

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

James (Jim) B. Brooks



**STATUS OF INTERVIEWS:
OPEN FOR RESEARCH**



Interviews Conducted and Edited by:
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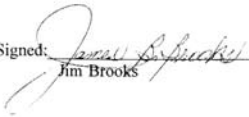
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**STATEMENT OF DONATION
OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS OF
JIM BROOKS**

1. In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms, conditions, and restrictions set forth in this instrument, I, Jim Brooks, (hereinafter referred to as "the Donor"), of Boise, Idaho, do hereby give, donate, and convey to the National Archives and Records Administration (hereinafter referred to as "the National Archives), acting for and on behalf of the United States of America, all of my rights and title to, and interest in the information and responses (hereinafter referred to as "the Donated Materials") provided during the interview conducted on July 26 and July 27, 1995, at the Snake River West Areas Office, and prepared for deposit with the National Archives and Records Administration in the following format: cassette tapes and transcripts. This donation includes, but is not limited to, all copyright interests I now possess in the Donated Materials.
2. Title to the Donated Materials remains with the Donor until acceptance of the Donated Materials by the Archivist of the United States. The Archivist shall accept by signing below.
3.
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5. The Archivist may dispose of Donated Materials at any time after title passes to the National Archives.

Date: 7/26/95

Signed: 
Jim Brooks

INTERVIEWER: _____
Brit Allan Storey

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

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Archivist of the United States

Introduction

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

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

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

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

Oral history of James (Jim) B. Brooks

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**Oral History Interviews
James B. Brooks**

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, senior historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing Jim Brooks in the Snake River West Area Office in Boise, Idaho, on the July 26th, 1995, at about nine o'clock in the morning. This is tape one.

I'd like to ask you where you born and raised and educated, and how you ended up at the Bureau of Reclamation, please.

Born in Boise and Raised in McCall, Idaho, and Baker, Oregon

Brooks: I was born in Boise, Idaho, October 30, 1938. I was raised in McCall, which is about a hundred miles north of Boise, which is a small resort town. My father had a hardware business, and went bankrupt. We moved to Baker, Oregon, where I completed high school at a Roman Catholic academy, not being Roman Catholic, but wanting to go there, and that's where I completed high school.

Attended the College of Idaho Intermittently

Worked for the Forest Service Intermittently

During that first summer after high school, I worked for the Forest Service on a brush crew, and

enjoyed the work, and then entered the College of Idaho, where my mother had graduated some years prior, and completed two years at the College of Idaho, each summer working for the Forest Service. After the second year, I went back to work for the Forest Service, they asked me to stay on, and I was having financial difficulties staying in college. My parents didn't have any money, so I stayed on with the Forest Service, and I worked until about February, I think, and then was laid off. Of course, I was still only a temp.

Hired into Permanent Position with the Forest Service

I then got a permanent position probably about July that same year. I continued to work for the Forest Service, still wanted to go back to school. Went back to the College of Idaho, spent a semester. Then went back to the Forest Service because I had just gotten some temporary leave. At that point in time, I was surveying, I was drafting for the Forest Service, doing preliminary construction, timber access road design work.

Attended Eastern Oregon State College

Again took some temporary leave and attended Eastern Oregon College, again only for another semester. Never did finish college, do not have a degree. My major was history with a philosophy minor. I currently have about three

more credits in philosophy than I do in history.

Transferred to Region 4 of the Forest Service in Ogden, Utah, to Be a Photogrammetrist

Continued with the Forest Service, still surveying and doing road design work, and then had an opportunity to transfer to Ogden, Utah—Region Four. Went there, where I started out as a photogrammetrist¹ working on a Kelsh Plotter.² Later moved to an I-C-8, which was used primarily for controlling aerial photography. Interesting work. I had to learn all of that stuff as I moved along in the Forest Service training, and those kinds of things.

“Interesting work, except that you spent most of your life in the dark working with aerial photography. . . .”

Interesting work, except that you spent most of your life in the dark working with aerial photography. No windows in the office. Not much fun, from that standpoint.

1. Photogrammetrists use photogrammetry to create maps or scale drawings from aerial photographs. Photogrammetry is the first remote sensing technology ever developed.

2. In 1948 Harry T. Kelsh at the U.S. Geological Survey designed the Kelsh Plotter. It quickly became a main tool in the United States for photogrammetric mapping—because it increased the speed and efficiency of the process.

Source: accessed on January 21, 2010, about 10:00 a.m.:
http://www.gisdevelopment.net/magazine/global/2007/may/58_2.htm

Trained as a Computer Programmer

So there was an opportunity to become a computer programmer. Had I ever computer programmed? No. I hardly knew what a computer was. (laughter) But anyway, I applied, and they trained me. We were buying some new equipment, Digital equipment. When I say Digital, I'm talking about the company, not a type of computer.

“It was my primary responsibility to convert all of the design programs . . . for roads and bridges, to the new computer system. . . .”

It was my primary responsibility to convert all of the design programs, the engineering design programs for roads and bridges, to the new computer system.

Worked Mostly at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City and Commuted from Ogden

We were currently using IBM equipment at the University of Utah, where I spent most of my time.

Storey: In Salt Lake?

Brooks: In Salt Lake, working at the university. We had an office downtown but I was still at the university most of the time.

Storey: So you moved from Ogden down to Salt Lake?

Bureau of Reclamation History Program

Brooks: No.

Storey: I mean the job.

Brooks: We commuted on the job. The new equipment was Control Data Corporation, and I finally got all of the programs converted from the IBM system to the Control Data System. I had to learn all the programming languages that that used. This was, again, all new to me, but the Forest Service was very good at seeing that we were trained. I was trained. Again, I was fascinated. Fascinating experience. I really enjoyed it.

Offered Various Jobs That Required He Move–Which He Refused

I had some opportunities to move from Ogden to, say, to Missoula, Montana. I was offered a job as a program analyst as it relates to the computer field, and really didn't like Ogden. I don't like the city. I've been here in Boise now for twenty years. Still don't like the city.

But anyway, looked at Missoula and says, "I don't want to move to Missoula." So then I was offered a job in Portland, Oregon doing the same, a program analyst, computer analyst. I said, "Gosh, Missoula was too big. Portland was way too big." And I said, "Nah. I don't want to go to Portland, either." Not that they were asking me to transfer or anything. These people were coming and saying,

“Jim, we’d like to have you.” I didn’t want to do that. I wanted to get out of Ogden.

Moved into Cadastral Surveying

So consequently, there was a new position opened up in engineering. It was cadastral surveying. I had spent a number of years in the Forest Service surveying. Cadastral surveying was *different* than what I’d done, because it was roads and bridge surveying. Cadastral is different.

So I applied, got the job, and spent probably about, it was a year doing that. Spent a whole summer controlling the seven and a half minute quadrangles, which finally became the seven and a half minute quadrangles along the main Salmon River all the way from the middle of Portland to the Snake. Again, that was absolutely a delightful experience because we choppered all over the mountain peaks, triangulation stations, in the wilderness, primitive areas. Good summer.

Storey: This would’ve been when?

Transferred to the Payette National Forest in McCall, Idaho as a Photogrammetrist

Brooks: ‘66, I think, because, well, ‘67 I transferred to Payette National Forest. I transferred. Again I moved back into photogrammetry. I go to the Payette National Forest, where I set up the first

photogrammic shot that they had on that forest. We bought new Kelsh Plotter. It was delivered. It was my responsibility to set it up, and run the shop run the plotter. The other *part* of that was photography, and I had a person who did most of the mapping work after I did the photogrammetric work.

Again Asked to Move to Various Positions in the Forest Service—Again Refused

Then, I think that had been a successful program because the Forest Service wanted me to go do the same thing in Cedar City, Utah. They asked me to do that, and I said, “Well, I’m not sure.” So they sent me down to Cedar City, where I spent a week traipsing around the forest. So I came back, and then in a friendly sort of way said I hadn’t lost anything in Cedar City. Declined.

Storey: Payette is headquartered where?

Brooks: Payette National Forest?

Storey: In McCall?

Brooks: Idaho.

Storey: Oh, back home.

Brooks: Back home. It was home. Indeed it was.

So about six months passes. The Forest Service then says, “Well, Jim, if you didn’t want to do it Cedar City, we’d like you to set up a new unit in Elko, Nevada. So I went down and traipsed around that national forest, the Humboldt. Again, the forest area was pretty, but I knew I hadn’t lost anything in Elko.

At that point in time, we had one child. The element, at least my perceived element, in Elko, Nevada, was not the place that I wanted to raise my child. So I came home again and said, “No, I decline.”

“At that point in time, you didn’t tell the Forest Service ‘no’ very often. Again this is my perception, but it was based on watching what happened to others—you were kind of rat-holed. . . .”

At that point in time, you didn’t tell the Forest Service “no” very often. Again this is my perception, but it was based on watching what happened to others—you were kind of rat-holed. You were put in the slot. That’s where you stayed for the rest of your career.

Spent Five Years Managing H&W Plumbing and Electric

So I had some friends in McCall that were

contractors. They built custom homes. They were getting ready to buy a plumbing and electrical store, sold fittings, plumbing and electrical fittings up through four, six-inch, eight-inch as it relates to plumbing, electrically. We stocked up to four-inch electrical fittings. Computerized Tamarac mail, the company finally did. Anyway, I resigned from the Forest Service and went to work for H&W Plumbing and Electric, managing the store. At that point of time, I didn't know an electrical L from a plumbing L, but the owners said, "We don't either. We'll learn together."

Storey: When was this?

Brooks: Gosh. Years get scrambled. I went back and spent—when I transferred to the Payette, I worked for the Payette National Forest for three years.

Storey: So that would have been about '70.

Moved from McCall to Boise and went to Work for Reclamation in 1975

Brooks: I worked for H&W Plumbing and Electric for five years. I came to Reclamation in 1975. Well, maybe my timing's not too bad. I'm getting gray, and old, and covered in my life.

Storey: I get them confused myself.

Brooks: So I managed H&W Plumbing and Electric. We

sold electrical, like I said, electrical and plumbing fittings, wire boxes, anything you needed to electrify a home. Also some of the big stuff we handled for the city of McCall, putting up sewers, new water mains or replacements. We worked in both the local saw mill, and one in Tamarac, west of McCall. I had a television repairman that worked for me. I had an office manager that worked for me. I had a salesman, a floor person that worked for me. I had two electricians. I had two plumbers.

The construction business was separate from the store business except that we did wire, and plumb all the custom houses that the construction company built. Built one home that, back in that point in time, was a \$200,000 *house*. A lot of the stuff, like the center beam of the house, came from Europe, a little church, they bought and had shipped to the States, and finally to McCall, included in the house. She wanted oak barber chairs, and the company installed those in the house. We took an old wood-burning stove and electrified it, put burners in it. Except that when you looked at the stove, you didn't know that. You still took the lid off, the burner was underneath the lid. All the controls were in the wall, not on the stove. The stove looked like an old wood-burning stove when we were done.

Anyway, that company was a family-owned company, two brothers and actually a friend, but

the brothers had family working for them. Halderman, [phonetic]³ the other was Williamson. Williamson had his son working for us. I hired him, and then I fired him. Politically it probably was not a good move, but it didn't really affect my employment.

Didn't Have Retirement beyond Social Security or Health Insurance

But, I didn't have health insurance other than that which *I* bought, which was a lot more expensive. I knew that if I continued with the company, the only retirement I would have would be what I'd squirrel away, and Social Security, and that never has impressed me, that system.

3.

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

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

Unlike Himself, His Wife Liked Larger Cities

Somehow, I was getting—my wife never liked McCall, *she* likes the city. She liked Ogden, she likes Boise. She was born in Boise. She didn't like McCall. In my personal life, I drove the ambulance. I was a volunteer ambulance driver for EMT. For fun, I fell out of airplanes, skydove, dived, climbed mountains. I was lieutenant in the Police Reserve, which, again, was a volunteer position. But I was caught up in a lot of the community affairs.

At this point in time, we now have three children, a son and two daughters, and somehow I was neglecting them, the whole family, as I was pursuing what I perceived to be fun. And that was fun. I was on ski patrol for eight years. Between skiing in the winter, falling out of airplanes and climbing mountains in the summer, and doing the other things I was doing, I wasn't around a lot. Well, that made my wife a little cranky. So I decided maybe it was time to do something else.

“ . . . ever since I . . . first went to work, one of the important things to me was having a retirement, at least kept the roof over my head, food in our mouths, and not have to worry where the next dollar was going to come from. . . . ”

Besides that, ever since I went to work, first went to work, one of the important things to me was

having a retirement, at least kept the roof over my head, food in our mouths, and not have to worry where the next dollar was going to come from.

I guess during my entire Federal career I've never been a person that wanted to climb ladders. I mean, absolutely never minded to me whether I was GS-6, -7, -9, -11, I was more interested in the work; [that] I was doing what I was interested in; where I lived; the opportunities; and then in the long run, I have to find a better retirement. But the Federal Government has been awful good to me, awfully good to me.

Decides to Move to Boise

I worked for H&W for five years. I came home one day right around the first of December, and I said to Susan, "I've given two weeks' notice."

She said, "Where are we going?"

I said, "Boise."

She said, "How are we doing that?"

I said, "I don't know."

Wife Transferred to the Boise National Forest from the Payette National Forest

At that point in time, Susan was working for the Forest Service, and quickly made application to the Boise National Forest. I was without a job. Susan managed to get a transfer to Boise. The Forest Service transferred *her* to Boise, and I came with her. So that's how we got here.

Then I just began to look, and I didn't wait long. I mean, I didn't wait at all. I began to work right away. I looked for state jobs. I looked for Federal jobs. Most of the things that I applied for, everybody told me I was overtrained. I said, "Well, that doesn't make any—no never mind. I don't care. I just need to work. And I'll work for you. I'll do a good job."

"No, you're overtrained."

Joined Reclamation in February of 1975

I walked into the Central Snake Projects Office, made an application for a civil engineering technician position, and in February went to work for the project office, and I've been here ever since. It's twenty years.

Storey: Who hired you?

Bob Brown Was Project Superintendent

Brooks: Bob Brown.

Storey: Tell me about Bob Brown.

Brooks: He came to the project in 1972 as the project superintendent. Bob Brown was a retired Colonel in the United States Air Force, and you'd only have to meet him to know that he was an officer in some branch of the service, and I don't mean that in a negative sort of way. Bob Brown is an absolute delight to work with. You always knew what he was thinking. There was never any doubt in your mind. You could argue with him. I could, anyway. Some could. I used to get away with it for some reason. Bob's retired now, went to work for the World Bank, has been in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan. Interesting fellow. Good supervisor, good person to work with.

Storey: Was he your direct supervisor?

Dick Fuller Was Head of the Division of Lands and Recreation

Brooks: No, my direct supervisor was Dick Fuller. Dick Fuller was head of the Division of Lands and Recreation.

Primary Work Was Writing Contracts and Crossing Agreements

There were three of us in that division, Dick Fuller, Jack Hansen, and myself—again primarily in the division writing contracts, crossing agreements, and

those kinds of things, did some surveying but not very much.

Recreation Moved over to the Water Division

I'm trying to think. I don't remember *when*, it was before Bob Brown retired, they take recreation out of that division, and they move it to the Division of Water, and they call it—I can't remember the name of the division--Recreation, Water and Recreation, Water Operations-Recreation. The reason they did that is the fellow that was head of that division, a fellow by the name of Howard Chipwood, was GSOM, and he was looking towards retirement in the not too distant future. Bob, wanting to see that he at least hopefully he had the opportunity to retire as a 12,⁴ moved the recreation responsibility to that division as a 12. Dick was a 12. And when they moved the responsibility, we didn't downgrade Dick.

Howard, interestingly enough, could've cared less about recreation. Didn't interest him one iota. I think, for a period of time, recreation just really took a back seat during that period of time. Dick was fearful, I think, and he never really voiced it, but I think he was a little fearful of being downgraded.

The other part of that was, Dick would

4. Graded as a GS-12.

cringe when he heard Bob Brown's footsteps coming down the hall. I don't know whether—I think it was more of a personality clash more than anything else. Dick did a excellent job, excellent job. Good letter writer. Knew the business very, very well. Dick had been here--well, Dick started his career with Reclamation, and I think he started it in the Central Snake Projects Office. He's here all of his career.

Dick Fuller Transferred to the Region in Boise

But anyway, Bob, for some reason, intimidated Dick—and in a serious sort of way, so he began to look and find a transfer to the region here, Boise.

Became Chief of the Division of Lands

So that made his position open. I applied, and became the chief of the Division of Lands.

Neil Stessman

At that point in time, that selection was made by Neil Stessman,⁵ who's regional director, Great Plains, today, but he was project superintendent at the time.

5. Neil Stessman has been interviewed for Reclamation's oral history program.

Neil Stessman Transferred Recreation Back to the Division of Lands

The other thing Neil did was he gave me the responsibility of recreation because he knew it was something I was really interested in. But at that point in time, they gave me the responsibility but not on paper. That didn't bother me. I didn't care. I did enjoy recreation.

The other person that had worked in the Division of Lands with myself and Dick Fuller was a fellow by the name of Jack Hansen. Jack moved to the Division of Water Operations and Recreation. One of Jack's favorite expressions was, "No way." And in a sense, it affected recreation, in my opinion, in a negative sort of way. So then I began to really politic with recreation ought to come back to Lands. Under Neil Stessman, that was accomplished. Division then became Lands and Recreation again. I was still chief of that division.

Storey: Stessman became the new project supervisor?

Brooks: Yes. He was project superintendent upon Bob Brown's retirement. And there was a period of time, it was about six months before the new project super was selected.

Storey: When would this have been?

Brooks: '82. 1982. March. It was when Bob retired. Neil doesn't come on board, I don't think, until September of that year. Maybe a little later.

Failure of Teton Dam

Storey: But in the meantime, you would've been here when Teton failed?

Brooks: I was, but I wasn't involved.

Storey: Was this office responsible for Teton?

Brooks: No. That was the Minidoka.

Storey: Project Office.

Brooks: Project Office.

Storey: How did people in this office react to the news, do you remember?

Brooks: As I think with any major disaster of any kind, whether part of your agency is responsible or not, we were pretty devastated. Now, we did become involved, a number of people in the office became involved as we took details to help with whatever expertise we had at the time to that office. A number of us spent quite a few months helping. Now, I didn't go. But it certainly impacted the office, both from the standpoint of the immensity of what occurred as well as just being personally

involved, so we went to help.

Then, in the end claims, Jill Lorentz [phonetic] at that point in time was working for me. She had worked on claims for Teton for a number of years, *also* was impacted personally by the Teton Dam failure. She owned a house in the flood plan. It took her house. She works in claims, becomes the final claims officer, and that responsibility rested in this office with Jill, who worked for me at the time.

Storey: What had happened to the Minidoka Office? Why wasn't it the finally responsible party?

Brooks: I think primarily because Jill had worked in claims. At that point in time, when they hired Jill, Reclamation hired Jill, to do some of the claims work, that was her first job with Reclamation, and because she just worked with them for so long, I think it was a good decision. The final resting place for all the claims was with Jill, rather than leaving them at the Minidoka Project Office. Because they would've had to retrain somebody else.

Storey: So you were here maybe seven years when you were promoted to Division chief?

Brooks: Um hmm. That's about right. There were promotions in between.

Neil Stessman

Storey: Tell me what Neil was like, Neil Stessman.

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1. JULY 26, 1995

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

Storey: I had asked you about Neil Stessman, and you had started to say, I think it was “Neil is one of those people--“ (laughter)

Brooks: He is. He’s a person who’s very interested in you as a person. He’s very interested in your family. He remembers your wife’s name. He remembers your children’s name. *Often* inquires on how they’re doing. Very personable in that way. I like Neil.

As a supervisor, in my humble opinion, he was a good fence-rider. He’s a very political animal. He’ll tell you what he thinks you want to hear, not necessarily what’s on his mind. In fact, I used to ask him, “Neil, what do you think about--?” and I never could get a straight answer out of him. And from an employee’s point of view, and at this particular time as a division chief, it was oftentimes very frustrating.

I remember one time he said to me, “Jim, the only reason why you want to know what I think is so you can do what I want you to do.”

And I said, “Well, wouldn’t you rather I did that, than do what you *don’t* want me to do?” (laughter) And he just looked at me. He didn’t really respond. He was here. Neil was project super three years, I think, then he moved on. In fact, to regional director very quickly.

Storey: I think assistant regional director.

Brooks: Assistant regional director, that’s right.

Storey: First.

Brooks: That’s right, he was.

Storey: Who came in next?

Jerry (Jerrold) Gregg

Brooks: Jerry Gregg.⁶

Storey: So he’s been here since about ‘85.

Brooks: Um-hmm. I think he came in November, early December. Well, we didn’t see a lot of him. He first came, and then he went back to Socorro. I can’t remember whether he was on an annual leave. There was a period of time after he first moved in that he went away for a little while to get his

6. Jerry (Jerrold) Gregg has been interviewed for Reclamation’s oral history program.

family, packed up and moved to Boise.

Storey: What was his management style like, or what is it like?

Brooks: Oh, I think it's great.

Storey: Has it evolved?

Brooks: Oh, yeah, it has, I think. But one of the things that I really appreciated about Jerry is that he gives you an assignment, he expects you to do the assignment, and he doesn't ride around in your hip pocket. And if you have a problem, you can bring it to him and hash it out, get on down the road. He's very open, *asks* advice, listens. Maybe he doesn't always follow the advice, but then maybe it's not always good advice either.

Storey: Or it may not have all the factors *he* sees—

Brooks: That's entirely true.

Storey: —involved in it.

Brooks: But I've enjoyed working with Jerry. [unclear], as a matter of fact.

Storey: When you were first appointed to lands and recreation, was it under Bob Brown?

Brooks: That's correct.

Joined Reclamation as a Civil Engineering Technician

Storey: As a civil engineering technician.

Brooks: Uh-huh.

Storey: You mentioned that you did a little bit of surveying. What else were you doing as a civil engineering technician?

Writing Crossing Agreements

Brooks: Primarily it was writing crossing agreements.

Boise Project Board of Control

In Boise Valley, a mile from here to the Snake, there's Boise Project Board of Control, comprised of five irrigation districts, and then some others, irrigation districts. Well, there's a tremendous amount of facilities. There were 3,000 miles of main delivery systems and drains.

Development in the Valley

It is just the valley's grown. There's been all kinds of subdivision work going on. There's lots of crossing agreements.

Reclamation Leases Cabin Sites

We have a number of withdrawn lands, because we own some fee lands that we've leased some for cabin sites. That's still an ongoing program.

Reclamation Administers Grazing Leases

There's grazing leases, and I did most all of them, the crossing agreements, advertised grazing leases, made the awards, and administered those programs.

Storey: Tell me about grazing leases. Do we have a lot of those?

Brooks: Yes, we do. I'd say this office probably has eighty to a hundred grazing leases here and in eastern Oregon.

Storey: Were those advertised annually? How did that work?

Brooks: No. They were advertized for a five-year period, renewable annually. What triggered the renewal was we sent out a notice that the one-year term had run, and if they were still interested, all they had to do was send in the money for the next year. But the full term of the lease is five years.

Storey: Was there a lot of turnover in grazing leases?

Brooks: No.

Storey: And did you have the same person over and over

and over?

Brooks: Not much. They aren't negotiated, although there are a few negotiated leases. We'd negotiate a lease where the land was landlocked, the lands that were leased was landlocked, and is surrounded by land owned by a single owner. *Or* if he had some different owners, we could contact the owners and say, "Are any of you interested? We've had this inquiry from, say Joe. Joe'd like to lease this tract of land to graze. Are *you* interested?" If they said no, then we could negotiate the lease. Most of them, though, are advertised. There's still not a lot of turnover. Generally, the person that bids the highest and gets the lease hangs in there for a number of years.

Storey: How large would these grazing leases be for, do you remember?

Brooks: Some as large as 1,400 acres. Most of them are smaller. A few larger, 10,000 acres. Very few of those that large. Most of them were 80-acre tracts, 116-acre tracts, 150 acre tracts.

Storey: Did you go out and look at these areas when you leased them?

"We probably get to most of our leased areas once during the full term. That would be once every five years. . . ."

Brooks: We probably get to most of our leased areas once during the full term. That would be once every five years.

Storey: So we didn't have a heavy inspection program or anything?

Brooks: No. Because there was just me, for the most part.

Storey: What kind of land were we looking at?

“A 1,400-acre lease at Cascade Reservoir was irrigated land. It can run . . . somewhere around 980 A-U-Ms over the summer period. A lot of the land . . . sagebrush country, where it'd take twenty to thirty acres for one A-U-M. . . .”

Brooks: Some of it was irrigated. A 1,400-acre lease at Cascade Reservoir was irrigated land. It can run—fiddlesticks, I don't remember for sure, but it was somewhere around 980 A-U-Ms⁷ over the summer period. A lot of the land, the 10,000-acre stuff, sagebrush country, where it'd take twenty to thirty

7. Animal Unit Months. “Federal and state livestock grazing permits generally are expressed in terms of animal units per area or total animal unit months (AUMs). One AUM is the amount of forage required by an animal unit (AU) for one month, or the tenure of one AU for a one-month period. If one AU grazes on an area of rangeland for six months, that tenure is equal to six AUs for one month or six AUMs. In general, the number of animal units, multiplied by the number of months they are on the range equals the number of AUMs used.”

Source: accessed 1.21.2010 about 11:30 a.m.:

<http://ag.arizona.edu/AREC/pubs/rmg/1%20rangelandmanagement/1%20aum93.pdf>

acres for one A-U-M.

Storey: And an A-U-M is an Animal Unit Month, right?

Brooks: Animal Unit Month, which is the one cattle and calf.

Storey: For a month?

Brooks: For one month, right. Pretty sparse.

Storey: But pretty good for the West, really, in a lot of places.

“The other thing about our grazing land which is a lot different, for instance, than BLM, is that all of ours had water. . . . consequently, we had *always* . . . gotten more for our leases than, say, BLM has.”

Brooks: In a lot of places. The other thing about our grazing land which is a lot different, for instance, than BLM [Bureau of Land Management], is that all of ours had water. Because most of it is on reservoirs, where we've got an irrigation facility running through it, or we've got a drain running through it. And consequently, we had *always*, yes, I'd say *always*, *always* gotten more for our leases, than, say, BLM has.

Storey: Or the Forest Service?

Brooks: Or the Forest Service.

Storey: Now, say this 1,400-acre irrigated unit, we had water rights, in other words.

Brooks: Yes, we did.

Storey: And when this person took the lease, they also did the irrigation? They took that on as part of it?

Brooks: They took that on as well.

Storey: Did they get to cut hay? How did this work?

“ . . . because of water quality, we decided to stop all grazing around Cascade Reservoir . . . ”

Brooks: No, no. No, it was only grazed. I'm thinking about the 1,400 acre-tract which is at Cascade Reservoir. No, it was just grazed. Then because of water quality, we decided to stop all grazing around Cascade Reservoir, and did. Had to answer numerous congressional inquiries, but made it stick.

Storey: What kind of water-quality issues came up?

Cascade Reservoir Has Heavy Algae Growths

Brooks: Oh, gee. Cascade Reservoir is becoming a dead reservoir. When I say that, I want you to realize that today people still swim in it, and Health and Welfare and DWQ state agencies have not restricted contact sports. There's a lot of things going on around here, around Cascade Reservoir,

Forest Service timber-cutting practices, grazing on forest allotments. BLM has a very small presence in the valley. McCall Sewage just dumped, after treatment, was dumped into the Payette River, which comes into Cascade Reservoir and contributes, according to studies, 10 percent of the [unclear] flow to the reservoir. But there's a lot of farming going on in the valley, so there's ranching. All these things are affecting the reservoir. Heavy growths of algae.

Storey: So there's too much fertilizer in the water?

Brooks: Too much fertilizer, too many nutrients, although it's still supporting a good fish population. Used to be the number-one fishery in the state of Idaho, but it isn't anymore. We've had some fish kills because of the algae dying off, and then as that decays, it takes the oxygen out of the water. Consequently, we've had fish kills, but not anything real major—*yet*.

But in 1985, Reclamation said, "We do have a water quality problem. We certainly recognize it. One of the things we can do, although it's almost minuscule, and that is we can stop grazing on all Bureau lands." And we did.

Storey: So that prevents the manure load from getting into the reservoir even indirectly.

Brooks: Even indirectly. That was a good decision.

Bureau of Reclamation History Program

Storey: Do we continue to irrigate the land?

Brooks: No, but the water right—the land served between the Westside Road, and that doesn't mean much. Let's see, probably half-mile from the road to the reservoir, and the water rights, we had water rights on some of these streams that crossed this area, and it was really just to help fill the reservoir. So as they diverted from the stream to irrigate the field, considering the acreage and how far the water had to move actually to get into the reservoir without losing anything that was measurable. All these lands still stay pretty green, even without the irrigation.

Storey: Were there any other irrigated grazing leases that you recall?

Acquiring and Moving Montour, Idaho

Brooks: Well, beginning in the late seventies, we begin to acquire and complete the acquisition in 1982 of a small valley called Montour, where we had a lot of flooding due to ice jams in the river.

Storey: Agrading, I think?

Brooks: Beg your pardon?

Storey: I think the river was agrading a little bit, maybe? Had to move the town, too.

Brooks: Yep. In the backwaters of Black Canyon Reservoir. We had to move a town. I was very much involved in that. I wrote all the legal descriptions, did all the planning, the properties. A fellow by the name of Phil Goodsoul [phonetic], who was in regional office, did all of the negotiating with the landowners. He was able to buy by most all of it, to reach an agreement with the landowner, or the property owner.

Storey: Rather than going to condemnation?

**“ . . . we did take two or three to condemnation. . . .
The interesting one, though, is Esther Palmer. . . .
She has a lifetime estate on the property as a
result of the condemnation. . . .”**

Brooks: Rather than going to condemnation, although we did take two or three to condemnation. Three-, might've been four. The interesting one, though, is Esther Palmer. Esther's ninety-seven years old. At the time, back in the '82, '83--no, I think we're through in '82. We condemned Esther's property. Esther had about fourteen acres. She gets a letter from Squeaky Fromme,⁸ who's in prison for

8. “Lynette Alice ‘Squeaky’ Fromme (born October 22, 1948) is an American former member of the Manson Family. She was sentenced to life imprisonment for attempting to assassinate U.S. President Gerald Ford in 1975. After serving 34 years in custody, she was released from prison on August 14, 2009.”

Source: accessed January 21, 2010, about 1:45 p.m.:

(continued...)

murdering somebody. I don't remember that whole story, but Esther is written up in *Time Magazine* or *Newsweek* or one of the national publications, anyway. They came out and interviewed her. Somehow they'd gotten her story that we're condemning this poor little old lady's property. They come and interview her, and they publish her story in this national magazine. Squeaky, who is in prison, reads this article and writes her a letter, which I've seen. It said, "Hang in there!"

If one was to pick a grandmother, had that opportunity, Esther's one of those people that you'd say, "Yeah. I'd pick you." Although every time I ever went to see her, she always had to badmouth Reclamation, and that took five or ten minutes, telling me what a no-good, rotten outfit this was. Then she kind of smiles, saying, "Well, yeah, but they didn't treat me too bad." She has a lifetime estate on the property as a result of the condemnation. A character.

“ . . . we enter into . . . ag leases, allowing them to raise crops. . . . we enter into an agreement with the State Department of Idaho Fish and Game, and . . . agree on what Reclamation will lease out for grazing and for agricultural purposes as it relates to growing crops. We require that 20 percent of the crop be left for wildlife in the

8. (...continued)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynette_Fromme

wintertime. . . .”

Irrigated grazing. After we acquire Montour, for a few years we enter into grazing leases, as well as ag leases, allowing them to raise crops. We’re still doing some of that, although we enter into an agreement with the State Department of Idaho Fish and Game, and together we agree on what Reclamation will lease out for grazing and for agricultural purposes as it relates to growing crops. We require that 20 percent of the crop be left for wildlife in the wintertime. But that’s all irrigated. Then again, the lessee [unclear].

Storey: What kinds of crops do they grow up there? Small grains?

Brooks: No. It’s too wet. The groundwater is too high to raise small grains. It kills it. But they do raise corn. They have raised some maize, not real successfully. Still raising corn, and that’s about it. Initially, right after we first acquired it, they raised small grains. But that water table is really high.

Storey: Do you remember anything about the fact that Montour was determined to be historic town?

Montour Was Considered Historic

Brooks: Indeed, I do.

Storey: Tell me about that from your perspective.

Brooks: It was a pain in the neck, and yet when you talk about historical things, and Boise's great at it, we love to look at our buildings and say, "My, that's historical," and then rip it down. Montour was, in my opinion, was kind of like that. There was no livery stable there. Huge barn. *Huge* barn, and we tore it down. In a sense, I'm really sorry we did. And yet that's on the one hand. On the other hand, to maintain it would've cost a *bunch* of money. I don't know. I don't know.

Photographed Properties in Montour and Did Oral History with the Owners

But we did go in and photographed all the buildings. That was under contract. Also under another contract, we went in and did an oral history with the owners of the original property, the owners that we bought the property from, not necessarily the original owners. Unfortunately, that thought didn't occur to us until after some of the really older folk had passed on, which was too bad. Anyway, we got that done.

Storey: Who would've been doing that work for you all? Was that out of your office?

Brooks: No. Both those contracts were let out at the regional office. I'm trying to think whether--no, it wasn't Lynn.

Storey: Before Lynn, I believe was Terry Zontek.

Brooks: I don't think Terry did it, either.

Storey: And Jim Budolfson has always been involved in this region.

Brooks: I want to say Karen McGordon might have had something. For some reason, I think she had something to do with it. Certainly as it relates to photographing the old buildings, I think Karen was involved. Karen worked for Jim Budolphson.

Reclamation's Concerns about Crossing Agreements

Storey: You mentioned crossings, a *lot* of crossings. What were we looking for in crossing agreements at Reclamation? What's our interest?

Brooks: Our facilities are crossed with sewer lines, power lines, both overhead and underground. They're crossed with gas, natural gas lines. Some of them may be small, serving residents. Others are mostly main lines. Sewer, water, power. We're concerned—

Storey: I presume roads.

Brooks: Oh, my, yes. I'm sorry. Roads. Yeah, yeah. There's a road or two. (laughter)

Storey: Streets and that sort of thing.

“We’re concerned . . . whatever they’re putting in, doesn’t unduly cost the irrigation district a lot more money in maintaining the facility . . . that . . . [it’s] put in the right way so that . . . we don’t get piping along the pipe. . . . and blow out the facility. . . . that we know where it is so that . . . ” the district can avoid it during O&M operations.

Brooks: We’re concerned, one, that whatever they’re constructing, whatever they’re putting in, doesn’t unduly cost the irrigation district a lot more money in maintaining the facility that they’ve contracted with us to operate and maintain. I think we do a pretty good job of that.

The other thing that we’re concerned about, *I’m* concerned about, anyway, is that when they put in a, say, pipeline, that’s put in the right way so that water doesn’t pipe along, we don’t get piping along the pipe.

Storey: In other words, it doesn’t erode around it and cause a leak.

Brooks: Yeah, and blow out the facility. That’s one. Two, that *we* know where it is so that when the district’s operating and maintaining the facility, they’re not in there with a backhoe or a shovel or something, and destroy that facility, which could create a real safety hazard for workers, as well as tremendous expense to somebody.

Contracts Generally Specify That the Installing Company Has to Repair Any Damage Done by the District in Normal O&M Operations

The contracts generally are written that if the district tears it up, that's too bad. The company gets to fix it, at no cost to the district, unless we do something really stupid. That's a different matter.

Storey: Do you require marking, for instance?

Brooks: Absolutely. Yes, mark both sides if it's an underground facility that's crossing. Or marked at every turning point. There's an angle where it turns, changes direction, each angle point is marked. Generally we don't have much problem. Once in a blue moon, they'll rip up mostly telephone lines.

Storey: When they're doing maintenance?

Brooks: When they're doing maintenance.

Storey: Do we, for instance, require that they go to certain *depths* or anything like that?

Brooks: Not necessarily. We prefer to have at least four feet below the bottom of the facility. But sometimes, sometimes in the engineering point of view, their engineering point of view as well, and we agree with it, you can't go that deep. So what we'll get them to do is cap it with concrete.

Storey: So that when you hit the concrete, you know you're getting close.

Brooks: Yeah. The concrete's not as the same depth as the bottom of that facility is. We don't need to go below that, anyway.

Storey: But does that cause problems in unlined canals, for instance, putting in a little concrete section?

Brooks: No, I really don't think so. I can't think of any time where we've required them to cap something of concrete that would create a problem for us. Once in a while what *will* create a problem is if they're crossing underneath a bridge, for instance with—it could be telephone lines in pipe. It could be a gas line. It could be a water line just hanging from a bridge. Sometimes the difference between the bottom of that pipe, the inverted pipe, to the top of the water surface, if you get debris floating down, sometimes it'll catch on the pipe.

“So rather than hang pipes below bridges, we try to get them moved up on the side of the bridge, and we're pretty successful . . .”

So rather than hang pipes below bridges, we try to get them moved up on the side of the bridge, and we're pretty successful at getting that done. Pretty successful—I'd say we're *very* successful. Most of the pipes that hang below bridges were done before my time, when people weren't giving a whole lot of

thought, I think. Back when you look around the valley, and you see mostly irrigated farms, and you don't see a lot of houses and subdivisions, some of those things don't really enter into our thinking until all of a sudden you notice you've got some problems, and we need to fix them. Everything changes over time.

Storey: What kinds of things go into contracts; for instance, a street crossing?

Concerns about Street Crossings and Service Roads along Canals

Brooks: Almost all the facilities have an operation and maintenance road down one side of the facility. Some of the major ones have operation and maintenance roads down *both* sides of the facility. Somebody comes along and they want, say a new subdivision and have a street crossing, might even have more than one, you look at the plan and profile of the facility. We want to make sure that as the street crosses, the people, the district, O&M people, operation and maintenance people, can get up and down the facility without having to drive around because the new street crossing is elevated *off* the facility far enough that they can't cross over. They have to go around. Does that make sense?

Storey: You don't want, then, to build it up so high that the streets can't be crossed.

Brooks: Right.

Storey: Yeah, I think it made sense.

Gating the O&M Roads along Canals

Brooks: The next thing that happens, and we allow it to happen, and that's we allow them to gate the O&M road, which creates a real pain in the neck for the ditch-rider, particularly in the summertime when they're delivering water, because he or she is constantly having to stop, get out, unlock the gate, pass through, close and lock the gate behind them. But on the other hand, it helps keep horses, even in downtown Boise, from riding up and down the canals. The only problem—

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

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

Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey with Jim Brooks on July the 26th, 1995.

So the gates cause problems.

Brooks: The gates cause problems.

Storey: And you were talking about horses sometimes—

Brooks: Well, it helps keep the horses out, gates will, if it's gate and fence. But they'll create problems, say, during rainy weather because the O&M roads

aren't paved, they're just dirt. Very few of them are graveled. So as it gets wet, you [unclear]. The other thing it does it keeps cars from running up and down there.

Storey: And motorcycles.

Brooks: And motorcycles.

Storey: Kids on motorcycles.

“Some of the large facilities, like the New York Canal, which runs at 3,000 cfs, is a pretty dangerous facility. . . .”

Brooks: Tearing up and down. Some of the large facilities, like the New York Canal, which runs at 3,000 cfs,⁹ is a pretty dangerous facility. It's probably good that that happens and people don't use that O&M road. Although they run up and down on it, walk it a lot. There's nothing the matter with that.

Storey: What other kinds of things do we require? For instance, do we require specific clearances above high water?

Brooks: Oh, yes. Absolutely. There's a minimum clearance between the invert and the bridge, the bottom of the bridge, and the surface water when

9. cfs=cubic feet per second. Also written as: cu ft/s, cusec, and ft³/s.

the facility's running full.

Storey: And do you remember what that minimum is, by chance?

Brooks: My remembrance says it's two feet.

Storey: So you'd want to keep all the pipes and everything carrying sewer, and telephone, and so on, above that also.

Brooks: Above that.

Storey: What about responsibility for maintenance? Do we specify that in the contracts?

Maintenance Responsibilities at Street and Highway Crossings

Brooks: Oh, it depends. It depends upon the facility. If the state's crossing with a state highway system road, we'll *often* require the *state* to be *responsible* for the maintenance, not operation, but maintenance of the facility underneath the highway right-of-way. So if something goes awry, they're responsible to fix it.

Storey: You mean in the canal?

Brooks: In the canal. In most cases, if you're talking about a highway, we require them to put in a box called a concrete box culvert, but culvert. Culvert over time

deteriorates faster than concrete. So we'll require the state to do the maintenance. On city streets, we continue to do the operation and maintenance of the facility. We have nothing to do with the maintenance of the street. If it creates a problem for the facility, like, for instance, a bridge that, in our opinion, was about to fail, we'll go to the state or the city and say, "Close it." And generally they are very cooperative. There's language in all of our permits that say that if the cost of the operation and maintenance is made more *expensive* because of the facility, then based upon the decision that the Secretary of the Interior—

Storey: Which is us.

Brooks: Which is us, you may be billed for the *added* expense. I can't think of anytime in my history that that's ever occurred, where we've billed them for what we perceive to be something above and beyond our normal operation and maintenance costs, because of whatever, because this bridge is there. I can't—unless they go underground, it's over, say below the surface of the water but above the bottom of the delivery system, or if it's over the top of the canal or drain, such as a bridge, even a pipe, it's going to cost the district a little more, it's going to take just a little bit longer to do the maintenance because you have to work around this—

Storey: Thing.

Brooks: Thing.

Storey: Whatever it is.

**“I think bridges are much more problem than pipe
, , ,”**

Brooks: Whatever it is that’s constructed there. I think bridges are much more problem than pipe, but even though the language is there, we’ve never billed anything.

Fences along Canals

Fences. We have fences running up and down the canals. Some of them in the city of Boise run *right* down the top of the canal. Couldn’t get down in the canal if you wanted to. In a few cases, in a *few* cases, if we permitted it, there’s language in the contract that says, “If the district needs to, you can go in and take the fence out.” First they’ll come to you, the owner of the fence, give you the opportunity to remove it. If [unclear], they’ll remove it, the owner of the fence is responsibility to put it back in. I don’t think that’s happened, either. We’ve got some stone wall fences that would be quite a challenge.

Storey: But they’re on the right-of-way?

Brooks: Oh, absolutely. They’re right on top of the canal. In the case of the stone wall that I’m thinking

about, I'll bet it's at least eighteen inches thick, approximately four foot high, and the owner of this particular subdivision came to me, and I said, "No, absolutely not. You may not build such a structure." And we drew up an agreement not for the fence but for some other things as it related to that subdivision. He went away, and the next thing I knew, the stone fence is built. I asked him why. He said, well, he'd gone downstairs to the Board of Control, the manager of the Board of Control who at that point in time was Royce Van Keeran [phonetic], and Royce said, "Oh, sure. That'll be all right. Go ahead." And he did.

Storey: Well, that brings up an interesting issue, anyway.
(laughter)

Brooks: There are times, as I think about that particular issue, that particular wall, there are times I believe Reclamation should have said, "No. Take it out." And we don't do it.

Storey: Why don't we do it?

Brooks: I'll be blast if I know.

Storey: Have you ever asked anybody to tell him that?

Docks on Cascade Reservoir

Brooks: Words like "gutless" come to mind. Oh, absolutely. We've got docks in Cascade Reservoir

that haven't been under permit *ever*, and I've said to region, "Let's take them out." But I can't get any support. Couldn't get any support, and now it's not my responsibility, so I don't care. I do care. We don't get the support.

Storey: Has anybody ever intimated or suggested why we don't get support?

Brooks: No. I think one thing, and this is just personal opinion, I think oftentimes an agency runs scared of congressional inquiries. A congressional inquiry has *never, ever*, bothered me. As far as I'm concerned, they're people just like we're people.

Storey: And they're just calling to get information.

Brooks: Yes, and oftentimes it's coming from some cranky voter, constituent. Oftentimes I think we can respond in a very forthright way. Congressional inquiry doesn't bother me. Even if I'd screwed up, and I get a congressional, I don't have any problems saying, "I screwed up." But I think maybe that's one of the reasons we don't.

If we took a dock out of Cascade Reservoir and burned it, which we most likely need to do because most of them are in disrepair, we'd get an awful lot of political flak.

Storey: Are there people right there in cabins?

Issues with Subdivisions Around Cascade Reservoir

Brooks: Uh-huh. Oh, there's a bunch of subdivisions around Cascade Reservoir, recreational subdivisions. We, Reclamation, own in fee simple anywhere from half a mile to zero feet. In fact, we've lost some bank into the reservoir, where we're now encroaching on private land, where we don't have a flowage easement. In a lot of cases, we have flowage easements where the subdivisions are, and yet if we began to erode under, I would say a cabin, probably, I don't know. It would be for a court of law to decide, but they're not real friendly when it comes to fences.

Storey: But do we operate Cascade Reservoir recreation facilities? Who does that? Anybody?

Reclamation Built and Managed Recreation Facilities at Cascade Reservoir

Brooks: Well, we've been doing it. We've built some mighty fine facilities out there. OMB [Office of Management and Budget] tells us that we had absolutely no authority, although they didn't bother to look at the Clean Water Act. They didn't bother to look at the Clean Air Act. They didn't bother to look at many, many other acts. The only thing they bothered to look at was whether we had authority to build a campground that was something other than just a dirt track and Porta-potty at the end of it.

Some of us, both in this office and in region, wanted to argue with OMB. In fact, the written words that went out of this office, the written words that went out of region took that report to task, and it went to Washington, D.C., and they said OMB was right.

Storey: When was this?

“ . . . we’re out of the recreation business for the most part at Cascade. . . . ”

Brooks: Two years ago. Two years ago, I think.¹⁰ So consequently, we’re out of the recreation business for the most part at Cascade.

Began Talking to Idaho Parks and Recreation about Managing Facilities at Cascade Reservoir after Reclamation Was Informed It Didn’t Have Authority to Build or Operate Recreation Facilities There

They’re telling us we can’t even operate and maintain them, so we’re currently in this—well, I began talking to the state of Idaho Parks and Recreation and see if they’d be interested. They’re very interested, and I think it’ll probably happen.

The state of Idaho does a good job. The

10. During the term of Commissioner Daniel P. Beard. Commissioner Beard was interviewed for the Reclamation oral history program.

state of Oregon does a much better job. I think the sad part of it is that Reclamation has a nice reservoir in an absolutely beautiful setting, we have nice facilities, and we ought to, by golly, take responsibility for those and toot our own horn. I think we do good jobs in a lot of places. We're going to stop recreation. Nuts. We're going to get out of the business. Somebody else will do it for us. It won't be long, methinks, it won't be long before people forget that Reclamation had anything to do with it.

Storey: Before we go to recreation, back to crossings.

Brooks: Back to crossings, okay.

Issues of Pollution at Crossings

Storey: Do we have any concerns about pollution in the canals from crossings? You know, I hear sewage, I hear natural gas, I hear gasoline and petroleum lines, maybe. What do we do?

Brooks: When you talk about those kinds of things, yes, there are concerns and, again, there's language in the contract that if there would be a major break, or spill into the facility, the company that owns the facility, like the gas company, would be responsible for total clean-up. Also it would be responsible for any crop damage that would occur. We've not had any major failure like that in *this* area office.

Pollutants Find Their Way into the System in Various Ways

When you talk about pollution, we're very concerned. One of the things that we get as we move from agricultural, which can add pollutants in a different sort of way to the facilities both [unclear] and drains, to an urban setting, we're getting a lot of different kinds of things, like oils, household chemicals, and stuff that enter the drainage system.

“We have a *lot of unauthorized* drainage pipes that enter, in some cases, into live irrigation delivery systems, that have been put in place over time. . . .”

We have a *lot of unauthorized* drainage pipes that enter, in some cases, into live irrigation delivery systems, that have been put in place over time. Those are adding pollutants that come generally from urban settings.

Did Study of Trespass at Cascade Reservoir

One was a sump from a truck stop, which was putting in oils and gasoline-based materials, oil-based material. We took care of that one. Golly, I can't remember, it was right after I became chief of lands. I'd been pestering Dick Fuller, because we had a lot of trespass in Cascade. This'll come back to live irrigation facilities. I'd been

pestering Dick. I said, “Dick, we’ve got a lot of trespassing in Cascade Reservoir. I think we ought to go up and do a photo reconnaissance, walk the line and take photos of all the trespass, and document it, and do something about it, begin a program to deal with the trespass.”

And he kept saying, “Jim, don’t rock the boat. Don’t rock the boat.”

“Okay.”

So when he transfers, I decided that was a splendid idea. Still thought it was a good idea.

Storey: And you were the division chief then. (laughter)

Brooks: Yes. Yes. So I talked to then Bob Brown, the project superintendent, and he said, “Sure.” So I hired a summer person, and she—in this case, she—spent two summers walking the reservoir, photographing all the trespass, finding out owners, getting addresses, and all that stuff. We produced two full volumes, three-inch-notebook volumes of trespass Cascade. Well, that was prepared, then, in three volumes. One, went to the regional office. *Two*, went to the regional office, and they decided to send one to Denver, Colorado.

It was shortly after that that the wisdom of Dick’s words came home in a very big way to me about “Jim, don’t rock the boat.” I got a three-

four-page memorandum came down through the regional office from Denver, Colorado, telling me how I should deal with all the trespass at Cascade, and part of it lacked any rationale, any rational consideration of any kind, I thought. So I decided, well, I was sorry I did that.

Storey: Can you give me examples, by chance? Do you remember?

Brooks: Sure can. First decision, one of the decisions that came out of Denver, Colorado was, "Oh, we'll get rid of all the boat docks." *All* of them, lock, stock and barrel.

I said, "That's crazy. That's absolutely ludicrous. They're nuts." Well, I mean, they stuck by their guns, and I just ignored it.

The other thing they wanted me to do was go out and tear out all the steps that came from the top of the bank to the beach, in some cases, to the dock, but oftentimes just to the beach. It was just the stairs. In some cases you might have—we had thirty foot of ownership, thirty feet from the property boundary, the lot boundary, to the top of the bank. And then, of course, you step off the bank and you hit the high mark of the reservoir. And it could be maybe—it varied, could be anywhere from three foot above the maximum water surface elevation to maybe thirty feet. More like twenty.

Some of these people had built wooden stairs to go down to the beach. Some of them were certainly retired people, older folk, had difficulty getting around, just getting around, period, and would have had absolutely no way to get from the top of the bank to the beach without the stairs. I'm thinking, gosh, this is crazy.

I remember one man in a wheelchair, sat in a wheelchair, chair user. Had a concrete patio, and the corner of the concrete patio encroached on Reclamation fee-owned land, probably a triangle, three foot by three foot. And they said, "Saw it off." Gosh darn it. It seems like we ought to be able to do something, something, we need to do something. Maybe we could enter into permits. Anyway, I write him this letter. I say, "Saw the gol-darn thing off," and he does. And when he did, he severed a small portion of the sidewalk that he needed to just get around his cabin. But he did it. He's dead now. That doesn't make any difference.

But I think somehow what was coming out of Denver, Colorado, and then what was being said at that point of time out of the region, from a person in charge of lands, lacked any common sense. Yes, they were trespassing, and some of them did it, probably did it knowingly. Knowingly. And we did have a major problem that we needed to deal with, but I think they need to deal with people as people. There was certainly room for negotiation, but Denver would've had it wiped clean. So in

some cases like the stairway, the steps, I just totally ignored it. I certainly ignored the boats docks until finally region's pushing me hard enough, we now enter into boat dock agreements that says in ten years your boat dock permit will terminate, and when it does, your dock will be taken out. Gosh. Again, I think it lacks any common sense.

“So Senator Craig gets involved and finally gets the policy turned around, and makes this wonderful statement about how he'd handled Reclamation. . . .”

So Senator [Larry] Craig gets involved and finally gets the policy turned around, and makes this wonderful statement about how he'd handled Reclamation. I think for the most part, on his part it was a political ploy. There were a number of us in Reclamation that realized that it was a crazy decision, and needed turning around. Unfortunately, it took him to turn it around, I guess.

Storey: We just do permits now?

Permits for Boat Docks at Cascade Reservoir

Brooks: We do permits. We inspect them.

Storey: We do?

Brooks: The docks?

Storey: Yeah.

Brooks: Yep.

Storey: You inspect them for pollution issues and so on?

Brooks: We do. We inspect for pollution, for safety, for how they're maintained. Each one is permitted as a small tag on [it]. In fact, same size, and looks like a motorcycle license plate. It's that same stock. Same metal stock reflectorized. Yep. We inspect them every year.

Storey: So no chemical barrels, for instance?

Brooks: No. No gas storage. No barrels that hold anything. There's one boathouse, but we don't . . . and it was built prior to this time. In fact, when it was built, it was permitted by this office. We don't permit that anymore, either.

Storey: Well, presumably Cascade fluctuates.

Brooks: Absolutely.

Storey: So you have to be there to take care of this dock all the time, or it gets stranded high and dry, or left out in the middle of the lake.

Brooks: A few drift off, but not very many.

Storey: But we don't really have any program up there to

speaking of, because we're out of the recreation business?

Brooks: Yes, we're pretty much out of the recreation business, although we're doing it this year.

Storey: Doing what?

Recreation Facilities at Cascade Reservoir

Brooks: Operating and maintaining the parks. We have a Natural Resources Specialist in Cascade who is responsible for a lot of the lands, interacting with U.S. Fish and Wildlife right over to Department of Fish and Game, doing the boat-dock checks.

Storey: And when did we build all these facilities?

Brooks: [unclear], which was the first campground built on the reservoir predates [my arrival], so I don't know the answer to that for *sure*. Probably built in the sixties. The next one to be built is Poison Creek, and that was built in 1975.

Storey: Before you were in charge of recreation?

Brooks: Before I was in charge, uh-huh. And then after that, we built quite a few more. But I guess we won't be building any more.

Storey: What do we have in the way of campsites up there?

Brooks: You mean number-wise?

Storey: Yeah.

Brooks: Probably close to 300.

Storey: So this is a fairly popular area.

Brooks: Oh, *very* popular. Very popular. A lot of people in Boise go to Cascade and McCall area. A lot of summer homes. Probably in the neighborhood of 1,500 summer homes.

Storey: Around—

Brooks: Around Cascade Reservoir, and that's continually building up.

Storey: Expanding.

Brooks: Expanding.

Storey: Do they have a sewage system?

Brooks: No.

Storey: Septic tanks.

Brooks: Septic tanks, and that's another part of the problem for the reservoir. The upper end of the reservoir has now formed a sewer district, and there will be a sewer system put in which will pick up—at this

point in time will probably catch 90 percent of the problem as it relates to septic tanks.

Storey: When was it that you got recreation back? If I'm recalling, you were promoted in '82. You became the branch chief?

Brooks: No.

Storey: I mean the division chief.

Recreation Functions Reunited with the Lands Functions in about 1984

Brooks: Bob retires in '82. Probably became branch chief in '80, 1980. Recreation comes back to the Division of Lands in Neil Stessman's time, Neil becomes project super in late '82. Probably comes back in '84.

Storey: Did you do any of the development up at Cascade while you had that recreation responsibility?

Brooks: Yeah.

Storey: What did y'all do?

Brooks: Let me see now. While I was chief of the division, we built Boulder Creek, Sugar Loaf, Buttercup, West Mountain North, West Mountain South. They were built when Jack was in water operations, [unclear].

Storey: That was later? Earlier?

Brooks: That was earlier. That was before recreation came back to lands.

Storey: So these are campgrounds.

Brooks: These are campgrounds.

Storey: Where did we get the money to built the campgrounds with?

Brooks: Harry found it. (laughter)

Storey: Harry found it?

Brooks: Kirk Ernstwell [phonetic], our financial man in region, it's my understanding that Cascade–

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

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

Storey: . . . Cascade hadn't been closed down?

Brooks: Closed out.

Storey: Closed out, okay.

Brooks: And some of those funds were still being supplied

by BPA.¹¹ Don't ask me why. I don't understand that part of the picture.

Storey: WPA?

Brooks: No, no. BPA.

Storey: But it wasn't like a congressional line item or anything?

Brooks: I don't think so, but I'm not absolutely certain.

Storey: What other recreation development was done while you were chief of that division?

Brooks: That's all in the way of development. We were involved a little with recreation on the Owyhee Reservoir, which is the Owyhee Project in eastern Oregon. Didn't do the operation and maintenance, but we were involved in recreation to some degree. Thief Valley had been built before my time. That's a very small campground, kind of a *ratty* campground, actually, and that was done with the bass fishing organization in eastern Oregon. Now operated and maintained by the county, using those words "operation and maintenance" lightly. Again, it's kind of a ratty area. But Cascade was the only one where we were doing any real construction as long as I was chief of the division.

11. Bonneville Power Administration.

Storey: What about relations with the organizations that were operating our facilities? Did your division handle that also?

Brooks: Yes. Our relationship with the folk were good. As it relates to the Owyhee Reservoir, it was primarily the county sheriff or his deputies. We always had a good working relationship with them, and not many problems. Had Union County, Oregon, was excellent, even though their operation and maintenance was not very good. It's kind of a remote site. It's not heavily used. I talked to a lot of the folks that used it, and they weren't real unhappy, so there didn't seem to be any reason for me to be unhappy. There was a lot of thistle growing in the area. Sometimes they'd let the grass get up waist high before they'd bother to mow it. But I still think our relationships with the county was good.

Storey: Did they want us to develop more facilities for them?

Brooks: No. Not at [unclear] Creek. The Owyhee Reservoir, they would've liked to have had us develop more.

Storey: And what was our response to that?

Brooks: At that point in time, generally what they wanted us to do was do it next year, and our budget was already done. The other thing we were looking at

at Owyhee Reservoir was that we knew we wanted to do a resource management plan. And through that process, we hoped--it certainly was my hope, anyway--was that we garnered the support of state and county and local users to support whatever it was, the plan finally described as it related to recreation or or anything else, for that matter, as it relates to my area of interest, lands and recreation and, later, water. That process was completed, finally--I'm trying to remember--'92, I think.

Storey: This would be the Owyhee Reservoir Resource Management Plan?

BLM Wanted Reclamation to Relinquish Withdrawn Land to It

Brooks: Um-hmm. There were a number of things identified in there. But then we got all caught up in this withdraw and review, and a spitting match between BLM and Reclamation. Again, the Washington office gets heavily involved, gosh, in both cases, I would say, both agencies, BLM and Reclamation. So that takes the forefront, and consequently, the rest of the plan is just kind of set aside until that question is finally answered, who's going to manage these lands? The question, even today, has not yet been answered. See, BLM wants everything, lock, stock, and barrel.

Storey: Hey, possession is nine-tenths of the law.

Brooks: Well, I think, and I guess that I think also that they hope that with it would come a lot of money. In fact, the manager of Vale District has said to me, he wants me to introduce him to the manager of ~~South Board of Control~~–North Board of Control, ~~I'm sorry~~, of the Owyhee Project, and he wants to tour the facilities, and he wants to learn how to operate the system, because he thinks he could operate the system, the irrigation system. I related that to John Ross, who's Manager of North Board of Control, and he said, "Well, Jim, that'll be a chilly day when that meeting takes place." (laughter) But they're still in that mode–BLM.

Storey: They're still pushing?

Brooks: In Oregon, absolutely, they want it *all*. They want *everything*.

Storey: Have we actually transferred anything?

Brooks: I think now that Jim Budolphson's in charge, I think they have. I think they've come to some agreement. I think it's a mistake. In a not-too-friendly way, I've referred to BLM as the Bureau of Mining and Grazing, and I still think they're in that mode. I think if we transfer lands of Owyhee Reservoir to BLM and give up the withdrawals, you'll see mining. Currently they've got four-inch PVC pipes strung all over that country. But because it's under First Board control, they can't mine it. But there's gold there. There's gold in

that country. If it's transferred or withdrawals are lifted, it'll be mined. BLM tells me it *won't*. I don't believe it for a moment.

From the standpoint of esthetics of the reservoirs, I think that would be a mistake.

Storey: Not only that, but possibly water-quality issues.

Brooks: Absolutely.

Storey: Well, we started out with you being a civil engineering technician. You mentioned that mostly what you did was contracts for crossings. Sounds like there must've been a lot with 3,000 miles of canal, and streets, and—

Brooks: Subdivisions. There were.

Storey: And all of the various lines that would be coming in. Would a transmission line, for instance, require a crossing permit agreement?

Brooks: Absolutely.

Storey: Even though there might not be anything touching our property?

Brooks: Oh, yes. Absolutely. In fact, to the very best of our ability, we see to it that the poles are *not* set on our right-of-way. They're set *off* the right-of-way. But the other thing we're absolutely concerned

about is the height of the lines *above* the operation and maintenance road as it relates to the use of heavy equipment. The last thing we want or need is somebody getting tangled up in lines with a backhoe.

Storey: Or what they used to call a steam shovel.
(laughter)

Brooks: Yeah, right. Or cleaning equipment.

Storey: What kind of maintenance do they have to do on these canals? I noticed, I think it's the New York Canal is ~~cement-lined~~, concrete-lined.

Brooks: Yeah, and underneath that's asphalt. And then underneath that is the original canal.

Storey: Really?

Brooks: Yeah.

Storey: They tried asphalt first?

Brooks: Uh-huh, and then rather than remove it in a lot of places, they just went in and concreted over the top of the asphalt.

Normal Maintenance on the Canals

In most of the area, in most cases where the canals of the live irrigation facility's been hardened

to concrete, the maintenance is pretty low. They periodically get cracks, and leaks in the concrete lining in New York, for instance. But in most of the system, *most* of the systems is not hardened. In a few places they've hardened it with gravel and clay materials. So they're always constantly needing to remove silt, and then irrigation facilities in urban areas, like the city of Boise, that's absolutely delightful trash collector. If I have an old rubber tire that's just come off the car, and I don't know what to do with it, why, I can just throw it in the New York Canal, and it's not a problem, you see.

Storey: Oh, it isn't?

Brooks: No. Well, it's not my problem, anyway.

Storey: Yes.

Brooks: Grass clippings and tree trimmings. Well, I just changed the oil on the car. Darn. I don't have anything to put it in, like cans, so I throw in the garbage. They won't know if I throw it in the garbage if I put it in the right container. But then there's the New York Canal, or some other canal—I'll just dump it in there. It's wonderful. From the standpoint of maintenance, the irrigation districts are *always* contending with that. Washing machines, *dryers*, refrigerators. You name it, it ends up in the canal at some point in time.

Storey: And then they have to haul it out, which looks to me like it could be dangerous on some of these canal banks.

Brooks: Oh, it could.

There Is Little Fishing in the Canals

Storey: Is there recreation, like fishing, for instance, in the canals?

Brooks: No. There's a little fishing in the canal, but not much. It's not really good. When we dewater there's quite a bit of fishing. Although most of the time, most of the New York is not owned—the underlying fee is owned by adjacent landowner, not by Reclamation.

Storey: So we just have a right-of-way?

Brooks: We just have a right-of-way, so most of the adjacent owners run the folk off, but when it's dewatered, there's good fishing for a very short period of time.

Bikers and Runners Use the Paths along the Canals

We get a lot of runners. We built— we allowed to be built a bike path along the Penitentiary Canal. That's heavily used by bikers, runners.

Storey: That's up on the east side of town?

Brooks: Yes, and eventually connects the entire bike path along the Boise River like a peak. Penitentiary Canal bike path's a piece of that system. And, I think it works well.

“The irrigation district board of control doesn't like it, and if it was up to them, we'd never have another bike path along any of our facilities anywhere. . . . They're afraid they're going to run over somebody. Or they're afraid somebody's going to run into them. Or they're afraid somebody's going to fall into the Penitentiary Canal and drown, and then sue. . . .”

The irrigation district board of control doesn't like it, and if it was up to them, we'd never have another bike path along any of our facilities anywhere.

Storey: Why don't they like it?

Brooks: They're afraid they're going to run over somebody. Or they're afraid somebody's going to run into them. Or they're afraid somebody's going to fall into the Penitentiary Canal and drown, and then sue. So far, we've had a number of drownings in a number of canals around here, but not the Penitentiary.

“In a few cases, suits have been brought against

Oral history of James (Jim) B. Brooks

Board of Control But so far, no one has won in court, except the Board of Control. But that's a fear. . . ."

In a few cases, suits have been brought against Board of Control But so far, no one has won in court, except the Board of Control. But that's a fear. That's a concern for some, the liability. To some degree, I suspect that it's a well-founded fear, if you look at the tort claims and several settlements on tort claims that come to without going to court. In my humble opinion, it should give people cause for fear.

Storey: In other words, the irrigation district should be concerned?

Brooks: I think they should be concerned, because I think our tort system needs revision. I think in some cases, the courts or the insurance companies, negotiating with their clients, I think it's probably better that we settle than go to court. In either event, I think in some cases what should've happened was that the suit should've been thrown out. I think we sometimes pay atrocious amounts for people's real stupidity that's not the agency's responsibility and or—that could be Forest Service, could be a state agency. I think our court systems need something, needs fixing.

Storey: It's getting screwy.

Brooks: Yeah, it is getting screwy.

Storey: I'd like to continue, but we're already a few minutes over.

Brooks: Well, that's too bad.

Storey: So what I'd like to ask you now is whether or not you're willing for the tapes and resulting transcript from this interview to be used by researchers both inside and outside Reclamation.

Brooks: Sure, it's all right with me.

Storey: Good. Thank you.

END SIDE 2 TAPE 2. JULY 26, 1995.

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

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, senior historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing James B. "Jim" Brooks, on July the 27th, 1995, in the Snake River West Area Office at about nine o'clock in the morning. This is tape one.

Mr. Brooks, first of all, I'd like to ask a couple questions to clean up some things. When you were living in McCall, which is near Cascade, were you aware of the Bureau of Reclamation at that time?

"They built Cascade Dam . . . The thing I

Oral history of James (Jim) B. Brooks

**remember is it drowned out a lot of small critters,
and the stench was fairly significant. . . .”**

Brooks: Vaguely. They built Cascade Dam before I left McCall for Baker, Oregon, and the reservoir filled. The thing I remember is it drowned out a lot of small critters, and the stench was fairly significant.

Storey: Oh, really?

Brooks: Yes, as we drove up and down the highway from McCall to Boise. Then when I was in Baker, they built Phillips Mason Dam and Phillips Reservoir on the Powder River.¹² But I didn't really know much about the agency as such.

Storey: You were just vaguely aware?

Brooks: Vaguely aware of it.

Avoiding Contamination of Canal Water by Runoff

Storey: We started talking yesterday about contamination of canals by runoff and that sort of thing. What kinds of things are we doing to try to avoid

12. Mason Dam is a Bureau of Reclamation dam on the Baker Project near Baker Oregon. It “is a rolled-earth and rockfill structure 173 feet in height with a crest length of 895 feet. Phillips Lake, impounded behind the dam, covers 2,235 acres and has a total capacity of 95,500 acre-feet (active 90,500 acre-feet).”

Source: viewed January 22, 2010, at about 11:20 a.m.:
http://www.usbr.gov/projects/Facility.jsp?fac_Name=Mason%20Dam

problems?

Precautions about Allowing Storm Drain Water to Empty into Reclamation Drains

Brooks: Well, in part, I think, brickwork. We're giving subdivisions a hard look. We're working with Ada County Highway District. They want storm drains to enter into Bureau drains. We're going over it with a fine-toothed comb. We're getting a commitment out of them. Most of the water is either treated through a pond filtration system, ponding, natural growth, and then often it goes into a settling pond. It moves from there into a concrete structure that skims off some of the pollutants.

Storey: So we're requiring that they build these facilities?

Brooks: Yes.

Storey: How do they react to that? Obviously it's an extra expense.

Brooks: They don't like it. The subdivision people don't like it. Ada County, of course, isn't real happy with it ~~because~~ either, because in the end they've got to maintain those facilities, which is an added expense for the county. But I think that they realize that it's important to the health of the drains.

Storey: Yeah. When you say—I think you referred to a pond that filters.

Brooks: I did.

Storey: Yeah. What are we talking about there?

Brooks: They'll take the storm water runoff from a subdivision. It's piped, collected, and then put into a pond where it either settles, the water just settles out in the pond, or it may overflow, depending upon the size of the event. They overflow. If it overflows into the drain, it generally *first* passes through a concrete structure where it skims off oil and those kinds of things.

Storey: How would you do that? How would you design a concrete structure that would skim off oil?

Brooks: There's two vaults, two concrete vaults similar to septic tanks, except that they have—I don't know what you'd call it. They're designed in such a way that the oils float, and they pass into another tank. Shoot, I've seen the designs. I'm not sure how to describe it, though.

Then Ada County comes along and pumps out that particular tank. They also clean out ponds if there's a lot of silt that settles into the pond. Silt will also settle into the concrete skimming structures. Those need to be cleaned.

Storey: Do these ponds also use vegetation?

Brooks: Yes. Cattails and willows.

Storey: And they absorb things that we don't want in the water? Is that the concept?

Brooks: They do. That's the concept.

Storey: Sounds to me as if you go into these concrete vaults, maybe, and you take the water out low and the high water overflows into a second chamber and that carries the oil.

Brooks: That's right.

Storey: That's interesting. They have to maintain these?

Brooks: Yes.

Storey: There isn't a drain system for the city of Boise?

Brooks: No. There isn't a drain system throughout this entire valley *except* what Reclamation has constructed.

Storey: Our agricultural drainages.

Brooks: That's correct.

Storey: And it's mostly ditches?

Brooks: Yes. Open.

Storey: I saw a bunch of them out when I was driving ~~east~~
~~I mean~~ west. So naturally they want to dump all of

their water into us.

Brooks: Absolutely.

Storey: And they have to get a permit to do that?

“ . . . right after I first came here, Reclamation was even allowing them to dump storm water into live irrigation-carrying facilities . . . we stopped that practice. . . .great risk of overtopping that facility . . .”

Brooks: They do. We used to, right after I first came here, Reclamation was even allowing them to dump storm water into live irrigation-carrying facilities, which didn't make an awful lot of sense to me. In talking to Bob Brown, we stopped that practice. That doesn't mean that we don't get trespass. We do. But when they're adding storm water to a live irrigation facility, we run a great risk of overtopping that facility because it's designed for the irrigation flows, not designed to carry a storm event. So we've tried to get rid of most of them.

Documented Trespass on Irrigation Delivery and Drainage Facilities on the Boise Project

I was talking about Cascade yesterday and the trespass that was going on, and how we documented all that. It was a couple of years later I did the same thing for the irrigation facilities in this valley, both the drainage and the delivery system.

It was documented in volumes—I can't remember, there was two or three volumes to that one. But I never moved it forward because of my experience with trespass at Cascade. That data is still in this office.

Storey: You didn't proceed because of the problems generated out of the Denver office, you mean?

Brooks: As I perceived them to be, anyway. That and staffing, the cost of dealing with a problem which really needs to be dealt with, it really should be dealt with. It would take a great deal of money, I think, and *certainly* a number of additional employees. At this point in time, and even then, it wasn't feasible.

Storey: This would have been between when you came to Reclamation in '75 and when you became branch chief in '80?

Brooks: Yes.

Storey: So you were interested in trespass concerns, doing leases, crossings. What other kinds of things were going on when you were a civil engineering technician? Were we actually designing anything, for instance? Were we doing any construction, even if it was O&M construction?

Brooks: A little, but not much. We built a new garage, for instance, out back, which is now gone.

Storey: Would you have been involved in that?

Youth Conservation Corps Camp at Cascade

Brooks: I was. I was involved to some degree in designing what we needed. I was very much involved in with the YCC [Youth Conservation Corps] program. Designed the camp that was a seven-day residential camp at Cascade. Pretty much designed what we needed. Saw that it was constructed. I literally plumbed it—did some wiring in it. Most of that was done by a licensed electrician.

Storey: Where was that camp?

Brooks: On the west side of Cascade Reservoir.

Storey: Over on the west side. How long did it survive, or is it still there?

Boise State University Now Uses the YCC Camp

Brooks: Well, the camp's still there and it's being used right now by Boise State University. They have taken out all the tent frames, which was living quarters for the YCC students. The mess hall was actually a trailer house. We moved it. I don't remember how many years the YCC went on, but it was an active camp until Reclamation, for all practical purposes, got out of the YCC programs.

Storey: Did you actually work with the folks up there?

Bureau of Reclamation History Program

Brooks: Yeah, I did.

Storey: What was going on up there?

Brooks: They were helping us develop wildlife habitat. They constructed goose nesting platforms and then installed them. They helped us maintain some of our campgrounds. They worked also with Forest Service. They worked with U.S. Fish and Wildlife projects that they had going. It was an *excellent* program, in my opinion. I think we got a big bang for our dollar.

Storey: Do you know anything about the arrangements for funding?

Brooks: For?

Storey: For the staffing, for the YCC folks, for the materials for the projects, any of that kind of thing.

YACC Non-Residential Camp at Montour

Brooks: The funding for the materials for projects, if it was Reclamation, came out of our O&M funding. The YCC—we had another residential camp, it was in Montour before we tore the buildings down. We housed them in the houses there. Those particular--no, it wasn't YCC. I take it back. It was YACC [Young Adult Conservation Corps]. Nonresidential. They designed a campground at Black Canyon and constructed it back of the YCC.

I'm not real sure where the funding came from. The Department of Labor comes to mind, but I'm not certain.

Storey: How were you involved with the YCC camp then?

Brooks: I wrote the contract with Boise State University and the administration.

Storey: Boise State administered it?

Brooks: They administered it. They hired the staff and administered the program.

Storey: What about the projects they did? You were in lands and recreation, right?

Brooks: That's correct.

Storey: So is that separate from O&M the way you were organized here, or is that O&M?

Brooks: Well, I don't think you can separate the two, although we had an O&M Branch, a division, that actually was more involved in operation and maintenance of the power facilities, and the other just did dams and irrigation facilities that *we* administered.

“ . . . even though when you talk about lands and recreation, you still have operation and maintenance responsibilities . . . ”

But even though when you talk about lands and recreation, you still have operation and maintenance responsibilities, particularly as it relates to campgrounds or other high-use, public high-use areas.

Storey: But, for instance, did you identify those O&M needs and then go to the O&M Division and say, “This is what we need”? How did that work?

Brooks: I did if I needed heavy equipment, like a cat or a backhoe to do something for us. We installed osprey poles at Cascade.

Storey: I saw three last evening over the dam.

Brooks: Now that takes a piece of equipment to set those poles into place. So I’d go to the O&M people and ask for the equipment and an operator. A lot of things, though, that we did didn’t require that, although at the project level I’d say we interacted extremely well.

Storey: Maybe we better clarify some stuff here. How many “projects” was this office supervising at that time?

Brooks: How many projects?

Projects Supervised out of the Projects Office

Storey: Was it just one, the Boise Project?

Brooks: Oh, no. Off the top of my head I can't tell you how many. There was the Baker Project—

Storey: In Oregon.

“There's Boise Project, and that involves five irrigation districts. Boise Project Board of Control is made up of five irrigation districts. . . .”

Brooks: The Baker Project. The Owyhee Project also in Oregon. Vale Project in Oregon. There's Mann Creek in Idaho. There's Burnt River in Eastern Oregon. There's Boise Project, and that involves five irrigation districts. Boise Project Board of Control is made up of five irrigation districts. Off the top of my head, I would say there were probably twenty-some irrigation districts that we interact with in the Boise Valley between Boise and the Snake River.

Storey: On the Boise Project?

Brooks: Yes.

Storey: When you say you had good relations with the project, this sort of leads into my next question. Where were the people coming from that were doing these jobs for you that weren't coming from O&M?

Brooks: The people that were doing the work for me are Reclamation staff. When I'm talking about the project, I was talking about the project office, Central Snake Projects Office and Reclamation people. Once in a while we'd get an irrigation district to do something for us. We'd either contract with them or they'd just sometimes do it out of the goodness of their heart.

Storey: I guess what I'm trying to probe here is the relationship between the Reclamation project office and all of these various projects like the Vale Project, the Owyhee Project, the Boise Project. Some of them maybe had the local water users running the project?

“All . . . irrigation districts . . . under the Reclamation umbrella do their own operation and maintenance under contract with the United States. . . .”

Brooks: All of our irrigation districts that are under the Reclamation umbrella do their own operation and maintenance under contract with the United States.

Storey: Okay. Then the next question becomes why were we doing *anything* if they were doing the O&M?

“. . . O&M that we're doing is on facilities, dams and power facilities that have not been turned over to the irrigation districts for operation and maintenance. . . . we're still required to do the

safety-of-dams reviews, review of operation and maintenance, those kinds of things. . . .”

Brooks: Well, the O&M that we’re doing is on facilities, dams and power facilities that have not been turned over to the irrigation districts for operation and maintenance. I’d say at least 50 percent have been turned over to the irrigation districts for operation and maintenance. But we’re still required to do the safety-of-dams reviews, review of operation and maintenance, those kinds of things.

Storey: Say Cascade, for instance. Had Cascade been turned over to the appropriate irrigation district?

Reclamation Is Operating Cascade Dam and Reservoir and Black Canyon Dam and Reservoir

Brooks: No, and there are a number of districts that hold water storage space in Cascade, and they’re not a single entity. They’ve not formed a board of control, for instance. They do their own thing. So there really isn’t an *entity* per se that we would turn it over to.

Storey: So Reclamation is running that facility?

Brooks: We are.

Storey: Downstream, it may be the water users are O&Ming the canals or something?

Brooks: They're O&Ming the canals, all the delivery systems, and the drainage downstream. We operate only the dam and reservoir at Cascade and Black Canyon, which is also on that system.

Storey: So that's why we're interested in osprey poles, campgrounds, and so on at those facilities is because they're our responsibility.

Brooks: They are.

Storey: Gets confusing. (laughter) In lands and recreation, were you involved in the oversight on the way the water users maintained the facilities they were responsible for?

Brooks: From the standpoint of Reclamation holding title to the right of way or holding title to mineral, material sources, gravel pits, I was involved in reviewing those particular lands, rights-of-way, to assure that the district was operating them or maintaining those particular lands and rights-of-way to a particular standard. Comes to mind one material source, for instance. I had a ditch rider was dumping garbage, *lots* of garbage, washing machines, old refrigerators, that kind of stuff. We made him go in and clean it up, haul it to a dump, and restore the site.

Storey: How did you carry out that oversight?

Brooks: Mostly just by finding some time to drive around

and up and down the rights-of-way. Under the Central Snake Projects Office, there's over 800,000 acres. At that point in time, there was only staff of two or three people. So consequently, getting out to see the land and the rights-of-way was most difficult, and we didn't get there very often, unfortunately.

Storey: You weren't on a schedule or anything?

Brooks: No.

Storey: Eight hundred thousand acres. And I presume the most likely thing to be turned over to the irrigation district is the canal and lateral system?

Brooks: Yes, but also the material sites were turned over to the irrigation districts. Isolated tracts were, only from the standpoint ~~of the~~ most of the isolated tracts were considered to be material sources. In many, many cases they hadn't been opened up, and at this point in time, they probably won't be. Actually, we restored a lot and we've asked for restoration. BLM [Bureau of Land Management] actually makes the recommendation to Congress for Congress to restore, they're withdrawn tracts of land.

Storey: When you say materials, we're talking about clays, gravels?

Brooks: Gravels, sand.

Storey: I'm trying to think what else I should ask about lands and recreation in your early years, what other kinds of activities you were involved in. What about purchase or sale of land or anything like that, or withdrawal of land, or *de*-withdrawal of land? (laughter)

Brooks: De-withdrawal?

Storey: Whatever it is. (laughter)

Reclamation Can Sell Small Tracts of Fee Title Lands but Cannot Sell Withdrawn Lands

Brooks: Well, we did, and do, review our withdrawn tracts and make the determination we either need it for project purposes, or if we don't, we recommend restoration. In a number of cases, we sold some small tracts of ~~withdrawn~~ land.¹³

Storey: How did we go about selling them?

Brooks: There was some criteria, still is some criteria. You had to be an owner of land in a particular irrigation district, and an irrigator. You could make application to buy a small tract of ground. You can

13. Note that on January 22, 2010, the editor consulted with Ms. Peggy Haren, program analyst: lands lead, in Reclamation's Land Resources Office, Policy and Administration. Mr. Brooks reversed Reclamation's ability to sell lands in this discussion. Withdrawn lands may not be sold, but fee title lands can be sold under certain conditions. The text of the interview has been corrected.

today. We determine whether we needed it for project purposes or we didn't. If we didn't, then we could sell it. If it was surrounded by private land, one single owner, we could negotiate the sale. If there were a multitude of owners, or other people in the district could get to the land, then we'd advertise it.

Storey: Very similar to leases, then.

Brooks: Very similar.

Storey: In terms of the criteria of who could do what.

Brooks: We can sell land that's been withdrawn. We *can't* sell [withdrawn] ~~fee~~ land. That has to be done through GSA. GSA can give us permission to sell. If it appraises over \$1,000 dollars, we can't sell it.

Storey: What's the difference between withdrawn and fee land?

Brooks: I'll be blessed if I know. Policy, I think. In part, it's written in the law, too. I could sell 80 acres of [fee title] ~~withdrawn~~ ground, but I couldn't sell 200 feet of [withdrawn] ground without special dispensation.

Storey: So the maximum size was eighty acres?

Brooks: No, no. I just pulled that figure out of my head. But we did sell eighty-acre tracts. We've sold

forty-acre tracts in the past. I don't remember anything over eighty, but the possibility exists.

Storey: When we were evaluating lands to determine whether or not they could be sold, or, as I put it, de-withdrawn—

Factors Considered When Restoring Withdrawn Lands to the Public Domain or Selling Fee Lands

Brooks: Restored.

Storey: —what kinds of factors entered into our decisions about whether or not we needed the land for project uses?

Brooks: If it was adjacent to a canal system or a—I started to say “and drain,” not drain so much but live irrigation systems, one of the questions we always ask ourselves, if we had a failure in this particular area, if we sell the ground and failure occurs, are we going to have to buy it back or are we going to have to pay damages? How serious that might be, that's one factor we weigh.

The other factor we look at was, is it a good material source? If it is, we're probably going to hang onto it. If it's not, we get rid of it.

Mining Could Occur on Withdrawn Lands Restored to the Public Domain

Another question we generally ask ourselves is if it's restored to the public domain, mining *could* occur. If mining occurred, what would that do? How would that affect the facilities that we retain? Generally speaking, well, it's a question we ask ourselves, generally speaking, mining doesn't occur on small isolated tracts.

Storey: What about environmental issues?

Hazardous Material Issues Related to Sale of Lands

Brooks: Oh, that's another question we ask ourselves, I guess. Well, we certainly do. Is there a hazardous-material problem with the site? If there is, then we need to clean it up first. But generally, the question's asked, generally you don't find that as problem.

Sometimes Leasing Is the Best Option, e.g., for Enhancing Wildlife Habitat

Another thing we look at is would the tract be better held in the name of the United States and maybe leased, a long-term lease with either the state of Oregon or the state of Idaho Fish and Game Department, and used for enhancing wildlife habitat?

**“That makes our irrigation districts grumpy . . .
[they] are not in favor of doing anything to**

improve habitat. . . . they don't want to give up a drop of water for anything, including salmon. Then I think they just fear that if it's developed . . . [the] state then has some say on what occurs on the land . . . They just don't want to give up *anything*. . . ."

That makes our irrigation districts grumpy, though, to do that.

Storey: Why?

Brooks: I think they see that as creating a problem for them down the road. Generally speaking, our irrigation districts are not in favor of doing anything to improve habitat. Sometimes to improve a tract of ground, you might need some water, and they don't want to give up a drop of water for anything, including salmon. Then I think they just fear that if it's developed, say, for upland bird habitat, as a for instance, this state then has some say on what occurs on the land and maybe they want to do something with it at a later date. Rightfully so, they probably have a hard time doing that. They just don't want to give up *anything*.

Storey: Yesterday you mentioned, I believe it was Owyhee where BLM wants to take the land back and weren't concerned that mining might occur. Are there other kinds of issues like that for releasing the lands back to BLM?

Brooks: We have some history where we have made recommended restoration and the land was restored. BLM then becomes just part of the deal on tracts. And we've had canal failures.

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

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

Storey: You were saying that we've had a history with BLM, like where we've had a canal failure, and the district tries to go out and—

Reclamation Has Found BLM Slow to React Because of Its Permitting Process

Brooks: Yes. Generally when a canal fails, you've got land above the canal, and the irrigation district could go and just take material from above the canal to fix the breach in the canal that's on the lower side. But not with BLM. I mean, that doesn't occur just right away. They've got to go through a permitting process. Sometimes BLM says, "Well, we have to do NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act]." And in the meantime, the farmers downstream are without water.

Management Issues with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

I'm thinking of—we used to have the Umatilla Project under this office. We've got a reservoir called Cold Springs that's in northeastern

Oregon. It has a refuge overlaying it, U.S. Fish and Wildlife refuge overlaying it. We have 300 feet from high-water mark. To get there, though, you have to cross refuge ground. That's not BLM, of course, but U.S. Fish and Wildlife. The process of getting down to the reservoir is not an easy process because of all the governmental bureaucratic hoops you have to jump through with that particular agency to get down to the reservoir where you can begin to fix the problem.

Storey: That's over in Oregon?

Brooks: That's in Oregon.

Storey: Can you think of any other examples where our release of the land might cause problems?

BLM Issued a Mining Permit on Lands Affecting Reclamation's Owyhee Project

Brooks: We have a withdrawal on the Owyhee Project where BLM issued a mining operation, I think—permit. The operator of the mine was mining right alongside the river, and practically in the river, when Reclamation—when I saw it and knew it was the first form withdrawal, and called BLM. Got no action, so I had to write them. Did, and they withdrew the mining permit.

BLM in Oregon Has Been More of a Problem than in Idaho

Oral history of James (Jim) B. Brooks

BLM Issued a Mining Permit Within 100 Feet Downstream of Deadwood Dam

Generally, most of the problems with BLM have been in Oregon, not in Idaho. Idaho's much more cooperative. Although come to think of it, they issued a mining claim to a gentleman at Deadwood Reservoir *just* downstream of Deadwood Dam. Can't be more than about 100 feet below the dam. The miner—it's hard rock—was blasting his way, a tunnel into the side of the mountain. (laughter)

Storey: Within 100 feet of one of our dams?

Brooks: Yes.

Storey: How did that work out?

Brooks: Well, thank goodness it didn't injure the dam at all, and when it was brought to their attention, they withdrew the mining claim.

Storey: Was it on withdrawn land?

Brooks: Yes.

Becoming a Branch Chief

Storey: Why was it you decided that you wanted to move out of being an engineering technician to being a branch chief? What happened there?

Brooks: I was at the right place at the right time. As I said yesterday, I didn't ever set my sights at becoming a branch chief or division head. I was just at the right place at the right time.

Storey: There was one other person in the office with you at that time?

Brooks: At that time, one other.

Storey; This was when, was it Bob Brown retired?

Brooks: That's correct. There were just two of us.

Storey: That was a branch?

Brooks: Um-hmm. It was.

Storey: So how did you have to go about seeking the job, if you will, even though you hadn't planned on it?

Brooks: I had to apply, a 171. Make application; was selected.

Storey: So then you become branch chief. How did that change things for you?

“I was now able to do the things that I thought needed doing, such as inventorying the trespass at Cascade, inventorying the trespass on the drains . . . irrigation facilities. . . .”

Brooks: Well, the first thing, I guess, I perceived that I was now able to do the things that I thought needed doing, such as inventorying the trespass at Cascade, inventorying the trespass on the drains on the Boise Canal, drains on irrigation facilities.

Storey: So that was after you become branch chief?

Increasing the Annual Fee for Cabin Site Leases at Owyhee Reservoir

Brooks: That was *after* I become branch chief. It was after I became branch chief I looked at the—I didn't look at *them* any more than I looked at it before, but the amount of dollars we were getting for cabin site leases at Owyhee, I thought it was inordinately *low*, so I raised it. That drew congressional inquiries, *many* of them. Caused an awful flap.

Storey: What did you raise it from, to? Do you remember?

Brooks: Raised most of them were 25 dollars—

Storey: A year?

Brooks: Yes, a year. Some of them were 50. We raised them to 100. I think that first raise we went to 150. And if you were paying 25 dollars and then we went to \$150 a year for a cabin site, the lessee, that was an *inordinate* amount of increase, and pointed that out to their congressional folk. We divided by twelve and pointed out that even then it was dirt

cheap, if you looked at it from a monthly basis.

Storey: A little over 10 dollars a month.

Brooks: Yes, right. And most of the cabins are nice, nice cabins. The only way to get to most of them is by boat. You can't drive to them.

Storey: Did you figure in an automatic increase every year?

Brooks: When we wrote the new leases, we said we could look at it in any given year and increase, based on market value. Today they're up around 400 dollars. I think it's just under 400.

Storey: That probably at least pays for the collection that we do.

Brooks: That's about right. It think that's about it. I think that's about it. We inspect those. We inspect the cabin sites once a year, generally. The only ones—I started to say the only ones we have are at Owyhee Reservoir. That's not entirely true.

There Is One Cabin Site Lease at Cascade Reservoir

We have *one* other one, and that happens to be at Cascade. That one's 1,500 dollars a year.

Storey: Somebody who built in trespass?

Brooks: No. Before my time, they allowed two cabins sites to be subdivided and cabins built under lease at Cascade. Just two. What the rationale was for that, I don't know.

Storey: Is there a lot of money involved here, large number of cabin sites? Maybe I should put it that way.

Seventy-two Cabin Site Leases at Owyhee Reservoir

Brooks: There are seventy-two cabin sites.

Storey: At Owyhee?

Brooks: At Owyhee. One at Cascade. It's not a large sum of money, no.

Storey: Do these lessees on Reclamation land cause us any problems?

Brooks: I don't think so. Owyhee Reservoir is fifty-two miles long, has probably three times that much shoreline. We have two recreation subdivisions, cabin site subdivisions at Owyhee. There's a few isolated cabin sites. No, they don't cause us any problem.

Storey: It's nothing like Lake Berryessa, for instance?

Brooks: No. Not even close. Not even close.

Storey: How many people were on your staff as branch chief?

Brooks: When it was just lands, I had one full-time person and some summer temporaries.

Storey: Like the woman you used at Cascade, for instance.

Brooks: At Cascade, um-hmm. Inventorying trespass.

Storey: Of course, when you became branch chief, then you had supervisory responsibilities. What kinds of issues came up for you as you transitioned from being non-supervisory to supervisory?

The Division Increased in Size as New Responsibilities Were Added

Brooks: Other than the things that you're required to do, such as personnel performance, not much. As the division got larger and we took on more responsibility, I took on more staff. But by and large, the people I selected were topnotch people. So from a supervisory point of view, those people helped make that task considerably easier than if I'd somehow selected people that were lazy or—
[Tape recorder turned off]

Storey: This is why you were still branch chief?

The Original Branch Function Was Lands, and Then Recreation Was Added

Brooks: Yes. When I first become branch chief, it's lands. Then finally we become lands and recreation.

Storey: That was in '82, I believe.

Water Operations Were Added to the Responsibilities by Jerry Gregg

Brooks: Then under Jerry Gregg we reorganized again and I take on lands and recreation, and I add water operations to that. Again, I've got a lot of technical staff with a lot of technical expertise. The management, the supervision of people was pretty darned easy. I had staff at Cascade. I had staff at Black Canyon. Those were field stations. In the summertime, those field stations would grow to about twenty-three, twenty-four people, total, between the two. But again, for the most part, because I had good people, it was not a real problem. That's not to say that I didn't have some personnel problems.

Storey: So did you increasingly find your time involved with administrative management activities rather than doing things in the field and so on?

Brooks: Pretty much, although again because of the professional staff that I had, I could still get to the field. I didn't have to worry about the job not getting done.

Storey: So when you started out, you had lands.

Brooks: That's right.

Storey: That was the crossings function, the leasing functions, withdrawals, and releases, and sales, and all that kind of stuff.

Brooks: That's right.

Recreation Added to the Branch in 1982

Storey: What was added when you got recreation then, in 1982?

State Turned back Various Campgrounds and Day Use Areas

Brooks: By that time we've got a number of campgrounds at Cascade that have been constructed. The state, who had been operating Mann Creek campgrounds and campgrounds at Black Canyon—not campgrounds at Black Canyon, those were day-use areas, but the state was operating them. They turned them back over to us, so we had to pick up operation and maintenance of the day-use areas at Black Canyon, campground at Mann Creek, of course, and Cascade and those campgrounds, we had to hire summer temporaries. Initially we had *one full-time* person at Cascade that was responsible for the operation and maintenance of the dam, as well as the recreation and other land

functions around the reservoir, although the leases, even at that point in time, are still written out of this office by lands--well, by staff that work for me.

Storey: And then when was water operations added? Let's see. Jerry must have come here about '85, was it? Am I remembering correctly?

Brooks: No. Neil Stessman. Oh golly, '85.

Storey: I forgot about Neil.

Brooks: Neil follows Bob Brown and then Jerry follows Neil.

Storey: So that would be '83 or so.

Brooks: Neil comes to us in late 1982. I don't remember what--

Storey: I believe yesterday you said he was there about three years, here about three years.

Brooks: That's right. Then Jerry followed him.

Storey: So all of a sudden you had a whole new area of *activity* that you were responsible for. I have the feeling you enjoy new activities.

Brooks: Sure. (laughter) New challenges. But the water doesn't become a part of that division until Reclamation goes through--I forget the name, but

we go through a fairly lengthy reorganization process.

Storey: The one in '87, '88?

**Water Operations Added to the Division During
the 1988 Reorganization under Commissioner
Dale Duvall**

Brooks: That's right. That period of time, the water is added to the function. Again, I have to apply, using the 171 process, and I was selected as division head.

Storey: So this was division head rather than branch chief? So this was a promotion when we reorganized here in '87, '88?

Brooks: Yes, it was.

Storey: May I ask the grade for a division chief?

Brooks: It was a 12.

Storey: Is it still a 12?

"I got my 13 on July 5th, 1992. . . ."

Brooks: No. Later to become a 13. I was made a 13. I got my 13 on July 5th, 1992.

Storey: How can you guys remember this stuff? (laughter)

Brooks: Because my high three just occurred this year.

Storey: Oh, I see.

Plans to Retire in September 1995

Brooks: And I'm retiring in September. So some of those things are kind of important to me, not necessarily to anybody else.

Storey: What kinds of responsibilities were added?

Functions of the Water Operations Staff

Brooks: Water operations? In water operations is where the civil engineers resided that helped irrigation districts design headworks, helped them solve problems as it relates to structures or other facilities like canals. Those folk were responsible for the safety of dams at the project office level. They were responsible for review of operation and maintenance, again at the project level. The civil engineers were always called upon to view subdivisions and bridge designs if a bridge was crossing a facility. They also reviewed anything else that crossed our facilities from a civil engineering point of view.

Then water operations was responsible for the release of water for flood control in all our reservoirs and dams, also responsible for water delivery for the system for the dams and reservoirs

that Reclamation retained rather than turned over to an irrigation entity for operation and maintenance. But even at that, we still had overview.

Storey: Oversight over those folks?

Brooks: Oversight over those people. Uh-huh.

Storey: Well, now, let's see. I'm trying to think. You didn't have anything really directly on the Snake?

Brooks: No, we don't have anything. The Central Snake *Projects* Office didn't have anything on the mainstem of the Snake, no.

Storey: However, the Minidoka Projects Office would have.

Brooks: Sure does.

Storey: And what you do, for instance, at Cascade or at Anderson Ranch, or at Arrowrock, or Owyhee might affect the flows of the Snake, as might the Minidoka Projects. How is all that coordinated?

“We . . . [talk] daily with Idaho Power, . . . with the Corps of Engineers . . . with people upstream, the Minidoka folk. . . .”

Brooks: We talked. We do now, and we did then, talked daily with Idaho Power, which operates private power generating facilities on the mainstem. We

also talk daily with the Corps of Army Engineers who operate dams and systems on the mainstem of the Columbia. And we're talking daily with people upstream, the Minidoka folk. That was all coordinated between those different people and agencies.

Storey: When you say you talk daily, does that mean literally the telephone?

Brooks: That means literally the telephone.

Storey: Not a fax system or anything like that?

Brooks: No.

Storey: One of the things that I'm interested in, particularly interested in, is the way the different parts of Reclamation interact with one another. My recollection from interviewing Max Van Den Berg is that he ran water operations for the region. So how does the region fit into this picture?

“For all practical purposes, region calls the shots, even though we have very qualified hydrologists as water operations people. Region calls the shots. . . .”

Brooks: For all practical purposes, region calls the shots, even though we have very qualified hydrologists as water operations people. Region calls the shots.

Storey: But they call the shots after consulting with the projects? How does this work?

Brooks: I would say consultation with the projects is pretty minimal. They make the decision then they call the projects and tell us. Then we pass the word along.

Storey: To the other agencies and so on.

Brooks: That's correct.

Storey: Has there been any change in the way that's worked since you became the branch chief—I mean the division chief. Excuse me.

**Wants to Move a Water Operations Hydrologist
from the Region to the Area Office**

Brooks: No. We have talked to Max and we are talking to region, and believe that one position should be moved from region to the Snake River Area Office, and that would be a water operations hydrologist that would do all the modeling here. There's a person in region currently, there's one that does the Payette system. There's another one that does the mainstem of the Snake system and the rest of our areas. Together, that's a full-time position. We believe, and when I say "we," I'm talking about council, our council, Snake River Area Office management team, believes that that position should reside within the area office rather than at region.

Storey: Tell me about the Snake River West Area management team. Your council, who's on it?

Snake River West Area Management Council

Brooks: The council's made up of all division heads plus myself and another division head, named Warren, a Special Projects Officer, with the primary responsibility of working with the Indian Nations within our area. I sit on council. All the division heads sit on council.

Storey: How many are there?

Brooks: An administrative officer, a budget officer, Chief of operation and maintenance, Snake River Area Office *West*, Snake River Area Office *East*, which is Burley. Then we have the Natural Resources Division, both east and west. Those managers sit on the council. Then we have a planning officer and he sits on council.

Storey: And the area manager.

Brooks: The area manager.

Storey: So we're talking seven or eight folks.

Brooks: That's correct.

Storey: There's an office in Burley that's now considered a division?

Brooks: No. It's all one area office we've just chosen to call this side West, and that side East. We're still working on making—we still have that separation between the east and the west, between the Minidoka Project and the old Central Snake Projects Office. We've been working real hard to make that one office. I think we've come a long way.

Storey: They're separated by what, maybe a good 150, 200 miles?

Brooks: Yes, 200 miles. The two offices. Well, it's more like 150.

Storey: It's a long ways. How long does it take water, do you know, to get from there to here?

Brooks: No, I don't know.

Storey: Well, it's irrelevant anyway. So when you became a division chief, all of sudden you had more people, I presume, that you were supervising.

Brooks: Yes.

Storey: Were you still actually able to do field work and stuff, or were you doing mostly management things?

Brooks: Mostly management things, but I was still able to do field work. When I had the people, say at

Cascade, and the people at Black Canyon, I'd visit them at least once a month—in person—just to see how things were going for them.

Storey: Let them know that you're really there.

Brooks: Well, I really cared, because I do care. Did care.

Storey: What kinds of problems came up, issues came up while you were division chief, in water *or* recreation *or* lands?

Recreationists and Residents and Businesses Adjacent to Our Water Bodies Become Irritated When Water Levels Drop

Brooks: In water operations, probably some of the biggest problems came from recreationists or people that lived alongside our reservoirs, and as the water dropped, they became irritated. We had people on Anderson Ranch that have businesses, marinas, and motels, and restaurants, and that kind of thing. As the reservoir drops, oftentimes it might be mid-August, the docks are out of the water and they can't launch boats, and they get extremely irritable.

At Cascade, a lot of cabin-site owners, as the reservoir is drawn down, depending upon the season, not the season, the drought years were the worst because they get very irritable. So you're having to answer those kinds of questions.

“ . . . some of the biggest problems that came from recreationists were some of the obnoxious ones that were toting guns or often we had alcohol-related incidents. . . .”

Recreation--oh, golly, again I think some of the biggest problems that came from recreationists were some of the obnoxious ones that were toting guns or often we had alcohol-related incidents. We'd have family reunions, maybe, where a family would show up in a campground and want to sing 'til midnight, and just generally raise Cain. The other campers would object.

Storey: And we're without law enforcement authority.

Brooks: Oh, absolutely.

Storey: How did we deal with it?

For Law Enforcement Needs, Reclamation Works with the Counties and Cities

Brooks: If it required law enforcement, we always called the county sheriff, Valley County. We have had an *excellent* working relationship with that particular department. Without them, it wouldn't have worked.

Cascade's kind of unique, though. We also have two cities that have facilities and jurisdiction nearby. So we work with city police departments,

as well.

Storey: Cascade is one?

Brooks: Cascade is one. Donnelly's the other one.

Storey: Donnelly?

Reclamation Doesn't Have Formal Rules for Use of Our Lands and Waters

Brooks: Donnelly. Again, it works well. City department's been good. Part of the problem is that—oh, let me see, as it relates to recreation, we have rules and regulations that we post that are taken from the Forest Service, but again Reclamation's never really done anything with them, so we're just huffing and puffing.

A couple of years ago, we had a bunch of baseball teams holding a tournament at Cascade and they were camped in our campgrounds, just spread out on public land, Reclamation-administered land around the reservoir. They were burning—one of the teams had a large campfire down that was right underneath the trees, a bunch of trees. The city policeman stopped and suggested that they put the fire out. The baseball team challenged him. There was nothing we could do. Fortunately, the tree didn't catch fire. The trees didn't catch fire. But most of the time we're just, again, we're just huffing and puffing because we

don't have the regulations really and truly approved and in place.

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

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

Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey with James B. Brooks on July the 27th, 1995.

We have hardly any authority, so that creates problems. What about issues like we mentioned yesterday, the Endangered Species Act? Of course, you have osprey, and you have bald eagles at Cascade, and so on. Who asks us to do things, or does anybody ask us? Do we just initiate activities?

Osprey and Bald Eagles at Cascade Reservoir

Brooks: We've done both. I mean, both has happened. We've initiated activities. It was in the early eighties, like 1981, I believe, or '82, we approached Boise State University and asked the Raptor Department if they wouldn't do a study of osprey, the osprey population around Cascade Reservoir for us. We entered into a contract with Boise State and they produced a study of the osprey population. At that point in time, I don't remember, but it was—very low population that has now grown to somewhere, we've got somewhere in the neighborhood of eighty active nests around Cascade. Back in the early eighties, there was

probably only about ten. So the population has grown very well. We didn't do a *whole* lot of things to help improve that, I don't think, other than putting in some poles and nesting platforms for the osprey. They're used every season.

Bald eagle. We first discovered some bald eagle nests adjacent to Cascade Reservoir, some of them are on the Forest Service, only a couple were on us, on Reclamation-administered land. But we talked to U.S. Fish and Wildlife and they got very active and interacted with us. We've done a Bald Eagle Management Plan for the reservoir. The Forest Service joined us in that effort, although at a public meeting held about three years ago, they said they were withdrawing their support of that management plan which they had been a part of.

Storey: Why was that?

Brooks: I'm not real sure. I think it was politically motivated, but I'm not sure of that.

Storey: But what does the Bald Eagle Management Plan tell us we're going to do?

Brooks: Protect the nests, and in some cases we've enhanced the habitat. We've put butcher blocks out, which is nothing more than a cut of log that stands a little higher than the surrounding grass so that the eagle can land and feed and be able to see. We've managed some tree populations there to

improve nesting habitat. We have fenced off eagles' nesting sites. We've put up signs. We've prepared a bald eagle brochure in conjunction with Boise State University and state Department of Fish and Game, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife. That's primarily used to help educate the people, the reservoir users as well as the people that live in the area.

Storey: Have we seen an increase in eagle population?

Brooks: We have. We've seen an increase in population. In fact, the population's increased to the point where it was downlisted last year to "threatened." From the standpoint of management, with the Endangered Species Act for a particular species, a downlisting from "endangered" to "threatened" doesn't change our management style at all.

Power Generation at Cascade Dam by Idaho Power Company

Storey: Speaking of management style, when I drove up to look at Cascade yesterday evening, I noticed there are, I think, two power generation units on the dam? Am I thinking correctly?

Brooks: There are.

Storey: Below the dam?

Brooks: Below the dam.

Storey: Are they operated by us or by somebody else?

Brooks: They're operated by Idaho Power Company.

Storey: My question is, what kinds of things come up in terms of their generating power and our management of the facility? And particularly, how are water releases managed?

At Cascade Dam, Idaho Power Has a 200 cfs Water Right. They Can Also Use Irrigation Releases to Generate Power in Return for Which They Pay Reclamation a "Falling Water Charge."

Brooks: The power company had a powerplant at Cascade prior to our construction of Cascade Dam. They had a water right for 200 cubic feet per second. We released the 200 cfs. We released it then and we release it now. The only difference is that the powerplant, the old powerplant, was downstream, down by the river bridge crossing on Highway 55, and all we did was enter into an agreement with Idaho Power to construct the new powerplant at the site where it is today, which is just downstream of the dam. They modified Reclamation's penstock so that they could divert 200 cfs *plus* any irrigation releases through their powerplant.

Storey: So they get the 200 cfs?

Brooks: That's right. That's year-round.

Storey: *And* if we release water for irrigation, they get to run as much of that as they can through the penstock?

Brooks: That's correct. They pay us a falling water charge.

Storey: Rather than buying "electricity."

Brooks: Right.

Storey: So we actually--let's see if I understand this. They pay us a falling water charge for the irrigation water. (Brooks: That's right.) *Plus* we deliver it downstream to our water users?

Brooks: That's right.

Storey: That's interesting. Then where do the revenues go from the powerplant? To repayment of the project?

Brooks: You're talking about the falling water charge?

Storey: Yeah.

Brooks: It goes to the Treasury. No, it doesn't go towards repayment of the project.

Storey: It doesn't. Is the project repaid?

"In the case of the Payette Division of the Boise Project . . . there's a number of irrigation districts . . . they will never pay out. . . ."

Brooks: No. In the case of the Payette Division of the Boise Project, which that is, there's a number of irrigation districts, one of those being Black Canyon Irrigation District, they will never pay out.

Storey: Why is that?

Brooks: Contract is written in such a way that they pay more for power as they've got a pumping plant. As power costs increased from the "C" Line Pumping Plant, then the repayment of the facilities decreased. Finally the cost of power *exceeded* the repayment charge and, consequently, they're paying nary a penny on construction costs, and never shall.

Storey: We can't correct the contract?

Brooks: No. The only way to correct it would be to withdraw it or to break the contract, and beyond a shadow of a doubt we'd be in court tomorrow. That was a sweetheart deal.

Storey: How long does the contract run?

Brooks: I don't remember, when they initially entered into that contract, what the projected payout was. I'm going to guess that it would be something like maybe 2010, 2015. But as currently written, it's going to run for perpetuity, with nary a cent being paid on construction costs.

Storey: This is Black Mountain?

Brooks: Black Canyon.

Storey: Black Canyon.

Brooks: Irrigation District.

Storey: Do we have any others like that around?

Brooks: Nope.

Storey: That's the only one where we goofed?

Brooks: The only one that I'm aware of.

Storey: What about Owyhee, for instance? How are some of these other districts doing on repayment?

Repayment in the Area Office's Projects

Brooks: Most of them are doing well. The ones in the Boise Valley, the major ones, the five major ones, that comprise the Boise Project Board of Control have paid out. Owyhee, those folk are continuing to pay. They should be paid out *early* in 2000, like 2010, 2012. We'll see those people pay out. There were a few. Mann Creek Irrigation District, for instance. On a couple of occasions in the last couple years, I can't put a date on it, we have allowed them to postpone their payment. That's a very economically depressed area and farming's pretty

marginal. I think probably the project was pretty marginal in the beginning.

Storey: One of the things you mentioned yesterday that I'm interested in are resource management plans. When did this office start doing resource management plans?

Resource Management Plans in the Area Office

Brooks: Back in the early eighties, we saw a need for management plans and we prepared one for Cascade that was a draft, and never moved beyond that stage in those early years. We finally did one for Montour and it was in draft form and never moved beyond that stage, although we used them to help us reach management decisions.

Then later, golly, late eighties, Reclamation, at the Washington level, Denver level was beginning to say to us, "*Do* resource management plans." That's when we begin and finished Cascade. We begin and finish Owyhee. In the east, we've begun and finished American Falls. But it looks to us like those funds are going to dry up, unfortunately.

"I think resource management plans are excellent tools. . . ."

I think resource management plans are excellent tools. Kind of without them, oftentimes I think we

manage pretty much on a crisis management basis or seat-of-the-pants kind of thing.

Storey: What is it a resource management plan's supposed to accomplish?

Brooks: I think one of the *primary* things it accomplishes is it looks at all the resources around a particular reservoir, consistent, *all* those resources, and brings together a management plan that considers all those resources and gathers the input from all the users from *all* kinds of users, not just recreation, and meshes all those concerns and manages that particular reservoir resources to the *best* benefit of all users, be that people or critters, endangered species or other animals and birds. I think it's good. The process gets people talking together and reaching decisions rather than Reclamation just deciding what's good for others.

Storey: But a resource management plan couldn't logically identify *all* of the issues that are going to come up, could it? I don't quite understand how it's useful as a management tool.

Brooks: Most of those processes, resource management plan processes, take two to three years. It involves all the users and other agencies, both state and Federal. And, maybe once in a while we miss. As I said, it doesn't get a handle on all concerns or all issues. But as it relates to Cascade, I can't think of a thing at this point in time that has hit us between the eyes

and said, “Golly, you didn’t really consider this particular issue.”

Storey: So it does fairly comprehensively look at the issues?

Brooks: I’d say it’s very comprehensive. Before it’s finalized, we go through the NEPA process. In the case of Cascade, that was an E-I-S, environmental impact statement. You’re getting input from all walks of life as well as state, county, city, Federal government agencies.

Storey: When you say you consider all the resources, what are all the resources? What are we talking about here?

Brooks: Oh, gosh. Water, land, irrigation interests, endangered species, other fish and wildlife, cabin site owners, recreation, boating, fishing, concessions, to name a few.

Move from Division Chief to Special Projects Coordinator Working on Native American Issues

Storey: That’s very interesting. What caused you to change? What happened that you went from being a division chief to being, I believe you said, a special projects manager?

Brooks: Coordinator.

Storey: Coordinator.

Experience with Native Americans

Brooks: With primary responsibility for working with the Indian Nations. In 1989, I wanted to go to Taos Pueblo and experience some of the Navajo culture.

Storey: Pueblo culture?

Brooks: Yeah. Pueblo culture. I had a good friend that had been there, and he called and they said, in essence, “We’re really tired of the non-Indian people. Don’t bother to come.” So he called another friend who put us on the track of a cultural/spiritual leader, who happens to be Micmac. We called Tully, and Tully says he’s headed for South Dakota to Cheyenne River Indian Reservation, why don’t we meet him there and see what develops.

Adopted by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe

So we do. To make a long story short, I’m adopted by the Cheyenne River [Sioux] people-tribe which is Sioux, [unclear], and from that time forward I have been very much involved in my personal life with a lot of Indian tribes both here in Idaho and then back in South Dakota.

Asked Whether He Would Be Interested in Working with Native Americans at the Area Office Level

Oral history of James (Jim) B. Brooks

Reclamation, back in the early eighties, was beginning to say, “We do have the trust responsibility.” We decided that we needed to begin to work in some real ways with the Indian tribes. So when the offer was presented to me, the idea was presented to me, Jerry said, “Jim, I’d like to have you just think about working with the Indian world at the project-office level.”

Storey: Jerry?

Brooks: Asked if I’d be interested. And he said, “And take your time. I’d like this to happen.” I said I would, and he said, “Well, six weeks, a couple months, then let me know how you feel.”

I walked out the door, took about six steps down the hall, turned around, and walked back in, and I said I’d do it. (laughter)

If one was to—if I was, Jim Brooks was, to sit down and say, “Golly, how would you like to end your career with government (in this case, Reclamation) you can write your *own* job description, you can do *anything* you want to do, be anybody you want to be,” I couldn’t have chosen any better. It’s been an *absolutely delightful, delightful* time.

Storey: When did this happen?

Began the Job as Special Projects Coordinator in Early 1994

Brooks: I really started in February of '94. It doesn't become effective officially until the Commissioner buys off on the reorganization, which occurs March, April, I don't remember, something like that.

Storey: Something like that.

“Besides working with the Indian people . . . I gave up a few real supervisory headaches. . . .”

Brooks: Besides working with the Indian people and finding a great deal of enjoyment in that and excitement, I gave up a few real supervisory headaches.

Storey: Am I to take it these are personnel headaches?

Brooks: They were personnel headaches. Two, in particular. I kept kind of wondering if it wasn't a cop-out, but I don't think so. In fact, I know it wasn't.

Storey: Tell me more about the Indian groups you work with for this area office.

Worked on the Federal Team, Mostly with the Nez Perce and Shoshone-Bannock, on Water Rights Settlements

Brooks: I worked for, I work with Nez Perce in Lapwai. Primarily at this point in time it's water rights negotiations. Fort Hall is Sho-Ban, two different tribes.

Storey: Shoshone and Bannock.

Brooks: Shoshone and Bannock. We've just completed water right negotiations there and settlement. Currently, that's being adjudicated by the judge.

Storey: When you say we've just completed, it sounds like Reclamation did something. Is that the case?

Brooks: Reclamation did something. That's correct. Although it's a Federal team and Reclamation was very much a part of that Federal team. There's the Federal team, the state team, and the tribal team. We negotiated water rights with the tribes and arrived at settlement.

Storey: But it isn't Reclamation water? Or is it?

Brooks: It is. (Storey: Oh, OK.) Absolutely. Storage water in the upstream reservoirs and, to some degree, American Falls, because the reservation joins American Falls Reservoir. We acquired thirty-plus-thousand acres of tribal land for American Falls Reservoir.

**The Shoshone-Bannocks Are Working with
Reclamation to Help Manage Withdrawn Lands**

with Cultural Sites below American Falls Dam

But other things that we're doing is we're looking at all kinds of programs for the Sho-Bans. We're, in fact, currently writing a cooperative agreement with the Sho-Bans that would allow them contractually to help us manage some of the lands around American Falls Reservoir, particularly downstream of the dam where there's another Idaho powerplant. But downstream of American Falls Dam we've got some extensive withdrawals that were heavily used by the Shoshone Bannock people and there's a lot of cultural sites.

Storey: This is the area with the all-terrain vehicle problem and all that kind of stuff?

Brooks: It is.

Storey: I've heard about this. We brought in Park Service personnel to enforce the Antiquities Act, I guess.

Closing Withdrawn Lands below American Falls Dam to All-terrain Vehicles

Brooks: Yes, we did. Through the American Falls Resource Management planning process, we picked—we, Reclamation—as well as all the other people involved, picked what we perceived to be the best alternative, and that was to close those lands to all-terrain vehicles, creating a *tremendous* flap.

Storey: A tremendous flap, yeah–

Brooks: There were numerous meetings in the all-terrain vehicle clubs. People that were using those lands were extremely combative, confrontive. Again, we didn't have law enforcement authority, so when we did close the area, we needed to get somebody to help us. The county sheriff had already said they wouldn't be involved. So we did contract the Park Service. Today we're using BLM law enforcement. But the problem's gone away pretty much.

Storey: Good.

Brooks: So the presence of law enforcement personnel is not near as important today as it was when we first began.

Storey: What amount of water was agreed upon in the settlement with the Fort Hall groups? Do you remember?

Brooks: No, I don't. I'd have to look.

Storey: Are we talking significant quantities of water?

Brooks: No, we're not. Certainly an increase–but *not* significant. The reason for that is Fort Hall has an irrigation district within the reservation boundary and has a *lot* of irrigated land.

Storey: Was the state team a problem in the negotiations?

Brooks: No.

Storey: I had the impression that Idaho is very possessive, protective of its existing water rights.

Non-Indian irrigators in the Fort Hall Irrigation District

Brooks: I think most of the states in the West are, but, no, as it related to Fort Hall, the state was pretty darn cooperative, I think. The real fly in the ointment was the Fort Hall Irrigation District who perceived that they were going to lose rather than gain. In fact, we were going to Federal court in June of this year, but they finally withdrew their objection.

Storey: This is the irrigation district on the reservation?

Brooks: The irrigation district on the reservation.

Storey: Does it serve Indians?

Brooks: Serves Indians, but the majority is non-Indian people. The Fort Hall Indian Reservation, through that allotment period, lost quite a bit of land, but certainly not as much as some other Indian reservations. It's about 92 percent tribally owned. But the non-Indian farmer on Fort Hall Indian Reservation has some large irrigated farms.

Storey: What about the Indian team? Did that work well? You know, I know there are always frustrations dealing with Indian groups because they have different visions of time and conversation and negotiation than we do, but anything in particular?

Brooks: No, I don't think so. I think the process worked pretty doggone good. Initially, and off and on during any Indian negotiations, or even working with Indian tribes in other areas, you're going to be beat on about the head and shoulders about what our grandfathers and their grandfathers did before us, and the way we treated Indian people, and they're justified.

It was yesterday or the day before, I was listening to a talk show on the radio and a man was saying, "How can I be held responsible for what my grandfather did?" I don't think that so much is the question. We look at what we said we'd do, the United States said we'd do for Indian tribes, and if we didn't do that, then we need to correct the problem. ~~To say that I'm doing something today, of course I'm not sure what I started to say. Skip that thought. Strike that. (laughter)~~

Storey: (laughter) All right.

You've been doing this now about a year and a half. How are the other negotiations going? Moving along okay?

Fort Hall Negotiations Are Moving Slowly

Brooks: Slow. Slow as a seven-year itch. We started Fort Hall actually before I took the new position. The last—gosh I don't remember, it's been over a year or almost a year since the team has met again, and [unclear] family. I happen to know that there *will* be a meeting between the tribe and at least a part of the Federal team next week, but I learned that from the tribes. I didn't hear it from the Federal team. But I'm not sure what's going on there.

Nez Perce Negotiations Are Moving along Pretty Well

The Nez Perce negotiations are moving along at a pretty good rate.

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“Negotiations are generally always slow. To begin with, the Indian tribe or tribes, generally . . . paints it with a *huge brush*, the amount of water that they want. . . .”

Brooks: Negotiations are generally always slow. To begin with, the Indian tribe or tribes, generally, as it relates to water, paints it with a *huge brush*, the amount of water that they want. I don't blame them. I mean, if I was going to start somewhere, that's where I'd start. Then we keep working it

down 'til we get hopefully something that's right.

Storey: One of the things that's going on in Reclamation is there's a Washington Office Indian Affairs Coordinator, and then we have various people out in the regions. Jim Rawlings used to do a similar job for the region in Billings, for instance.

Brooks: Great Plains, uh-huh.

Storey: Do we have meetings among the people who are doing this kind of work to talk about issues and do training and various sorts of things?

Brooks: Training, for the most part, has been pretty minimal, except that there are others doing training, like Falmouth Institute. Those, for the most part, the ones I've attended anyway, have been excellent. Reclamation has been a little slow, but I noticed just within the last few days Denver's going to have some training as it relates to Indians and Indian tribes and working with Indian people.

For the most part, there hasn't been any meetings of Indian coordinators, Indian program coordinators, as such. Joe Miller's office, Washington, D.C., Joe's just recently retired. That office has met with regional office heads that had responsibility for Indian affairs, but area office or project people have not been included. The money is held in Washington and then divvied up according to something—I'm not quite sure how that

works. I know that this region, and certainly the area office people, have pushed to have those monies released at least to the regional office levels and let the regions decide where we want to spend our Indian dollars, but that still is being retained in Washington. With Joe's retirement, it's hard to say what will come of it. I think that's what ought to happen. We need the people in Washington doing those kind of battles that they're doing for us to get the dollars, but then once obtained, I think they should be delegated at least to the regional level and let the regions decide then where they want to spend those dollars rather than having them pronounced from on high.

Storey: My impression is that you really like this job.

Brooks: Oh, yes.

Storey: And you've enjoyed it for the last year and a half.

Brooks: Absolutely.

Storey: So my next question becomes, why did you decide to retire in a few days, here? In a few weeks, here.

Decision to Retire

Brooks: In part it had to do with the buyout. I could take a fairly sizeable chunk of money, which is just a little bit better than a retirement dinner, and I have my thirty years and a new Congress is looking at high

fours, high fives, and they were talking about other things that were certainly not beneficial from my point of view, anyway, to the Federal worker. It just seemed to me like it was perhaps the best time to go, from a personal standpoint, as it relates to retirement rather than stick around and see what Congress is going to do.

Storey: So with your Forest Service service, you do have your thirty years?

Brooks: Oh, yes.

Storey: That's great. Twenty years of it at Reclamation.

Brooks: Twenty years of it at Reclamation.

Storey: How would you characterize the socialization in Reclamation? You've been in this office your entire career with Reclamation. Am I thinking correctly?

Socialization at Reclamation

Brooks: That's correct.

Storey: How does this office socialize, or does it?

Brooks: It does. I would describe this office as a family. It's a group of people that enjoy one another both in the office and outside the office. We do do things in both places. We know each other's likes and

dislikes. We're very cognizant of what is going on within each other's families. It's a very close group.

“ . . . when I get up in the morning and come to work, aside from really enjoying the work that I'm doing, I enjoy coming to work because I enjoy the people. . . . ”

I think from the standpoint of working, when I get up in the morning and come to work, aside from really enjoying the work that I'm doing, I enjoy coming to work because I enjoy the people. That's going to be one of the toughest—

Storey: Things about leaving, huh?

Brooks: Yes.

Storey: Yes, well, things change. Now you get to spend your time in different ways, though. What are you planning to do?

Retirement Plans

Brooks: Well, I own a tepee and it's already set up in the woods. I'm going to spend two weeks there, minimum, maybe four, a month, and I'm going to do absolutely *nothing* but read and write and whatever else the spirit moves me to do. And *then* I've got a date with a Indian family in California at whose drum I sit and sing, and we're going to chase

the powwow circuit for another month.

Storey: In September, roughly?

Brooks: September. Well, October we'll chase the powwow circuit. September I'll spend in the tepee.

Storey: Do you know which powwows yet?

Brooks: I don't remember the names, but there's one in Arizona and there's three in California that we're going to go to in October.

Storey: And then?

Brooks: *Maybe* in November I'll get a *little* serious, a little more serious about cleaning my garage, which you can hardly walk through. (laughter)

Storey: What kind of writing are you interested in doing?

Brooks: I write poetry primarily. That's Japanese poetry, haiku. I write it in Japanese and English, but mostly English.

Storey: Now, where did you learn Japanese?

Brooks: I taught myself. My Mother bought me a book, sent me a book in 1968 of haiku, and I read it from cover to cover, called her up on the phone and said, "What in heaven's name is this all about?"

She says, “Jim, give it a break. Read it again.”

So I read it again and was hooked. Some of the non-Japanese translators, mostly of European descent, because our poetry rhymes, when they translated the haiku into English, they made it rhyme. In Japanese, it seldom ever rhymes and certainly not one of their objects. I wanted to be able to translate it for myself, so I bought some dictionaries and some books, and began to learn Japanese for myself. Then *finally* took a year of Japanese at the University here in town. I now translate my own. It’s a little painful, but I can get the job done.

Storey: Foreign languages are always painful, but, you know, the early guys in American history, the intellectuals back in the late 1700s and the early 1800s, they would just take the dictionaries and the grammars, and they would sit down and teach themselves these languages. If you didn’t know two or three or even four or five or eight languages, you were considered uneducated in those days. Now, of course, what they were doing was mostly reading, which is different than being able to speak it. I’m sure you understand that from the Japanese.

Brooks: Oh, my, yes. I speak a little.

Storey: It’s a time-honored American tradition to do it that way.

Well, let's see. Let me check here. What kind of changes did you see in the office's responsibility as you reorganized from a project office to an area office, this most recent reorganization?

Brooks: I think the most significant change is that the area offices have been empowered with more responsibility for making our own decisions and for others, even as a supervisor, to release that authority to let another person *make* the decision. It's not an easy process for a lot of people. I think it's been tough. As a people, we're territorial for the most part, and it's hard to give up ground, but I think there's been a very significant change.

One that really throws me a for a loop, though, is this new team concept. I think all that, for the most part, is just neat, wonderful buzzwords that give somebody a nice, warm, fuzzy feeling. I, for the most part—for the most part—have never operated alone, and as far as I'm concerned, the Snake River Area Office and Central Snake Projects Office before that, we always operated as a team. In fact, I can't even begin to comprehend being chief of lands and recreation and not interacting with the people in operation and maintenance or the people in water ops. It's impossible. Well, maybe not impossible.

Storey: But difficult, anyway.

Brooks: Absolutely difficult. If you're going to operate without them, then you're just dealing with part of the picture.

Storey: So mostly it's this devolution of responsibility.

Brooks: I think so.

Storey: Has it happened with in the office also?

Brooks: Oh, my, yes. To some degree. Let me put it that way.

Jerry Gregg, as a for instance, that's part of his management style, anyway is empowerment, empowering people to do the things that they're responsible to do. He's always operated that way, so I don't see *that* as a change. Some of the division heads, *current* heads, still haven't empowered the people. In fact, I can think of one that doesn't, that goes to all the meetings, never asks for any background information from any of the staff, goes to the meetings and comes back to the office and doesn't bother to impart anything that occurred at the meetings to the staff.

Storey: How many division chiefs do you have nowadays?

Brooks: Well, that's not the term we use anymore.

Storey: No, but you've already listed those anyway.

Brooks: I did list them.

Storey: That's right. So we don't need to go over that again. Have you ever met any of the commissioners?

Brooks: Um-hmm, yeah. Dan Beard was here.

Storey: What was your impression of Dan Beard?

Dan Beard

Brooks: It was a good impression. He ate breakfast with us. We had a potluck breakfast down in the basement of our office building. He spoke with us. It was a good impression. Since that time, and in reading some of his public speeches, he's made me angry because I think he's, a couple and more than once given Reclamation employees what for, and not spoken of them in a very good light. But that hasn't occurred too many times.

Storey: What about Dennis Underwood, for instance?

Dennis Underwood

Brooks: I met him, too. He was here. I interacted with him in a number of ways, even at the personal level and it was enjoyable. I enjoyed the man. From the standpoint of being commissioner, I think he did a good job.

Storey: Did you ever know any of the chief engineers like Darrell Webber or Rod Vissia?

Rod Vissia

Brooks: Yes, I knew Rod, of course.

Storey: Tell me about him.

Brooks: Rod was regional director. I think the regional director we have now is a crackerjack, one of the best we've ever had. The only real thing I remember about Rod Vissia was that we had a meeting at Cascade and a man wanted to create a subdivision in an area that I thought made absolutely no sense at all, and wanted to do an exchange with the Bureau of Reclamation, and I thought it even had less-

Storey: Merit.

Brooks: Yeah, had even less merit. I was directed to see that it happened by Rod Vissia. I came back to the office and *sat* on it until he left, and it never happened. I think from the standpoint of is that good for Uncle Sam, is that good for the government, is that good for the people of these United States, I think the decision I made *not* to make that exchange is certainly in the best interest of government and the people. That's the *first thing* that leapt to mind, when you mentioned him.

Storey: I think he would've been the Regional Director when you came here, probably.

Brooks: I think so.

Storey: And, who was his successor?

Brooks: Bill Lloyd.

Storey: What was Bill Lloyd like?

Brooks: Most of my interaction with Bill was meeting him in the hall when I was in the regional office, and just speaking to him as we passed. I've had more dealings with him since he's left and begun into consulting work. But again, the regional directors, I think, for the most part, certainly in the Pacific Northwest Region, anyway, any of the dealings that I had with the regional directors was positive.

Storey: What about the chief engineers? I think that would have been Rod Vissia and then Darrell Webber, maybe.

Brooks: Darrell Webber, to the best of my knowledge, I never met, nor had any—

Storey: And Vissia you've already talked about.

Brooks: Right.

Storey: Okay. Anything else we should talk about?

**Area Office Has Not Done Project Histories since
about 1975**

Brooks: One thing comes to mind. It came to mind yesterday when you told me what you were about, talking about histories, the history of Reclamation. This office has not done a written history probably since 1975.

Storey: The project history?

Brooks: Yes. I think that's too bad. We need to. I think some of the stuff that we were putting in those later histories, a lot of it was junk and didn't really need to be there, but as I read the old histories, I think it is *so important* that we continue to do that. We need to figure out how in the devil to get it done, I think.

Storey: Nowadays people just don't want to take the time and energy and make that investment to do those, it seems.

Brooks: And I think, in part anyway, if we ever get started again, there's going to be a large gap because we've lost information.

Storey: Twenty years.

Anything else? In that case, let me ask you if it's all right for researchers to use the information contained on these cassettes and the resulting

transcripts.

Brooks: Today?

Storey: Today and yesterday.

Brooks: You asked me that question yesterday.

Storey: That's true.

Brooks: Certainly. (laughter)

Storey: Okay. Good. Thank you.

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END OF INTERVIEWS