside researchers for purposes of historical research.

Robison: There isn't any . . . I haven't said anything that I'm concerned about. I haven't maligned anybody's character and told any tales out of school. Whatever I've said is fine. You can use it for whatever purpose you want.

Storey: I appreciate that. And thank you.

Storey: After discussing a schedule conflict with Mr. Robison for our next appointment tomorrow morning, it was decided that we would continue the interview on the afternoon of September 27, 1993, with a small break.

Storey: Well, we're up to your coming to the Bureau of Reclamation in 1989 then. That would get you back to Utah. Were you particularly

interested in Reclamation for any reason other than getting back to Utah?

Robison: Oh, I had had growing out of my previous experience some considerable interest in Reclamation. I think maybe I ought to explain that I served for a time as Administrative Assistant to Utah Governor George D. Clyde. That was in the early 1960's, not long after I got out of law school.

Interest in returning to Utah in 1989

It was after I was in the Attorney General's office, and Governor Clyde was the foremost spokesman for the State of Utah for passage of the Colorado River Storage Project Act in 1956. He had been the head of the Utah Water and Power Board, he'd been Dean of the College of Engineering at Utah State, he was "Mr. Water" in Utah as a matter of fact. And my identity with him over several years caused me to have a better appreciation and understanding about water development than might otherwise have been the case.

So having been somewhat tutored by him and then having served on Capital Hill for some time with a Congressman who was very much interested in the Bureau of Reclamation and water development and so on, early on brought me in touch with Reclamation concerns and activities. And then, of course, I did the legal work for, or much of it, for the Bureau of Reclamation in Washington and then out here in Salt Lake, so it wasn't an unnatural fit as far as that goes -- that is my coming to the Bureau of Reclamation again.

Storey: Did you come from a rural background in Utah, or were you from an urban situation?

Robison: Oh, my grandfather on my mother's side operated a sheep ranch in what would be

considered quite rural Utah, and I spent my summers when I was growing up on that sheep ranch. I was born in Morgan, which is a small Utah community, and so my background is very much agrarian, and rural, and water dependent.

Storey: I asked that because I'm a native Coloradoan myself and was raised in my early years in a rural area. The first conversation I ever remember was about water rights. And it makes a big impression on people when you're in a rural situation in the West, often.

Robison: That's interesting. One of the earliest recollections I have is going to my grandmother's house and seeing my uncle in bed all bandaged up. And the reason he was in bed, and the reason he was bandaged, is because he had gotten in an altercation with another individual over whose turn it was to use the water. And he had been struck on the head by a shovel, and that's kind of the way it used to be in the West (laughing).

One of earliest recollections is dispute over water

Storey: Yeah, gosh. Well, Reclamation had just gone through its reorganization in '87, '88. You arrived somewhat after that reorganization. Can you give me your perspectives, first of all on what you understand that the reorganization was supposed to achieve?

Robison: Well, as I understand it, the idea in the first place was that because Reclamation's bases are in the West that it would be a good idea to transfer essentially most of Reclamation to Denver. Denver would be its operational hub. And you would only leave in Washington a skeleton operation, if you will, that would respond to the interests of the Congress and be a player as much as it could be under those arrangements within the Depart-

Reflects on the intent of the reorganization in 1988

ment of the Interior and in the Washington establishment. That ...

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

START OF SIDE ONE, TAPE THREE

This is a continuation of the interview of Brit Storey with Roland Robison, Regional Director, in Salt Lake City, on September 27, 1993.

Robison: I don't know exactly what everybody had in mind in connection with that. When the idea was first broached with me, and while I was still in Washington with the BLM, I had some considerable problems with it because I just don't see how you can take an agency of the Government that is high profile, and of considerable concern to the Congress, and which spends a lot of money, and has a lot of influence, and take it out of the Washington scene and have it remain a major player.

Comments on proposals to move Reclamation out of Washington, D.C.

I expressed some doubt to some of my friends about the advisability of the move to the West because I think if an agency[']s ~~that's~~ going to survive and thrive and be a player on the scene that's got to be at the seat of the Government ... Washington, D.C., where it can easily meet with the members of the Congress, where it can be a player within the Department of the Interior. I've been around the Department long enough to know that there is competition among agencies in the Department. It's important to have the ear of the Secretary, it's important to have the Secretary know where you are and what you do and what you're about. And I think when you remove yourself from the main stage, you suffer as a consequence. But I was not a party to any of those discussions and I don't know all of the thinking that went on there.

With the Bureau of Land Management, I long had felt that there are certain functions carried out by the Bureau in Washington that need not be carried out there. There was an engineering presence for example in Washington that really didn't need to be in Washington, that could have been at the Denver Service Center.

The same would have obtained with the Bureau of Reclamation as far as I'm concerned. Certain functions could be carried out just as well in Denver as in Washington and so with respect to those, and I suppose we could look at them and identify them, it was quite appropriate to consider moving them, and there are several reasons for that. One is there are too many people in Washington, transportation is such a problem, it costs too much to live there. You can't afford to have mid-level Bureau people working in Washington because they can't survive very easily there. So to the extent that you don't need them, move them to a place that's more hospitable. So I agree with that.

But I just cannot see how you can take your Commissioner and your Deputy Commissioner and your principal policymaking people and move them out of the arena of play.

Storey: What do you think happened to that original vision of what Reclamation was supposed to be?

Robison: Well, I remember attending the very first meeting in which I participated of the Executive management committee . . . that is the Regional Directors of the Bureau and the Assistant Commissioners and the Deputy Commissioner and the Commissioner. It was held within two weeks of my coming

aboard, and I expressed the view, based upon my experience, that the Commissioner had been cut too lean in Washington, that he did not have enough helpers there to do the job that he really needed to do. And I remember I was probably rather indelicate in saying that, because I stepped on some toes in saying it; because what had been done was to a large degree what some of those present had wanted to have done.

But I expressed early on to Dennis Underwood when he asked my view what did I think about the shift to Denver and I said, "Well, unless you're going to move everybody to Denver, it is a mistake to move practically everybody except the Commissioner and leave him exposed and unclothed back there without any help or assistance." I said, "You've got to set about beefing up your staff," and he proceeded to do some of that, but now Dan Beard is in the process of kind of rethinking things, as you know.

But I really think that the idea that you could have the Bureau of Reclamation run out of Denver to the extent that it was envisioned that it could be run out of Denver was a mistake. I think the Commissioner of Reclamation needs an alter ego in Washington. He needs somebody who can think for him and speak for him and advise him there on the spot. And that it's awkward and really not very workable to have that alter ego located in Denver. If you want to have a head of Denver operations in Denver, that's fine, but your number two guy's got to be where you are, as a matter of fact.

Storey: What do you understand to have been the need for the reorganization? Was there something going on in Reclamation that caused there to need to be a reorganization?

Robison: I am not in a position to comment on that very well and there are others who can. To a degree, I think it was largely bottomed on personality conflicts, at least somewhat.

Storey: Yeah, I agree. (A brief interruption while Mr. Robison responds to a telephone call from the Principal Deputy Commissioner.) Let's see, we were talking about . . . what were we talking about? Oh, we were talking about the need for the reorganization.

Robison: And I said to you that I'm not the best person to comment on that. There were some decisions made because of the personalities involved I think, but because I was not a player in that, I'm just not able to comment intelligently on it.

I have told you that I didn't see anything wrong with a transfer of some people but I really did think that bifurcation of the Bureau if you will — and leaving some of it in Washington and leaving some of it in Denver and leaving the Commissioner without adequate tools — was a mistake. Now if you'd have transferred the Commissioner to Denver so that everything related to Reclamation was there, that might have worked, although I think it would not. Because I still don't think you can transfer an agency out of Washington and have it remain much of a player.

Now people have told me, "Well, the Bonneville Power Administration isn't in Washington or the Western Power Administration isn't in Washington," but they're not the Bureau of Reclamation either, with interests in as many States and with such a broad constituency. At least I don't view them as being quite the same, and maybe I do them a disservice because I don't adequately know their whole operation, but I

just think you can't take a major agency in the Department of the Interior and move it out and expect it to be as effective a player if it's not acting on the main stage.

Storey: What are the major issues that you think Reclamation has had to begin to deal with or begin to deal with during your tenure as Regional Director . . . agency-wide?

Robison: Oh, there is no question but what the role of Reclamation is changing, has changed rather dramatically, and it's happened in a relatively short period of time. The present Commissioner, of course, is talking about a new direction for the Bureau, but the previous Commissioner did, too, and the one before him did, too. I mean this has been an evolution, a gradual change from being a construction agency to an agency that is more concerned with the interests of a broader constituency which is more concerned with operation and management, with wiser use of water, with forays into environmental . . . ecological, endangered fish, fish and wildlife, recreation activities, on a much broader scale than it ever had been before.

The role of Reclamation is changing

Storey: Water conservation is an interesting topic. First time I came to Salt Lake must have been about 1967, and the gutters were still running water twenty-four hours a day as I recall. And nowadays, of course, I don't think anybody would think of doing something like that, but in those days, it was the common Western technique for street cleaning basically. Where do you see us going in terms of water conservation with Reclamation?

Robison: It still is a difficult area within which to operate, as we discussed earlier, where States

Water conservation issues

or water user groups, constituencies of some kind or other, come to the Federal Government to the Congress and ask for money, ask for favors of some kind or other. Wherever there is a Federal presence required, then the Feds can to a degree impose certain types of conservation measures on the beneficiaries and recipients, but it's still largely a State concern.

And the States should really be the leaders in the water conservation effort. Now unfortunately, they are not always in that position, but the States generally control the water — the Bureau of Reclamation receives whatever water rights it gets from State jurisdiction. Water rights are granted by States, water is apportioned by States, and the States are in the best position to place limitations on its use and affect conservation. That's the way it should happen ideally, and I think most people at the Federal level would say "gosh, if the States would do that, that would be fine." I think what's caused the Congress and Chairman Miller and others to take action in some of these areas is that the States have sort of defaulted and so there's been an effort to step into the breach.

I don't know how far you can carry that ... in Utah, you know, that's been . . . an effort's been made as relates to the Central Utah Completion Act. I don't know how many more Acts like that you're going to have. I really think, though, the long and short of it is there's nothing wrong with the Feds moving in that direction — I think it's appropriate for the Feds to do it. I think the Feds have got to be a little cautious, because they always raise the red flag of States Rights and cause some problems and difficulties, and it would just be far better if the initiative would be taken by the States.

Central Utah Completion Act

Storey: Do you think it will be?

Robison: Oh, I think it's going to come to that. I see here in Utah more concern over these issues than was a concern before. Water development is becoming more costly, water bills to residents are higher. Just because of practical economics, there's going to be in the years ahead a conservation ethic established, I think. Water is not going to be as cheap as it used to be, and the beneficiaries of this water that comes out of the Central Utah Project, if they complete that I&D System, are going to have to pay more money in taxes, or whatever.

I see newspaper editorials here about water conservation — a great effort has been made in the past and the Bureau has been a big player in this in converting from flood irrigation to sprinkler irrigation, and more and more efforts will be made along those lines. Of course what has happened with sprinkler irrigation is in many instances, it's only freed up water for irrigation of other areas, but it's also freed up water for other uses. I just see that happening . . . you're hearing now some recommendations that we not plant lawns in this country. You know, the early pioneers tried to make the desert here a part of New England, and it doesn't always adapt itself to that. But I think you're going to see more xeriscape efforts, wiser use of water, and as we dedicate more and more of our water to instream flows, to fish and wildlife concerns, we're going to have less of it to apply. And the Utah population is growing tremendously as is the population in all the Rocky Mountain West, and it's going to just simply require better uses of our water supplies.

Storey: But I take it you don't see, for instance, major construction projects on the horizon, beyond what's already in progress.

Robison: Well, we dedicated the Jordanelle Dam ten days ago. That's the largest storage project associated with the Bonneville Unit of the Central Utah Project. We have for all practical purposes completed, now, the municipal and industrial water supply system. All that remains to be done is the building of the irrigation and drainage system that would carry water to the central part of the State. The bill that was enacted by the Congress last year provides that that shall be constructed by the Central Utah Water Conservancy District acting as a quasi-Federal entity. So the Bureau of Reclamation will not build that . . . whether it will really be built or not is another matter. Whether the State can raise its cost share amount is still open to question.

But, be that as it may, the Bureau of Reclamation in this Region now only has one rather large construction activity yet to do, and that would be construction of the Animas-La Plata Project in southwest Colorado and northwest New Mexico. That provides water to Indian tribes, as well as to communities in the area, and would allow for some extensive new irrigation. It's a highly controversial project, it's opposed vigorously by environmental concerns. And there are interests within the Government who are not very pleased with it . . . the OMB and the EPA. What has kept it going thus far is the fact that construction of that project would satisfy Indian water right concerns of two Indian tribes: the Southern Utes and the Ute Mountain Utes. It's supported vigorously by the Colorado Congressional Delegation, at least those directly

concerned. Thus far, the State Government . . . the Governor and the State officials have supported it, but quite frankly, it will be difficult to construct because of its high cost and the opposition of environmental interests. If that is not built, and we won't know whether it will be built for another eighteen months or so because we won't complete the supplement to the Environmental Impact Statement that we're presently preparing for at least another eighteen months. If that is built, that will still give us some construction activity. If it is not built, why that's the end of the large-scale construction activity by the Bureau of Reclamation in this Region.

We're winding down the Dolores Project. We're winding down the Central Utah Project. We have a rather extensive Safety of Dams Program here. Many of the reservoirs in this Region were built in the 1930's, 1940's, a good many of them anyway, 1950's, are now becoming older and some of them need to be rehabilitated. And that will require some considerable construction, if we go ahead and do all of that, but that requires money and it requires cost sharing, and so a lot of things have to take place before all of that happens. But that would be the big construction activity here in this Region, if we continue at all in that mode.

Otherwise, the challenge before the Bureau of Reclamation is to operate the existing facilities that it has, and that includes the mainstem facilities on the Colorado system. That includes Flaming Gorge, and Glen Canyon Dam, and Navajo Dam, and the Curecanti System — operating those in a sensible way that accommodates as broad a constituency as possible. Those dams on the mainstem are largely envisioned as cash registers in some way, that is, they

One of Reclamation's challenges is to operate existing facilities

were impoundments for purposes of producing power that could be sold to help defray the irrigation costs that the irrigators weren't able to repay. That wasn't their only purpose, of course. The Upper Basin needed a storage facility in order to guarantee that it could meet downstream deliveries to the Lower Basin under the Colorado River Compact. And without a storage facility, it was difficult for the Upper Basin to develop its resources, so water resources of [storage by] that facility provided that capability. But I don't see any large-scale construction activity separate apart from Safety of Dams activity in the future.

Storey: O&M and Safety of Dams are the two things that are going to be the Reclamation's future?

Robison: Well O&M, but that's just not common, ordinary, heretofore practiced O&M — I think it's going to require imagination. How can we take these facilities and better utilize them in behalf of many more interests than they've been utilized [for - ed.] in the past? It's going to require some considerable planning, not only land use planning but operational planning. How can we get the maximum or the optimum out of our facilities? How can we increase fish and wildlife benefits? How can we make them more usable for recreation purposes? How do we address endangered species concerns? How can we . . . as we're doing at the Glen Canyon Dam . . . operate the facilities so that we can address the concerns of the boaters on the lake, the recreationists on the lake, the recreationists below the dam, the endangered species concerns, the trout fishermen below the dam, the Native American interests? Plus the irrigators, plus the water

users, plus Mexico, plus water quality, all of those kinds of things. That requires some considerable thought, effort, planning, and it takes people to do all of that.

Storey: I was talking to somebody the other day, for instance, who said they didn't believe Colorado would ever be able to use their full allotment under the Colorado River Compact because of instream flow issues, and various other things. Do you have any thoughts on where we're going with that — with the Colorado River Compact?

Robison: Oh, it depends I suppose, on what you mean by use. If leaving water in a stream is use, yeah, they'll be able to use it. If you mean does every drop of water have to be put in somebody's tap and sprinkled on somebody's lawn or somebody's alfalfa field, or run through some kind of industrial complex or something, I think it's clear that not all the water in the old sense of beneficial consumptive use will be used. Some water is going to leave Utah, and some is going to leave Wyoming, and some is going to leave Colorado in the streams. And it just won't be put to the traditional beneficial consumptive use, because some of our water is going to be dedicated to wild and scenic rivers purposes, you know? And some of it's going to be left in the stream in order to make sure that we still have Humpback Chub, and Colorado Squawfish, and other endangered species. And some of it is going to course through National Parks in order to enhance their beauty, and so on.

So some of it's just going to be left in the stream, but will it be used? Yeah, it'll be used in the broader sense of the word. But will it be used in a narrow sense? A good part of it, and it's hard for me to say

Using Colorado River Basin water

how much. But at least some identifiable part will not be spread upon the land or run through an industrial complex.

Storey: How about other issues besides construction of Animas-La Plata that have come up since you've become Regional Director? Maybe issues with water users or nonconstruction kinds of issues.

Robison: When I took this job, I essentially was told that there were three things that I was to pursue — they were the three "big ticket items" of concern in the Region.

One was to move ahead and push to conclusion the development of the Bonneville Unit of the Central Utah Project. We are now entering that conclusionary stage, as a matter of fact.

The second was to undertake the development of an Environmental Impact Statement covering the operation of the Glen Canyon Dam. That is well underway, and we expect to issue our draft Environmental Statement within sixty days, our final will be toward the end of 1994. That has been a mammoth and exhaustive undertaking; it's required a lot of work by some very good people in this Region. When we first bit that off, we met with a lot of opposition, there were many groups out there who were saying that the Bureau of Reclamation can't objectively carry out that task, and somebody else ought to do it. There was considerable suspicion on the part of a lot of groups, particularly the environmental groups, etc. We have over the past three years, through countless meetings, tremendous efforts at outreach, the involvement of all kinds of publics, through the production of good, sound, solid work demonstrated I think to everybody out there that we can do a good

Three items I was told to work on as regional director

Move to complete the Bonneville Unit of the Central Utah Project

Development of environmental statement for operation of Glen Canyon Dam

job and have done a good job. If there's anything that I'm proud of, it's the effort that we put forth in that regard and the end result of that effort. I think we're coming up with a very good EIS, and I think it's going to lead to considerable changes in the operation of the Glen Canyon Dam. And I pay a lot of tribute to our people who have been involved in that.

Storey: There have already been I believe interim changes made.

Robison: Oh, there have been, yes, yes.

Storey: And where were those decisions made for those interim changes?

Robison: Well, we developed an interim operating plan here with our own people, we have scientists, senior scientists and others, who work with us. We took the information, the data that we had, etc., and we put into play an interim operating plan. Now, there were great pressures brought to bear on us to do that . . . we didn't do that in a vacuum. The voters were insisting upon it, members of the Congress were insisting upon it, the recreationists were, etc., and those who didn't want it to happen were largely the power consumers who were happy with things the way they were, because we had reduced considerably the peaking power capacity of that dam by our interim operations. And if we had not have come up with interim operations on our own, I think the Congress would have forced them upon us as far as that goes. So we weren't just undertaking that in vacuum all by ourselves . . . pressures were mounting. But nonetheless, we largely developed that here among ourselves and our cooperating agencies. You know, the

Park Service has been involved in this, the Fish and Wildlife Service has, the State of Arizona has through its Game and Fish people, Indian tribes have also been involved, and the Western Area Power Administration. So you know, there have been a lot of people involved in this, plus a whole retinue of ...

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE THREE
START OF SIDE TWO, TAPE THREE

Robison: ... the various environmental groups, the Colorado River Commission, the various irrigating groups that are concerned, the States themselves, so you know, there have been a lot of players, a lot of players.

The third item that I was told that I was to pursue with some vigor was the construction of the Animas-La Plata Project. And early on, I just simply decided that we could not proceed with that project without writing a supplement to the original 1980 EIS. And we've been in the process now of doing that for some time. Whether that project will ever be built or not, I can't say because as I've indicated earlier it's quite controversial. But you asked about the things that have been of concern and import during the time that I've been here since 1989 — those are the three big items. There are been a lot of ancillary items, a lot of less important items, but those have been the three big issues.

Told to pursue construction of the Animas-La Plata Project

Storey: Do you see, going back to the Glen Canyon issue, do you see a shifting and realignment of Reclamation's constituencies developing around that issue?

Robison: Well, that's symptomatic, I suppose, of a realignment whether that causes it or not is something else again. This was one of the first big efforts to look at operation of a facility in the interest of a broader constituency. I don't think there's any question but that's the direction in which we're going. I think you're seeing that happening now in the Pacific Northwest, and it's happening in California. I think we were kind of in the vanguard of that movement because we happened to have the dam above a National Park that's of tremendous significance, and pressures were brought to bear on that I guess early on, but it's just ... we're going to look at all of our facilities, I imagine, to see how we can better manage them in the interests of a viable and sound ecology.

Storey: Oh, of course, Commissioner Beard has taken office, I think it was March. And he's very intent on reorganizing into an effective . . . doing an effective reorganization, I guess you'd say. And as a result, we've had CPORT [Commissioners Program Organization Review Team - ed.] EMC's [Executive Management Committee - ed.] response to C-Port, and so on. What do you feel is the logical way to deal with the issues that are being raised now?

Robison: Oh, I can't fault the Commissioner at all — in fact, I laud his efforts to date. I think he has made some very deft and important steps in the right direction. And in saying that, I don't fault at all Commissioner Underwood, because Commissioner Underwood clearly saw that the Bureau had to change, and he was marching the Bureau in the mode of change. He fostered the Strategic Plan concept and implementation of it, and so on. But I think it's also clear that Commissioner

Beard's orientation is more clearly in the direction of environmental considerations than any of his predecessors, growing out of his background and experience and his proclaimed philosophy. I think the appointment of the CPORT group . . . they're looking at ways and means to do this job better and looking at the organization that we need to do it, laying out some kind of blueprint for the Bureau for the future was very wise. And I think they came up with a good product. I think now what has to be done is for the Commissioner to decide, because he can't do all of those things at once, which ones of those things he should pursue on the short term. And he's got to clearly decide what it is he wants the Bureau of Reclamation to do — does he want the Bureau to continue to do work for other agencies? Does he want us to be involved in the work of the EPA, as we have been? Does he want us to be pursuing work for Native Americans? Or does he want us to be involved in the international field, for example?

See, there was an effort during the past administration to get the Bureau to branch out into some of these areas because it recognized it wasn't going to do some of the construction, and therefore it could pick up the slack, if you will, by performing more work for other agencies. I'm not so sure that's the way the Commissioner wants to go now. But some cuts have got to be made on that score because some of us have got some active work going there, and if we're not to do that any more, then we've got to be taking some actions accordingly.

I think he's already taken some steps to fix-up the organization, if you will. I think he clearly understands that the focal point of Reclamation's policy activity's got

to be in Washington. He's eliminated the dual ~~Assistant~~ [Deputy - ed.] Commissioner-ship by taking care of that office in Denver and no longer have a Deputy Commissioner in Denver. Well now, wait a minute, I'm misspeaking . . . he appointed a Deputy Commissioner in Denver but whose job is largely even though he's a Deputy Commissioner in charge of Denver operations. It's not the policy position, as I view it at least, that it was envisioned before.

Storey: And [Don - ed.] Glaser doesn't view it as a policy position any longer.

Robison: Yes, it still bears that title but its purpose has been changed, and I think for the better. I think he will strengthen the Washington Office some more, which in my judgment is appropriate. He's clearly laying out a blueprint for Reclamation's future. I think thus far he's done very well — and I can only cheer him on in that regard.

Storey: Well, you've worked with two Commissioners now as Regional Director . . . Beard and Underwood. What kind of . . . how do you perceive their styles to be the same and different?

Robison: Well, Beard has some real advantages. Number one, he had worked in the Department before: he was a Deputy Assistant Secretary for Land and Water under the Carter Administration. So having worked in the Department, he has a feel for how it functions and operates, which I think is a great plus.

Secondly, he has worked on the Hill for a long period of time, and he's worked with very important people. If you're looking at somebody important to have

Comments on Commissioners
Dennis Underwood and Dan
Beard

worked with, there's nobody who better fits in that category than George Miller. He's Chairman of the Committee on the House side, and he's powerful and has rather pronounced views. Beard has worked on the Hill long enough to establish liaisons with a lot of important people up there. Besides that, he understands how that system works. I think that experience and those contacts and liaisons are just invaluable to him. I don't know anybody who comes into the position of Commissioner of Reclamation as well fortified as he is in those regards.

To repeat, he came in knowing quite a bit about the Department, he knows now one heck of a lot about the legislative process, and he knows the right people up there. Plus, he is a Commissioner who's working with a Congress of the same party as the [Clinton - ed.] Administration and that hasn't happened for quite some time, at least where both houses have been of the same party. So he's in a great position to advance his agenda as long as he articulates it, and he is articulating it. And what he's saying is what the people in the White House and what the people on the Hill want to hear. So there's that cohesion, that unity of purpose, and that strength that gives him tremendous advantages as far as I'm concerned.

Now, they may not be advantages insofar as irrigators are concerned, or the traditional constituency of the Bureau of Reclamation is concerned — the power people, etc. But if you're looking at it from the standpoint of the new Bureau and it becoming an environmental, ecologically attuned organization, then he's in great, great position.

Contrast that with Underwood. Underwood is one of the nicest guys I ever met and one of the hardest working people

I've ever met, but Underwood had the disadvantage of having an administration that was at odds with the Congress most of the time. And an administration that was even reluctant to talk to the Congress, and there was never a very good alliance there. And it was difficult for Underwood to operate in that climate, as a matter of fact. And Underwood did not have the relationships, did not have the strengths, up on the Hill, nor, I think, within the Department of the Interior that Beard has. Beard is looked upon with admiration and great favor by the Secretary and by people in the White House, etc. I think Dennis had the disadvantage of having an administration that wasn't nearly as interested in what he was trying to do as he was. And so he kind of to a degree got lost in the shuffle, unfortunately. That's not the case with Beard.

Storey:

Well, you know you just mentioned that we're moving into a new area of environmental concerns, water conservation, and so on. One of my interests is how does Reclamation determine what the "public interest" is? The "public interest" seems like it's so amorphous. How do you deal with that issue?

How does Reclamation determine what the public interest is?

Robison:

Well, what was yesterday's public interest isn't necessarily today's public interest. Reclamation was very, very much a force in the Department of Interior and in the body politic, in the Congress when I first went to Washington in the 1960's. Floyd Dominy would come up to the Hill to testify on a bill and whatever Floyd Dominy said, all those Congressmen just believed and cheered on, you know? He was as big a force around Washington as there was, at least in his area of operation. All the Western Congressmen

wanted more dams, all of them wanted more water developed. And all the constituents wanted that, so the famous "iron triangle" was working to perfection, in those days. And that was an expression, I suppose, of the public will . . . what was good for the people.

Well, we've changed somewhat since that time. I don't know as the Bureau of Reclamation is in the vanguard of forming public opinion and deciding what's good for the public. But I think Dan Beard would kind of like to put it there, and his view is that it ought to be in the vanguard of the environment and the ecology. And that's probably as good a public will and public purpose as any in this day and in this time. And I say all that, as I said before, not decrying what happened in the past because by and large what happened in the past was an expression of then public will. And much of that was good, but, of course, not all of it was.

Storey: Okay. Is there anything else we ought to be talking about? About the Regions, about the reorganization, about Reclamation as a whole?

Robison: We ought to say this: people who work for Government too often are maligned, in my judgment. My experience in Government has been limited so that I don't know how the IRS functions and I don't have an appreciation for people concerned with Social Security, and housing development, and drug enforcement. Mine's been limited largely to natural resources and agencies associated with natural resource concerns. But in the Bureau of Reclamation and the Bureau of Land Management and the Department of the Interior, generally, the people with whom

"people who work for government too often are maligned. . ."

I have worked have been fine people. They have been hard-working people, they've been interested people, they've been dedicated people, and they have had, almost all of them, the interest of the public and the general welfare of their country at heart. It's easy to criticize people who work for Government, and I hear a lot of criticism. But my experience has not been that they are people who don't work hard, that they are not dedicated people, that they are not people interested in the public welfare. The opposite of that has been true, and I'm now about to finish my Federal career. And I've had a very interesting and exciting Federal career, and I've enjoyed it. It hasn't been the norm or the standard, it's been rather eclectic, as a matter of fact. But it's been a great experience for me and I think if I were to start all over again, I'm not sure I would do it any differently than I've done it.

I've always encouraged people in the Government service to do a number of things, I kind of feel sorry for somebody who's been an engineer with the Bureau of Reclamation and spent all of his time in one Project Office, because I think he's limited his opportunities and experiences. So I'm happy that I moved around a bit and had opportunity to work with a number of agencies, and work not only at the State Government level but at the Federal level, and not only at the field but in Washington and so on. So it's been fun. But my experience has been by and large that the Government career is a good one and the people who work for Government are good people.

Storey: Good. Well, thank you again. Once again, I need to ask you if the tapes and transcripts from this interview can be used by Reclamation researchers and outside researchers.

Robison: Anything that I've said can be used by anybody for any purpose, okay?

Storey: Good. Thank you.

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE THREE

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM GUIDELINES: BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

Effective Date: October 13, 1994

COOPERATIVE PROGRAM WITH THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION (NARA)

The Bureau of Reclamation conducts its oral history program cooperatively with NARA because Reclamation wishes to permanently protect the data obtained through implementation of its oral history program, facilitate research in Reclamation's history, and assure permanent access of Reclamation and researchers to the data resulting from implementation of its oral history program. This cooperative program permits Reclamation to: use and distribute unrestricted oral history materials; use and distribute restricted oral history materials after the restrictions end; and, close interviews to public access and researcher access through restrictions contained in a donor's deed of gift accepted by the Archivist of the United States. The program is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding between the Bureau of Reclamation and the National Archives and Records Administration. These Oral History Program Guidelines of the Bureau of Reclamation fulfill one condition of that agreement and are required to be followed.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

The ideal sought in Bureau of Reclamation oral history transcripts is to retain information understood today which may not be clearly understood, or will be lost entirely, in the future; yet, still retain facts and opinions, speech patterns, inflections, characteristics, and flavor of speech. This shall be done through preservation of oral history interviews: on cassette tapes and in printed transcriptions.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS DONE OUTSIDE THE DENVER OFFICE

Oral history interviews done outside the Denver Office should conform to the guidance in this document to assure that the resulting tapes and transcripts will be accepted by the National Archives and Records Administration for permanent storage and retention. Even if that is not done, copies of tapes and transcripts should be provided to the Oral History program in the Denver Office.

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEWS

Preparation for Interviews

Effective interviews are dependent upon proper preparation in advance. A brief telephone conversation with the prospective interviewee should provide basic background about where the interviewee worked at Reclamation and types of responsibility. Using that information, basic research into the offices involved and relevant projects may be conducted.

It is always a good idea to have a list of questions ready in advance of the interview. These should contain both general and specific questions about Reclamation and the interviewee's special areas of expertise and responsibility.

Obtaining Deed of Gift

Signature of the interviewee on the approved deed of gift should be obtained before the interview--with the understanding that clauses limiting access to all or part of the interview may be added after the interview if the interviewee deems it necessary.

The interviewer will also sign the deed of gift as a simple acknowledgement of conduct of the interview.

Objective of the Interview

ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT, WHILE WE ALSO WANT GENERAL BACKGROUND ABOUT THE PERSON BEING INTERVIEWED, THE OBJECTIVE(S) OF THE INTERVIEW IS:

TO PRESERVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BUREAU OF RECLAMATION, ITS PROJECTS, THE COMMUNITIES ON ITS PROJECTS, AND PERCEPTIONS OF BOTH INSIDERS AND OUTSIDERS ABOUT THE BUREAU OF RECLAMATION.

Conduct of the Interview (Including Opening and Closing Statements on Tape)

Introducing the Interview Before Taping Begins

Before beginning the interview discuss:

the general nature of what is going to happen,

the deed of gift and request signature of it,

point out that the interviewee may at any time state that they don't wish to discuss the topic proposed,

state that in addition to information strictly about the Bureau of Reclamation you want general family, education, biographical outline and other information about the interviewee,

Explain that the interview will be transcribed and then transmitted to the interviewee for review for accuracy and correct spellings. The interviewee will then be asked to initial each page of the interview.

Beginning the Interview on Tape

Open the interview with a statement which includes the following information:

Names of interviewer and interviewee.

Any pertinent information such as: farmer on _____ Project, or, electrician at Hoover Dam, or, operator at Minidoka Dam, or, watermaster of the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, etc..

Location

Date

Time

Point out to the interviewee that the conversation is being recorded and ask permission to record the conversation.

Conduct of the Interview on Tape

Try to avoid questions which can be answered with yes and no. Instead ask for descriptions, explanations of events or working conditions or relationships with the community, etc.

Responses that include hand motions need supplemental work by the interviewer. When a person says "Oh, it was about this high" [and holds a hand about 2½ feet above the floor] -- we have no record of the meaning of what was said. The interviewer must integrate words into the tape to provide the necessary meaning, e.g., "Oh, about 2½ feet high, then?"

Just Before Ending the Interview

Before closing an interview, ask the interviewee whether (s)he wishes to add anything, recount an interesting story, or express any perspectives on Reclamation that were not already covered.

Ending the Interview

In spite of the signed deed of gift, each interview should end with a question such as this:

May we quote from and otherwise use the information in this interview for purposes of research and quotation? And may we also provide it to researchers interested in Reclamation and its history for purposes of research and quotation?

The end of the interview should be a brief restatement, ON TAPE, as to the identity of interviewer and interviewee, time, date, and location.

PREPARATION OF TRANSCRIPTS²

Use of Computers

For editorial and other reasons it is necessary to use an IBM compatible computer using WordPerfect 5.1 or a later version for transcription of Bureau of Reclamation oral history interviews.

Objectives

Transcription and editing of oral history interviews by the Bureau of Reclamation shall be carried out in accordance with this guidance.

Transcription shall be done only with very limited editing. The basic objective is a verbatim transcript of the interview.

The Parts of the Final Transcript

² Much of this material is developed from Shirley E. Stephenson, *Editing and Indexing: Guidelines for Oral History* (Fullerton: California State University, 1978 (Second Printing with revisions - 1983).

The following will normally be the outline of a completed transcript, and when transmitted to the interviewee for review the transcript will be as nearly complete as possible:

- ◆ Title Page with suggested bibliographic citation form on the back of the page near the bottom. The title page should include the information and be laid out as shown in Appendix 1.
- ◆ Table of Contents -- use the table of contents function of WordPerfect to do this.
- ◆ An "Introduction" to the transcript with background material on the interviewee and interview, and including:
 - Discussion of the time, location, date, and circumstances of the interview.
 - Listing of each Bureau of Reclamation employee or contractor involved in the interviewing, transcribing, editing, and indexing of the interview.
- ◆ Copy of the signed and dated "Statement of Donation" for the interview.
- ◆ The transcript of the interview.
- ◆ Appendices, including:
 - A copy of the Bureau of Reclamation's "oral history program guidelines".
 - A list of donated photographs (including copies made at Reclamation expense which were only loaned) and/or documents -- if any provided by the interviewee/donor.
 - Copies of any photographs and/or documents.
- ◆ Index to the transcript -- use the indexing function of WordPerfect to do this.

Page Layout of Transcripts

Begin the first page of the transcript with the heading "Oral History Interview of _____."

Single space the heading on the first page. Double space the transcript itself.

Insert a centered footer which will include the page number to begin after the first page of the transcript in this format (8 pt. Times Roman font):

Name of Interviewee
 Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Program
 Date of Interview
 Page Ctrl-B

The transcript, if it falls naturally into distinct segments may have headings for each segment inserted in the transcript.

To indicate the speaker use the last name of the person followed by a colon on the left margin of the page, e.g.:

Wilson: Would you tell me about your educational experience?

Smythesville: I was educated, first, at a one- room school house in Wittsendburg, .
 . .

After the name of the speaker indent as needed to line up the left edge of the text for all speakers. For instance do not do the following:

Babb: Would you tell me about your educational experience?

Smythesville: I was educated, first, at a one- room school house in Wittsendburg, .
 . .

Instead, indent twice after Babb and once after Smythesville for this effect:

Babb: Would you tell me about your educational experience?

Smythesville: I was educated, first, at a one- room school house in Wittsendburg, .
 . .

Indicating paragraphs in transcripts should follow the following rules:

Immediately after the name of the speaker do not tab at the beginning of the paragraph. For all subsequent paragraphs tab the beginning of the paragraph and do not insert extra spaces. For instance:

Watson: Would you tell me about your education?

Witt: Well, I went to grade school at South Wittburg, junior high school at West Wittburg, and High School at South Inglewood.

On the other hand, my older sister went to grade school at South Wittburg, and then attended West Wittburg Junior High School before going off to finishing school in Basel, Switzerland.

Then I went to college at . . .

Indicating the Beginning and end of Tapes

Indicate the beginning and end of each side of tapes in the transcript. Place this notation on the left margin lined up with names. Do not indicate the beginning of the first tape -- simply begin the transcript. For instance (note single spacing):

END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1.
BEGINNING OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1.

Smith: There was no indication that we . . .

If interviews/sessions on more than one date occurred then use the following format:

END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 2. SEPTEMBER 15, 1993.
BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1. OCTOBER 22, 1993.

Smith: There was no indication that we . . .

In such cases, place that date at the end of all indications of tape changes in order to help quickly orient readers/researchers:

END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1. SEPTEMBER 15, 1993.
BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 2. SEPTEMBER 15, 1993.

Smith: There was no indication that we . . .

Editorial Conventions

Transcription shall be done only with very limited editing -- punctuation designed to clarify meaning must be provided; only false starts and redundant oral sounds shall be edited out of the transcript with no indication they have been removed; interruptions to the interview or situations when the conversation wanders from the topic may be indicated in brackets and not included; to the extent possible full identification of individuals and geographic place names shall be provided.

Punctuation Conventions

Punctuation is the best tool for the transcriber and editor to provide clarity, understandability, and readability. Do not rearrange sentences or words to do this. Punctuation must simply reflect the original meaning and the original arrangement of thoughts.

Quotation marks.

Do not use quotes around the words of the interviewee as spoken to the interviewer. Use quotes around words which are presented by the interviewee as quotes of another person, e.g., -- then he said to me "Well, if you want it that way you can go ahead and do it."

Place commas and periods inside quotation marks -- regardless of whether the punctuation belongs to the quotation or the sentence as a whole.

Place colons and semicolons outside quotation marks.

Question marks and exclamation marks are placed inside or outside the quotation marks dependent upon whether or not they belong to the quotation or to the sentence as a whole.

PARENTHESES ARE USED TO INDICATE THINGS WHICH ARE ON THE TAPE. When laughter or other expressive sounds occur indicate them in parentheses =(). Indicate only what is on the tape with parentheses =().

ALSO USE PARENTHESES to include brief interjections in a discussion. For instance:

Smith: At that time we were assigned to special duty as concrete inspectors for the construction of the dam. We found that the quantity of ice

mixed with the concrete was insufficient to reduce the temperature properly, (Jones: Yes.) and we had to work that issue out with the contractor. That only took a day, but it was rather tense because the contractor had to shut down the [concrete] batch plant while we worked it out. (Jones: Um-hmm.). The contractor was particularly concerned that she wouldn't fall behind schedule, and . . .

BRACKETS ARE USED TO INDICATE SUPPLEMENTAL EDITORIAL INFORMATION SUCH AS INTERPOLATIONS, EXPLANATIONS, AND CORRECTIONS PROVIDED BY THE EDITOR WHICH WAS NOT ON THE ORIGINAL TAPE -- place it in brackets =[]

FOOTNOTES:

May be used to provide supplemental editorial information. This would generally be done for researched information added to clarify and supplement the interview while brackets would provide brief information intended to clarify what was said.

Footnotes must be attributed to indicate who added the material. If the editor made the addition, the footnote should be followed by: (Ed.) If the addition was made by the interviewee, the footnote should be followed by the initials of the interviewee in parentheses.

Footnotes should be printed at the bottom of the page on which they appear in the final transcript rather than at the end of the entire transcript or of a section of it. The following conventions should be used (using WordPerfect set these conventions in the options to footnotes at the beginning of the transcript):

The footnote number in the text shall be superscript.

The footnote(s) shall be separated from the text on the page with a line from margin to margin of the page.

The footnote number in the footnote shall be on the left margin with the beginning of text one tab in from the note.

The footnote number in the note shall be full-size and shall sit on the same line as the text, i.e., it will not be superscript.

Ellipses are used to indicate pauses in the conversation.

For pauses in the middle of sentences always type them as three dots separated by spaces from one another and the preceding word -- thus . . .

For pauses which become the end of sentences or even incomplete thoughts, always type them as four dots separated by spaces from one another and the preceding word -- thus

Use of dashes.

Double dashes (--)³ are used to show an abrupt change of thought in a sentence. For purposes of Reclamation's transcripts each double dash will be preceded and followed by a space. For example:

Our house at the dam had a living room, dining room, kitchen, and three bedrooms -- now it's been moved over on "N" Street here in town.

Single dashes (-) are used in inclusive or continuing series of numbers or dates (e.g., 23-26 or 1945-1948; to indicate words spelled out by the interviewee (e.g., L-A-N-I-D-O); for compound words (e.g., twenty-one).

Use of italics:

Use the italics font on the computer to indicate italics.⁴

Italics are used:

For titles: books, plays, newspapers⁵, periodicals, journals, long poems, musical productions, paintings, films; the names of ships, trains, and aircraft.

For foreign words not yet anglicized.⁶

Abbreviations:

³ Technically double dashes (--) are known as "em" dashes and single dashes (-) are known as "en" dashes.

⁴ If a typewriter is being used for some reason, a single underline of the word indicates it is italicized.

⁵ The official title of the newspaper that appears on the masthead is what should be italicized. Consult *Ayer's Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals* for the official title.

⁶ Dictionaries are useful here. A useful reference is Marjorie E. Skillin, Robert M. Gay, et. al., *Words Into Type* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974).

Under normal circumstances abbreviations should not be used since one does not speak in abbreviations and the objective is a verbatim transcript. The following abbreviations are generally acceptable: Mr., Messrs., Mrs., Ms., Dr., Jr., Sr., Ph.D., M.A., B.C., A.D., a.m., and p.m..

Do not use U. S. Postal Service abbreviations for names of states. Spell them out.

Acronyms:

Acronyms are capitalized without periods inserted after each letter, e.g., BR, NASA, NPS.

Normally the first use of an acronym should be followed by the words for which that acronym stands in brackets, e.g., BR [Bureau of Reclamation]; SOP [standard operating procedure].

If an interviewee uses the acronym B-O-R for Reclamation, type it BoR [BOR is the acronym for the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, a now defunct Federal agency].

Hyphens:

Do not use hyphens except in compound words. Turn the hyphenation default in the computer program off.

Margins:

Set the margins in the computer at one inch -- top, bottom, and sides.

Justification:

Set the justification at left justify only. Do not use the "full" justification setting.

Grammatical Conventions

Use contractions in the transcript when they appear on the tape, e.g., they's, it's, etc..

Do not correct the interviewee's grammar.

For consistent colloquial pronunciations of words use the proper spelling instead of a phonetic spelling, e.g., them and not "em." But, equally, do not change the words, e.g., "yeah" is a word and should not be changed to "yes."

Numbers:

Generally exact numbers of two or fewer digits should be spelled out and numbers with more than two digits should be expressed in numerals.

Dates and parts of a book are expressed in numerals.

Do abbreviate dates when the century was not included in the taped discussion (e.g., '41 and not 1941)

When referring to dates you may use numerals and an "s" -- type 1940s instead of Nineteen Forties, or type '40s for the term forties. Do not use an apostrophe unless the term is possessive [as in -- The 50's autos often had huge tail fins]..

Spelling Conventions

Use the first (preferred) spelling in a standard dictionary when transcribing. American English conventions are preferred over British English conventions in most instances (.e.g, interviewing a Briton might result in use of British English spellings).

Table of Contents

Interviews on different dates and major sections of the manuscript shall be marked with the table of contents function of the WordPerfect 5.1 program. Interviews of different dates shall be labelled at Level 1. Major sections within each interview shall be labelled at Level 2.

Indexing

All proper names, project names, feature names, locations, and major topics of discussion shall be indexed using the WordPerfect 5.1 indexing function. Items in the text will be cross-indexed as necessary to assure ease of finding them.

Review of Transcript by Interviewee

After transcription and initial editing, the transcript will be forwarded to the interviewee for review, comment if necessary, correction of names and place names, etc.

The interviewee will be asked to initial each page of the interview if it is acceptable as is.

If the interviewee requests changes, additions, or deletions to the transcript, each request will be considered on its merits. The transcript will then be corrected as necessary and returned for final review and initialing by the interviewee.

Changes to Transcripts at the Request of Interviewees

Additions to transcripts requested by interviewees will be made in footnotes at the appropriate location in the text with the initials of the interviewee in parentheses at the end of the addition.

Deletions to transcripts at the request of interviewees should be made with care and only after consultation with and approval by the Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation.

Editorial changes to transcripts for the purposes of making the text more formal and grammatical, e.g., more like a formal written style rather than spoken style, shall be discussed with and approved by the Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation. It is the policy of Reclamation, where possible and appropriate, to retain the flavor and style of the spoken interview.

Preparation of Record Copy of Transcript and Other Materials for Transmittal to NARA

The record copy of the transcript prepared for transmittal to the National Archives and Records Administration will be on quality, non-acid paper with a high cotton content, preferably 100 percent cotton. The record copy will be unbound, but Reclamation's copies will generally be bound in a standardized hard cover format.

Transcripts of 100 pages, or fewer, will be printed on one side of the paper. Transcripts of more than 100 pages will be printed on both sides of the paper.

The record copy of the transcript and other copies shall normally be printed in Times Roman font at the 12 point size.

SUGGESTED INTERVIEW CITATION FORM FOR RESEARCHERS

A suggested bibliographic citation should be placed near the bottom of the page on the back of the title page of each oral history interview. The following is the format and punctuation for the citation:

Suggested Bibliographic Citation:

Last name, First and middle name or initial (of interviewee). ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW. Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interview conducted by ___(name of interviewer)___, ___(relationship of interviewer to Reclamation)___, ___(date of interview - be precise)___, at ___(location of interview)__. Transcription by ___(name of transcriber or transcription service)___ . Edited by ___(name of editor[s])___ . Repository for the record copy of the interview transcript is the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland.

THIS SET OF GUIDELINES SHALL BE PLACED AT THE END OR BEGINNING OF EACH INTERVIEW TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE PRINCIPLES USED IN DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRANSCRIPT.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
Name of Interviewee
Name of Reclamation Project
(if limited to only one - otherwise blank)

Date of Interview
Location of Interview

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

Interview Conducted by:
Name
Title
Organizational Unit

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

Oral History Program
Bureau of Reclamation

APPENDIX I: BRIEF RESUMÉ

**ROLAND G. ROBISON
REGIONAL DIRECTOR
UPPER COLORADO REGION
UNITED STATES BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH**

Appointed to present position in July 1989.

Was Deputy Director of the United States Bureau of Land Management in Washington, D.C., immediately prior to assuming present position.

Has served in various other capacities in the United States Department of the Interior since 1969: Deputy Assistant Secretary, Land and Water, and Associate Solicitor, Energy and Resources, both in Washington, D.C.; Utah State Director, Bureau of Land Management, Salt Lake City, among others.

Also served as Administrative Assistant to Utah Governor George D. Clyde (1963-65) and United States Congressman Laurence J. Burton of Utah (1965-69), and as Deputy Attorney General, State of Utah (1962), and as Assistant Attorney General, State of Utah (1960-62).

Graduate of the Brigham Young University (B.A., 1954) and the University of Utah (J.D., 1959). Member of the Utah State Bar. Served in the United States Army (1954-56).

Recipient of the Distinguished Executive Award, Presidential Rank, conferred by the President of the United States; and the Distinguished Service Award, the Department of the Interior's highest recognition.