ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

FLOYD E. DOMINY

Boyce, Virginia

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STATUS OF INTERVIEWS:
OPEN FOR RESEARCH

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

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

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Oral History Program
Bureau of Reclamation

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Date: 7/8/96 Signed: Floyd E. Dominy

INTERVIEWER: Brit Allan Storey
Brit Allan Storey

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Chronology
at the Bureau of Reclamation

Chief, Allocation and Repayment Branch	April 1946-1950
Assistant Director, Operation and Maintenance Division	1950-53
Chief, Division of Irrigation (formerly Operation and Maintenance Division	December 1, 1953-August 1957
Assistant Commissioner for Legislative Liaison	August 1957-February 1958
Associate Commissioner	February 1958-May 1, 1959
Commissioner	May 1, 1959-December 1, 1969

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS
FLOYD E. DOMINY

This is Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing Floyd Dominy, Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, from 1959 to 1969, at his home, Bellevue Farm, near Boyce, Virginia, on April 6, 1994, at about 1 o'clock in the afternoon. This is tape 1.

Other Interviews Mr. Dominy Has Given

Storey: Mr. Dominy, could you tell me if you've ever been interviewed by oral historians before?

Dominy: Yes, somebody from the Lyndon Johnson Library, years ago, interviewed me about my relationship with President Johnson. And, of course, Marc Reisner interviewed me extensively for his background on what ended up as the *Cadillac Desert.*[1] And some outfit that did a public broadcast featuring Dave Brower interviewed me about my relationship with Dave Brower. And then there was an outfit that put out a public broadcasting program on the Wilderness Society, the Wilderness Program . . . and they interviewed me. So [it][2] might be used on the Wilderness Program. And then about 3 or 4 months ago, an outfit that's working on a public broadcast for two or three hours

1. Marc P. Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (New York: New York, 1986).

2. Brackets in the text indicate material not found on the original tape recording. It is material added by the interviewee or the interviewer to clarify the text. Material with a line through it was in the original text but removed to clarify the text.

on water. They were here, and spent the whole afternoon with me, and recorded . . . my views [about water development]. I think that's the extent of it.

Storey: Okay. Well, could you tell me where you were born, and raised, and educated? And how you ended up with the Bureau of Reclamation, please?

Early Years and College Education

Dominy: Well, it's a very short story. I was born in the dryland prairie country of Nebraska, where my grandfather homesteaded in 1875. I grew up there, went through school in Hastings, Nebraska, had two years at Hastings College. And the Depression was already showing up in Nebraska in 1929.

I decided I might want to be an engineer, so I went to Georgia Tech, where they had a co-op program, where you went to school four weeks, and then you worked four weeks. You're supposed to be able to make enough money in the four weeks you worked to take care of your education, and it didn't turn out that way. So I went belly up — couldn't hack it financially, came back.

I laid out of school a year, and ended up working for a farmer in western Nebraska, who was a graduate of the University of Wyoming. And he encouraged me to go back to school, and said he'd get me employment summers, and spring vacations, and all that stuff. So I went back to the University of Wyoming. Got my degree in 1932, the depth of the Depression. Nobody wanted me. I applied for

every kind of an agricultural job all over the world, and nobody took the bait. So I had a $40 a month assignment as a student assistant in the ag college, at Wyoming. So I took another year at Wyoming, working on a bachelor of science – I had my bachelor of arts.

And then the only job that showed up was teaching school at Hillsdale, Wyoming, at $100 a month. All I had to do was teach all the vocational ag subjects, including mechanical shop and a woodworking shop, coach the basketball team, teach 7th and 8th grade arithmetic, 9th grade general science. Then, when they asked me to coach the junior play, I decided that was too much. And I took another job. I quit. I didn't even teach a year.

Becomes Emergency Agent in Gillette, Wyoming

[In January 1934] I was offered a job as an Emergency Agent in Gillette, Wyoming. During the Depression, many counties in Wyoming had fired the county agents, which was a cooperative program funded Federal, state, and county. And a lot of the counties decided they couldn't afford it during the Depression, so they'd run the county agent out of the county. So when Franklin Roosevelt started all the New Deal programs, the Wheat Program, the Corn-Hog Program, and all that, they had to have a Federal agent in each county. And where they had county agents, they used them. And where they didn't have county agents, they put in what they called an Emergency County Agent who was financed entirely by the Federal government, except for the office space that the county had to provide. And so

the Director of Extension [at the University of Wyoming] called me, and said I could either take Converse County or Campbell County.

Well, I'd been to Converse County, [Douglas] was the county seat. And I thought, surely Gillette must be better than that! So, I said, "I'll take Campbell County." Arrived up there the fourth of February 1934, 20 below zero, a little cow town. Couldn't find any place to live. I could only make $160 a month, minus fifteen percent, because of the Depression. We finally located a little stone house that hadn't been lived in for thirty years . . . about five miles west of Gillette. About a mile off the nearest road. Of course, no plumbing, and no electricity, or anything like that, no telephone. But it had a good well on the hill, and a two-holer. So we moved out there, and lived [there] for 2-1/2 years while I was getting started as a county agent, in Gillette.

Cattle Buying Program

And it was a rough time. Campbell County was in the very throes of the drought; farm families [were] in desperate trouble. There wasn't any market for cattle, so the cattlemen were in trouble. There wasn't any market for sheep, so the sheepmen were in trouble. Everything was a disaster. But as the only Federal agent in the county, all these programs, I was the kingpin . . . I was in charge of it. And I remember the cattle buying program showed up, and it said that I was in charge of it for that county. And they sent a veterinarian in to be part of the appraisal crew -- you had to go out and decide which

cattle were fit to go to market. In those days, you didn't truck them, you walked them to market. So we had a big meeting the night before the program was to launch, and I said, "We'll have to start at . . . the crew will have to leave here at 5 o'clock in the morning, because we're going to start 60 miles out of town, and hit two or three ranches on the way back. We're going to start out there, because they're going to take longer to walk their cattle to market. Because that's the sensible way to start." And this Federal veterinarian said, "My hours are 9 to 5."

So I said, "You're all mixed up, they're 5 to 9!"

"Well, by god, I'm not leaving here until 9 o'clock."

"Well," I said, "in that case, we'll do without you. It says right here I'm the County Director. As of right now, I appoint this man right here [a local brand inspector]. He's probably a better man to judge whether those cattle can walk to market than you are, anyway. He'll be the veterinarian that represents me." And I said, "We're going to go right ahead without you." And that was the way I ran those Federal programs — if I was in charge, I was in charge! And I didn't ask any questions [from] anybody else.

So they moved him out of there, and sent a young veterinarian in that would tolerate my hours. We bought more drought cattle, more drought sheep, than any other county in the state.

Range Improvement Program

Then along came the Range Improvement Program, the fall of '36. And I looked upon this as a real savior for Campbell County, Wyoming. It was a chance to build a lot of stock water reservoirs, and drill wells, and put in cross fencing to better rotate your pastures. And the Federal Government would pay for it. But it [the Range Improvement Program] wasn't announced until September, so most everybody in the Western states didn't do anything about it. They thought it was too late in the year, it was going to start freezing up. But I jumped onto that thing with both feet, and contracted with all the idle road machinery that wasn't being used, and got them out building dams. And we did more work in Campbell County than five Western states put together. And that was what attracted the attention of Washington to me.

Moves to Washington, D.C., as Field Agent for the Seventeen Western States

And they began to offer me some jobs in Washington. And I was reluctant to accept them, but finally they offered me a job in 1938 to be a field agent for the 17 Western states, with headquarters in Washington in the Triple A program.[3] And I moved back here, arriving on August 29, 1938. Meanwhile, all I knew about the Bureau of Reclamation, of course, was that they built some big dams, including Hoover, and that they irrigated a lot of land. None of it in Campbell County, Wyoming, and none of it where I grew up.

3. Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA).

Visits Hoover Dam in 1937

But I'll never forget January 2, 1937, when I was coming back from the Rose Bowl Parade, in the winter vacation that I'd taken. And to go through Hoover Dam — it was called Boulder Dam in those days, and to stand down there on that transformer deck below the power house, and look up at that massive chunk of concrete, having walked through the dam and through the power house. And I marvel that anybody — anybody, could do such a thing as that. It was just fantastic to me. And of course, I had not the wildest idea that someday I would be in charge of that program. Anyway, I came back here [to the nation's capitol] in 1938, and expected to spend two years in Washington. In those days, that was considered to be quite a feather in your cap, to get a job in the nation's Capital. Then I was going to come back to Wyoming . . . I had one child 3 years old, the day we arrived in Washington. And we were going to come back when she was ready to go to school.

Family Decides to Live Permanently in Washington, D.C.

But a year after I arrived, Hitler moved into Poland on September 1, 1939. So I give Mr. Hitler credit for my future from that day on, because Mrs. Dominy and I debated all night long about what we should do. I knew I'd be involved in it, one way or another. And I also had studied enough history and economics to know that a World War was pending, and that it would be catastrophic. The pace of the world would change dramatically. We'd never lived in an

apartment house — we'd never lived off the farm in all our lives. Both of us born and reared on farms in Nebraska. We visualized that we wanted open space for our kids as they grew up, and that they'd have 4-H Club projects, and all that sort of thing. But I'd already made up my mind that I was going to make a career in government, that I was a dedicated public servant, to work for the United States. And Washington was the seat of government, so I said, "Let's see if we can find a piece of property, and decide to make this our permanent home, instead of going back West. Since we . . . we can't go back now, we don't have a job back there. And there's so much uncertainty for the future." So we looked around, and we found 32 acres, 20 miles from Washington, in Virginia. A piece of abandoned farm ground that hadn't been farmed for 50 years, no fences, no nothing, on a gravel road, a mile and a half off the highway. No electricity, no telephone — but we managed to buy that 32 acres for $2,200. I had to borrow on my insurance to raise the $2,200. But we were able to borrow money, and build a home, and my son still has it.

Works for Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs Program

I worked the first two years of the war with Nelson Rockefeller, in the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs program, in Paraguay, and Peru, and Brazil, Columbia, Venezuela, all the Central American countries, on war emergency projects helping get

bauxite, and raw rubber, and cinchona,[4] and the things that we normally got from Indonesia. Which the Japanese had overrun.

Joins the Navy

Nelson Rockefeller wanted me to take deferment, and stay on. And of course, I wasn't going to be drafted, I was already 34 years old, had a wife and child — two children by that time. But the Navy was on [radio][5] every night, talking about how they needed young enough people to stand the rigors of war, and old enough to handle other people. So I went over, and volunteered, and they put me in military government. Went up to Columbia University, and learned a little Japanese, and studied all the economics of the Far East. The team I was assigned to was supposed to go into Formosa, we were to be the military government for Formosa. And we had doctors, and lawyers, and mayors, and police chiefs, and dentists, and city administrators, and I was the agricultural man for the group.

Then the big feud between MacArthur[6] and Nimitz.[7] Nimitz' program for solving the war was to bypass the Philippines, and neutralize it by air, and use Formosa. Capture Formosa, and use it as the launch

4. The cinchona tree is an evergreen whose bark is commercially important, because it provides quinine which was important in medicine, especially treatment of malaria.
5. Mr. Dominy said "television" rather than "radio" during the interview.
6. General Douglas MacArthur.
7. Admiral Chester Williams Nimitz.

against Japan. But MacArthur, he'd said, "No, no, I promised to come back to the Philippines, and I insist that we go back to the Philippines. And then we can neutralize Formosa." So MacArthur won that debate, and our group was disbanded, and they no longer needed a crew being trained to be military government of Formosa -- or Taiwan, as it's called today.

Assigned to Grow Vegetables and Establish Dairy Farm on Guam

So we were all sent out to Fort Ord, California, as a staging base, to wait for individual assignment, we were no longer going to be sent out as a group. And I was the first one of that group of officers to be singled out. I was sent out to Saipan to join the staff of a three star Admiral who was in charge of the forward area, and the idea was to grow vegetables on Tinian, and Saipan, and Guam — we'd just captured those three areas. The Dean of Agriculture at the University of California, Dr. Ryerson, was a high school buddy of Nimitz. He'd gone out, and flown over those three islands in a piper cub — he hadn't even landed, because it wasn't safe to land yet. He saw all that sugar cane, and all those lovely trees on Guam, and the coconut palm, and one thing, and another. He told Nimitz, he said, "This would be an ideal place to grow vegetables for the troops! Just think how nice it'd be for them to sit down to a dinner of corn on the cob, and a nice piece of lettuce, and a fresh tomato. Think how that'd buoy up their spirits."

So the Navy jumped right on it, of course, when

Nimitz said, "I want it done." And hell, they sent out tractors, and fertilizer, and seed, and everything else. And the warehouses were full of them. So I was the agricultural man that showed up on their radar screen, and they sent me out there to be in charge of it. Well, of course, the first thing I did was go to each of the three islands to see what kind of a situation I found, in terms of soil, and one thing and another. Well, that sugar cane had all been hand planted (laughing). Those fields were full of coral, rocks! You couldn't run tractors through it at all! And it was a mess.

So my first report after being on the job a week, I told my Admiral it was a bunch of crap, and it should be abolished. Wiped out. "Well," he said, "we can't do that, this is a pet project . . . Nimitz wants it. And what Nimitz wants, he gets!" So against all my better judgment, against all my wishes, we tried to grow vegetables. It was a complete failure. We had a vegetable expert from California in charge of the actual farming. He put more fertilizer on the tomato plants than he harvested tomatoes. The radishes that we grew were so damn hot you couldn't eat them, and everything was wrong . . . the climate, and the soils, and the insects. Nothing, it just didn't work at all.

And the island commander at Guam, he wanted an 80-cow dairy. Well, the warehouses were full of powdered whole milk, and reconstituting machines were available. It was just as wholesome as whole milk. So I tried to stop that, I sent a memorandum up to the Admiral that we weren't going to endorse this nonsense.

That it was ridiculous, and we were still losing the war. The Admiral says, "If the man wants it. Give it to him!" So we built a big dairy barn, and had an 85-cow dairy. You had to bring the feed to the cows, and you had to have them stand out there in a light spray most of the time to keep them from overheating. Sure, we produced whole milk, all right. I have no idea what it cost, and I doubt if very much of it got to the patients . . . it probably went to the nurses and the doctors.

Then Iwo Jima came along, and they had a dust problem up there, that fine, volcanic ash. So I was sent up to Iwo Jima, soon after we wiped out the last of the Japs. I think the biggest thing I did on Iwo Jima was I ended up, the second trip I made up there, I took a whole planeload of coconuts to plant in the cemetery for the 5,000 guys that lost their lives unnecessarily in Iwo Jima.

Decides He Would like to Work for Reclamation after World War II

So that was my Navy career, and I sat out there two years. I began to think about what I'm going to do when I get back. I had reemployment rights in the Department of Agriculture, I had reemployment rights in the Coordinated Inter-American Affairs Office. I'd been a grade 14 when I went into the Navy, and neither one of those appealed to me very much. The Inter-American Affairs job was too much travel away from home. Agriculture guys that had taken draft deferments would have moved up, and . . . So I had learned from everything I could read, and all the

broadcasts we got on Guam, that the Bureau of Reclamation was going to start a real program of expansion. They hadn't done hardly anything during the war, of course, and all the veterans are coming home wanting to farm, and the Bureau is going to really go to town. So I made up my mind before I left Guam that as soon as I got back to Washington, I was going to approach the Bureau of Reclamation and see if they had any work for me.

Seeks Job at Reclamation

I arrived home in the middle of March, 1946, and while I was being mustered out of the Navy, right there on Constitution Avenue, in the old temporary war buildings ... that were temporary from the first World War. They were just a block from the Interior Department, so in between times, I'd have two or three hours from one project to another in my mustering out. I called over to the Interior Department to see what I could locate -- the guy that was hiring. And after two or three calls, I was told that Goodrich W. Lineweaver, in charge of the Operation and Maintenance Division, was probably the man that I should talk to with my background in agriculture.

So I got Goodrich W. Lineweaver on the phone, told him I wanted to come over and interview. He started giving me the runaround, and I finally said, "Well, goddamn it, I don't know what you've done the last two years to win the war. But I've been out in the Pacific trying to win the war, and I want 30 minutes of

your time! That's all I need! But I want it today! because I'm going back to Virginia, and get acquainted with my family. Now can't you give me 30 minutes to find out whether or not I'm qualified for some of your openings?" Well, I shamed him into letting me come over. And I had a one-page summary that I'd typed up, with my background and education. And when we got through, he said, "Well, there's a lot of jobs out West that we could put you in." And I said, "No, I have a wife and family in Virginia. I've been away from them the better part of four years, and housing's short all over the country. And right now, I want a job in Washington."

"Well," he said, "all the grade 14 jobs we got in Washington are already filled."

"Well," I said, "up to right now, we haven't talked about salary. Have you got any grade 13 jobs that aren't filled?"

"Well, yes," he said, "there's some 13 jobs right here in my division that's not filled." I said, "All right, I'm interested."

So there was a job in an Economics Section they had, and there was a job in the Land Use and Development Section, and there was a job in the Allocation and Repayment Section. And I went around, and interviewed those three guys that headed up those divisions. The guy in Economics was so far out in left field, I knew I couldn't work with him. The guy in Repayment was a banker, and I knew he was

misassigned . . . he didn't know what the hell he was doing. But the fellow in Land Use and Settlement was an old soil conservation man, and an ex-county agent, and a real solid kind of fellow. He was Chief of that Division. So I told him I'd be glad to take the job he had at grade 13.

He said, "I'll be glad to have you."

So that's how I got started in the Bureau. And that was in the middle of March, and I told him I'd come to work the first of April. I wanted to take some time off with my family. And that's when I went to work with the Bureau [April 1, 1946].

Joins Land Use and Settlement Division of Reclamation in Washington, D.C.

It wasn't very long until the guy in charge of that Allocation and Repayment . . . he was supposed to take charge of -— see, under the 1939 Reclamation Project Act, they recognized there were a lot of projects that weren't paying under their existing contracts. So the 1939 Act,[8] under section 9, set forth certain standards by which these projects could be renegotiated . . . the repayment contracts could be renegotiated. Under 9 a, b, c, d. And then, under section 9e, if you couldn't do it under any of those other four, the law said that if the Secretary finds that he can't renegotiate these contracts fair and equitably under these standards, then the Secretary can negotiate such a contract as he feels is fair and equitable. But he can't sign it

8. Reclamation Project Act of 1939 (53 Stat. 1187).

without approval of Congress. So nothing had been done until 1946. And now the Bureau was ready to face up to the fact that we had about 46 irrigation districts that were violating the law. We were delivering water when they weren't making payments, and so on. So now, the Bureau was ready to really face up to this.

Offered Position as Head of Allocation and Repayment Branch in Washington, D.C.

Well, as I predicted, the guy that they'd hired, the banker they'd hired in charge of that program fell flat on his ass. I'd been in the Bureau about 3 months, I think, when Lineweaver called me up. And he said, "We're going to have to make a change in that Allocation and Repayment Branch. And I'm thinking about giving you a chance at it." And he said, "I'll make you an Acting Director of that branch. And we don't want to make another mistake by giving it to you without checking you out a little bit."

I said, "Okay, let's pin it down. How long am I acting before you make up your mind?"

"Well, what do you think?"

I said, "Ninety days. And if you aren't ready to give me the grade 14, and full title of chief of the Branch in 90 days, well then, I'll go back to Land Use and Settlement."

And I said, "There's one other question. Why aren't you moving Bill Palmer, who's been the assistant in there?

Why aren't you promoting him to the job?"

"Well, he spends all his time on the telephone, or else he's out in the hall visiting with people."

"Well," I said, "are you going to tell him why he's being passed up, because he obviously would think he's got the chance to do it, since he's been in there."

"Yeah, I'll tell him." Well, of course, he never did. So Palmer's nose was clear out of joint, and after a couple days of sulking around, I called him in. And I said, "Now, Bill . . .

END SIDE 1, TAPE 1. APRIL 6, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1. APRIL 6, 1994.

Dominy: . . . And I told him. But I said, "By god, it's my job now to run, and I intend to run it, either with your help or without your help. But I'm not going to have you sulking around here like a goddamned infant."

"Well, I'd like to go out West, I've been passed over, and I'd like to get the hell out of here."

"Okay, where do you want to go? I'll help you get it."

"Well, you need me."

I said, "No, I don't need you a damn minute -- if you don't want to be here." So Palmer left, and went out to

California.

Begins to Renegotiate Contracts on Projects That Were in Trouble

And I ran the program, and set the standards for how we were going to negotiate these contracts, and . . . the first one [that] came up was Milk River in Montana. The Region finally negotiated a contract with the Milk River Project, three irrigation districts. Sent it in -- it was horrible. It was a complete bailout. They had given the farmers everything, and it was . . . well, I could never take that to Congress and defend it. It just wasn't the kind of a package that made any sense, and it violated all the principles that I'd established in how the contracts were to be renegotiated. So I told Lineweaver that this was completely unacceptable, and he talked to the Regional Director. And the Regional Director said that was the best he could do, and if Dominy thinks he can do better, let him come out and negotiate with the farmers. So Lineweaver threw the gauntlet down, and he said, "Are you prepared to do it?"

I said, "Sure. But," I said, "I'll do it my own way. I don't want a single goddamn member of that Regional outfit when I'm negotiating. The only man I want is the Project Manager that's been there on the job." I said, "I don't want any of those clowns that's been messing around with it from the Regional Office or the District Office.

So I went out to Milk River for the first time in my

life, I'd been in Montana many times, but I'd never been up on the Milk River. And there's nine of these county board members from the irrigation districts. So I show up at the office a couple hours before their meeting's supposed to start, and this guy has got the nine chairs lined up like a church (laughing). You know, like church pews! And I said, "This won't work at all. I want a conference table."

"Well, we don't have a conference table."

"Well," I said, "get a plyboard. Get a plyboard, and some sawhorses, we're going to make a conference table. I want these guys sitting with their feet under a table, I want them to have a scratch pad in front of them, a cup of coffee, if they want it. We're not going to lecture to them like a goddamn bunch of high school kids, and a professor standing up here with a pointer." So we arranged a conference room, and these guys show up, and I'd memorized their names. So as soon as I heard their name, I knew which District they were from, and something about them. And I made them feel right at home when we sat down, and I told them the facts of life. That this contract was not supportable, and that we were going to have to start from square one, and build one that was supportable. And before the day was out, we had it, we had it.

Goes Before Congress to Explain Why Reclamation Projects Failed

Well then came the thing that probably had more

to do with my being qualified to be Commissioner in the eyes of many Western senators and congressmen. All the bigwigs in the Bureau were very jaundiced about carrying these failures up to Congress and admitting these failures. This is going to give us a black eye, it's going to, you know, hurt our budget process. And they didn't want to do it. So they were perfectly willing for this young punk, the Chief of the Branch, to carry it to Congress. The Commissioner didn't carry it. The Assistant Commissioner didn't carry it. Lineweaver didn't want to carry it . . . and he was a great guy to go to Congress. But he didn't want to be responsible for admitting these failures, you know. He thought that was going to be a black eye. So that was my first experience at testifying before committees of Congress.

Storey: Which failures were these?

Dominy: Well, these projects that hadn't paid, you see, for years.

Storey: Oh. Okay.

Dominy: So now we've got to go up and admit that they can't pay in 40 years. They can't pay in 80 years. It might take 120 years, you see, to pay out this interest-free loan. And it was a real challenge to convince Congress that this was good for the government. But it made my name in Western history books, as far as testifying before Congress, because I was a natural at it. I had a quick mind, and I answered the questions from my knowledge of the West, and my years as a county agent, and so on. And it went over real good, and one project I took up

there, the chairman of the board says, "What's the payout period here, Dominy?"

"Oh," I says, "it's infinity."

"What do you mean? Isn't there any payout period?"

I said, "No, this project can never be paid out."

"Well, why shouldn't we abandon it then?"

"Well, because we've got a town out there, we've got families out there. As long as they can pay the operation and maintenance cost, why should we worry about the sunk investment? It's already sunk! We can't get it back. So why don't we forget about trying to get it back, but let these farmers live by paying the operations and maintenance costs, and maintain the schools, and the viable community. Inadequate as it may be, from a financial point of view."

So I got these passed, they went through, I never had any problem with them, you know. I put 46 of those bastards through. Each one of them a special case, each one of them different.

Storey: Now all of these were situations where they couldn't pay?

Dominy: Right, there wasn't a single project . . . you see, when Reclamation started in 1902, every Senator in the 17

Western states wanted a project. Well, there wasn't any, wasn't any records, there was no soil surveys, there was no stream flow records from the hydrology. And they homesteaded them to anybody that was a veteran, whether he was a baker, candlestick maker, whether he'd ever been on a farm in his life — just drew their names out of a hat. So a lot of those projects were not very well conceived, and here they were, not paying. And we were violating the law every day that we delivered water without payment. The law said you don't deliver water without pay.

Storey: So you went 46 different times to Congress to testify? Or in groups? Or how did it work?

Dominy: Well, I finally convinced the chairman of the committee that we ought to group them. That there was no sense in having individual hearings. Like showing a pattern, you know, and I said, "Why can't we have five or six of these in an omnibus bill and not take up so much time of the committee"? So we finally we'd get five or six of them ready to go and we'd put them all in one bill.

Storey: Who was that chairman of the committee, was it

Dominy: Aspinall, Wayne Aspinall.[14]

Storey: Wayne Aspinall from Colorado.

Dominy: Right, he was the chairman of the subcommittee. We

14. Representative Wayne Norviel Aspinall served in the House as a Democrat from 1949 to 1973.

always had to go before the subcommittee, and then the full committee'd treat them later.

Storey: What was he like?

Dominy: Oh, he was a very decent kind of a man. But hard-nosed. He didn't take any palaver. If you tried to . . . you'd better know the answer to the question, or admit you don't know it with Aspinall because he could see through a fake pretty fast. And that was my reputation . . . that if I didn't know, I'd tell them I didn't know. But I'd get the answer to their question. I never tried to run any smoke screen at them.

Storey: Of course, he was from Western Colorado, where we had the Grand Valley Project, part of the Colorado-Big Thompson.

Dominy: One of the projects that we had in trouble was his Uncompahgre Project in the southwestern part of his district. Mancos Project, in Colorado, was another one that was in trouble. In Montana, it was the Milk River; in North Dakota, it was the Williston; in South Dakota, it was Belle Fourche; in Wyoming, it was the North Platte . . . well, it was actually the Nebraska [part of the North Platte] Project. North Platte runs from Wyoming down here to Nebraska, most of the North Platte Districts in Wyoming were in pretty good shape. But the North Platte, on the eastern end of the project, was in sorry shape. Then we had Okanogan in Washington. . . there was one in every damn state, practically, that was in trouble.

Storey: Do you remember which one you first took to Aspinall's subcommittee?

Dominy: The Milk River. Milk River was the first one that we took up. Anyway, that proved to a lot of people that Floyd Dominy knew his business, and the word began to get around among Western Congressmen, Senators — if you wanted to do business with Reclamation, if you had any problem, why, touch base with Floyd. He'll get the answer for you. So along comes the . . . this was when Mike [Michael W.] Straus was the Commissioner. If you can imagine, Mike Straus, a Chicago newspaperman, never seen the West bank of the Mississippi River until he was Commissioner . . . strictly a politician and a big project fellow. So he'd gone hog wild with the help of Congress after World War II. We built a big camp, gonna build a project on the Powder River. Had a big construction camp, warehouses and everything else, already constructed. Then they discovered nobody wanted the project. Up in Dickinson, North Dakota, same thing. Spent millions of dollars getting ready to build a project that nobody wanted. This is Mike Straus, the big builder. Well, he had 19,000 people, he had the Washington Office, and the District Offices, and Regional Offices, and Project Offices.

When I got back from Milk River, I reported to the staff meeting, I said, "It's awful hard to find a water user, to wade down through all those layers of bureaucrats to find a water user." But I finally negotiated directly with the water users (laughing).

So, the Republicans, when Eisenhower was elected during the campaign . . . Ike was riding the campaign trail, he [Straus] was an out-and-out Democrat and a politician. He was an Ickes protégé, Ickes had brought him in. If you can believe it, when I joined the Bureau of Reclamation, Mike Straus, the newspaperman from Chicago, the Commissioner, Bill Warne, a newspaperman from southern California, Assistant Commissioner, Goodrich Lineweaver, a newspaperman from Virginia, head of the Irrigation Division. They were all buddies from the Ickes Information Staff at the departmental level that had migrated to Reclamation, because Reclamation had the biggest budget, and had the biggest growth opportunity. So Mike says, "This is what I want," and the Secretary let him have it.

So the Republicans made an issue out of it during the election. They said the next man in the Bureau of Reclamation will be an engineer. And it won't be a politician, and it won't be a non-engineer. So they selected a man by the name of [Marvin] Nichols, he was a sewage engineer (laughing) from Fort Worth — municipal water and wastewater man. No background in dams or irrigation at all, but he was an engineer, and a politician of some strength in Texas, apparently.

So they didn't get him nominated. They fired Straus out of there, and they made the new Assistant Secretary from North Dakota, had been governor from North Dakota a couple times . . . Aandahl. They made him Acting Commissioner as well as Assistant Secretary and, of course, he didn't know how to run it. So he was

relying on guys like Lineweaver, who'd been around there. So it went on, week after week, with no Commissioner. Finally, the scuttlebutt around the building was that they'd nominated this fellow, Nichols, that his name was in the White House, and [Secretary of the Interior James Douglas] McKay actually brought him into Washington. Well, Eisenhower had the clean-as-a-hound's-tooth program, you know. So they were running Nichols through the FBI checks, and all this stuff. And finally, he's on his final clearance, and somebody says, "Marvin Nichols, wasn't he involved in a nickel deal in Cuba during World War II where there was a question of profiteering on raw nickel for the War Effort?" So they ran it down again, and sure enough, he was the guy that had been involved. He wasn't ever charged with anything, you know, but the hint was there that he'd done a few fraudulent things, and made himself a lot of money on some handling of some war materials. So Ike wouldn't sign the papers . . . try again!

Wilbur Dexheimer Becomes Commissioner

Well, this is six months into the new administration, and Reclamation's got a big program that they're trying to promote. And they don't have a Commissioner. But he had to be an engineer, because the goddamn Republicans were absolutely adamant on that, they'd said we were going to have an engineer. So Ralph Tudor, who was the Under Secretary, a big engineer from California, designer of bridges, he says, "Well, I know a fellow by the name of Dexheimer, out in the Denver Office of the Bureau. I worked with him

during the war in China, and I'm sure Dex has got the engineering background we want. And he's the kind of a man we can work with. Let's bring him in." So they reached down into the Denver Office, and pulled old Wilbur A. Dexheimer out of a contract administration desk with no experience with dealing with the Bureau of the Budget or with Congress, no administrative experience, whatever, in dealing with the handling of staff, and so on. They bring him in here, and make him Commissioner.

Well, very early in the game, McPhail[15] was one of the Assistant Commissioners, he . . . they ran him off. So Dexheimer's got the job of getting an Assistant Commissioner, and he called me up there, and he said, "I ought to put you in there, I know. But," he said, "I don't dare do it because you're not an engineer, and I'd like to make you a special assistant."

"No," I said, "I don't want that. That's the same salary I got now, grade 15, with no assigned responsibility, except what you delegate to me from day to day." I said, "That's not the way I like to work. I like to know what my job is, and have my own responsibilities. Besides that, you bring another guy in here, and move me up in the front office, the other guy might just as well stay home, because they'd all come to

15. Harvey F. McPhail was appointed an Assistant Commissioner in 1952, and on December 1, 1953, Commissioner Dexheimer designated him the Assistant Commissioner for Irrigation and Power. In 1953 he received the Department of the Interior's Citation for Distinguished Service. He retired on July 31, 1954, having started with Reclamation in 1919 as an electrical engineer.

me anyway. Because I've been around here, you know, I'm already established. I know the Congressmen, I know the Committee members, and so on, and this wouldn't work. But," I said, "I'll be glad to go over a list of people that I think you ought to consider to be an Assistant Commissioner. And," I said, "really, you ought to sit down and . . . you've been here now two or three months, and surely by this time begin to understand a little bit about what this job requires in order to make it work. And you ought to sit down and list your own strong and weak points. Then you ought to try to find an Assistant Commissioner that'll plug your weak spots. Make a team out of it. And," I said, "you got Divisions Chiefs here in Washington that are qualified by experience within the Bureau to be considered. Then you got seven Regional Directors that's qualified to be considered. And I won't try to rate the Division Chiefs, of which I am one, because you've seen us operate here. But I'll rate the seven Regional Directors in my judgment as to their capacities." And I rated Nielsen[16] absolutely last, as being absolutely the worst choice. And that's the one Dexheimer picks! (Laughter.) I'll never for this day understand what motivated him to select Nielsen to be his Assistant Commissioner.

It was just terrible . . . the guy was an incompetent from the word go, as to handling people and a staff. And he was arrogant and just like up to — one time, one of

16. E. G. Nielsen was regional director in Region 3 (Lower Colorado Region) from September 1952 to March 1955. He moved into the position of Assistant Commissioner for Power and Irrigation.

his first appearances before Congress. We had a guy from New York,[17] he was in his 90's, he was senile, but he was a ranking Republican member of that subcommittee. And he tried to read a question that a member of his staff had given him, and he fumbled around, and mumbled. As soon as he finished, Nielsen says, "I don't understand the question, Mr. Chairman. How can I answer it"?

So the Chairman said, "John, would you like to try again?" And so John tried again.

Nielsen, "I still don't understand the question. I can't answer something I don't understand."

Well now, if I'd been in that spot, I'd have listened very carefully to the old man. And when he finished, I would have said, "Mr. Taber, I'm not positive that I understand fully what it is you're inquiring into. Let me paraphrase your question, and see if I've got it." And he'd have nodded, and I would have made some sense out of his goddamn question, and got it on the record. And he would have said, "Yeah, that's what I want," and then I would have answered it, you see.

But not Nielsen! No, indeed, the arrogant son of a bitch. "Who's this bastard to question me," you see? Terrible! I never saw anything like it in my life. But that still isn't what made me Commissioner.

17. John Taber of New York was elected as a Republican Representative and served from 1923 to 1963.

Effects of Republican Loss of Congress on the Bureau of Reclamation

What made me Commissioner was the third year of the Eisenhower Administration. The first two years, the Republicans controlled the Senate, and they controlled the House. And Republicans were chairmen of all the committees, and they treated Dexheimer with kid gloves. They'd ask questions that he couldn't possibly miss, you know. And hell, he thought it was a cinch, nothing he could do wrong -— they carried him along. They all wanted the program to succeed. In those days, all the subcommittees on Interior and Insular affairs, and Appropriations was handled by Western Senators and Congressmen. The Reclamation program was their baby, and they protected it. And they carried Dex[18] along with kid gloves.

So now, the third year of the Eisenhower Administration, the Democrats are now in control of Congress . . . it's a whole new ball game. They're going to try to embarrass the Republican participants before Congress whenever they can. And on top of that, the new Chairman of the Appropriations [Committee] said, "I'm sick and tired of having the Corps of Engineers appear before one subcommittee, and Reclamation before a different one, and Soil Conservation and Water Program before a different one. We're going to change all that, we're going to take Reclamation out of the Interior Department budget. They're not going to have that Western subcommittee any more. And we're going

18. Wilbur Dexheimer.

to have a new Public Works subcommittee on Appropriations, of which I'm going to be the chairman. And we're going to take the Corps of Engineers, and the Soil Conservation Service, Water Program, the Bureau of Reclamation, and put them all under this subcommittee." So we lost all of our old Western friends. We got a subcommittee that's completely Corps of Engineers-oriented from Mississippi, and Louisiana, and Tennessee. And they don't give a shit about Reclamation, they're Corps oriented.

So that's the year [1955] that Dexheimer decides he's going to bring his Regional Directors in, and have them testify on their Regional programs. Well, I went up there and pled with the guy. I said, "Dex, don't do it! This time, we've got to have the pros before Congress. We've got to sell the program, we haven't got our friends up there to bail us out any more. We've got to produce a budget that's so ironclad that we can convince our enemies, the Corps of Engineer Senators, that they can spare a little money for us." Well, I might just as well have been fartin' in a whirlwind, in a hurricane. He didn't pay any attention to me. Well, I knew it was going to be a debacle — I knew it was going to be horrendous.

Chief of Irrigation Division

So I was Chief of the Irrigation Division, I was only responsible for one little segment of the budget. But I went out and visited every project under construction. I studied all the "Planning Budget." I

studied the "Power Budget." I knew that budget from figure to figure, and backwards and forwards. I knew why it was in there, and how to justify it, because I figured somebody's going to have to backstop these amateurs and hold this program together. Now, it wasn't self-aggrandizement! I'm a proud man! I didn't want my Bureau to fall flat on its ass.

So comes the day that we go up to the hearings. In those days, the Appropriations hearings were closed hearings. They were held in small rooms, and the only people allowed in that room were the members of the committee, and witnesses whose name had been sent up and certified to the committee in advance. Well, I assumed my name had gone up as a part of a backup group. So the morning of the hearings, I'm down there at 5 o'clock in the morning, reviewing the kind of stuff that I think's going to come up the first day. And I'm ready. At 9 o'clock, Assistant Commissioner Crosthwait,[19] in charge of [presenting] the budget, calls me. And he said, "Floyd, we don't have room for you. The committee's limited us to X number of people. We're in a very small room down in the basement of the Capitol, and we just can't take you with us." I said, "Fine, fine. Thanks for

19. Stanley W. (Stan) Crosthwait, born December 24, 1898, received his B.A. in electrical engineering from George Washington University in 1928. He joined the Federal government in 1916, and came to Reclamation in February 1946 as the Associate Director of Supply in Denver. In November 1946 he became the Director of Supply in Denver and transferred to Washington, D.C., in that position in January 1947. In 1953 the Commissioner appointed him Assistant Commissioner for Administration, the position he held until he retired on January 31, 1958. [*The Reclamation Era*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (February 1958), p. 12.]

letting me know."

Well, the roof fell in on them. They had a bunch of tongue-tied people that had never testified before Congress. And Dexheimer, himself, didn't even go: he decided he wanted to go out and watch one of those big atomic test programs that he'd been invited to. So Nielsen was in charge. Nielsen had said, "I don't know the names of the projects in this year's budget, and if I hear the name, I won't know what state they're in." And he hadn't done a damn thing to learn them, either, you know. He was not only arrogant, but he was lazy. So here's the headman with a bunch of Regional Directors that had never testified before Congress. And the roof fell in on them, they just . . . it was terrible. And the word got out real fast that Reclamation's in trouble. Called them back that afternoon, and it wasn't any better.

They went back the second day at 10 o'clock, and at 11 o'clock the chairman of the subcommittee just pounded the gavel. He said, "This is hopeless." He said, "We're not accomplishing a damn thing. We're not making any kind of a record that this committee can carry to the Congress and defend, so we're going to adjourn the hearing on Reclamation. And we'll take up the Corps of Engineers, and the Soil Conservation Service. In a couple weeks, we'll call you back. Maybe you'll study your lesson in the meantime." And that's how bad it was.

So, two weeks go by, and they go back up. They still don't take Floyd Dominy — they hadn't learned their

lesson. And they haven't improved any -- they haven't improved any. I'm getting telephone calls from Western members, the Senate and the House. What the hell is going on up there? Why aren't you up there, and so on. All I could say was, "Well, I'm just not . . .

END SIDE 2, TAPE 1. APRIL 6, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2. APRIL 6, 1994.

Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey with Floyd Dominy on April 6, 1994.

Dominy: . . . they still don't take me. Senator Gale McGee[20] of Wyoming was on the Senate subcommittee on Reclamation. He called me, said, "Come up and have lunch with me," that first day after the hearings had started again in the House. And he'd heard how bad things were, and he just wanted to consult with me about it. And wanted to know what I could do to prevent something similar happening in the Senate . . . they always take the House first. So we finished the lunch about 1:30, and I always made a habit when I'd been out of the office for any extended period up on the Hill to get to the nearest phone and call my office to see if anything had come up that I could take care of before I got back. Maybe another Congressman or Senator had something, you know.

Testimony Before Congressional Committee on Reclamation Programs

20. Senator Gale William McGee, Democrat, served from 1959 to 1977.

So I called my office, and my secretary says, "Oh, thank god you called! Nielsen's tearing his hair out. They want you over there to testify . . . they want you at the Congressional hearing this afternoon."

Well, I didn't have my books, I didn't have anything. I just, all I had time was to get down to the hearing room. So I got down to the hearing room, and Nielsen comes up. "Where've you been, where've you been"?

"Well," I said, "I was having lunch with a Senator and . . ."

"Well, we've been looking all over for you! We've gotta have you in here."

"Well," I said, "that's kind of interesting that you've got the fire burning real good, and your nuts are hot and burning, and now you want me to bail them out"!

"Are you being insubordinate"?

"No," I said, "I'm just telling you the way it is"! (laughing).

"Well, are you going to go in there, or not"?

"Well," I said, "you're running this place, and I work for the Bureau. And if you ask me to come in there, and testify, of course I'm going to do it."

So we went in, and I assumed he'd cleared it with the committee. But everybody moved up to the head table . . . they just had this long table, and everybody moved up, there wasn't any place for me. So I sat down on a chair against the wall, not realizing that my name hadn't even been sent up to the committee! So they start this program, and Kendrick Project, Wyoming, was the one that was up. They had a big map on the wall, and one thing and another. Rudy Walters[21] was the Regional Director that Dex had put in charge that wasn't qualified to be a Regional Director. Just somebody Dex knew. And if you'd have said, "What did you say your name was?", he wouldn't have been able to tell you them. He was so shook up that he was shittin' in his pants. It was terrible, you know. The guy was . . .

Storey: Very nervous. Shaking.

Dominy: Oh, terrible! So here's Nielsen looking back at me.

Storey: Motioning you to come up? (Dominy: Right!) Yeah.

Dominy: No place for me to sit, or a damn thing, and here's Crosthwait.

Storey: Motioning for you to come up, too. (Laughing.)

Dominy: Yeah. I waved Crosthwait back [to where I was sitting] and I said, "For Christ sake, Stan, I can't just stand up here and start speaking. I've got to be introduced, I've got to be made an official witness, if you're going to

21. Raymond J. Walter was the regional director in Region 7 (Lower Missouri Region, Denver) from 1954-1959.

want me to do it.!"

So he went up and whispered in Nielsen's ear, and I'll never forget this as long as I live. Here was my introduction, this is verbatim: "Mr. Chairman, Floyd is here now. And he used to work out in Wyoming as a County Agent, and he knows this Western area, and perhaps he can answer your questions on this Kendrick Project."

"Floyd is here now," like I'd been off on a two weeks' drunk, see. That I'd supposed to have been there all the time! (laughing). You know? So I got up, no place for me to sit, and the court reporter's in the middle of the table. And Nielsen's on one side and Crosthwait on the other, and so on, you know.

So I stood behind the court reporter and I said, "Mr. Chairman, my name is Floyd E. Dominy. I do work for the Bureau of Reclamation, I'm Chief of the Irrigation Division. And I'll be happy to explain to you why the Kendrick Project is in trouble, and how we need this money desperately to bail out. You know, some farmers were misled, and put out on that land, and it hasn't worked." Well, I had their attention. I said, "Incidentally, the reason it's called Kendrick is that Senator Kendrick[22] was the sixth most Senior Senator at the time this project was authorized. And it's been a problem project for the Bureau ever since it was conceived, or ill-conceived, as the case may be." I said, "Number One, it's at 6,000-foot elevation, in a northern

22. Senator John Benjamin Kendrick (Democrat) served Wyoming in the Senate from 1917 to 1933.

latitude, which limits what you can grow."

Storey: Not much of it, too?.

Dominy: Yeah. And a short growing season. Number Two, the river is already over-appropriated in terms of water. And the only water supply that's available to the Kendrick Project is in those very exceptional years when there's more water than anybody figured would be in the river. And then we can divert it into this off-stream reservoir, and create a water supply for them. Now the only good thing that's happened on the Kendrick Project is that we abandoned half of it, because the soil was so bad and because of a selenium problem, and . . ."

"Selenium, what's that"?

I had their attention, you see? And I took them through the whole goddamn picture in about 30 minutes, and I gave them all the facts and figures, and why we needed this drainage money, and it was very important for these settlers out there. So I went back, sat down. And the chairman calls his aide up and whispers in his ear, and that aide goes around and whispers in Nielsen's ear. And they created a space for me at the table (Storey: laughing). And I moved up to the table and — still didn't have my books, or a damn thing. But I had it all in my head . . . hell, I'd worked on this for months!

So one member of the committee said, "Mr. Chairman, it appears to me that we finally have found someone who understands this program, this Bureau of

Reclamation program. Why don't we start all over? We haven't made enough record here in the past appearances to do anything." He said, "Let's start all over."

The chairman said, "Without objection, that's what we'll do." So they ran until about 6 o'clock that night, and I never hesitated a minute. I poured it all out. I didn't ride back with the Bureau cars — I went out and caught a cab and went back. Pretty soon, Nielsen calls and wants to see me (laughing).

Storey: This was that evening?

Dominy: Yeah.

Storey: Back at the office?

Dominy: Yeah. We'd all gotten back about 6 o'clock. "Well, you bailed us out, and I appreciate it. But by god I don't like your attitude"! (Laughing.)

I tell you, the guy was impossible. So I said, "Well, Ed, you know Dexheimer's the Commissioner. You're the Assistant Commissioner. And you people have the authority, you have the privilege, you have the responsibility, of running the Bureau. And I'm not challenging that at all. But I'm going to reserve the right to judge for myself how effective I think you are." And I turned around and walked out.

Well, I was back up there the rest of the session. Except the Regional Directors never opened their head

again and then we . . . I bailed it out. So the next year . . .

Storey: This would have been '56. Is that right?

Dominy: Well, let's see, Eisenhower was elected in . . .

Storey: '52.

Dominy: Yeah, so it would have been '54.

Storey: Okay.

Dominy: The calendar year '54. And then calendar year '55. Now wait a minute. We're mixed up. Eisenhower's first term was . . . yeah.

Storey: He took office in '53, so he was (inaudible) then.

Dominy: Yeah, '53, '54, and then Congress '55. It would've been the Democratic Congress. So this is '55.

Storey: Okay.

Dominy: And then '56, some more of the same. They take me up as a backstop. But I'm still not in charge of presenting the budget. I'm still just there to help out when they — when things are not going very well.

And I remember one Congressman saying to Nielsen, he said, "Well, Mr. Nielsen. Looks like you're digging a pretty good hole there. Isn't it about time to

roll up Mr. Dominy again to bail you out"? (Laughing.) I mean, it was awful!

Storey: Yeah, I guess!

Dominy: In the printed report, they talked about these guys' incompetence, and so on. That was the best read book in the Department of Interior. But they still don't do anything, so one more year goes on. And we're before a subcommittee, and Nielsen is trying to testify. And the chairman of that subcommittee caught my eye . . . I'm sitting back there. Well, I looked around, I thought he was waving at someone behind me . . . "No, you, you, you."

Storey: He motioned you to come up.

Dominy: Right! To come up there on his side of the table. And he lets Nielsen and this Republican Congressman, they're carrying on a colloquy. And he said, "Mr. Dominy, I don't understand why they don't put you in charge of this thing up here. You're the only one that seems to know anything about it."

"Well," I said, "Mr. Rabaut[23], I can't very well put myself in charge." I said, "There's a Secretary of Interior and a few other people around that makes these decisions, but I appreciate your confidence in me anyway."

So he was passing the word — he was from

23. Representative Louis C. Rabaut (Democrat) of Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan, served from 1935 to 1947 and 1949 to 1961.

Detroit. But he was passing the word to fellows like the Chairman of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, Wayne Aspinall, and others, that Reclamation was having a hell of a time. And that Dominy was the guy that should be doing these things.

Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton Calls Dominy to His Office

So finally, Fred [A.] Seaton calls me down, he's the Secretary. I'd never met him, I knew who he was, of course. He called me down and he said, "Floyd, is Reclamation in as bad a shape up on the Hill as my telephone tells me they are"? He said, "They won't quit ringing."

Well, I was indignant. I said, "Look, Mr. Secretary, "I'm a member of the Reclamation staff. I don't think it's proper for you to call me down here and ask me that question." I said, "I'm not Commissioner, I'm not Assistant Commissioner. I'm not Assistant Secretary of the Interior. I'm just a man on the staff," and I got up. I was indignant.

"Oh, for christsake, sit down! We're just two Nebraskans. You were born in Hastings, weren't you"?

"Yeah."

"Well, we're just two Nebraskans. Now, sit down, I want to talk to you." So I sat down and he said that there were just so many complaints on The Hill that he

had to do something. And so many of them were telling him that I was the guy that could do it. And what about it?

And I said, "Well, of course I can! But I can't do it as Chief of the Irrigation Division. You've got to give me some Assistant Commissioner's title and some responsibility that I'm in charge of. I can't just do it by waving a wand"!

"Okay, what will it take"?

Made Special Assistant Commissioner

"Well," I said, "In the first place, I'd want full control of everything going to The Hill. That's where the problems arise is when you first start sending stuff up there. So I'd want . . . that goes for project planning. That goes for any new project proposal. That goes for any budget item. I would want full control as to how to package it . . . the timing of it, and so forth."

And when I got through, he said, "Well, what else is there"? I said, "Not much." I said, "Not very much." (Laughing.)

So he said, "Well, you just be a tree in the woods and you'll hear from me." So he called Dexheimer down there, and told him to create a job for me, move me up in the front office. Well, of course, there wasn't any job up there unless they got Nielsen out of there. The Nielsen assignment was really the job I had to have if I'm going

to do the things that I was required to do. Well, Dex wasn't about to sacrifice his hand-picked pigeon. So they finally created a Special Assistant Commissioner responsible for presenting everything to Congress, and so on, and so forth. Moved me up in the front hall and Seton sent a memorandum to Dexheimer saying that all Congressional mail would be signed by Dominy. And all hearings that the Bureau of Budget or in Congress would be in charge of Dominy, you know.

So Dexheimer takes a big trip for a month and makes Nielsen Acting Commissioner, even though he can't sign the mail!

Storey: This would have been in about '56?

Dominy: Oh, '57. So when Dex got back, I was mad as a hornet. Because mail would come in, and Nielsen would surname it. It'd come in to me for signature, and if I didn't like it, why, I'd send it back to Nielsen with suggestions on how I wanted it rewritten. And he'd send it back to me "Rewrite it, yourself, if you don't like it," you know. That kind of crap went on for a month.

Now, I could have stopped all that, I could have gone to the Secretary and said, "For christ sake, cancel Dexheimer's order and make me Acting Commissioner." But I'm not built that way, and I took it for a month but I was boiling all the while. And when Dex got back I went to in to see him the very next morning. And I said, "I've had it clear up to here, and it's come to a head now. Either you go down to the Secretary and ask me to be

made Associate Commissioner and get that goddamn Nielsen out of here or I'm going to make an issue out of what you did to me the last 30 days. And maybe you won't [be] here." I said, "I just . . . by god, I've had it."

Becomes Associate Commissioner

So he went down and talked to the Secretary and it worked out that Nielsen would go to Denver and I'd be made Associate Commissioner.[24]

Poor old Dex still didn't know how to handle it. He called a big staff meeting and says, "By orders of the Secretary, Floyd's moving up." Instead of saying, "I've discussed this with the Secretary and we worked out an agreement that . . ." No, no. "By orders of the Secretary," you know.

Storey: Would you explain to me . . .

Dominy; Pig-headed to the day he died!

Storey: Would you explain to me, though, why you think that was an error?

Dominy: Well, of course it was an error! If he's going to be there, and work with me as an Associate Commissioner, he should have said that he was responsible for it -- not the Secretary of the Interior.

24. E. G. Nielsen's name disappears from the list of Reclamation officials published in the *The Reclamation Era* in May 1958. It was listed in the February 1958 issue.

Storey: Uh huh. Okay. Good.

Dominy: He should have said that I've discussed a personnel problem with the Secretary. And we worked out an arrangement whereby Mr. Nielsen's going to transfer out to Denver, and Floyd's going to take over with the title of Associate Commissioner.

Storey: What did Nielsen do out there? Do you remember?

Dominy: Yeah, they sent him out there as a . . . the only place they could put a grade 16 was as Assistant Chief Engineer. So they put him in as Assistant Chief Engineer. And he'd already proven himself completely incompetent for an administrative job, but they put him out there in that job.

Storey: And they then made you Associate Commissioner?

Dominy: Associate Commissioner, the first time in history they'd ever had such a title. And the job sheet was written very carefully, so that I had all the authority that Dexheimer had. It was a . . . plus the instructions that Dex couldn't sign the mail. I signed all the mail (laughing). So Dex was a figurehead from then on.

Storey: Well, when you say you signed all the mail, you mean to Congressmen?

Dominy: Well, I signed <u>all</u> the mail after that, after I was made Associate Commissioner. Dexheimer didn't sign anything. So that's the situation, and of course, I'd been

running the Bureau as Assistant Commissioner. But now, it's recognized that I'm running it as Associate Commissioner. And it was out in the open that Dexheimer was a figurehead.

Appointed Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation

And I was plumb willing for it to stay that way through the rest of the Eisenhower administration. But I'm out making a tour of the projects in April of 1959 — I was made Associate early in '58, and I was at Glen Canyon Dam on the fourth of April. I went over the construction budget progress, and so on, and they drove me to Flagstaff. And I took a plane from there over to Farmington, where I was going to check on the progress of the Navajo Dam construction. And I step off the plane, and I'm being paged at the counter at this small airport in Farmington. So I go there to the desk, and the gal hands me a telephone — all these people milling around this little lobby. And it was Fred Seton's secretary.

She says, "Where have you been? We've been trying to find you for the last hour and a half."

"Well," I said, "I been traveling from Page to Farmington . . . been en route."

"Well, here's the Secretary."

"Goddamn it," he says, "You're hard to find"!

"Well," I said, "I been moving from one project to another this morning."

"Well, you might be interested that Eisenhower had a press conference about 30 minutes ago. You know, the President"?

I said, "Yes, I know." "Well, he said he's . . . he announced that he was accepting Dexheimer's resignation effective May 1, and that you're to be named Commissioner on that day."

Well, I was dumbfounded . . . absolutely, christ almighty. I was shittin' my pants, I was dumbfounded. I had no idea this was in the mill at all. . . I thought they were going to let it ride right on through, you see. Because it was working, Dex was staying out of my hair and letting me run it. So I just didn't say a damn word.

"Well," he said, "do you want the job!" (Laughing.)

"Well," I said, yes, I'll accept it. I'll accept it."

"Well," he said, "there's two things that I want you to know." He said, "You know, the Republican Administration is not very pro public power."

I said, "Yes, I understand that. I've been living with that ever since Eisenhower came in, and that doesn't give me any problem."

"Well, the second thing you ought to know," he said, "I announced that you're a Republican."

"Well" (laughing) I said, "I've had worse things said about me, I guess. So that doesn't bother me, either. I've been non-political all my life, but if you've announced that I'm Republican, I won't deny it."

So that's the way it happened. I was going to be in Denver that weekend, because a group of ranchers from the Ainsworth Project were raising hell about the canal going down across their sandhills for the Ainsworth Project. We weren't giving them enough crossings to get their cattle from one side of the canal to the other and one thing and another. One of the ranchers was an old friend of mine from years back, and he'd prevailed upon me to meet with these ranchers and listen to them. So I'd arranged to meet them on Monday in Denver on my way back to Washington, so I arrived in Denver late Friday night . . . I was going to meet with those guys on Sunday, that's right.

First Meeting with Chief Engineer's Staff as Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation

So I called old Grant [Bloodgood], he was the Chief Engineer, and I knew what a shock this was to the Denver Club you know . . . Floyd Dominy, the farmer, ending up Commissioner, and running off poor old Dex, and so on. And I could just imagine the reverberations that were going through the Denver Club out there as I call them. So I called old Grant the next morning about

8 o'clock, and he was out in his garden, and I said, "Well, don't bother him. Just tell him that I'm in town, I'll be here today. And if it's convenient, I'd like to have him come down and visit with me a little bit."

Well he called me back in about 5 minutes she must have gone right out there and got him and "I can be down there in 30 minutes."

I said, "Fine." Well, Grant came up to my room and I said, "I'm sure that you haven't quite got over the shock yet, but things are going to be a little different now. Matter of fact, they're going to be quite a lot different in the Bureau than it has been in the past." I said, "Number one, there's only going to be one Bureau, Grant, and that's going to be run from my office on the seventh floor in Washington. And Denver is not going to be the exclusive club that runs its own goddamn show in its own goddamn way without any interference. You're going to be working with me, we're going to quit this feuding between Denver and the Regions. We're not going to have work done in the Regions, and then you guys redo it all. It's going to be one Bureau, and it's going to work a lot different."

"So," I said, "the main reason you and I are talking today is that Mr. Nielsen has to go. He can't be Assistant Chief Engineer, because I don't know how long you're going to stay. You're 64 years old, and pretty damned independent, and I don't know how long you'll work with me. And I want a replacement in there ready to take over the day you retire, and I know you, Grant. You're

not going to try to teach anybody anything — he's going to have to learn it by osmosis. So," I said, "let's decide who's the best qualified man to succeed you as Chief Engineer . . . it's certainly not Nielsen." So we debate -- half a dozen people -- and we finally narrow it down to two people Barney Bellport, the Regional Director out in California, and Emil Lindseth one of the top men there in the Denver Office.

So we debate the pros and cons and I finally said, "Okay, Grant, you put down your first and second choice and I'll put down my first and second choice. And we'll see how we come out." Well, he put down Lindseth and Bellport, and I put down Bellport and Lindseth. So it was Bellport (laughing).

So then I said, "I understand Nielsen is supposed to be a Power expert, and so move him out of there right away. Create a job in the power industry, and slice him into it."

"Well, you can't do all these . . ."

I said, "Grant, I want it done May Second. I'm going to be sworn in May 1. This is the 6th of April, you've got plenty of time to work it out. And I want it done May Second, May First, if you can get it done. But not later than May Second."

Storey: And this was in the days when the Commissioner did not have to be accepted by the Senate?

Dominy: Oh, no. No, no. I'm the reason that was changed (laughing). That'll be part of my story, when I get to it.

Storey: Good.

Dominy: No, that'll be part of my story when I get to it. So Grant, he tried to calm me down.

I said, "No, Grant, you've got plenty of time from the 6th of April til the 2nd of May to get this done." I said, "Send me in a job sheet for him and we'll get it approved and you slice him into it."

Well, he didn't do it. The Second of May shows up and I haven't heard anything from Grant. So I called the Chief of the Personnel Division around, and I said, "Now, you call the Denver personnel chief, Mr. [Everett K.] Gould. Just ask him 'where is that job sheet reassigning Mr. Nielsen into a power slot.' He's going to be real surprised because I'm sure Grant's never said a damn thing to him."

So you get pretty upset, and you say, "Well, my god, Dominy's going to be out there Monday night, the 7th of May. And he's going to be this is the middle of the week on Wednesday or so and he wants this done! He's expecting to take that action!" Well, just as I thought, Grant had never even talked to his personnel man at all, see. So I show up out there . . . I sent him a wire that I'm coming out on Monday, be in the office Monday at 9 o'clock.

And I walk in, and Grant's got the job sheet, and he tells me that, "You just can't . . ."

"Grant, I know you were a colonel in the Army, I understood. Did you only give orders, or didn't you ever learn how to take orders from anybody?" I says, "What's this nonsense that you can't do these things?"

"Well, here's the job sheet."

"Well," I said, "are you going to take it in there and tell Nielsen about it"?

"Well, as long as you're here, maybe you ought to do it."

"Well," I said "I'm sure as hell willing to." So I barged into Nielsen's office with this job sheet, presented it to him, and he read it.

"I won't take it."

"Well," I said, "maybe you don't understand what your options are here. Either you accept this reassignment . . .

END SIDE 1, TAPE 2. APRIL 6, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 2. APRIL 6, 1994.

Dominy: . . . Right. "You either accept this reassignment, or you're out of the Bureau, you're fired."

"Well, you can't do that. You'd have to prove incompetence."

And I said, "In your case, that's no problem. You've proved incompetent, you proved that successfully while you were in Washington. That certainly removes you from any qualification to be Chief Engineer. You've also shown every indication that you won't work with me on any basis. And all these things, I'll put in the memorandum that removes you from office. So I'll be back at" . . . they quit out there at 4:15. I said, "I'll be back at 3:30 for your answer."

Meanwhile, I was pretty sure what the stubborn bastard was going to do, so I wrote out my memorandum firing him. I had it all ready when I went back in there, and he refused to sign the release, taking the other job. So I served notice on him (laughing).

He appealed it all over the place, Civil Service, and members of Congress, and everywhere else. But I fired him . . . Civil Service upheld my action. So that kind of let the Denver crowd know who was running the Bureau. And while I was there, I went through that whole shop, and shook hands with every single employee, from the janitor down to the lowest grade clerk. Just to let them know who I was, to let them know I understood what projects they were working on, and so forth. Well, I had a year and a half before the next election, and I'm a Republican now (laughing). So I

changed Regional Directors in many places,[25] and put my imprint on the Bureau.

Reappointment as Commissioner When Administration Changes from Republican to Democratic

And Kennedy was elected. "Scoop" Jackson,[26] one of the most powerful Senators, was his campaign manager. During the campaign in October, just before the November election, Gruening,[27] the Democratic Senator from Alaska, had a hearing on the power needs of Alaska. And the Corps of Engineers -— he [Gruening] had gotten behind a big project to build a dam[28] on the Yukon River north of Fairbanks. Well, the Corps hadn't done anything in Alaska. We'd [Reclamation'd] made the surveys of the power needs of Alaska, and some preliminary studies of where you might build some power projects. And we [had] built the Eklutna Project to supply power in Anchorage. So

25. In 1960 Frank M. Clinton replaced Ernest O. Larson as regional director in Region 4 (Salt Lake City); Clinton had moved from Region 6 (Billings) and was replaced there by Bruce Johnson; A. B. West replaced W. H. Taylor in October of 1959 in Region 3 (Boulder City); Leon W. Hill replaced Robert W. Jennings in 1959 in Region 5 (Amarillo); Hugh (Pat) P. Duggan replaced Bernard (Barney) P. Bellport in Region 2 (Sacramento) when Bellport became Assistant Chief Engineer; and, in Region 7 (Denver) John N. Spencer replaced Raymond J. Walter in 1959. At about the time Floyd E. Dominy became commissioner only Harold T. Nelson remained in a regional director's chair. He served in Region 1 (Boise) from 1949 to 1972 as regional director.

26. Henry Martin "Scoop" Jackson (D) served as a Representative 1941 to 1953 and in the Senate 1953 to 1983. During his tenure in the Senate he chaired the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs from 1963 to 1979.

27. Ernest Gruening (Democrat) served in the Senate from 1959 to 1969.

28. This is Rampart Dam.

I'm invited to go up there and participate in this rump hearing by Gruening. And I'd got no instructions from anybody as to what my position would be, or what the Interior Department's position would be. But I knew damn well that the Commissioner of Reclamation's opinion was the one that should be prevailing. So I didn't have any compunction. When they had the big hearing in Fairbanks, and everybody praising this, and the Corps of Engineers standing up there with their big maps and stuff, "5 million kilowatts of power, half a mill cost," and came my turn.

Testifies on Proposed Rampart Dam in Alaska

I said, "Well, I'm going to have to throw a little cold water on this monstrous project. I can't support the project of a 5 million kilowatt development for an undeveloped state that only needs at the maximum 200,000 kilowatts for its potential growth for the next foreseeable future above what you've got now, including all the military installations, and the dew line, and everything else." "And, I said, "it's not half mill power unless you can sell it, and there's no place you can sell it . . . there's no way you can move it from here down into the lower 48. So," I said, "this is nonsense. You flood out the biggest nesting grounds in the whole continent. This is nonsense."

Well, of course, I get all the headlines, "Commissioner Dominy opposes Rampart." They might just as well, all the rest of them, stayed at home. Well, we have four of these, these hearings, and I'm the only

negative witness, and I repeat my story at every one of them.

And Gruening is fit to be tied, of course, and the last hearing is at Juneau, the capital. And after we finish, why, he said, "Well, I'm going to wind up these hearings, we've only had one witness that didn't fully accord with this great project. But we've learned to love Floyd, and we think that if he could lay aside the conservative robes of the Eisenhower Administration, that he has to represent and has to be a spokesman for them, we think that he'd be with us as a individual, if he could. He just, because of his office, he feels like he has to take this position. So, as just a last opportunity, before I officially close these hearings, I'm going to let Floyd come back to the witness stand, laying aside his Eisenhower robes of office, and testify as an individual in his own behalf, if he cares to do so. Now, of course, I'll understand that if he doesn't come back, that it's just because of his position with the Eisenhower Administration."

Well, hell, I got right up. I walked right back to that witness chair and, of course, he thought I was going to capitulate; otherwise, why would I come back? And I said, "Mr. Chairman, I have testified here as an official of the Eisenhower Administration, as the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation. I returned to the chair at your request or at your offer to testify, not as Commissioner of Reclamation, but as Floyd E. Dominy, a man of some experience in the water and power field. So now, I'm about to testify on my own behalf, with no

restraint of office." Well, I had his full attention, he was sure I'm going to capitulate. "Mr. Chairman, I do not want to associate myself with those who, in my judgment, would mislead the people of Alaska in holding out the false hope that the United States would underwrite a project of the magnitude of the Rampart Dam at this stage of Alaska's underdevelopment. That to me, sir, is as absurd as if we had told the settlers as they harnessed their teams and wagons on the Missouri River, heading for Oregon, that we'd build Grand Coulee Dam for them before they got there." Oh, god, he was mad! Whew! He was furious!

This is all on the record, you know, and I heard him say to his aides, "By god, he won't be Commissioner if Kennedy's elected."

Well, meanwhile, I'd also antagonized Clair Engle,[29] the Democratic Senator from California. He was one of those Senators that kind of wanted to tell you how to run your office . . . not just pass the laws, but also how to administrate them in California. And I'd had to tell him a couple times that I didn't submit to Congressional blackmail, and by god, I was Commissioner, and he wasn't. And I'd also antagonized Scoop Jackson, and Magnuson,[30] from the state of Washington, because I was trying to renegotiate the

29. Clair Engle (Democrat) was a Representative 1943 to 1959 where he chaired the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs from 1955 to 1959. He then served in the Senate from 1959 until his death in 1964.

30. Warren Grant Magnuson (Democrat) served as a Representative from 1937 to 1944. He was then appointed to a vacant Senate seat which he held 1944 to 1981 when he was not reelected.

repayment contracts on the Columbia Basin Project. And they'd interfered by sort of promising those settlers they could have what they wanted, you know. I didn't cotton to that very good. And I'd finally told them up there that either they'd pay the bill, or the water would be shut off. That I wasn't the Commissioner that was going to violate the law. And I had public meetings up there where I told them, right to their face, all four districts. That if they didn't pay the bill come May 1, [1960] the water would be shut off. I said, "We've been trying to renegotiate this contract for six years, because I knew the day would come when you would have to meet these payments, and it is beyond reason . . . the contract isn't very good. But you haven't cooperated, now I've come to the end of my line. I took an oath of office to uphold the law." I said, "I'm going to turn the pumps off. What water is in the canal, you can use. But no more will be coming down that canal after May 1 at midnight."

Some veteran: "Are you going to do that to us"?

"Well," I said, "you look like an honorable man to me. If you took an oath of office, wouldn't you uphold it"? I said, "That's the kind of a man I am, I took an oath, and I'm going to uphold it." So I had Scoop Jackson, and Magnuson, and Gruening, and . . .

Storey: Engle.

Dominy: Engle.

Storey: Truly ticked off.

Stewart Udall Proposes That Dominy Continue as Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation

Dominy: So Kennedy is elected. And I'm out in Denver, right after the election, at a water user's meeting of some kind. And Stewart [L.] Udall, the Congressman, had just been nominated by Kennedy to be the new Secretary of Interior. And he's on the same program — I'm the speaker during the morning, and he's the luncheon speaker. So I'm sitting up at the head table when Stewart comes in. And he whispers in my ear as he goes down the line, to the center of the table, "Come up to my room at 1108 right after lunch. I need to talk to you."

So after he makes his speech, we go up to his room, and he said that he wanted me to continue on as Commissioner. He said, "I know you have no problems in the House. Is there any problem in the Senate?"

"Well," I said, "yes, you might have minor irritations in the Senate (laughs)." And I told him.

"Good god!" he said. "Campaign manager, Chairman of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee. Magnuson's the second ranking Republican on the Appropriations Committee! Gruening's the only Democrat from Alaska! Engle, the only Democratic Senator from California! Good god, Floyd!"

"Well," I said, "I didn't pick them, they picked me. They picked me. And," I said, "they have no legitimate beef, it's just personal pique . . . there's no legitimate beef.

I haven't deliberately gone out to antagonize — it's just my principles. My standard position on the administration [of the USBR]."

"Well," he said, "I'll have to see what we can do about it."

So on the 24th of December, my birthday, 1960, Orin Beatty who's going to be Stewart's Administrative Assistant, he'd been in that capacity as a Congressman, now he's moving with him to Interior, he called me out at my house. And he said that at Stewart's request, he'd interviewed those four Senators, and all four of them were adamant. That, by god, I wouldn't be Commissioner with their blessing, they were going to oppose it. He said, "I'm going to give you Stewart's unlisted telephone number. You better call him and talk to him about it."

"Well," I said, "I'm not going to bother Stewart with it."

"Well, don't you want the job"? I said, "No, not if the President, and the Secretary of the Interior, are going to let four Senators out of a hundred tell them how to run their business. I don't think it'd be much fun working under those circumstances." I said, "I don't have to be confirmed . . . <u>all they got to do is say they want me as Commissioner, and I'm Commissioner</u>"!

"You want me to tell the Secretary that"? I said, "Yes, you tell him that."

"You're not going to do anything"?

Carl Hayden's Involvement in Retention of Dominy as Commissioner

I said, "No, I'm not going to do a damn thing." Well, I got reappointed. And I didn't find out until months after what had happened. Udall called old Carl Hayden,[31] the Senior Senator . . .

Storey: From Arizona.

Dominy: Yeah, and he was the Senior Senator of them all, and . . .

Storey: Yeah!

Dominy: And he [Udall] said, "If you want Floyd continued on as Commissioner, you've got to get these four Senators off my back."

And Carl Hayden called them over that Christmas holiday, individually. Ran one of them of them down in Spain — wherever they were, and old Carl ran them down. Made them face up: "Why don't you want Floyd reappointed? I've known every Commissioner since the first one, and I think he's the most effective we've ever had. Why don't you want him reappointed? What's your objections"?

31. Carl Trumbull Hayden (Democrat) served as a Representative from 1912 to 1927 and in the Senate from 1927 to 1969 when he retired. Among other committee chairs, he headed the Senate Committee on Appropriations from 1955 to 1969 and was President pro tempore of the Senate from 1957 to 1969.

Reappointment of Dominy as Commissioner Results in Approval of Appointments to Commissioner by the Senate

And, of course, they all had to run for cover . . . they didn't have any valid objections to my being Commissioner. But "Scoop" Jackson made it plain that the next Commissioner after me was going to be confirmed by the Senate (laughing). They changed that law!

Storey: Then you did, indeed, cause that.

Dominy: Oh, yeah, sure. Sure, I was the reason for that. And I was the only Commissioner, well, the only head of a government agency I think in history, I think, go up there before Congress. And the chairman of the committee would turn the gavel over to somebody else.

Then they brought this fellow in from California, I'll think of his name in a minute [Jim Carr]. As Under Secretary. He was an Engle appointee, of course. And Engle's man [administrative assistant] calls me, and he said, "You know who's going to be Under Secretary"?

And I said, "Yeah, Stewart Udall asked me about him. And I told him he'd be a good choice."

"You know how close he is to Clair Engle"?

And I said, "Yes, I know, I know, Jim Carr."

"Well", he said, "Does Clair ever call you on anything about Reclamation"? I said, "No, you know that. You know he's had a hardon against me for some time, and we don't communicate."

"Well, he's going to be working with Carr, and where's that leave you"?

"Well," I said, "let's put it this way. When Clair Engle got irritated with me, and decided that I was *persona non grata* with him, I was Chief of the Irrigation Division. Now, I've been appointed Commissioner by the second President. So I don't think Clair Engle's enmity toward me has been very hurtful so far." See, I don't run from these bastards — he was trying to make me come up and kowtow, because Jim Carr was going to be Under Secretary.

Well, it was a little rough around the edges . . . two or three times, Udall said, "Can't you get along with Carr and Engle"?

"Well," I said, "I know what I have to do to get along, Stewart."

"Why don't you do it then"?

"Well," I said, "I'm not going to cut my throat. I don't like the color of blood." I said, "That's the only thing I can do to pacify those bastards."

Construction of a New Denver Office Building

The Denver Office Building was a case in point . . . nobody wanted me to have it. General Services Administration wouldn't approve it, wouldn't build me an office building. And they said they were the only ones that had the authority to build government buildings. I couldn't convince the Bureau of the Budget that I needed a building. I couldn't convince anybody in the Interior Department to fight anybody about it. So I decided to take it direct to Congress, which is against the rules and regulations. But after we'd had our hearings, the old chairman was about to pound the gavel. I said, "Well, Mr. Chairman, I've answered all your questions now for 10 days. Before you officially close the hearing, there's two items that I'd very much like to present to this committee which aren't in my line and item budget, but which are of some great significance to me." Well, it was a great shock, you know. Bureau Chiefs aren't supposed to do things like this.

The old chairman said, "Well, what is it"?

"Well," I said, "the first thing is my airplane. The carburetor ices up at unusual times over those Rocky Mountains out there in bad weather. It isn't just me, but sometimes I have members of Congress, and governors, and other people onboard with me. And I'm concerned about it."

"You mean this plane's going to crash?" "Well," I said, "I have a strong feeling that it could. I've been up in that co-pilot's seat when I had to pull the carburetor's

[de]icers out by the roots to get enough heat in there to keep those carburetors from freezing up solid. It's kind of an eerie feeling to have that plane choke up when you're up there, blind, in a snowstorm."

"When's it going to crash"?

"Well," I said, "Mr. Chairman, I'm not clairvoyant."

"Well, I want to know. What trip's it going to crash? On what trip?"

"Well," I said, "I'm sorry, sir. I'm just not able to give you that information."

"Well," he said (whispered), "I've got a list of passengers I want on board"! (Laughter.)

"So," he says, "without objection, we're going to let you get yourself a plane with better carburetors. Approved!"

So then I brought up the housing situation. I had prepared a photographic display of how bad that old building was. I told him about . . . we were training engineers from all over the world, and that my engineering staff had a worldwide reputation. And yet they were housed in absolutely deplorable circumstances, as this little photographic album will prove to you. So I handed out a copy of that. [Provides Storey with a scrapbook titled:]

Storey: "Inside Building 53" (laughing).

Dominy: I handed that out to them, and they began to look through it, and nudge one another, and laugh.

Storey: Here's one of the stockyards in the middle of it!

Dominy: Sure. Look at the comparison.

Storey: Just like all the carrels here . . .

Dominy: Sure, just look at . . . those girls are in the stockyards at the Denver Federal Center.

Storey: Yeah. Known as "Little Antarctica," with guys with their coats turned up, their overcoats turned up, and gloves on the desk. I love this!

Dominy: Well, it was terrible!

Storey: Oh, and here's a picture of a stenographer with sweat showing through her blouse going down her back. For summer. I like it.

Dominy: Sure. Right. Air conditioner.

Storey: A lot of dirt from the . . . oh, my! Here's a whole desk covered with dirt from the ventilating system and stuff. Blown-in leaves, insects, little birds fly happily overhead! With patches on . . . (laughing) with bird droppings on the oak furniture, and mice chewing on -- documents that have been chewed by mice. And a

mouse that's been caught in a typewriter (laughing). My, lord! And an old fashioned boiler that looks like it must have been way outdated even at that time.

Dominy: Well, the thing that finally irritated me beyond any chance of my recovering from it was when I discovered that the General Services Administration was going to build a new building to house their garbage cans, and stuff. A new warehouse for the Denver area. And we had a warehouse, all they had to do was build us a new building and they could . . . we were in a warehouse. We had freight elevators [that could be loaded] up to 250 pounds per square inch and all that stuff.

So I carried my case direct to Congress and I said, "Now, I'm not asking for new money, I just asked for authority. If I can find money within my budget up to $250,000, I'd like to design an office building that fits my needs. Then I'll submit the preliminary plans to you next year, and if you agree, then we might be able to build a building."

So, without objection, they okayed that I could spend up to $250,000. Not new money . . . it wasn't line item, but it was within my $500,000,000 budget, or whatever. If I could make a savings somewhere, then I could use it for this purpose.

Well, of course, the General Services Administration descended right away, my god almighty. "Dominy has no authority to build buildings! The law says every government building is our responsibility,"

and so on. So we want that money transferred to us; we'll design the building. Well, Udall and Carr didn't bother to talk to me about it. They just wrote a letter agreeing to transfer the money to General Services Administration.

And one of the boys down in the mailroom saw this letter, and could tell by the surnames on it that it hadn't cleared through me. And I was a fairly popular guy around the low income people and . . . I was the first one to hire a black girl above a grade 4 [in 1947], for example. I was the first guy to hire a black pilot [in 1961] -- long before the Civil Rights Act. So some guy in the mailroom — it's already signed by Udall, agreeing to transfer this money. He called me and I said, "Well, don't mail that letter. Don't mail that letter. Just stick it in a blue envelope and send it up here to me."

"Oh, god, I don't hardly . . ."

I said, "You just, I'll take care of it. Don't worry about it, nobody'll know how I got the letter." So I'm in Udall's office the next morning when he shows up. And I said, "I can't understand how you could possibly do a thing like this without even consulting me."

"Well, everybody said that the law said that you -- you know."

I said, "By god, did you talk to your own solicitor? Did you talk to me? In the first place, there's no money to be transferred! There's no line item, this money is in

my hands -- if I can find it. And I sure as hell can't find it to transfer to the General Services Administration that's refused to build me a building for years"! I said, "Stewart, I just don't understand how you could operate in that fashion."

"Well, Jim Carr . . ."

"Yeah," I said, "Jim Carr, for christ sake, you know what his relationship is with me."

"Well, you've got to go over there and convince them [GSA] that you have authority to build that building."

"Well," I said, "I've got authority to build dams, and related structures. And this is a related structure to a dam. It houses my staff!" I said, "That's all the authority I need, plus the money Congress gives me. If they give me the money to build it, that settles it. And I'm not going to transfer any money to the General Services Administration." So I had to go over there, and meet with them, and their lawyers. And they had all kinds of arguments that I didn't have any authority to do this.

Storey: You met with GSA?

Dominy: Oh, yeah. And their top legal staff, and everything else. I didn't even take a lawyer with me, I just went over there. Hell, I didn't have any money to transfer! I pointed that out: "This is not a line item in the budget.

This is authority for me to expend if I can find the money.

Storey: That's right.

Dominy: And I sure as hell am not going to transfer that authority to you bastards (laughing)." So I started designing the building. Well, the next fun came when I told the Chief Engineer, I said, "Now, . . . the architect that I want is in St. Louis.[32] Because I've seen some of their buildings and they're just as functional as they can be, but no decorations whatever, no frills. Completely functional, and I've told Congress that I can build this building that meets our full requirements for not more than 6.5 million. And that transfers down to about eighteen and a half dollars a square foot. And General Services Administration is spending up to $34 a square foot for the buildings they're building. So," I said, "you've got your work cut out for you to meet my specifications on this. So I want this St. Louis firm to be given the contract to design the building."

Well, about a week went by and I get a call from the Denver Congressman, pretty powerful guy, had lots of seniority. "Is it true that you've awarded the contract to a St. Louis firm for that Denver building"?

I said, "That's exactly right."

32. The prime architect for Building 67, the new Denver Office Building, was the St. Louis firm of Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum. The firm worked in association with Scott Associates, Architects; and Ketchum, Konkel, Ryan and Fleming, Engineers, both of Denver. Commissioner Dominy conducted a ground-breaking ceremony for Building 67 on November 18, 1964.

"And you did that without consulting me"?

I said, "Hell, I didn't know you were an architect"! God, he bounced off the ceiling four or five times (laughing). So I finally calmed him down and I said, "Well, now look. How would you like if I'd have told people out in Denver that you were going to make the decision of which Denver firm got that job? Did you really want to be put in that position"? And I said, "Goddamn it, get off my back. I'm the Commissioner of Reclamation, this is my responsibility. I'm committed to build a building at the cheapest possible price, and I'm familiar with the kind of work this firm does. Now you tell your Denver architects and engineering firms that there's nothing you can do about this. That the contract's been awarded, but that that St. Louis firm is going to be looking to Denver firms to do a lot of subcontracting . . . the plumbing, the electrical, the geology for the foundation, and all that kind of work will be subcontracted out to Denver. Now do you want me to tell that firm that you're the one that's going to make those selections? Or do you want to let them operate"? I calmed the bastard down to where he . . .

Storey: That was Congressman . . . ?

Dominy: Oh, I can't recall his name now, but he had a lot of seniority. He's been around a long time.

Storey: We'll get back to it.

Dominy: Well, it was 1964. Anyway, he calmed down. And we

got the building, and we got it built for eighteen dollars and fifty cents a square foot. But the General Services Administration found out I was designing a high rise. And they called me, and wrote me letters, objecting that everything else out there was two stories and that was the pattern for the Denver Center. I just ignored them — by that time I had the authority to build a building. Congress had given me the money (laughing). I just . . . the record will show that I never even answered their damn letters. We couldn't build a two-story building for [the same cost per square foot] -- [it would be] a lot more expensive to build a [two-story building]. . .

END SIDE 2, TAPE 2. APRIL 6, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 3. APRIL 6, 1994.

Storey: This is tape three of an interview with Floyd Dominy by Brit Storey on April 6, 1994.

So then . . .?

Dominy: Well, that was one of the big controversies, was that office building. The Bureau of the Budget, of course, had a couple of "hits". Another thing that happened while I was Commissioner that I did without authority to do, was award contracts.

When Eisenhower was about to go to Japan, when he was President, they had some unrest over there, and he had to cancel his trip.

Refused to Issue Contracts to Foreign Bidders on

Turbines and Generators

Right at that time, we had four major contracts to be awarded for turbines and generators. The Japanese were low on three of them, second low on the fourth one, English Electric was second low on three of them, and low on one. I had to go clear down to the third bidder to find an American bidder. And yet, the law said I had to award the contract to the low bidder, if they're qualified. I asked my lawyers, I said, "I'm not going to do this. I'm going to award one to the Japs and one to English Electric. Then I'm going to the lowest American bid on the other two."

"You can't do that."

"Well," I said, "I just told you I'm going to do it."

"Well, you can't do that, the law won't let you."

I said, "By god, I'm going to do it!" And that's what I did. I said, "You can watch me while I sign these. Now keep me out of jail!" Well, the Japs protested of course that they didn't get all three of them. And General Services Administration slapped my hand pretty hard. But I already had done it, so — it [would have] cost a lot of money to redo it. So I got away with it, and the only reason . . . I told General Services [Administration], the only reason I did it was because the Japs had never done this kind of work for us. They do it all over the world, but they'd never done it for us. So I'm not going to have three contracts out there at one

time. English Electric had never done any of that work for us. They do it all over the world, but they'd never worked under Bureau of Reclamation specs, so I'm only going to give them one. I'm not going to give them a second low bid, where I passed up the Japs. I got away with it.

Introduces Weather Modification Program

Another thing I did that I'm proud of was the Weather Modification Program. Here's the Weather Bureau not doing a damn thing about investigating whether or not you [man] could make clouds produce more moisture than nature otherwise would provide ~~by man manipulation~~. Nobody was doing anything about it, and here was guys like Crick going around the country, collecting thousands of dollars from farmers . . . going to make it rain for them, and so forth, and so on. So I went to Congress — I didn't have any advice from anybody else. I went to Congress and I said, "Look, somebody ought to be doing something about this. And I'm the logical outfit to do it. I've got a trained staff of skilled people. I don't have a meteorologist, but I can hire one. And I've got all these dams that we'd love to have extra moisture sometimes. We don't want to make it rain when the strawberries are ripe, or when a man's putting up hay. But we want to make snow in the wintertime. And we want it to snow in the wilderness areas, and places where very few people live, if any. But <u>basically</u>, we want to <u>find out</u> for the first time, scientifically, whether man can produce more moisture out of a given set of clouds than otherwise would fall. We don't think

we can create clouds, but perhaps when a cloud is already formed, man can manipulate it. But we need to know this, and I'm willing to start real small. Give me a million dollars the first year to get staffed up and get the meteorologist onboard and to start outlining some specific areas where we think an experiment could be run intelligently. And under proper controls."

Well, they jumped right on it and, of course, the Weather Bureau and the general science people, oh, they raised hell. "What the hell is Dominy doing in this business"? You know. They weren't doing it — so I did it!

Changes Foreign Program

The next thing I did was in foreign affairs participation. Up to that time, any of this foreign work was done under the State Department and under what they called a Point Four Program. And they'd frequently come to the Bureau and say, "We need a man to go to Afghanistan to do this or that," or to go to Nairobi to do this or that. And I discovered that maybe they'd hire a Bureau of Reclamation [employee] who was an expert hydrologist, but because he had a Bureau of Reclamation name tag on him, they might want him to do a soil survey, or something else.

So when they came in to see me, right after I was [appointed] Commissioner, and said there was a problem in Afghanistan on the Helmand Valley. And they wanted some Bureau of Reclamation people to go over

there and make a study. "Well," I said, "the way the Bureau is going to participate in foreign work starting as of today is that you contract with me. You furnish the money, and I'll decide the kind of people that will go, and what we will do. No more of this just hiring some of my people and putting them over there. It's going to be controlled out of my office, and it will be a Bureau of Reclamation undertaking, with your money. And that's it. Now, in the case of this Helmand Valley, you guys let that be built by an American contractor on a cost-plus contract, with no assistance whatever from the Bureau of Reclamation — the one agency in the Federal government that knows how to do these things. You didn't consult with us. Now, it's a mess; you don't know what to do about it. And the only reason you came to me now is because the Afghan government told you that perhaps the Bureau of Reclamation ought to be consulted. It took the foreign government to tell you that, I'm sure. And," I said, "we're just not going to operate that way any longer. Any time you want the Bureau participation, you get it through me. Now, what I'll do, in the case of this Helmand Valley, is I'll personally go over there. I think I know some of the things that's wrong with it already, having read the record. But," I said, "I'll personally go over there, look into it, and decide how many people and what kind of people that needs to go over there to help straighten it out. That'll be the pattern from now on." And I made it stick, and the Bureau got into foreign affairs pretty deep.

We made the big survey on the [Blue] Nile River Valley . . . [we] ~~they~~ had a crew over there for six years.

And of course the Mekong Dam on the -- Pa Mong damsite on the Mekong River. That's an interesting story, too. I was at a Large Dam Congress in Rome early in my career, either the first or the second year that I was Commissioner, and I got an urgent telegram through the State Department insisting that I show up in Bangkok. Leave the Large Dam Congress a day early, and fly to Bangkok. And I flew into Bangkok, and the Ambassador was actually at the airport, personally, to meet me.

He said, "We're having a conference with the Prime Minister at 4 o'clock," about two hours from then. "And I'm authorizing you . . . the government's authorizing you, through me, to tell the Prime Minister that the United States will help underwrite the construction of the Pa Mong Dam on the Mekong River."

"Well," I said, "Mr. Ambassador, as Commissioner of Reclamation, I can't support any such nonsense."

"What are you talking about?"

I said, "Nobody knows anything about that damsite. All they know is that there's a canyon there that's narrow. They know there's a big river there. Nobody knows the hydrology, nobody knows how many villages you'd flood out with the reservoir, nobody knows what the geology is, whether we can actually put a dam in that canyon safely or not. None of these things

are known, so the most you'll get me to say on behalf of the United States Government is that we'll make the necessary studies to see if a dam in the Pa Mong damsite area [on the Mekong River] is feasible."

"Well, how long will that take?"

I said, "About six years." This is all part of the Vietnam thing, they were trying to do anything they could, you know, to show the United States' presence in Laos, and Thailand, and . . . that's the way it was. I insisted that we limit our participation to making this study. And, of course, I made it look good. I took a man from [Thailand] ~~Vietnam~~, and a man from Laos, and actually went up the river in a small boat, and looked at the site on the ground. And I flew over it in a small plane, and made a big show out of it; then, we made a study. And it would be a great dam, a dam 350 feet high would create 150 million acre-feet of usable water a year. Compared to two 700-foot-high dams on the Colorado that yields 15 million acre-feet of water a year — 10 times greater. But it'll never be built, one end of it in Laos, and the other end of it in Thailand.

It's too bad that we didn't spend a little money doing something like that, instead of dropping bombs on innocent rice growers. So, you see, there was never a dull moment in my career as Commissioner.

Storey: You enjoyed it?

Dominy: Enjoyed every minute of it, enjoyed every minute of it.

Storey: We have now gone for about two and a half hours, which is longer than I had actually planned. And it doesn't bother me at all, but I imagine you . . .

Only Lost His Voice Once During His Public Career

Dominy: Doesn't bother me. I was very fortunate, only one time in my public career -— and I made speeches around the clock -- only one time I lost my voice. I was flying in a Bureau plane from Denver up to Bismarck, North Dakota, where I was going to make a speech that night to the North Dakota Chamber of Commerce at their annual banquet. And I landed at 4 o'clock, voiceless. All of a sudden, I'd just lost my voice, never had happened to me before nor since. The Regional Director was there to meet me at the airport, he said, "The governor and his wife are having tea up at their mansion and they got all the press and radio and television up there for a press conference with you."

I said (whispered), "I can't even talk." It was hopeless, I mean I was in terrible shape. So we got up there, and the governor's wife met me at the door, and I told her, I said (whispered), "I don't know whether I can handle this, unless you've got a real strong loudspeaker."

"Well," she said, "maybe some tea will help you."

I said, "You bring it in a cup, but make it bourbon. Just give me a cupful of bourbon" (laughing). So I sat there, and sipped the bourbon, and it sure as hell helped! It brought it back a little so I could get through the press

conference. And I went down to the drugstore, and he sprayed me, and gave me stuff to spray my throat. And by 8 o'clock I was able to make my speech with audio help.

Storey: I notice you didn't mention the Colorado River Storage Project, and all of the controversy that swirled around it.

The Public Power Controversy

Dominy: Well, that's another thing that I'm proud of, the way I handled that controversy between public and private power. See that started still while the Eisenhower Administration was still in place. [Fred A.] Seaton was the Secretary, and Bennett was Under Secretary, and Aandahl was the Assistant Secretary. And they were all public power opponents, they were all private power enthusiasts. So they weren't interested in Federal transmission lines, they were plumb willing to let the private power companies move in and pick up the power at the dams. And let <u>them</u> control the distribution of it, to the extent they could under the law. There's a preference clause in the law that you have to sell it first to other Federal and state agencies and then to municipalities that have their own public distribution systems. That's a <u>law</u> . . . preference customer law.

Well, I knew that [USBR] ~~we~~ should control the interconnection of the Upper Colorado River Storage Project system -- the three dams on the Gunnison, the Flaming Gorge, and the Glen Canyon <u>had</u> to be interconnected with Federal lines. Now beyond that, if

there was already a line in existence, like from Glen Canyon to Farmington, and on down to Albuquerque. Well, it wouldn't be from Farmington to Albuquerque, a line was already in existence. Now there's no reason why I would want to build a line parallel with an existing line if that line was already heavy enough to carry it, or could be beefed up with the same poles to carry it.

In other words, I couldn't see any reason why I wanted to parallel existing lines, no matter how public power minded I was, or people wanted me to be. So my whole initiative was to get authority to build the lines. Once I had that authority, then I could negotiate from strength. So I defied the Secretary of the Interior and the Under Secretary of Interior and the Assistant Secretary of Interior. And I privately, quietly, passed the word that I wanted the authority to build all the power lines for the Upper Colorado Storage Project. And Congress gave me that authority.

So with that authority, then I went to negotiating. And instead of paying these guys a half a mill for transporting power when it actually . . . they could afford to pay us to be interconnected with us. They didn't need that half a mill at all. So we worked out deals with Colorado Public Service, with New Mexico, Utah Power and Light, all those public power companies. Private utility company is what they are. And we built all the lines that we needed to keep control, and then we didn't duplicate any lines. We built very few lines in Utah, practically none in New Mexico. We made deals with those companies.

The chairman of the committee, Clarence Cannon,[33] was a great REA man, public power man. And so, when I'm making my proposal to Congress, he kept interrupting me, and giving me a hard time because Alec Raedon and Riccard, the public power people, REA, and the public power folks had wanted to fight the private utilities everywhere, you know. So along toward the end of my presentation, he kept interrupting me, and I kept going back. I said, "I want all this in the record so we'll start again."

And he finally said, "Well, Mr. Commissioner, if this is such a lead pipe cinch good deal for the public as you make it out to be. How come my telephone won't quit ringing and my mailbag's full of hostile letters about how you've sold out to the private power companies, after you had authority to build these as all Federal?"

"Well," I said, "Mr. Chairman, those letters are not coming in without a lot of help from Riccard and Alec Raedon." I said, "These guys have made erroneous statements publicly and in speeches and in letters and press releases. And they've stirred this up. They know better! But they're so died-in-the-wool wanting everything public that they're willing to do it."

"Can you document this?"

I said, "I certainly can, I have some of the stuff

33. Clarence Andrew Cannon (Democrat), elected to Congress in 1923, he served there until his death in 1964. He served as chairman of the Committee on Appropriations 1941 to 1947, 1949 to 1953, 1955 to 1964. From 1920 to 1960 he was parliamentarian of the Democratic National Conventions.

right here in my briefcase." And I pulled out this stuff that they'd been putting out. Got it in the record and the old boy supported me.

Storey: These were opponents of public power? They opposed public power development?

Dominy: No, they were the ones that wanted everything public. (Storey: Oh.) They didn't want the private power companies to have anything. They didn't care how many lines got duplicated or anything else; they wanted it all done by the government.

Storey: Going too far the other direction.

Dominy: Sure. They were . . .

Storey: Well, one of the things that was going on at the same time as the public power debate in CRSP (Colorado River Storage Project) was having to decide what to build, and where to build it, and how to build it, and all that. And, of course, Echo Park was one of the things that was proposed.

Dominy: Well, Echo Park of course was before Flaming Gorge. If we'd have built Echo Park, we wouldn't have built Flaming Gorge. So that was a good tradeoff, I mean Echo Park was a little bigger. Had a little more power capacity. And of course it didn't interfere with Dinosaur National Monument a damn minute. It didn't encroach on any of the park that that monument was created for. But the fight wasn't carried on very successfully by the

Bureau.

Bridge Canyon and Marble Canyon Dams Controversy

I would have gotten my other dam on the Colorado River, except for the atomic energy people. I had Dave Brower and that outfit whipped — I'd challenged them. I'd taken two helicopter trips down that canyon, without a door on it, and taken pictures of every foot of it. I had a model that wouldn't even fit in this room, of the entire area, where I could take the dams and the lakes in and out, and show people that I wasn't going to do any damage, whatever, to the Grand Canyon National Park.

Storey: This Marble Canyon we're talking about?

Dominy: Marble and Bridge Canyon Dam[s]. Now I was perfectly willing to give up on Marble, after my trips down that canyon. I said, "This Marble Canyon is better than the Grand Canyon, itself. This ought to be part of the Park!" I was willing to give up on Marble, because it did destroy, or well, it also made it tough on the river trips . . . it'd be hard to launch below that dam, and that 1,000-foot canyon, and so forth. So I was perfectly willing to give up on Marble. Matter of fact, I told Udall, I said, "What you ought to do is we ought to have a bill that changes that park boundary, and moves it clear up to Glen Canyon Dam. And make that part of Grand Canyon National Park, and then build the Bridge Canyon Dam." But like I say, I showed my slides to members of Congress, and committees of Congress, and answered all

the questions of the environmentalists. And I had that problem won. The thing that whipped me was the atomic energy people.

Storey: And how did that work?

Dominy: Well, they said, "No more, we don't [need] any more dams for heaven sakes. Atomic energy!" You don't know — in the '60s? Whew. They were going to have that breeder reactor! So as they made energy, they created energy, you know. It was going to be so cheap that you can desalt seawater and irrigate with it. They were telling Congress wild, speculative tales about how great atomic energy was. And then Congress threw it right at me. They said, "Well, Floyd, we don't need any more of your dams. Atomic energy . . . that's it. That's it. That's the future." And of course look here, 30 years later and it's still just the same. Atomic energy hasn't proven itself at all. And they still don't have the breeder reactor. And billions of dollars have been wasted on projects that they started and couldn't complete. There was that kind of nonsense that cost me that dam.

Storey: Bridge Canyon.

Dominy: Bridge Canyon. That was the big one below . . . that was below Glen Canyon Dam, below the National Park. See there, it's of record that when the Grand Canyon National Monument was designated by the President, and Western Congressmen and Senators stipulated that that would not interfere with construction of the Bridge Canyon Dam. And the Sierra Club, in writing, agreed

that the Bridge Canyon Dam should be built, or could be built, without their objection, so long as the water did not back up past the Deer Creek. Well now, the Deer Creek . . . the park boundary, is the Colorado River up to Deer Creek. And then the park crosses and follows the river, like that. The dam we proposed would not go above Kanab Creek, which is only halfway between here and here.

Storey: Uh huh, so if the waters from Bridge Canyon never would have encroached into . . .

Dominy: No. Would never encroach into the Park at all, and would only be 50 feet deep at this corner where the park would corner with it. So we were absolutely home free, and we could . . . but the atomic energy people cost me that dam. No question about it. There are two dams that I desperately wanted to build and didn't get built. I wanted to build one in the Middle Snake River, and I wanted to build this Bridge Canyon Dam.

Storey: You left Reclamation in '69.

Dominy: December 1, '69.

Why He Left Reclamation

Storey: Why did you leave?

Dominy: Oh, Nixon,[34] and Haldeman,[35] and Ehrlichman[36] . . . Haldeman and Ehrlichman were the kind of people that I couldn't work with. They didn't want any old pro's in government anywhere. They wanted their handpicked pigeons in every job throughout the government.

They could call up, "Floyd, this is John. I want you to do so and so right away."

"Yes, sir." That'd be the answer, no matter what it was. You couldn't debate the merits. That had already been decided by the hierarchy. That was the kind of government that John Ehrlichman and Haldeman were trying to set up with Nixon's full approval. And they were cutting budgets, and one thing, and another. And I'd lost my fight on Bridge Canyon Dam and — because of the atomic energy thing.

So I wrote Nixon a letter in May [1969] telling him that I had determined to make this my last year in government. And that effective December 1, I would retire from government. It was a carefully worded letter because I didn't want to retire before that, because I'd just be 60 in December, anyway, see. And I wanted to get my full retirement. And technically, I had reemployment rights in government, if they wanted to run me out of being Commissioner. See, I was in a schedule C, Commissioner's job, but technically, I could go back to grade 15 in government, if he wanted to replace me before December 1, see. So I said in my

34. President Richard Milhous Nixon.
35. H. R. Haldeman.
36. John Ehrlichman.

letter that I'm retiring from the Federal government. I didn't say retiring from the Commissionership, you see? And I also said that in the event that he wanted to name a Commissioner prior to December 1, that I would be fully cooperative with him. Which meant, of course, that I'd help break in the new man, and he'd give me a job as a grade 15 until December 1 (laughing). Well, the speculation all over Washington was that Nixon would have a man in there within a week. But he didn't. He let me stay there until December 1.

Storey: And at that point, you would have been in government right around 35 years?

Dominy: 37 years.

Storey: 37 years.

Dominy: Twenty three and a half years in the Bureau.

Storey: And a couple of years in the military.

Dominy: Well, that's included with the 37.

Storey: Yeah, that's included. Did you do anything to prepare for retiring?

Dominy: Well, yes, I had this farm that I bought in 1956. I had 550 . . .

Choosing a New Commissioner at Reclamation

Storey: Um, did you choose a replacement at Reclamation is what I . . .

Dominy: Oh, yeah, I had . . . actually, I had handpicked my successor when I brought Armstrong back into the Bureau. Ellis Armstrong had been in the Bureau and . . .

END SIDE 1, TAPE 3. APRIL 6, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 3. APRIL 6, 1994.

Storey: . . . instead of Armstrong?

Dominy: So Armstrong quit the Bureau and went with the St. Lawrence Seaway Project, and then he went into private consulting work in New Jersey. Had an office in Newark, New Jersey. And I hadn't . . . I didn't know Ellis personally, but I'd heard of him, and then he was also Eisenhower's Highway Commissioner. Eisenhower appointed him. He was in that job for awhile.

Storey: And of course, that was the program where they established the Interstate Highway system.

Dominy: Yeah, right. So I thought Ellis would be a hell of a good guy to be Commissioner of Reclamation with his background. And he came in to see me in about 1967, and said his consulting firm wasn't working out. He and his partner weren't getting along, and one thing and another. And that he'd be very happy to come back into government at grade 14s or 15. "Well," I said, "will you accept a 14?"

"Yes," he said, "I will."

"Well," I said, "I can bring you back in as an Assistant Regional Director at grade 14, and get you reestablished in the Bureau." So that's what I did, I put him in at Salt Lake as Assistant Regional Director. So I handpicked my replacement.

Storey: I don't quite follow how putting him in as Assistant Regional Director . . .

Dominy: Well, I brought him back in the Bureau so he could be reestablished in the Bureau, and let him make his mark as an administrator and as Assistant Regional Director. So he'd be in contention, he'd at least would have a leg up over somebody else who wasn't in the Bureau.

Storey: And he would know Nixon from the Eisenhower days.

Dominy: Right, mm-hmm. It was a pretty tough decision — there was a lot of horseplaying going on. From May til December (laughing), the candidates were running in and out! An engineer from California wanted it real bad, a lot of people thought he was going to get it.

Storey: Do you remember his name?

Dominy: No, I can't think of it right now. The state water engineer in California also was considered, he kind of wanted it. And of course Palmer and Buzz Bennett, my assistants, but neither one of those guys could quite cut it. They weren't . . . they were good assistants but they

weren't ready to be the top man. Armstrong didn't prove out to be very successful as Commissioner.

Storey: And he was Commissioner for four years under Nixon, I think. When you retired from Reclamation, what did you do then?

Lives on Farm after Retiring

Dominy: I moved up here [to the northern Shenandoah Valley, 75 miles west of Washington, D.C.]. See, I had two farms, I had a farm there in Fairfax County that I lived on, just 20 miles out of Washington. And when my son went off to college, I had to expand enough to afford to hire help. He and I had been running it ~~this~~ as a family situation on 160 acres down there in Fairfax. So in '56, having no idea that I'd ever be made Commissioner, not being an engineer and all this malarkey about engineers, I decided to expand my farming. So I bought this place [Bellevue Farm just outside Boyce, Virginia] and hired a full-time man. It was a struggle to travel as much as I did as Commissioner, and still run this place with hired help that couldn't even read and write. Kind of hired help you can get on a farm.

Storey: Bellevue Farm. How big is Bellevue?

Dominy: Five hundred and fifty acres. But I've sold off most of it now.

Storey: I noticed your sign says that you raise angus. How many head would you run in those days?

Dominy: Two hundred head. I've got plaques over there showing I had the Sire of the Year award a couple of times and I was named Cattleman of the Year. So I did a lot of work in cattle after I retired as Commissioner.

Storey: A little bit different than the West where we run a head on maybe 10, 15, 20 acres.

Dominy: Oh, you want a head on 200 acres, some places. Forty acres, many places. But here on a year-round basis, including the winter feed, about 3 acres to the animal unit. That includes the winter feed that you put up.

Storey: So you cut hay and everything.

Dominy: Hay and silage.

Storey: How many cuttings?

Dominy: Well, alfalfa, you get four cuttings. Three every year, and four some years.

Storey: And how many acres do you have in hay that you cut?

Dominy: Oh, we . . . out of the 550 acres, we farm about 150. The rest of it's in grass.

Works as a Consultant after Retiring from Reclamation

Storey: Uh huh. Did you do anything in terms of consulting, or anything?

Dominy: Oh yeah, I did . . . I represented Nebraska Mid-State Project on a retainer basis, and I worked on the Navajo Indian Irrigation Project for the Navajo Indians. They asked me to come on their board . . . that was a pro bono, except for expenses. But I enjoyed that. And, well — I went up on the Alaskan pipeline! They were having a hell of a time getting that thing authorized, and the environmentalists were fighting them tooth and nail. So Senator Stevens[37] called me, and he said, "There's some people from Alaska that are going to be in my office next week, and they want to talk to you." "Well," I said, "Senator, I don't come into Sin City any more. If the people want to talk to me, they have to come to Bellevue Farm."

Storey: You said the same thing to me when I called (laughing).

Dominy: Right. That's what I tell everybody. So they came out here, a couple of them, and they said, "We know about your standing up against the environmentalists and speaking your mind with some enthusiasm. And we'd like to have you come up and stir the public up about this Alaskan pipeline."

"Well," I said, "I don't know whether I'm in favor of that Alaskan pipeline or not. I don't know how many environmental problems you guys are really going to create with that monstrous line across the country. The Brooks Range, rivers, and one thing and another. But," I said, "if you want to gamble, all it'll cost you is a ticket for

37. Theodore F. (Ted) Stevens (Republican) was appointed to a senate vacancy from Alaska in 1968 and has served there since. He was reelected in 1990 to a term that ends in 1997.

me and ma, four days' salmon fishing. And you show me the whole project, and then I'll tell you whether I'll make any speeches in favor of it, or whether you'll just let me go on home. I won't make any speeches against it, but I won't guarantee to endorse it until I see what the hell it ~~all~~ is. I don't sell my reputation for a buck."

So, they took me up there and took me to Prudhoe Bay, showed me all the oil field itself. They flew me in a high wing plane, so I had perfect visibility. They flew slowly the whole length of the pipeline, and the only thing I suggested was they change their terminal site. Move it where it wouldn't be quite so visible from the little village of Valdez. They agreed to do that. So I made speeches in Anchorage, and Fairbanks, and Sitka, and Juneau, urging Alaska to take charge of their own natural resources, and not let a bunch of environmentalists try to tell them how to run their country. These wild statements about how the caribou wouldn't walk under that pipeline if it was elevated, you know? I said, "I saw caribou all around those oil wells up there [at] Prudhoe Bay. They didn't seem to mind a little manmade structure here and there." So I got a consulting job out of that.

They needed an Act of Congress about crossing some of the Federal lands with their pipeline. And they were having great difficulty getting a quorum call and one thing and another. And I said, "Well, for a fee I'll undertake to at least get a decision." In other words, I'll put enough muscle of my own behind that with some friends I got still up in Congress to get a quorum call on the committee. So I picked up four or five thousand

[dollars] on a commission from them.

But the most fun I had was the Pacific Northwest Power Group, private power companies. Came in to see me just before I retired. Wined and dined me and my lady, and wanted to know since I hadn't been able to build that dam on the Middle Snake would I work with them to get a license to build it, [as] ~~this is~~ a private project. "Well," I said, "yes, I wouldn't object to it being built as a private project, as long as you cover all the bases. All the multiple uses: flood control, irrigation, recreation, and the whole bit."

"Well, you'll hear from us." Well, I didn't hear from them . . . you know, I thought they were going to hire me in on a retainer basis, to be a consultant with them. And I didn't hear from them. So I took this job with Nebraska Mid-State, then they [Pacific Northwest Power Group] called me in a hurry one time. There was a bill introduced in Congress to turn the Middle Snake into a national river, and block that stretch of the river for all time against any possible dam. They wanted to know if I'd help them kill that bill.

"Well," I said, "sure. I'll be glad to appear before Congress and oppose it. But I want it done my way." I said, "I don't want to be your agent openly. I'll bill you for my services, but I'll go up there as a private citizen and a former Commissioner of Reclamation and ask to be heard. And I'm sure I can be heard."

"So," they said, "it's going to be two days. The

proponents of the bill are going to have the opening day and then opponents of the bill a second day."

"Well," I said, "unless I'm on the first day, you might just as well not hire me because the press will be there the first day but there won't be anybody there the second day. You won't get any publicity out of the former Commissioner testifying the second day."

"Well, you can't be on the first day."

I said, "Well, leave that to me. Leave that to me." And so I called Alan Bible,[38] the Subcommittee Chairman. I said, "I understand you're having this hearing."

"Yep."

"I understand it's two days."

"Yep."

"Well, I can't be there the second day but I've got just a short statement. It won't take over 10 minutes. But," I said, "I've got to be on the first day. Can't you work that in?"

"Oh, I guess we can accommodate the former Commissioner" (laughing).

So they had all these witnesses up there, including Stu Udall, who was no longer Secretary of Interior. But he

38. Alan Harvey Bible (Democrat) was elected senator from the state of Nevada in 1954 until 1974.

was in favor of the bill, blocking it from development. They were about ready to call . . . about 11:30, they'd been going since 10. And about 11;30, the Secretary of Agriculture was next listed, and Bible said, "Well, Mr. Secretary, you're right here in town. I got a witness that lives clear out there in the wilderness in Virginia, somewhere, that can't be here tomorrow. Floyd, where are you?"

So I stood up, and went down there, and gave them a real impassioned speech for about five minutes, and tore the ass out of their bill. And told them how much barrels of oil they were going to have to import, instead of that cheap electricity. How the only renewable resource was hydro, that you didn't burn anything up, and you didn't heat any water. You didn't create any noise pollution, or air pollution, or anything else. Then I . . . how many barrels of oil, how many tankers full of oil it would take to replace this hydro. And Packwood[39] was one of the guys that was promoting this bill and, "Commissioner, did you ever oppose a dam anywhere, anywhere, anywhere?"

Why, I said, "yes, I've opposed the Ramparts Dam in Alaska, for one." And I said, "I opposed a few others that were going to be on fault lines, and things like that that I wouldn't underwrite." So I said, "I'm not a 'dam' fool, you know?" And he kept prodding me, and I finally said, "Well, you seem to have a pretty strong apathy against dams. How do you think you were able to be in that Snake River in a boat in August?" I said, "You couldn't have been there except for the dams up above it, like Grassy

39. Robert William Packwood (Republican) was elected to the Senate from Oregon in 1968 and served until 1995 when he resigned.

Lake, and Jackson Lake, and Palisades.[40] That's the water that's in the river in August that's stored from the floods." I said, "You'd have been walking up that river, instead of riding in a nice boat." Anyhow, I got the damn bill killed; I held it up for two years. But it passed, eventually. That's now a national river.

Storey: What wild and scenic river is it?

Dominy: But I sent them a bill (laughing) for $5,000. They protested, and I said, "Well, haven't you heard of standby charge? You know, you were going to hire me five years ago and never did." So they paid me the $5,000.

Storey: Well, I appreciate your taking time with me today.

Dominy: Well, I don't see why we need any more interviews. What else do you want to cover?

Storey: Oh. Do you want to keep going?

Dominy: No, I said, what else do you want to cover?

Storey: Well, I've got a lot of questions!

Dominy: Well, start asking them!

Early Life and Education

40. Grassy Lake Dam on Grassy Creek contributes water to the Minidoka Project through Grassy Creek and the Henry's Fork River which empties into the Snake River. The Jackson Lake Dam and Palisades Dams are on the Snake River. They contribute water to the Minidoka Project, and some water from Palisades Dam goes to the Michaud Flats Project.

Storey: Oh, okay. Why did you end up going . . . well, you were raised on a ranch. Is that right?

Dominy: Oh, it was a dryland farm.

Storey: It was a farm. Wheat farm?

Dominy: Well, it was a corn and wheat farm, yeah. Actually, we moved off the farm when I was very small, really.

Storey: Into Hastings?

Dominy: Into Hastings. My dad fell off a big stack of wheat. They used to stack the wheat in big stacks. He got knocked off of a wheat bundle and hurt his back. So he quit farming. Moved into Hastings in 1915, when I was just a young boy.

Storey: How young were you then?

Dominy: Six years old.

Storey: Six, so you'd been born . . .

Dominy: I say I was born and reared on a farm, but reared for six years on a farm. Of course, my granddad was still out there, and I used to go out there quite a little.

College Education

Storey: So you were born in 1909? (Dominy: Yeh.) Why did

you decide you wanted to be an engineer?

Dominy: Why does a young man decide about anything? I had two years' Hastings College, after high school. With no definite ideas I wanted to be a doctor, or a lawyer, or anything, you know. I took liberal arts for two years, liberal arts, and history, and studied the Bible, and French, and mathematics, and just regular liberal arts education for two years.

Then I was working out in western Nebraska. And some guys from Hastings College that wanted to be an engineer called me. He said, "Why don't you go with us down to Georgia Tech? They got this co-op course where you go to school year-round. You're four weeks at school, four weeks on the job, four weeks of school, four weeks on the job. And you make enough money on the job to keep yourself in school. The reason we want you to go is because you've got a car, and we need some transportation" (laughing).

I had a model A Ford, with a rumble seat. "That sounds all right." This was June of '29, I was working for Paul Bergstrom on a wheat farm in western Nebraska.

"Will they accept our transcripts?"

"Yeah, yours is the same as ours, and they've accepted all our transcripts. And we'll start out as juniors, and take three years to get a degree in engineering, on top of what we've already got two years

of college." So I immediately applied, and got accepted, and we went down there, and enrolled the first of August of 1929. We were supposed to get a job in September then. And the school couldn't find enough jobs. You're supposed to, if you're a mechanical engineer, if you're a mechanical engineer, you're supposed to get a job in that field. If you're an electrical engineer, and so on, you know. We were mechanical engineers.

They didn't have an aeronautical engineering, at that time, but that's what my ambition was. Airplanes were just coming into focus, so my ambition at that time was I'll get into aeronautical engineering.

So we went over to Hope Engineering Company, in Alabama, to work that four weeks on digging a ditch: 30 cents an hour, swinging a pick, on a gas line, between Monroe, Louisiana, and Atlanta, Georgia. This was through Alabama, where we were working. Well, 30 cents an hour, 8-hour day, doesn't make much money. So I went back to school, went to school in August, worked in September, went back to school in October.

And by that time, I knew that this wasn't going to work, financially. And you couldn't work during the four weeks you were in school, because you went to school six days a week. And the engineering degree, with all that study you had to do and the . . . so I knew it wasn't going to work. That I couldn't make it.

Goes to Work for Hope Engineering Company

When I went back over there in November, they offered me an Assistant Timekeeper's job for Hope Engineering Company. So I had [a total of eight] ~~four~~ weeks of school, at Georgia Tech, I got two credit hours in plane surveying. So I'm an engineer. I stayed on there with Hope Engineering Company, $150 a month, and a company car. And I thought I had the world by the tail. Got married, December 23, 1929, and the crash hit.

Hope Engineering Company were going to transfer me to Shelby, Montana, and that job got canceled. They had jobs in South and Central America that got canceled. So I got a little notice from them in April of '30, said we're going to have to lay you off. We're not going to be able to retain anybody, but a few of our real old employees during this recession. We want your permanent home address, because we think it will be temporary, and we'll . . . Well, I heard from them eight years later. Eight years later, they got in touch with me — offered me a job back again.

Moves Back to Nebraska and Then Goes to the University of Wyoming

So I went back to Nebraska, where my wife and I hadn't announced our wedding. We were going to keep it a secret until summer, because she was teaching school. In those days, they didn't allow married teachers to teach. It took a job away from a family -- somebody that needed it. So anyway, we talked it over, and decided to go back to school. There weren't any jobs,

and she'd saved a little money, so we both went back to Wyoming. That was cheaper than Nebraska. I lived at the boys' dorm, she lived at the girls' dorm, and we couldn't even have gone to school as married students that worked on the campus in those days.

I had a job on the campus washing dishes and waiting tables at the commons. She worked as a babysitter for a professor. So then the second year, she couldn't continue on at school. She'd run out of finances, so she got a job teaching again. And she'd come up once a month, to spend the weekend with me. We still didn't announce our marriage, and then, two years after we were secretly married, we got married all over again. So our parents didn't even know about the first marriage. So I married the same woman, twice!

Storey: What did you study at Wyoming?

Dominy: Agriculture and economics.

Storey: Why did you change from engineering to . . .

Dominy: Oh, I'd already made up my mind that I wasn't disciplined enough for engineering. It's too confining for me, I wanted a free range. So I studied economics and agriculture.

Storey: Well, when you study agriculture, do you specialize in something?

Dominy: Yeah, you either specialize in the agronomy or animal

husbandry, or ag engineering, or there's various specialties. But in those days, it was either animal husbandry or agronomy. I specialized in agronomy, because I was a wheat farmer in the summertime, so I farmed wheat.

I very nearly got involved in a big wheat deal. This Paul Bergstrom that I worked with knew a woman who had inherited 19 quarter sections of wheat land, scattered around about 10 square miles. And she said that if Paul wanted to lease all of that land as each lease came up, he could have it. And he said if I'd go in with him and borrow the money and buy the extra machinery we needed, that he'd do it. Well, that was the summer wheat went down to 30 cents a bushel. And I didn't know that Franklin Roosevelt was going to bail out the farmer in a couple of years.

So I said, "No, thank you. I don't want any part of that." So I almost ended up a wheat farmer. So then came . . . I graduate[d] in '32, nobody wanted me. So I went to school another year.

Storey: Studying?

Dominy: Studying . . . see, I got a degree in '32. A bachelor of arts in economics as a major. And ag as a minor. then I went another year toward a masters for a master of science in agriculture. But I never did write my thesis, so they finally gave me a -- instead of an M.S., I got a B.S. So I have a B.A. and a B.S. from Wyoming. I got out on a job and too busy to write a thesis.

Storey: That was the job in Hillsdale, Wyoming?

Dominy: Yeah, as a teacher. Then I was only there six months then I went to Gillette, Wyoming.

Storey: Was your wife also teaching?

Offered Teaching Job in Alaska

Dominy: No, no. Nope. No, she never worked again until after the kids were grown. We very nearly went to Alaska, in the summer of '33. Like I say, I applied everywhere for jobs. So I applied for teaching with the Indian Bureau in Alaska. And we were actually in Hillsdale in August, because as a vocational ag, you're on duty in the summertime on your projects with the boys and girls. All boys, in my case.

In the middle of August, I got a night letter from Alaska, offering me a principal teachery at Tetlin, Alaska, on the Tanana River.[41] We looked it up right away, and it was clear back almost against the Canadian border, well up above Fairbanks and back. Very remote area. And it wasn't a two teacher school, that's what we really wanted, to have two salaries. This was a single, principal teacher. But instead of making $100 a month, I'd make $150 a month, plus a $300 [annual] food

41. Tetlin Alaska is on Tetlin Lake on the Tetlin Indian Reservation. The reservation is

located just inside the border with Canada south of the Alcan (Alaska) Highway. The Alaska Highway was built during and immediately after World War II as a defense project. Prior to that time Tetlin was very isolated.

allowance, which they let you take in with you. So we wired back, "Definitely interested. Supply further details." And they came back with the further details that we had to go before the first of November, or we had to wait and go in after the first of January. Because they had to allow a month for the freeze-up on the river. And there was no communication in those days. So you either had to go in with a pontoon plane before the freeze-up, or a ski-equipped plane after the freeze-up. We'd be the only whites in town. Nearest doctor 250 miles away at Anchorage. The school had burned down . . . the teacherage had burned down, but they'd sent the necessary furnishings by ship. It'd be on the dock waiting for me when I got there, and we'd have to live in a log cabin with a dirt floor until we got a . . . I'd be in charge of building a new school and a new teacherage. But the thing that finally killed it for me was that the Indians, bag and baggage, packed up and were out of the village for four months a year, following the caribou. And I'd be sitting there for four months, looking at my wife (laughing). So, we didn't go to Alaska, we finally turned it down.

Storey: Yeah, before the Alcan Highway got a . . .

Dominy: Oh, hell, yes! That was 1933! The Alcan Highway wasn't until during the war.

Offered Job as Emergency County Agent

Storey: Well then, after about six months, you decided to become an Emergency County Agent.

Dominy: Yeah, they called me and offered me the job.

Storey: You had applied for it?

Dominy: No, no, I just . . . but the people at the university knew me and they were looking for people for that kind of a job. So the Dean of Agriculture and the Director of Extension called me and offered me the job.

Storey: So was this a Federal . . . this was a Federal Service job.

Dominy: This was a Federal job, completely. The county agent is State, Federal, and county. But the Emergency Agent's job was straight Federal salary, no state money. Then the county had to provide you an office space and some travel, if you needed any travel.

Storey: But the university was able to offer you the position?

Dominy: Yeah. Because it was all handled by the university, the extension service in those days handled everything.

Storey: I see.

Dominy: And then I got the County Agent job restored by convincing the County Commissioners that I ought to be made a regular agent — they ought to reestablish it. And that was interesting, because I was only making $1,600 a year, Federal,

END SIDE 2, TAPE 3. APRIL 6, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 4. APRIL 6, 1994.

Storey: This is tape four of an interview by Brit Storey with Floyd Dominy on April 6, 1994.

So they put in an extra . . .?

Dominy: They said we'll . . . I got them to agree to sign up again for a full extension service program, in which they'd put $1,000 toward the salary. Well, it never occurred to me that Bowman, the Director of the Extension, would want to take back some of the Federal money, and move that somewhere else, you know? I thought I was going to get a $1,000 raise. Get up to $2,600, which was a pretty good salary in 1933 and '34; '34 and '35, that was ...

Well, Bowman, "Oh," he said, "you'll be too, why, that'd be more than some of the agents that's been four and five years."

I said, "I don't give a damn about anybody else! I've talked the county into doing this, and you aren't going to have to put up any more money. I'm not asking for any state money, just the Federal." So I finally got him to agree to it. So I was making $2,600 a year when I was offered a job in Washington at $3,800 a year.

Storey: Then you went in on that $3,800 a year job. What grade was that? Do you remember?

Dominy: That's equivalent to a grade 13, or a 12. No, let's see, no, 11. It was a grade 11. Yeah, 12 was $4,600; 13 was $5,600 [in 1938].

Storey: That was for the Triple A (AAA) program. What's the "Triple A program"?

Works for Agricultural Adjustment Administration in Washington, D.C.

Dominy: The Triple A program, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, that was the Corn-Hog, and the Wheat, Crop Insurance, and the Range Improvement Program, and all that was under the Triple A.

Storey: What did being a Field Agent mean?

Dominy: Well, I had made an excellent record in managing these programs at the county level. And they kind of wanted a troubleshooter [to work] anywhere in the 17 Western states. This Western division was the 17 Western states. Anywhere they were having trouble, why they wanted Floyd Dominy to go out and find out what was wrong, and straighten them out. I was a roving field agent, is what I was.

Storey: You did it all over the country . . .

Dominy: Seventeen Western states; seventeen Western states.

Storey: Out of . . .

Dominy: Headquarters in Washington, yeah.

Storey: So, you would go out and work with which programs?

Dominy: Oh, the Corn-Hog, the Wheat, the Range Improvement Program, Crop Insurance. Anything that's running out of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. A lot of times, it was claims of fraud, where people had been paid that weren't supposed to be paid. And then these claims would come in, and I'd secretly go out there, and rent a car so I wouldn't be known as a Federal agent. And snoop around, and come back, and make my report. And then heads started to roll. Things like that.

Storey: Uh huh. And you were there from '38 until when?

Dominy: I went in there September 1, '38, and I went — after the war broke out, in December of '41, I went over with Nelson Rockefeller the following spring, '42. Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs.

Moves to the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs Office

Storey: How did you go from a GS-11 in '38 to a GS-14 in '41?

Dominy: Well, I got promoted twice in Agriculture before I went over to . . . no, I got promoted once in Agriculture to a 12. Then I went to Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs as a 13. And after my first two trips to South America, I made an impression enough to get a 14. I was moved up.

Storey: And how did you make the trips to South America?

Dominy: Well, the one to Paraguay was the most interesting one.

That was the first one. See, after the war broke out, we lost everything to Indonesia, raw rubber, cinchona, bauxite, and all that stuff, you know. (Interruption due to the arrival of a visiting friend.) The area where we got our bauxite, and cinchona, and raw rubber, and all that stuff. So all of a sudden, we rediscovered South and Central America. And Roosevelt didn't trust the State Department to manage a program. So he established, by Executive Order, the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. And he made Nelson Rockefeller the director of it, because Rockefeller had been doing a lot of work in Columbia with our oil, and Venezuela. Venezuela mostly. But he knew something about South and Central America, so he made Nelson Rockefeller . . . Well, I heard about it, and I knew damn well I didn't want to continue to work in Agriculture during the war.

Storey: (Inaudible), oh, during the war?

Dominy: Well, I mean that wasn't very exciting, to continue to work . . . something unrelated to the war effort. So I rushed over to the Commerce Department, where the coordinator was officed, and told him about my background, and I got a job in their food supply division. And they gave me a grade raise to grade 13. And in August of '42, we'd already lost Argentina and Chile, they sided with the Germans completely. Uruguay was neutral, they weren't going anywhere.

Sent to Paraguay to Prevent German Influence

Paraguay was the next country that they [our

government] were worried about. The military actually thought that Paraguay was far enough up the Southern American continent that the Germans might be able to bomb our East Coast industrial centers, if they could use Paraguay for landing fields. Well, Paraguay is strictly an agricultural country: cotton, and livestock, and that sort of thing, was their whole livelihood. No oil, no mineral, no coal.

So Rockefeller says, "I'm going to send a team over there. You're going to be part of it. You've got to convince that dictator, and of course, he called him president, El Presidente, but he was just a dictator, Morínigo,[42] your job is to convince that dictator to stay with us. Offer him whatever you have to offer him in terms of aid and assistance." So we went, we had a high school Spanish teacher was our interpreter. And a fellow named Dick Boke[43] was the team leader. And I was the agricultural man. Boke was a liberal arts graduate from Harvard, or Princeton. Princeton, I guess.

So we met with the Paraguayan ministry, and they made it plain that the only thing we could do to help them was buy their cotton at above world market, because they couldn't ship it. The Germans had the Atlantic Ocean blocked up with their submarines. So I spoke up, and I

42. General Higinio Morínigo was president of Paraguay from 1940 to 1948.

43. Richard L. Boke later became regional director from 1947 to 1953 in the Mid-Pacific Region (then known as Region 2) of the Bureau of Reclamation. Mr. Dominy, in a telephone conversation, indicated that Mr. Boke was there before he was even aware that he was being hired. He does not know why he was hired as a regional director.

said, "Well, we might as well go on home then, because there's no way we can convince our Congress that we should buy your cotton at above world market, when we can't ship it. And we got surplus cotton on our hands at home, anyway." "But," I said, "why don't you let us look around your country? We don't know anything about it. Let us visit your new colonies," there were a lot of German colonies in Paraguay, "let us study your agricultural situation, and see what we can come up with that might be of assistance to you."

Well, the Ambassador had been there for six years, and spoke Spanish fluently, and he was sure we'd blown it. That we should have continued to talk, and not insist on looking around. We cooled our heels for 10 days. Then all of a sudden, we got word there'd be transportation there the next morning, and we'd start our trip around the country. Well, I thought of it afterwards, what the problem was: how to get us into these German colonies safely. And how to get us around the country with no roads, you know. It was just very remote, primitive country.

We spent three weeks, we went everywhere there was to go. We went in pickup trucks, with barrels of gas roped to the back for our fuel supply. We went by ox cart, we went horseback, we went everywhere there was to go; on boats, on the rivers.

When we came back, this is practically all my stuff that we came up with, you've got a country that can grow tung oil. It's a very specific area that can grow tung oil, it's got to be cold enough so that you get at least one small

freeze. But not so cold that it kills the trees. And Paraguay was just ideally suited for tung oil production, they didn't have any tung oil. And we'd lost all the tung oil out of China. So we'll send you some tung oil [nursery stock] when we get some tung oil plantations started.

On paper, you've got a vocational agricultural establishment, but it's only on paper. You really don't have any program at all to train your young men in agriculture. So we'll send you a vocational ag expert to help you really get this established.

Your farm credit is atrocious, the reason your colonies aren't developing is interest is 20 and 30 percent, and it's just atrocious. Terrible handicap that these suckers are facing. So you need a farm credit system. We'll be glad to send you some help and some initial financing to get you going in a good farm credit program.

Your beef cattle, you can't really call it anything but a wild ass gamble here, just . . . a bull's a bull, you don't castrate, you don't vaccinate. You've got nothing but Indian cattle when they're six years old, they still don't weigh 600 pounds. You need to have a better breeding program for your cattle. We'll be glad to cooperate with you on that.

You've got some of the finest hardwood forests in the world, and yet you're floating all your timber down to Argentina and shipping back lumber. So you need to have that project develop for yourself, make your own lumber industry right here at home. Put a lot more people to work,

and so on.

You're shipping out boatloads, or you used to, of green hides from cattle that's slaughtered, and where you're shipping out carcass beef. And yet, you're importing shoes, and you're also shipping out the bark that they use to tan the leather. So you need to tan your own leather, right here at home, make your own shoes. And we went on with that sort of thing, you know.

Coffee . . . you've got areas that'll grow just as good a coffee as Brazil, and yet you buy your coffee from Brazil.

So we talked them into a co-operative program that was going to cost us about $600,000 a year. And they agreed to cooperate with the United States, and stay onboard with us during the war. So that's when they raised me up to a [GS-]14, and gave me additional responsibilities.

Storey: How did you get down to Paraguay?

Dominy: I flew, in those days Pan-American had "daylight flights." No night flying at all. DC-3's. You'd fly all day, and go about 600 miles, seemed like. See, the first day, we left Miami, went to Barbados I guess it was. From Barbados, we went to Belen, Brazil. From Belen, we went to Rio de Janeiro and then from there to Asunción.

Storey: So then they made you a 14? You mentioned other countries in South America that you worked with.

Dominy: I worked in Peru, and I worked in all the South American countries. I worked in Venezuela, and that was an interesting little tidbit there.

I didn't select the man that was head of the Venezuela group, but I heard him interviewing other people that he was hiring. He was from Mississippi, and I heard him say, "Well, do you know how to work niggers. You know, we'll be working with niggers down there in Venezuela." Well, Venezuela had no black policy like our South at that time. It was an open country completely. Segregation was economic, and not color. So I wondered about sending that guy down there, as a matter of fact, a fellow by the name of LaCrosse was head of the unit. He'd selected this guy, he was a former Soil Conservation Service man from Mississippi.

So by the time I got to Venezuela, he'd been there about six months. And the staff, the morale, was terrible. If he was out of the office for two or three days, the mail couldn't be opened. He was the only one that could open the mail. He was just an arbitrary, dictator-type guy, you know, and very narrow minded. So after my 3-days' inspection in that country, I told him to pack up; I wanted him returned to the United States for reassignment. Gave him 10 days or two weeks, whatever. I didn't consult Rex or Ralph or Rockefeller or anything, I just did it on my own. If I'm going to be your field representative, supervising these programs, you better back me up, you know.

Well, of course, he went right to the Ambassador

and protested, and by the time I got back from my inspection trip why, the Ambassador had gotten in touch with Rockefeller. Got Rockefeller to hold up this guy's return until the Ambassador could personally intercede. That he was coming to Washington, for a State Department conference, or something, and he wanted to intercede personally about this. So Rockefeller asked me about it and I said, "Well, you've already . . . you haven't overruled me. You've just delayed the action, that's fine. But I'm dead set that this guy is the wrong man," and I explained why and I had him pretty well convinced.

So the Ambassador shows up, and he's closeted with Rockefeller, they didn't invite me up to start with. They'd been in there about an hour, and then I got word that I was to come up. So I walked in and this Ambassador said, "So you're the guy that could come into my country, strictly a foreign country to you. You'd never been there before, as I understand it. And in three days, you decide that things aren't working and that you can improve on it. And you're going to bring out this head man and all that, in three days. You must be some kind of a genius," or something like that, you know, real sorry.

So I looked him right in the eye, and I said, "Mr. McCaffrey, with your background in the State Department, I wouldn't doubt for a minute that you could go to any embassy or legation anywhere in the world and, in three days, come to a pretty accurate conclusion as to how it was being managed. And," I said, "by god, that's what I can do in my field."

"Well, who're you going to send in there?" (laughing). He backed right off, I climbed right on him, and he backed right off.

I said, "I've got a man. He's already in Brazil, so it won't take long to get him up there and he's already acclimated to the South America country."

So this old boy showed up home for reassignment, and his reassignment was being fired! (Laughing.) So don't tell me that you can't fire people in government — I've done it many times.

Storey: What was Nelson Rockefeller like?

Dominy: Nelson Rockefeller was a very genial. . . very poor administrator, he had no experience in government, of course. He staffed his staff with too many people from Dartmouth, his old buddies from Dartmouth. But he let me work in my field without interference, I had no problem with him. He didn't want me to go in the Navy, he wanted me to stay out of the Army and the Navy. But I said, "No, I think I've got to get . . . I've got everything done in these countries that I can do, that I can foresee that I need to do. We've got programs launched in every one of them, I don't see any reason to stay out of the Navy."

Storey: If he wasn't an administrator, why was he chosen for that job?

Dominy: Well, his name! The Rockefeller name, and the fact that he knew something about South America, having worked

in Venezuela, for his family, in the oil business.

In the Pacific with the Navy in World War II

Storey: Well, you told me earlier about being sent out to work on Tinian, and Saipan, and Guam. Did you . . . once they insisted that you receive your vegetable project, did you . . .

Dominy: Well, I had to do it.

Storey: Yeah, did you try and use the tractors that . . .

Dominy: Oh yeah, we had good farm managers that we'd hired from California, vegetable growers, anxious to be in the war effort, you know. Then we had these young Navy men with an agricultural background that volunteered to join the ag crew to get out of the office ship, and so on, and get on land. And so, it was all set up to make it go, with warehouses full of fertilizer and seed, and everything else. But even these well trained vegetable growers couldn't make it grow on that kind of land in that kind of climate.

Storey: What kind of acreage did you have out there?

Dominy: We had thousands of acres on Tinian in sugar cane, but it was all hand planted among those coral. Coral rocks the size of that chair.

Storey: But what about vegetables?

Dominy: Well, it was too hot!

Storey: Didn't work, probably.

Dominy: Well, the Temperate Zone, you can grow squash and stuff like that. But tomatoes, and cabbage, and lettuce, and radishes . . . we could grow radishes, but they were so hot, you couldn't eat them. You could grow sweet corn — you couldn't grow sweet corn, we could grow field corn, but it wasn't any good either, it was just tough as a rock.

Storey: It isn't very edible if you let it go too long.

Dominy: Well, it doesn't matter. It was a disaster. But I spent a year fighting that thing.

Storey: And then you were sent to Iwo Jima.

Dominy: Well, that was twice I was up there, on the . . . they had that dust problem with that fine volcanic ash. I told them after I got up there the only thing to do was keep it wet. Every time a plane takes off, you've got to have a water tank truck right behind it spreading it down with water before the next one takes off. That's the only thing that you can do, you've just got to keep that ash wet enough so . . .

Storey: So that it can't come up.

Dominy: That's right.

Storey: You mentioned there were 5,000 men who were killed there, needlessly.

Dominy: Well, 5,000 men were . . . at least 5,000 killed, and a whole lot of arms and legs lost, on Iwo Jima. And I personally think it should have been bypassed, could have been neutralized. But the Air Force and the Navy . . . Air Force, primarily, wanted an emergency field for their bombers. Any of them got cripples, couldn't get back to Saipan, or Guam, or Tinian, they'd land at Iwo Jima. But we had control of the ocean by that time, and we could have picked them up if they had to ground the plane. I don't know, I wasn't the High Command, so I wasn't privy to it, but I think Iwo Jima was a terrible mistake. I don't think it was necessary.

Works with Goodrich Lineweaver

Storey: You mentioned that back in Washington when they were getting ready to muster you out of the Service, going over and seeing Lineweaver. What was Lineweaver like?

Dominy: Lineweaver was a fairly tall, partially bald, a man who would never look at you when he talked to you. He'd always be looking over your shoulder — he never would make eye contact if he talked to you. He was an ass-kisser of the worst kind on Senators and Congressman. He'd go up there on Saturdays, when the Senators and Congressmen were in their offices, snoop around to see if there wasn't something he could do to get on the right side of them. He was a -— I found him completely

unreliable in terms of being truthful.

For example, during that period when they didn't have a Commissioner, and they were reducing staff, Assistant Secretary Aandahl[44] was also Acting Commissioner. And he put out an order to reduce the staff in Washington by 10 percent, equal in all grades. In other words, 10 percent of your 14's, 15's, 13's, 12's; couldn't just take 10 percent of your bottom people. You had to pick 10 percent in all grades. Well, at that time, we had a curious situation . . . we had the Chief of a Division would be a grade 15. And the Assistant Chief would <u>also</u> be grade 15, because they were trying to justify raising the Chief to a 16, see.

Storey: Yeah (laughing). I understand.

Dominy: So there were two, four, six, there were eight grade 15's in the Assistant slots in the various branches or divisions. Two of us had veterans preference out of the eight, the other six didn't. But among the six that didn't were two of Lineweaver's cronies, a fellow by the name Golzé,[45] and a fellow by the name of [Eugene] Itan. So Lineweaver had a little staff conference one day, and he said, "Mr. Aandahl, [h]as modified ~~by~~ his instructions, and all these Assistant Division Chiefs are going to have to be cut back to 14's. Then they'll participate in the 14 level for the reduction in force." Well, I smelled a rat, so I just called Aandahl's office late that afternoon and I said, "Could I have an appointment for tomorrow morning?"

44. Fred G. Aandahl.
45. Alfred R. Golzé.

The secretary said, "Well, can I tell him what it's about, Mr. Dominy?"

And I said, "Just say that I have a personal matter that I need to discuss, it won't take over five minutes. Might not take even five minutes." I said, " Just a personal matter I want to discuss with him."

"All right, come down at 8 o'clock."

So I went down, he motioned me to a chair and I said, "No, I won't even take long enough to sit down." I said, "I just have one question. Have you issued any instructions concerning the reduction in force supplementing your written memorandum of such and such a date?"

"No," he said, "I haven't."

I said, "I thought that's what you'd say, thank you very much." And I turned around, and started out.

"Wait a minute, wait a minute!"

Storey: (Laughing.) "Wait a minute, I want to know what's going on."

Dominy: Right! I said, "No, you've answered my question, I don't want to take up any more of your time. I'll handle it from here."

"No, no, no, now Mr. Dominy," or I think he

called me Floyd. I'd been in his office a time or two. "Wait a minute now, what's going on?"

"Well," I said, "Lineweaver said you gave orders to reduce the grade levels on these Assistant Division Chief's positions, and it affects me. So I was interested in knowing whether you had given such an order or not."

"Well, tell me what's all behind this."

"Well," I said, "I suspect he's trying to protect a couple of guys that don't have veterans preference in this reduction-in-force program, is what I think he's doing. But," I said, "I don't know about Goodrich, what his real motives are." So I got that taken care of (laughing).

So when I became Commissioner, of course, Lineweaver was already gone. Dexheimer had run him off before I became Commissioner, and Lineweaver ~~Dexheimer~~ was on a staff up on Capitol Hill.

I was the first person in government to challenge the Congress on an Appropriation Act. I took the position, and I still think I'm right, that an appropriation from Congress is authority to spend, not a requirement to spend. And that the administrator still has the option of spending that money or not, at his discretion. We had a project in Helena, Montana, and Murray[46] was the Chairman of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee at that time from Montana. We didn't have any

46. James Edward Murray (Democrat) served in the Senate from 1934 to 1961. He chaired the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs from 1955 to 1961.

repayment contract and no agreement from the city or the irrigation district, so I sent word up there that I would not spend the money until those contracts were signed. And Murray and Lineweaver were upset about that of course. Murray went back . . . he was out in the state when they had a hearing about this matter. O'Mahoney[47] of Wyoming, was the Acting Chairman and I was up there justifying my action, and Lineweaver would go out in the outer office and act like he was talking to Murray on the phone. Then he'd come back, "Well, the Senator wants to ask a couple more questions, Senator O'Mahoney." And O'Mahoney let him get away with this for awhile, he kept making me repeat myself and covering the same ground over and over again.

Finally, Lineweaver said something about, "Well, now, with all this hedging around" and O'Mahoney hit that table. "By god, Lineweaver, this witness is not hedging around. He's answered every question we've thrown at him, fully, and distinctly, and positively. Now if you have any more questions of fact, what are they?" That was the end of that. And I made it stick.

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Storey: . . . withhold that kind of spending.

Dominy: Yeah, that's as I understand it, but I still think it's wrong. I still think that appropriations should be considered as a

47. Joseph Christopher O'Mahoney (Democrat) served in the Senate from 1934 to 1953 and 1954 and 1961. Chaired the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs 1949 to 1953.

authority to spend, and not a mandate to spend.

Head of Allocation and Repayment Branch: Renegotiates Repayment Contracts

Storey: Well, when they set you up and started you to work on repayment, were there any sort of categories of issues that were constantly coming up in those 46 cases that you were dealing with?

Dominy: You had a free slate that you could write your own program on. The law was very distinct. If you can't do it under 9a, b, c, and d,[48] you find you can't fit it into these specified category of facts, then you may negotiate a contract based on the ability to pay. But you can't sign it until Congress approves it. Now that's all there was to work with, really.

Storey: Yeah.

Dominy: So my ability-to-pay principle was, you studied the land, its capabilities; you studied the climate, its limitations. You studied the size of farm, was it homesteaded in 80 acre tracts, or 40-acre tracts, or 160-acre tracts, and so on. You, of course, studied the crop pattern available, whether it's limited to small grains, and alfalfa, or could you go citrus? All these things had to go into that package and what does an ordinary farm family need as a minimum to sustain them, you know. So we had all of those things into the equation. And then I came up with a variable repayment formula, too, because some years

48. These references are to sections of the Reclamation Project Act of 1939 (53 Stat.1187).

you could repay more than others. Like an Okanogan Orchard, for instance. The year the frost gets your apples, you can't pay anything that year.

Storey: That's right.

Dominy: So you ought to have a variable repayment schedule. That year, he doesn't have to pay anything but maintenance, you know. So we worked out stuff like that.

Storey: Were those kinds of things sort of standard issues, though. Were projects, for instance, built in areas where economically, they couldn't really support it, or ...

Belle Fourche Project

Dominy: Well, take the Belle Fourche Project, for example. They homesteaded up there in that Northern country in 40-acre farms. Now by the time . . . they used to say, in Reclamation, there was an old saying, it took three farm families — three generations before you had a successful farm. In other words, three different generations lose their ass on this irrigated farm before it's viable and shook down. Instead of the 40-acre farm, now it's 160 acres, because they bought out the guy that failed, and so on. These are some of the things that. . .

I remember one of the first things I did that came to Mike Straus' attention when I was . . . I'd only been in

the Bureau a few months. Senator Gurney[49] of South Dakota had written a very critical letter to the Commissioner about the Belle Fourche Project, and all the things that Reclamation had done to make it such a flop, and so on, and so forth. Eugene Itan, Lineweaver's buddy, had drafted a reply and sent it up to Straus. And Straus thought it was too apologetic, and he fired it back down to Lineweaver, and said, "Rewrite, and make it positive."

So it came to me, and I started right out, "Senator, the Bureau of Reclamation makes no apologies about the Belle Fourche Project. Let's reiterate the facts. The Belle Fourche Project was designed with nine months of one year's record of the river flow. That's all the hydrology the engineers had. There was no soil survey ever made. They just assumed that because the land was flat, and the water could be put there, that it would be all right. Number three, there was no selection of settlers as to their ability to farm. Anybody who filed as a veteran, his name went in the hat, and somebody's name got drawn. So there was no selection of aptitude, or qualification, financial or otherwise. The size of farm -- everybody thought that a team of mules, and 40 acres, was a garden of Eden." That was the principle that you went by in 1902 to 1906. "Now," I said, "compare that with what we do today, the experience we've learned from Belle Fourche, and other early projects." And then, I covered the fact that we had all this hydrology, we've got the soil scientists, we base the size of the farm up to 160 acre maximum, based on the cropping pattern, and

49. John Chandler Gurney (Republican) served South Dakota in the Senate from 1939 to 1951.

so on. And then I go on to say that "In spite of its so-called failure, Belle Fourche during the drought and Depression was the only real viable, economic community in western South Dakota. All the dryland villages, the merchants were out of business. But the irrigated farmer still had hay to sell, and still had cattle he could feed, and he did survive during that terrible time. So we don't apologize for the Belle Fourche. We agree that if we were to do it over again, it would be done far different." Well, Straus liked it — he liked the letter real good. He signed it, and sent me a long note of thanks for drafting it and so on.

Storey: You mentioned that two of the projects were the Uncompahgre and the Mancos.

Dominy: Mancos, in Colorado.

Storey: And, of course, with Wayne Aspinall as the subcommittee chairman. Did you approach those differently in any way?

Dominy: No, no. No, no. We had standards that we applied. That's what got me in trouble with Scoop Jackson and Magnuson.

Repayment on the Columbia Basin Project

The Columbia Basin Project, the richest project of all, they had that big hydroelectric dam at Coulee. And the farmers said, "We don't need to pay anything, let the power income pay it." The original contract called for X

number of dollars a year, per acre, plus operation and maintenance. And that the overall obligation would be increased for necessary drainage, except for X million dollars that's been earmarked for drainage. Well, the drainage thing was going to be 200, 300 times that allotment, it's way beyond anything a farmer could pay, you see? And they made the farms too small on the Columbia Basin. I didn't get a hold of that quite quick enough. They already homesteaded the first two blocks before I got a hold of it, then I insisted we change. They were putting out 65- and 80-acre farms up there. They should have gone 160 as the minimum.

Anyhow, we knew we had to amend that contract and I was trying to apply my same principles that I applied everywhere else. And by that time, I had 25 or 30 of those projects had already been approved through the Congress. So the committees understood that I was relying on a certain standard, and so forth. And I tried to face up to it. As Commissioner, I went up there and had these public meetings. I got some wonderful press, that where would you find a government administrator who had the courage, and the ability, to come up here and face irate settlers for hours on end without quibbling? And took all this abuse and smiled! You know, I got some terrific press, and some very good editorial comments, even though the papers were supporting the farmer. But they had to admit that what I had done was unprecedented for a top administrator. I didn't send my flunkies out there to face up to it; I took it on personally. And when they talked about the fact that if I wasn't willing to send a bill up to Congress, they'd get the

Senators to introduce their bill. And I said, "Fine, fine." I said, "The Senators are certainly . . . your agents. If you can get them to introduce legislation, that doesn't mean that I'll testify in favor of legislation that differs from the standards that I'm adhering to. But I can be overruled — certainly! If you can get me overruled, have at it!" That's when the Senators were getting boiled up, you see, because I was laying [the problem] right in their lap! But they had it coming, they weren't supporting me a damn minute.

Storey: You mentioned that when Dexheimer came in in '53, that he was going up on the Hill, and it was a Western-dominated committee. And they wanted him to succeed,

Western Congressional Support of Reclamation

Dominy: Right!

Storey: Reclamation has always traditionally been supported very strongly by the Western Congressmen and Senators.

Dominy: Of course.

Storey: Who were the Senators and Congressmen at that time that were the biggest friends of Reclamation? Do you recall?

Dominy: Well, they were all . . . anybody from the 17 Western states would fit that category. But some of them were

very powerful. Anderson,[50] of New Mexico; Hayden, of Arizona; Jackson, of Washington; Magnuson, of Washington; O'Mahoney of Wyoming; Curtis[51] of Nebraska; Hruska[52] of Nebraska; Francis Case[53] of South Dakota; the guy that the doctor told him he had to quit smoking so he chewed his cigar in the cellophane until it was nothing but juice. North Dakota man, I can't recall his name. Young,[54] of North Dakota, was a highly motivated man with a lot of seniority, so he was able to do a lot of good. Murray, of Montana; Morse,[55] of Oregon.

Storey: Texas?

Dominy: Texas wasn't a great Reclamation state. The Corps of Engineers had done quite a little work in Texas. Later on, we did . . . after I became Commissioner, it became more Reclamation oriented, but it hadn't been very friendly to Reclamation.

I broke the ice in Texas. We got the San Angelo

50. Clinton Presba Anderson served as a Democratic Representative from New Mexico form 1941 to 1945. He served as Secretary of Agriculture from 1945 to 1948. In 1948 New Mexicans elected him to the Senate where he served 1949 to 1973.

51. Carl Thomas Curtis (Republican) served in the House of Representatives from 1939 to 1954 and in the Senate from 1955 to 1979.

52. Roman Lee Hruska (Republican) served in the House of Representatives from 1953 to 1954 and in the Senate from 1954 to 1976.

53. Francis Higbee Case (Republican) served in the House 1937 to 1951 and in the Senate from 1951 to 1962.

54. Milton R. Young (Republican) served in the Senate 1945 to 1981.

55. Wayne Lyman Morse served in the Senate as a Republican from 1944 to 1956 and as a Democrat from 1956 to 1969.

Project, and I remember the day that this big oil man, [M. D. Bryant], that was promoting the San Angelo [Project] came into my office when I was Assistant Commissioner. I'd just moved up there, and he said, "My spies tell me that if you want anything done out of this corridor, that you come to Floyd Dominy. So here I am."

I said, "Okay, what is it you want?" (laughing).

"Well, I want the San Angelo Project authorized."

"Well," I said, "there's a few bugs that has to be ironed out, as I understand it." I wasn't familiar with all the project planning in those days, I'd just moved up there. "But," I said, "if I tell you what the bugs are, what are you going to do about it?"

"Well," he said, "I'm going back home and see if we can't unbug 'em."

"Well," I said, "that's the right answer. Come back tomorrow morning, and I'll tell you what you have to do." So I got the Planning people in there that afternoon, and we ironed out a few things that had to be done before you could get the project authorized. He went back home, and about six months, he had the things squared away. The city had to come up with a lot more payment for their municipal water, and a bunch of things like that, to make it feasible, and he got it done. ~~Trying to think of his name,~~ He's dead now. He was a good friend of mine.

Organizes Trip to Russia

When I was team leader on a trip to Russia, I had the experience of Udall being the team leader the year before on a power study, a power program in Russia. So I didn't want to make the mistakes he made -- spending too much time drinking vodka, and toasting each other, at these hour-long luncheons . . . hours-long luncheons and dinners. And I also wanted more grass-root participation and not just government people. So I picked out four guys that I knew could afford their own transportation and I said, "I'll get you an official passport, and you'll be official government representatives on this trip. But you have to pay your own way." And this guy from Texas, [M. D. Bryant] was one of them, Bonge from California was another one of them. I paid the way of the man from Oregon who was president of the Water Users Association — the old Reclamation Association, and the man from Wyoming, Fuller, he paid his own way. And that's an interesting thing, too, I might as well tell you. You won't believe it.

I sometimes wonder about our State Department. We had this official agreement, signed by Khrushchev[56] and Kennedy,[57] authorizing this exchange of the Soviet people coming to the United States and the United States going to the Soviet. And the way we worked it out, they were coming here for three weeks, and about in the middle of their time, we were to leave and go to the Soviets for three weeks. And then they'd come [together] ~~home~~, and we'd all have a big gathering, and

56. Premier Nikita Khrushchev.
57. President John F. Kennedy.

compare notes, and stuff [in Moscow]. The State Department couldn't get our visas! We've got all our passports, we've got all these official exchange of letters between the two governments. And they can't get our visas from the Soviets. And right up to the last minute, we were to leave on a Friday from various parts of the United States and meet in Copenhagen, Denmark, and have a rest day on Saturday, and fly into the Soviets on Sunday morning. That was the way the schedule was to be. And I wanted to huddle with them all in Copenhagen to explain how I was going to operate as team leader. For example, I was the only one who was going to make any toasts, there weren't going to be any spontaneous guys standing up making toasts. We were going to limit this goddamn business of toasting each other. So it came time to leave, and the State Department said, "Well, you'll just have to call it off until we get these visas."

"Well," I said, "like hell, I've got this -- everything's set up. We're going to get the visas!" I didn't even go to my State Department in Copenhagen. I got there at noon on Friday, I took the interpreter, and went to the Russian Embassy in Copenhagen. I had this exchange, a program with Khrushchev's name on it, and Kennedy's name on it. I told them I had the [Soviets] ~~Russians~~ over in my country, and they were right in the middle of their trip; and I want visas, here's my passports. "Oh, now, that's impossible. The Kremlin's closed for the weekend, and no, there's no way we can have visas by Sunday morning." So I told the interpreter, I said, "Now you put this -- I think he

understands English, anyway, but you be sure and make this just as blunt as I'm about to make it." I looked this third Assistant Secretary in the eye, and I said, "Bullshit. Your Kremlin's open 24 hours a day around the clock, just like my State Department is. And if I haven't got these visas by tomorrow afternoon, I'm going to have a press conference. I'm going to bring your team home in disgrace — that they're violating the agreement, that Khrushchev's word isn't worth a good goddamn. And if you don't think I'm going to do that, you just don't have the visas here by 4 o'clock tomorrow afternoon." Well, I got my visas. I didn't go to my Embassy to get them, I went right to the goddamn Soviets ~~Russians~~ and pushed their nose down in their shit, and said, "Get me the visa." And I got it!

Just like when we'd been exchanging correspondence. We never could pin them down as to where they were going to allow us to visit . . . we let them go anywhere they wanted to. And I wanted the same privilege. But we couldn't get them to confirm, finally, the whole trip. They kept saying, "Oh, we'll finalize it when you arrive," and so on. So we arrived, and that Sunday afternoon, my Ambassador and everybody was in this meeting. And they started to unroll on the trip, and the first 10 days were fine, just in accordance with what I wanted. Then they were going to take me to the Bratsk, the big hydroelectric dam that I'd seen the year before.[58] And they were going to take

58. The Bratsk Dam is located on the Angara River. Finished in 1964, it is 125 meters high and produces about 4,500 mw of electricity. The United States first identified hollow shafts for generating units at this hydroelectric plant

(continued...)

me down in the Volga, I'd been there the year before. This wasn't irrigation, this was power! So I just, "No, no, no. Nyet, nyet, nyet. After that 10 days, let's get down to Tashkent, let's get over into [the southeastern Soviet Union]. Let's go visit your old projects that we want to see, that I've requested, and you said we'd finalize it when we got here." Oh, the shit hit the fan, and the tickets are all bought, and everything else. I just held my ground, and I said, "We won't even start unless we get this worked out the way I want it." I got it done.

Now I found out afterwards what the problem was. They didn't have transportation, they didn't have housing, they didn't have suitable facilities for Americans, they thought. We slept on the ground, a couple times, but they had Turkish rugs on the floor . . . on the dirt, and nice cots with mattresses. I'm sure this is what it was. We had outdoor privies a couple of times, but that was all . . . they were embarrassed to take us in places they didn't have what they thought was modern facilities.

Storey: A few minutes ago, you mentioned friends of Reclamation in the Western states. There's always been a traditional undercurrent of opposition to Reclamation, also, in Congress. Who were the people who were problems, and who opposed Reclamation?

Dominy: There weren't really any, in my days. The 23 years I was

(...continued)
and subsequently introduced the new technology in Reclamation's Third Powerhouse at Grand Coulee Dam, according to Thaddeus Mermel (telephone conversation of January 2, 1996, with Brit Storey).

there, we had no guys like Miller[59] of California, for example. We just didn't have them.

Storey: Okay.

Dominy: No, Miller of California — if we'd had somebody like that, we'd have castrated him, or something. We'd have got rid of him (laughing).

Dealing with Political Figures

Storey: There are lots of stories about you and how you dealt with the Congress. Some of the stories go that you played poker with them, that they were your drinking buddies. You know, whatever. How did you relate to the Congressmen from your point of view? And how did you work with them to get them to agree to Reclamation's programs?

Dominy: Well, number one, the only time I ever socialized with any members of Congress was one trip I had Aspinall,[60] Chenoweth[61] of eastern Colorado, Rogers[62] of Texas, one other man. Anyhow, I wanted them to see Glen Canyon Dam, and I wanted to see Lake Powell, and they wanted to see something else. They wanted to see something

59. George Miller (Democrat) has served in the House of Representatives since 1975. Interview edited in January 1996.
60. Representative Wayne Norviel Aspinall (Democrat) served as a Representative from 1949 to 1973. There he chaired the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs from 1959 to 1973.
61. Representative John Edgar Chenoweth (Republican) served eastern Colorado from 1941 to 1949 and from 1951 to 1965.
62. Representative Walter Edward Rogers (Democrat) served from 1951 to 1967.

else, they wanted to see Navajo. So I said, "Okay, we'll take the Bureau plane. It'll handle five of us, plus the pilot. And it'll sure make a hell of a lot of headlines if it'd crash, with such a crew onboard, but we'll take it. And we'll do these things, within your timeframe." And Rogers and I played pool at the guest house in Page. Now that's the only time I ever played poker or pool with any Congressmen.

Now one time, I was flying West with several governors that had been to Washington for a governor's conference. There was a governor from Utah, a governor from Wyoming, governor from New Mexico, governor from Colorado. No, . . . we got to playing cribbage on the plane. In those days, you could sit at a table and play cards. Their planes were taking off at different times from Denver, and so I said, "Well, we can continue this game in the lounge area until you guys leave. I'm in no hurry about going to the hotel." And that was the night that [Chief Engineer Grant] Bloodgood and all the crew were waiting for me — that was when I was going out there to fire Nielsen [May 7, 1959]. And Emil Lindseth was the agent that came out to meet me, and was hurrying me up. And I said, "No, I'm going to play cribbage with the governors for awhile."

"Well, Bloodgood and all that group's wait. . ."

I said, "I don't know why they're waiting, I didn't ask them to wait."

"Well, they're all going out to dinner."

I said, "Well, let 'em wait, I'm going to play cribbage for awhile." I played cribbage for about an hour with the governors until their planes took off. Then I went down and had dinner with Bloodgood and his crew.

Storey: Let's see. That would have been Governor Thornton, Governor McNichols . . .

Dominy: Mm-hmm. And Hickey[63] of Wyoming. And, of course, you know about my feud with Governor Clyde[64] of Utah.

Storey: Tell me about it. Your version of it.

Dominy: Well, it is the version. He made at a speech at the Reclamation Association Convention out in Portland, and he spent half his speech condemning the Burns Creek Project that I was promoting in Idaho. And he called it a charade and a masquerade on Reclamation because it had some public power in it. And at the same time, he was pleading for unity in the Reclamation States, you know.

Well, I was on the program the next day. So I got

63. Joseph J. Hickey (Democrat) served as Governor of Wyoming from January 6, 1959, to January 2, 1961. He resigned when appointed to the U.S. Senate to fill the unexpired term of Keith Thompson. He served in the U.S. Senate two years. He later served as a judge in the U.S. 10th Circuit Court of Appeals.

64. George Dewey Clyde (Republican) served two terms as governor of Utah, from January 1957 to January 1965.

halfway through my speech, and I said, "Our friend, Governor Clyde, made a brilliant speech here yesterday and he gave some very excellent advice about unity in the West behind Reclamation. But," I said, "I couldn't help but notice that his unity plea was falling on some deaf ears. And the deafest ears of all were those of the governor himself! Because no sooner does he plead for unity than he condemns the Burns Creek Project in Idaho." And I tore his ass. Then I sent him a telegram giving him a quote on my speech. I said, "Sorry you weren't here to hear it, but I'd have said it whether you were here or not, George." Oh, it made all the headlines. *Arizona Republic* had quite an editorial about Dominy chastising the Governor of Utah, and so forth. So you see, I lived dangerously (laughing).

Storey: But you seemed to have fun doing it.

Dominy: Yes, I enjoyed every minute of it.

Dealing with the Press

Storey: Maybe one of the more interesting features of being Commissioner was dealing with the press, for instance. Did you have any particular ways of dealing with them, or

Dominy: Nothing but being perfectly frank and honest. I never tried to cover up anything. I took the Corps on one time up in Montana. There was supposed to be sort of a stop order on any further studies for development on the Missouri River. And the Corps was going right ahead,

they weren't paying any attention to this stop order. And the press, in a press interview, they asked me about the Corps. And I said, "Well, the Corps isn't a very disciplined outfit." I said, "Reclamation's a disciplined outfit. And when the agreement was reached that the studies stopped, we stopped. But," I said, "the Corps of Engineers aren't very disciplined."

Storey: One of the newsletters or columns that deals a lot with Reclamation is Helene Monberg's *Western Resources Wrapup*.

Dominy: Yeah, Helene was a thorn in my side a few times. Most of the time I put up with her without much problem. I think she was among the first of the press who advertised the fact that I had a unique way of dealing with Congress. That I was superb in my dealing with Congress. I had three Congressmen, two of them from the East and one from the South, who publicly said that I was the most effective witness that they'd ever seen. Whitten,[65] who was Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee . . . he's retiring this year after all these years, he was put on my subcommittee about [1961] ~~1956~~, I guess it was, when we were fighting that big power fight. And he attended every session, all those years in Congress, but he attended every one of those sessions, all the way through. That was the year that I fought for my airplane and my building. And he'd gone out and bought one of these souvenir cigars, about that long, about that big around. In those days, I was an inveterate cigar smoker, smoked

65. Representative Jamie Lloyd Whitten (Democrat) served Mississippi from 1941 to 1993.

all the time. And in those closed hearings, they let you smoke if you wanted to.

Storey: Yeah, and the cigar a foot and a half long and three inches in diameter was really (laughing).

Dominy: Yeah, he brought me one of those. And he said, "Mr. Chairman, I've got to say that I've been a prosecuting attorney

END SIDE 2, TAPE 4. APRIL 6, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 5. APRIL 6, 1994

Dominy: . . . if I had him for a witness, I could take on any case and win it. And I attribute it to one thing -- I'm always very polite to a Congressmen. No matter how stupid the damn question is, I always make him think it's the most brilliant question that ever was asked. I never belittle him in any way, shape, or form, even though I end up making him look like an asshole. I don't do it so that he thinks I'm doing it. And never be afraid to say, "I'm sorry, sir, I don't know. I can't answer that, but I'll look into it." And this was my theory, but study your lesson! Know what the hell you're talking about. Hell, I never went up there in my life that I didn't burn the midnight oil, and prepare myself for what I thought might come up. And don't be afraid of changing your game plan, right in the middle of the game.

One of my assistants came back from the Hill, one time. I'd sent him up on a simple little bill that I didn't think was of any consequence, that he'd have any

difficulty whatever. He came back all bloodied and scarred up, and he said, "The committee just jumped all over me because you did such and such and such and such without consulting them. And boy, are they waiting for you." Well, what it was was the — under the Rehabilitation and Betterment Act,[66] when the Congress is not in session, you can go ahead and do the work, provided you get the clearance of the Chairman and the minority member. You don't have to get the committee clearance. Well, anyway, I felt like the [Committee] ~~Congress~~ was absolutely wrong, that I hadn't done anything [illegal or] to violate their tender feelings at all. So a couple days later when I'm up there, why, the Chairman brings this subject up. And he starts to bring it up and they were all there, every damn member of that subcommittee was there that morning. And I was prepared to challenge them, you know, that I hadn't violated the rules at all.

And all of a sudden, I knew that you can't win, you can't win. So I interrupted him and I said, "Mr. Chairman, let me throw my face on the ground here, and bow in obeisance." I said, "I made a hell of a bull, I'm prepared to admit it. And," I said, "Mr. Mitchell told me, and I hadn't realized that I had flaunted this committee, I had — here are a group of people who's always supported me, and never given me any trouble. And I didn't treat you right, and I'm apologizing!" I changed signals completely. Christ, they wept with me, you know, and applauded me! And who else from downtown ever come up here and admitted they made a

66. The Rehabilitation and Betterment Act of 1949 (63 Stat. 724).

mistake, you know? Shit, I came out of it smelling like a rose! Well, this is what I'm saying. Dealing with Congress is a never-ending game! Your game plan, you've got to be able to shift with what comes up.

Well, of course, I've got away with murder -- Anderson,[67] Anderson, the senior member of the [Senate] Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, who bowed out because he wanted to be Chairman of the Atomic Energy Committee. And you can only be chairman of one major committee. So Scoop Jackson became chairman of the Interior and Insular Affairs Committee. And that's when [Stewart] Udall was up there for his confirmation hearings. And Gruening, and Jackson, and Magnuson and all this group take off after Floyd Dominy, "How come you reappointed that bastard?"

And Anderson joins right in, "Yeah, he's a double dealer from the Republican appointment," and you know.

So I read the transcript. Gruening had a henchman send in a wire that I'd failed on the Columbia Basin, I'd failed here and there. And that I was a no-account Commissioner. All this was in the goddamn record of Udall's confirmation. You'd have thought it was Dominy that was being confirmed for Secretary of Interior, you see.

I read that thing, and I said, "There's only one

67. Senator Clinton Presba Anderson.

statement in here that gives me any problem whatever. And that's Anderson saying that I'm a double dealer. And by god, I'm not going to tolerate that!" Well, I knew this would be printed in just 24 hours, or so. So the hearing was on a Monday, and I'm in Anderson's office Tuesday morning, at 8 o'clock. And his secretary says, "Well, he's got people coming in all morning. I don't know when he can work you in."

"I said, "I'm going to sit right here until he sees me." And I sat in a chair right outside of his office. When he came in, he just quick glanced at me and went on in his office. He came out two or three times to usher people in and out. And I'm sitting right there, and he ignores me.

The secretary kept saying, "I don't think he's going to see you."

I said, "He'll see me."

About 11:30, he finally came to the door. "What do you want?"

I said, "Senator, I want you to sit down, and give me two minutes, uninterrupted. By god, it's your radar that's out of focus, not my sending machine." I said, "You're the only man on either side of the House . . . on either side of the Congress, that's ever called me a double dealer! And by god, that's not the way I operate, and you know it!"

"Did I say that?"

I said, "You sure as hell did. It's right here in the record."

He took it, and read it. "Oh, shit," he said, "I shouldn't have said that." And he scratched it out. "God," he said, "I wish we could take all the rest of this out of here."

I said, "No, that doesn't bug me a minute."

"Well, what about your feud with these other Senators?"

"Well," I said, "those aren't serious feuds. I believe in the separation of powers between the executive and the Congress. And they overstepped their lines a couple of times, and I had to challenge them. It's just not serious." I said, "I can stand all the rest of that, but I couldn't stand you [saying on the record] ~~telling me~~ I'm a double dealer."

Storey: Were you able to correct the *Congressional Record*?

Dominy: Oh, yeah! He scratched it out. It never showed up that he said I was a double dealer. But all that other crap in there about Gruening and the wire where I was a failure, and all that. And Scoop Jackson's comments about me . . . all that's in there. But Anderson . . . oh, I said, I said, "I don't want to be the Admiral Straus [spelling and full name???] of this administration." He'd run Admiral

Straus out of government, you know (laughing).

So one time after that, I'm presenting a project and I said, "Our studies show that the benefit and cost ratio is 2 to 1, and this and that."

"Oh," he said, "anybody can work up those kind of figures."

I said, "Senator, a former cabinet member, the senior member of this committee, making a statement that we cooked the books?"

"Well, now, Floyd, I don't mean it that way." Well, I made him back off, and his principal aide saw me a few minutes later.

And he said, "How the hell do you get away with it?" He said, "No other Senator even would challenge him like that." A whole roomful of people, you know.

Storey: But you know that's one of the charges that's often made against Reclamation nowadays. That we change the ground rules in order to alter the cost benefit ratios. For instance, moving from specific reservoirs to river basins, for instance. How do you respond to that kind of criticism?

Dominy: Well, I don't know the circumstances of each . . . certainly not with my knowledge did we ever do it. All we had to . . . I had some problems with some of those Colorado projects that Aspinall wanted. I did my best to

talk him out of promoting two or three of them.

Storey: Do you remember the names of the projects?

Dominy: No, not any more. Some of them are built, some of them aren't built. I . . .

Storey: You mentioned that Helene Monberg gave you some problems, occasionally. Do you have any specific examples?

Dominy: No, no specific — she was a very biased reporter. She wasn't always willing to look at both sides of the question. But she supported me, for the most part. I guess the one that I . . . *The Denver Post*, Hannah, was a water reporter that finally just jumped on my team with both feet and supported me on anything, thick and thin. Had two or three full-page stories about me, and one thing and another.

Storey: Did you happen to read Marc Reisner's book, *Cadillac Desert*?

Dominy; Oh, I read it, yeah.

Storey: What did you think of it?

Dominy: Well, it's a bunch of crap, most of it.

Storey: Well, what is the question I should have asked you that I didn't manage to ask you?

Books in Which Dominy Figures Prominently

Dominy: I have no idea. I have no idea. There's three books, basically, written about me. *The Story That Stands Like a Dam*,[68] you've read that?

Storey: I've seen it. I've never read it. Martin, I believe.

Dominy: Yeah. And, of course, McPhee's book, you read that?

Storey: No.

Dominy: Well, you should read that. That's given me more publicity than any of the three, because it was used . . . it's used still in many colleges in environmental studies.

Storey: And it's called?

Dominy: *Encounters With the Archdruid.*[69]

Storey: No, I haven't run across that at all. Some day . . .

Dominy: Well, your education is very faulty.

Storey: (Laughing), I don't doubt that!

Dominy: It's divided into three sections. It pits Dave Brower against a miner that wanted to develop a copper mine in

68. Russell Martin, *A Story that Stands Like a Dam: Glen Canyon and the Struggle for the Soul of the West* (Henry Holt and Company: New York, 1989).
69. John McPhee, *Encounters with the Archdruid* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux: New York, 1971).

the Cascades. It pits Brower against a real estate developer on the [barrier] ~~boundary~~ islands, in Georgia. And it pits Brower against me on the Colorado River development. And McPhee came to me, he and the — in Washington. He told me what he was doing, and said, "I want you and Brower to go down the river and argue, with me along."

"Well," I said, "there's two things wrong with your proposal. There's no reason to run that whole damn river down there in the heat, and tissue paper trail, where there's a few places to camp, and everybody's been shittin' there for the last few years. And," I said, "the second thing is, you're missing Glen Canyon completely, and the most beautiful lake in the world. So," I said, "if you want me and Brower, you spend half of that time on Lake Powell, where I whipped his ass, and where we've got the most beautiful lake in the world. And then we'll take a helicopter, and fly in, and join the raft trip for the part of the canyon that would be affected with the Bridge Canyon Dam."

Storey: But only for that part of the canyon.

Dominy: Right. I said, "I don't want ride all the rest the way from Lee's Ferry down through there. There's no reason for that, because it's not effected in any way. We'll join them a few miles above the Kanab Creek, save your ass from going through all those rapids, and one thing and another." Then I said, "That's the way it'll be."

"Well," he said, "Brower'll never agree to that."

"Well," I said, "I won't agree with it the other way! So make up your mind. If you want a story, involving Brower and me, that's got to be the way I've outlined it." Well, Brower wanted the story, so he agreed. At that time, I'd never met Brower. So we arranged to make the trip coincidental with the dedication of Lake Powell.

And they had [at the dedication] the Governor of Utah, and the Governor of Arizona, and the Chairman of the Navajo Indian tribe. And Brower's in the audience, and the Governor of Utah raises hell against the Sierra Club, for opposing this wonderful project. And the Governor of Arizona does the same, and the chairman of the Indian tribe does the same. Here's old Dave Brower sitting out there in the audience. So it came my time to make a little statement, and I said, "Incidentally, Dave Brower is here. He's going to join me for a week on Lake Powell, where I'm going to try to convince him that he's made a great mistake to oppose this great development. Then I'm going to spend a week with him on the Colorado River, where he's trying to convince me that I shouldn't build another dam . . . below the Grand Canyon National Park. So stand up, Dave!"

The Governor of Utah, (whispering) "Was I too rough on him?" The son of a bitch, he said what he wanted to say. Why would he say it differently whether or not Brower was there?

Storey: Yeah.

Dominy: This is what I don't understand.

Storey: Then there's a third book, *Cadillac Desert*, we're talking about?

Dominy: Yeah, that's the third book.

Storey: Okay. In your career at Reclamation, what do you think is the most important thing that you did?

Most Important Work at Reclamation

Dominy: Well, the thing I think was the most important was straightening out those 46 projects that were in trouble. Put them on a viable footing, where the farmers could go to the bank and have . . . they couldn't even borrow money! The project was in default, they couldn't even borrow money from year to year for crops, until we got those projects straightened out.

Storey: So that was done before you became Commissioner.

Dominy: Oh, yeah. But I think that's the most effective thing I did in the 23 years I worked for the Bureau. In terms of making a contribution to the welfare of a lot of people.

Storey: Yeah. Good. Well, I really appreciate your spending time with me today. And I'd like to ask you now if it's all right for Reclamation researchers, and researchers from outside Reclamation, to use these cassettes, and any resulting transcripts, for research purposes.

Dominy: Fine with me.

Storey: Good. Thank you very much.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 5. APRIL 6, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 1. APRIL 8, 1996.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing Floyd E. Dominy, former Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, in his home in Boyce, Virginia, on April 8, 1996, at about one o'clock in the afternoon. This is tape one.

Interviewed for PBS Documentary on Western Water

You were just telling me that John Else came and interviewed you for a documentary they're doing on western water. How long did you spend with him and what did he want to talk about and that sort of thing?

Dominy: Well, he was here with a whole crew, video crew, for the whole day. As a matter of fact, they had me talking a total of about six hours. They tried to cover everything in my career, my retirement as commissioner, I guess.

Storey: And it was video?

Dominy: Yes.

Storey: And I believe Mr. Else is at Stanford?

Dominy: Yes. He's in charge of some kind of a public television

enterprise and is supposed to come out with a three-hour program on water.

Participated in Program at University of Utah with David Brower

Storey: In the West, yeah. And I understand also since we last talked you've gone back and debated with Dave Brower at the University of Utah.

Dominy: Yes. The University of Utah asked me to come out at their expense to debate Dave Brower, and I agreed to do that last October. We were interviewed on two different television stations, and then we had a two-hour debate scheduled at the Student Union of the university. We had about 400 people that showed up for that. The format was each of us made a brief statement and the rest of it was question-and-answer. So it was quite lively, and I enjoyed it.

Why Barney Bellport Was Selected to Become Chief Engineer

Storey: As I indicated in my letter to you last time, when I sent the transcripts from last time to you, I had a few additional questions that have come up, and I'd like to spend some time with you on those today. One of the first things was when you and Grant Bloodgood were selecting a new assistant chief engineer, I think it was, the choice was between an Emil Lindseth and Barney Bellport.

Dominy: Well, that's what we narrowed it down to and had more discussion.

Storey: Why were you more favorable to Barney Bellport than to Mr. Lindseth?

Dominy: Well, Barney Bellport had had the experience of working in the region more directly with the people. Lindseth's whole career had been in the technical side at the Denver Center, and I felt that the Chief Engineer's office was weak in that regard. They had never had to participate, lock horns, with the public. Barney Bellport had done that in the regional director's office in Sacramento. I felt he had a little broader knowledge of how to conduct the program of the Bureau with the public.

The "Denver Club"

Storey: Was that a weakness of the Denver Office then?

Dominy: Yes. The Denver office was very isolated. I called it the "Denver Club." They didn't have to defend their decisions to the public. They were the anointed. They were above reproach. They were the sanctified. Anybody who challenged them was obviously wrong, you know.

Storey: I've had a number of people comment that they were very set in their ways in the Denver office.

Dominy: Oh, indeed they were. They were certainly convinced

that they were God's anointed, that they knew how to do it and they weren't to be challenged.

Storey: We're talking about technical issues here or what?

Dominy: Yes. Yes.

Storey: Was there a lot of tension between the Washington office and the Denver office?

How Creation of the Regions Affected the Denver Office

Dominy: No. The real problem, as I saw it, was the coordination of the Bureau's program between Denver and the regional offices. Before the regional offices were established, in the early days of the Bureau, it was Washington and Denver. Then when the regional offices were established, why, Denver, of course, felt their nose was a little out of joint, that someone else had been interposed into the hierarchy that wasn't necessary. I found that whatever the region did wasn't enough; Denver would redo it and duplicate it and so on. That was my first enterprise, was to make it plain to the Denver Club that we were one Bureau, and that if certain work had already been accomplished at the regional level, that Denver shouldn't second-guess it, but accept it and move on from there.

Storey: Did that go quickly or was it a slow process?

Dominy: It was a slow process. But I was a hands-on administrator, and it didn't take long until Denver got the

message.

Making Changes in Regional Directors

Storey: You mentioned in our previous interview that when you became Commissioner, it was also necessary to make some changes in the regional director's offices. Could you tell me more about that, please?

Dominy: Well, we had some regional directors that obviously were not qualified to be leaders. [Wilbur] Dexheimer had selected several regional directors because he knew them when he was in contract administration, and they had very limited credentials to be a regional director. I had observed them for several years in my capacities as Chief of the Irrigation Division and later as Assistant Commissioner.

When I was appointed Commissioner, May 1, 1959, I knew I had a year and a half before Eisenhower was finished as President and someone else would be elected, and that's a very short time to put your imprint onto a major bureau, so I didn't hesitate. The first week I was Commissioner, I replaced those regional directors that I thought were inadequate and put people in who I thought would be more apt to perform the way I wanted it performed. And I replaced Mr. Nielsen, who was not qualified to be Chief Engineer, and there he was as Assistant Chief Engineer. So I did all that the first week.

Storey: Do you remember which regional directors needed to be replaced?

Dominy: Yes. ~~Rudy~~ [Raymond F.] Walter~~s~~[70] in Denver; Bob Jennings in Sacramento; Clyde Spencer in California. He didn't hesitate to help me, because he resigned as soon as I was made commissioner.

Storey: And I believe there was a Mr. Taylor in Boulder City, maybe?

Dominy: Yes. Mr. Taylor in Boulder City. I also replaced him, yes.

Storey: Were their replacements obvious choices?

Dominy: Oh, yes. I had observed the operation of many people, and I had people in mind that I thought would handle the job much better.

Storey: I think one was Leon Hill in Amarillo.

Dominy: Yes. Leon Hill in Amarillo replaced Jennings. Jennings had been trying to get the Canadian River Project organized for years, without success, and I told Leon Hill, "I'm going to make you regional director and I'll give you twelve months. If you don't get this thing solved with the eight or ten cities involved, then I'll replace you." And he got it done in ten months. (laughter)

Storey: He was there quite a while.

Dominy: Yes. He was there all the time I was Commissioner.

70. Raymond J. Walter was Regional Director in Denver from 1954 to 1959.

Storey: Down in Boulder you brought in Arleigh West, I believe.

Dominy: Yes. Arleigh West had been in that region. As a matter of fact, he'd been sent out there from Washington by the Straus-Lineweaver crew, more or less promising that if he made good that he'd move up and become Regional Director. That wasn't accomplished until I became Commissioner.

Storey: Let's see. Pat [Hugh P.] Duggan, was he the person that came in Sacramento?

Dominy: Yes. He was the one that I sent out to be Regional Director in Sacramento.

Storey: From Washington?

Dominy: No, he was in the Denver office.

Storey: You don't happen to know where he is now?

Dominy: I haven't any idea about Pat.

Storey: Then there was Ray J. Walter in Denver, I think. Was he related to Ray F. Walter?

Dominy: I don't think so. I'm not positive. He could have been. They brought him in here to testify before Congress, and I never saw such an inept performance by any human in my life. After the hearing had been going for a few minutes, if the chairman had said, "What did you say your name was?" he wouldn't have been able to have

told him what his name was. He was that shook up. He was just inadequate as a Regional Director. Wasn't any question about it.

Storey: Salt Lake City. I think you moved Clinton up from--

Dominy: Yes.

Storey: From Billings.

Dominy: I knew better than to openly challenge Larson. He was "Mr. Reclamation" in the Utah area and the Colorado River area, but he had a real serious fault as a Regional Director. He bragged that he had more files right there in his own office than they had in the regional files. He just hadn't grown with the magnitude of the job. He was still a project manager rather than a regional director. I talked to Oly [Ernest O.] very frankly about this. I said, "I don't know whether you can expand your horizons enough to suit me or not, but I'm going to expect you to undertake it, and I don't think you're going to be very comfortable with me as Commissioner, but time will tell." Well, he gracefully retired shortly thereafter. Gave me a chance to bring the tall man in, Clinton.

Storey: This is Frank Clinton?

Dominy: Yes. I enjoyed bringing that Catholic boy down there among those Mormons making him Regional Director. (laughter)

Storey: Tickled your fancy, did it?

Dominy: Tickled my fancy.

Storey: There's only one regional director that didn't change, I think, during your tenure as Commissioner, and that's Harold T. Nelson up in Boise.

Dominy: Yeah. "High Tension" Nelson.

Storey: Yeah?

Dominy: And if I'd a had my druthers, he would have changed also. But Nelson had endeared himself with all the politicos in the Pacific Northwest, and he was an untouchable, so I had to maneuver around him and keep him on as Regional Director.

Proposed Project on the Middle Snake River above the Mouth of the Salmon River

Storey: There was one major project you were interested in up in that area, I think. You mentioned it in our previous interview. At one place you mentioned the Middle Snake River and in another place, I believe it was Burns Creek you mentioned. Were those the same project?

Dominy: No. No. No. No, Burns Creek is in eastern Idaho. But the big dam that I wanted to build was in the Middle Snake above the mouth of the Salmon. The best dam site in that stretch of the Snake River was actually below the mouth of the Salmon. But you couldn't touch the Salmon because of its white-water majesty, although the dam wouldn't have affected the stretch of the river that is

spectacular and where the white-water rafters really run. But it was the holier than holy, and you couldn't touch the Salmon, but there was excellent sites above the mouth of the Salmon on the Snake River.

Storey: Do you remember the names of any of these projects? Did we [Reclamation] actually study them?

Dominy: Oh, yes. Yes, they were of record. We had engineering data on a dam below the mouth of the Salmon and on two dam sites above the mouth of the Salmon.

Storey: And these would have been supplementary water or what?

Dominy: Well, they would have been multipurpose projects, major hydroelectric installations, flood control, river regulation, additional water for all purposes.

Prominence of Reclamation in the Department of the Interior

Storey: One of the people I've interviewed sort of asserted that Reclamation was the major agency in the Department of Interior, and even went so far as to assert that the Commissioner was more important than the Secretary of the Interior. How would you respond to that?

Dominy: I'm convinced that's the case. As a matter of fact, going back historically, the Commissioner of Reclamation was authorized by Congress and his salary was determined by Congress and it was double that of the Secretary of

Interior at the time.

Storey: It was?

Dominy: Yes.

Storey: This was while you were Commissioner?

Dominy: No. No. No. This was 1902. The act said there shall be a Bureau of Reclamation, it shall be headed by a Commissioner, and he shall be appointed by the President, and his annual salary shall be--I think it was $3,000. The Secretary of Interior only made $2,000 at that time. And it was for years the Commissioner of Reclamation's salary was greater than that of the Secretary. As a matter of fact, clear up to my time, the salary was determined by Congress. It had leveled out and became the same as the other bureaus in the building, but it took a special act of Congress. Each time the other bureau chiefs automatically got a raise under government procedures, the Commissioner had to have a special act in order to get his raise. It was finally encompassed into the general Federal payroll system after I retired.

Two other things happened as a result of my tenure. The Commissioner of Reclamation was appointed by the President, but did not require the concurrence of the Senate. But when Kennedy reappointed me, in spite of the objections of a bunch of senators, they changed that. Now it requires the consent of the Senate.

Storey: What about the power of the Commissioner in comparison to other agency heads when you were Commissioner?

". . . every bureau chief has the same opportunity of gaining influence and power to run his program. . . ."

Dominy: Well, every bureau chief has the same opportunity of gaining influence and power to run his program. It depends pretty largely on the personality and demonstrated competence of the individual. I <u>was</u> the Bureau of Reclamation. Like when I was sent up to testify on the Ramparts Dam issue, I didn't consult with anybody as to what the position of the Department of Interior was on that project; I <u>made</u> the decision as to what the position of the Department was. Who was more competent to have that decision than the Bureau? So why would I consult with a bunch of political appointees and so forth? I made the decision. "This <u>is</u> the position of the Department of Interior. <u>I</u> am enunciating it."

Atomic Energy Issues and How They Killed Bridge and Marble Canyon Dams

Storey: The last time we talked, you mentioned briefly that Bridge Canyon and Marble Canyon Dam were killed by the atomic energy issue at the time. It was unclear to me what we were talking about exactly there.

Dominy: Well, you'd have to go back into the early sixties and read the testimony of Admiral [Hyman] Rickover

and--what was his name, in charge of the Atomic Energy Commission? [J. Robert Oppenheimer] They were making wild exaggerated promises as to the greatness of the future of atomic energy. They were predicting to Congress that it would be so cheap that you could desalt sea water and irrigate with it. They were promising that they could make energy at the same time they were expending it.

Congress would look at me in the eye and say, "Well, Floyd, we don't need any more hydroelectric dams. Why, we're going to have this energy sticking out of our ears, it's going to be so easy and cheap and plentiful."

So they were the ones that killed the hydroelectric proposals that I was making in the sixties. It wasn't the environmentalists. I can answer their stuff about destroying a canyon of the Colorado and all that, and did answer it with my book on the beauties of Lake Powell and my slides of the Colorado River that showed that we were going to molest it very little and none in the national park area.

That huge model that I made that would just barely fit in this room, we put it in the halls of Congress and we took it around various places, and it was a very convincing answer to the environmentalists that we were going to destroy the Grand Canyon National Park. But you couldn't debate the wild promises of the Atomic Energy people.

Storey: But there was a huge public outcry against the construction of those two dams, wasn't there?

"I was willing to give up on marble canyon, because it ought to be part of the [grand canyon] national park and should not be plugged. . . ."

Dominy: Oh, yes. A lot of reading literature, and Dave Brower, sanctimonious bastard, was guilty of misleading the public with his full-page ads that made people think we're going to flood out the Grand Canyon from rim to rim, Grand Canyon National Park. But, like I say, I could answer those wild things, and did, and we would have gotten the Bridge Canyon Dam. I was willing to give up on Marble Canyon, because it ought to be part of the [Grand Canyon] National Park and should not be plugged. It's a marvelous stretch of canyon and it would have made very difficult, the river running. Be very expensive to launch boats below the dam in that sheer canyon country. So I was perfectly willing to give up on Marble Canyon, which was the lesser of the two as far as its potential for creating power money and power energy.

Storey: What was the objective of those two dams?

Dominy: Create hydroelectric energy and produce the revenues to finance the Central Arizona Project. Congress had accepted the principle that irrigation couldn't possibly pay for costly works and that hydroelectric energy could be used to support it and finance it.

Looking at the Economics of Reclamation Projects

Storey: That's one of the major criticisms people now level against us at Reclamation, that these irrigation projects weren't economic. How do you respond to that way of thinking?

Dominy: Well, it all depends on how you interpret the word "economic." If you expect the farmer to reap enough financial rewards from irrigating the land to pay for it, then it's not economic. They started out with the very false pretense or they thought it would be possible for the project to pay out in ten years. Then they increased it to twenty years and then forty years, and then they added a ten-year development period. And even fifty years isn't enough for the irrigated lands to actually repay the costs of developing the project. But when you think about the development of the West, you wouldn't have anywhere near the number of people living comfortably in the West if you hadn't developed the projects, if you hadn't managed the water.

I recall early in my career at Reclamation when I was in the Land Use and Settlement division, or branch, this criticism of the Belle Fourche Project. Well, I'd been a county agent in Gillette, Wyoming, during the depth of the Depression, and the Belle Fourche Project was a jewel, because it was one area where you could go buy some hay and where you knew the cattle could be pastured. Everything else was a desert with the droughts. Sure, it was not economic in terms of cost benefits. You put the farmer out there and he couldn't

pay the cost of the project. But as a national investment, it was a good investment over the long pull.

Storey: My understanding -- well, according to Russell Martin in his book, you went on an international trip, and then Stewart Udall, in effect, killed Bridge Canyon. Is that true?

Bridge Canyon Was Killed Because California Didn't Want the Central Arizona Project Built

Dominy: Well, the tragedy of the Bridge Canyon was far deeper than that. You had an Under Secretary from California. Anybody from California didn't want the Central Arizona Project built. No matter what appearance they were putting up out front, nobody from California wanted the Bridge Canyon Project, because it was involved with making it possible for the Central Arizona Project to be approved. It all tied together.

So when Udall finally discovered that by building a steam plant and get the financial support necessary to make feasible the Central Arizona Project, other than to have it come from the power revenues of Bridge Canyon, and knowing how sensitive the Bridge Canyon issue had become, why, he adopted this other proposal. And, of course, he did it without consulting with me, but I didn't have the power to have stopped him if he had of consulted with me at that point.

Storey: So it was a political decision?

Dominy: Of course. Of course.

Storey: Was it made while you were out--I mean, was the announcement made while you were--

Dominy: Yes. The announcement was made while I was on a European trip.

Storey: How did you get news of this?

Dominy: I don't think I got it until I was on my way back. But it didn't matter. It didn't matter. And I supported the decision, helped him get the project finally authorized.

Storey: You said the Assistant Secretary was from California?

Dominy: He was the Under Secretary.

Storey: The Under Secretary.

Dominy: James K. Carr.

Storey: Spelled C-A-R-R?

Dominy: Yeah.

Storey: So he was talking to Stewart Udall, saying --

Dominy: Of course. He was the Under Secretary. He was a protégé of the senator from California by the name of Clair Engle.

The Pacific Southwest Water Plan Was Used by California to Forward its Aims on the Colorado River

Storey: Well, Bridge and Marble Canyon were part of a much larger concept that I'd like to explore with you, the Pacific Southwest Water Plan. And there were all kinds of varieties, variations of this plan, if you will, that would bring water. Some of them would bring water from the Columbia to the Colorado, and so on. How active was Reclamation and how active were you in supporting those kinds of projects, or were these pipedreams, or what?

Dominy: Well, they were pipedreams. Frankly, this was part of Carr and California's effort to sabotage the Central Arizona Project. Stewart Udall bought into it and had the Bureau of Reclamation and other agencies in the Department participate in these studies. But this wasn't realistic. California knew it wasn't realistic. But, it was all part of the delaying tactics of the California group to hold up --

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Storey: You were saying that this was all part of California's efforts to stop the CAP [Central Arizona Project], because they knew it wasn't a realistic project.

Dominy: Exactly. They knew all the specific Southwest plan was a hoax. But it amazes me that at a time when Arizona had the Secretary of the Interior, they had the

Republican nominee for President, they had in Carl Hayden the most senior senator of all time, who is all-powerful, And with all that going for them, why they didn't use their muscle and put that project through and get it authorized, I find it incomprehensible.

Storey: They finally settled for authorization of the CAP in '68, I believe.

Dominy: Right.

Storey: Under your commissionership.

Dominy: Right.

Storey: And that was the last--

Dominy: The last major project to be authorized.

Storey: Yeah, but also the last major authorization where you had multiple projects.

Dominy: Yeah.

Storey: Why was that the last one? What do you think was going on?

Why the Last Major Project Authorization Occurred in 1968

Dominy: Well, part of it was this atomic energy debacle where they were promising so much. Part of it was the

environmental movement that was gaining strength by the day to stop all development and let nature take its course. Part of it was the projects. And the West had been developed for the major part. There wasn't too much left to do in terms of managing rivers and making them more productive for the use of man. And part of it, of course, was the end of a group of pretty powerful ~~southern~~ [Western] congressmen and senators. [Wayne N.] Aspinall got his pound of flesh in that Central Arizona Project. He was chairman of the Committee of Interior Insular Affairs, and he got a bunch of cats and dogs authorized as part of that for Colorado.

There's a whole new climate in Congress. You don't have the power centers that you used to have. They've fragmented it to the point where you don't get that kind of strength that some of those people used to have, but mainly the work had been done. We'd pretty much developed the West.

Storey: There were some sites left, but they weren't buildable for one reason or another? Is that what I'm hearing?

Dominy: Well, there were still some hydroelectric sites that ought to have been built. Bridge Canyon ought to be built. The Snake River -- Middle Snake, ought to be built. There's a lot of pump-back storage sites in the West for hydroelectric development that I could identify very quickly that would be of national interest to get that pollution-free energy from hydro development. Stop all this acid rain and so forth, if you could have all of our energy.

Americans Are Unwilling to Make the Tradeoffs Necessary to Thoroughly Develop Hydroelectric Power

I envy the Scandinavian countries that get 100 percent of their energy from hydro, but they're willing to make some tradeoffs. In Norway, for example, during the winter months, they dry up the river in places, put it all through the hydro plants, turning the waterfall back up during the tourist season. Now, can you imagine that we'd dry up Yellowstone Falls for part of the year to make hydro energy with it? We're unwilling to make those kind of tradeoffs. But they've done it elsewhere in order to avoid acid rain and all the other things that goes with fossil fuels.

Storey: So if I'm understanding this, what you're saying is that the development of projects for irrigation and water development purposes had pretty much run its course in the West?

Dominy: Yes.

Storey: But there were still hydro projects that could be developed?

Dominy: Yes. Yes.

Storey: Okay. That's interesting. That's a really interesting concept, actually. Did Reclamation ever actively get involved in these big grandiose plans for moving water around in the West?

Dominy: Oh, yes.

Storey: And how actively?

Dominy: Oh, yes. We had a United Western office set up in Salt Lake City. This was before I became Commissioner. It was while I was Chief of the Irrigation Division. It studied all those plans of moving water from Canada and everywhere else. They filed a report before Mike Straus' tenure was completed under the title "United West" or something. Nothing ever came of it, of course, but the studies were made.

Of course, the reason I got in trouble with "Scoop" [Henry K.] Jackson, the Senator from Washington, was because I had made a statement that we ought to investigate the possibility of taking water out of the Columbia River at the mouth, after the western states had had their opportunity to use it, and transport it south. At least the study should be made.

Storey: One of the characteristics of these kinds of things where, you know, you've identified that California was confusing the issue by supporting this kind of thing is that they aren't telling people that's why they're doing it.

Dominy: Of course not.

Storey: When did you begin to understand what was going on? How did that knowledge come to you?

Dominy: It didn't take any great brain to figure out that California,

from the very beginning, wasn't going to allow Arizona to have a drop of that water if they could prevent it.

Storey: You mean out of the Colorado?

Dominy: Right. They never did accept their defeat in the Supreme Court decision that allotted 2.8 million acre-feet of the Colorado River to Arizona. California fought that all the way through for years, and finally the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Arizona.[71] But California never accepted that. For heaven's sakes, they opposed it with all their might, with thirty-eight congressmen in those days. Now they've got more than that. This was something perfectly obvious to anybody who had eyes to see.

Storey: Well, you know, Russell Martin, for instance, talks about that, too, and that part of it is pretty obvious, but how would their involvement in these big grandiose plans have come to your attention? That's what I don't understand.

Dominy: Well, my mother never raised any stupid kids. It was easy for me to see what Jim Carr and the Californians were doing.

Storey: Uh-huh. What kind of pressures were brought on you as Commissioner of Reclamation by California over issues like this? You know, it's been real clear they always

71. The Supreme Court made the decision in *Arizona v. California* in 1963 based on its watermaster's recommendation of 1962. Subsequently, Title III of the Colorado River Basin Project Act of 1968 authorized the Central Arizona Project (Act of September 30, 1968, Public Law 90-537, 82 Stat. 885).

wanted the Colorado to be theirs.

Northcutt Ely Represents California's Interests in Washington, D.C.

Dominy: Well, there was no way they could put pressure on me personally. But when I was testifying before Congress, many times Northcutt Ely, the overpaid representative of California, would be sitting right behind the senator, funneling questions in and trying to embarrass me and try to get me off balance and try to win points, you see. I called him Northcutt "Oily" and his name is Northcutt Ely.

Storey: What was he like? Did he ever come and meet with you personally?

Dominy: Oh, yes. Of course. He invited me out socially to some of his parties and one thing or another.

Storey: Was he D.C.-based, then?

Dominy: Oh, yes. Yes. California maintained a lobbying organization here under Northcutt Ely for years. I'm sure they still have it, but I don't know who's running it now.

Storey: There was another man who was very active in western water from Colorado. Was it Glen Saunders?

Dominy: Yes. Yes.

Storey: How did the other states react to California doing this all the time?

Dominy: Well, they fought back as best they could. As long as they had guys like Carl Hayden and Aspinall and [Clinton P.] Anderson--

Storey: In New Mexico.

Dominy: Yeah. As long as they had those guys with their power and seniority, California couldn't win. As a matter of fact, it's kind of historically interesting that California has had very few influential senators and congressmen.

Storey: So it was a give-and-take among all those folks.

Dominy: Right. Right.

Storey: Senate's harder for them, I suppose.

Dominy: I remember one time, shortly after I was made Commissioner, California was trying to get a bill through Congress for that Peripheral Canal. They had a hearing set up before the Interior and Insular Committee in the House, and this delegation from California came in to talk to me the day before they were to go up and testify, and I was amazed. They were still debating among themselves. They didn't have a state position. The northern part of the state wanted one thing and the southern part of the state wanted a different one. And I told them, I said, "You better cancel the damned hearing. This is nonsense for you guys to think that you can go up

there and have that committee decide an issue for California that you, yourselves, have not arrived at a solid position. That committee isn't interested in helping you solve your water problems when you haven't solved them. You don't know what you want." Of course, they were laughed out of the committee room the next day.

Storey: But Reclamation was also involved in the Peripheral Canal.

Dominy: Of course. We were the ones that made studies and we recommended it. But this was early in the game.

Storey: And they couldn't make a decision.

Dominy: Yeah.

Goodrich Lineweaver Tries to Manipulate a Reduction in Force (RIF)

Storey: One of the things that you mentioned in the last interview was when Goodrich Lineweaver was trying to protect some of his acquaintances. If I'm recalling, they were assistant division chiefs, but they were the same grades as the division chiefs.

Dominy: Right.

Storey: And we talked about going to, was it, Assistant Secretary Aandahl?

Dominy: Right.

Storey: What happened? I didn't understand how that worked out and played out.

Dominy: This was very early in the Eisenhower administration. We didn't have a Commissioner. They'd fired Straus and they hadn't gotten around to replace him. So Goodrich Lineweaver, as an Assistant Commissioner, was really the Acting Commissioner, but Aandahl, himself, was really the acting Commissioner, because he had no confidence in these carryovers from the Democratic administrations.

So he had sent a memorandum, a reduction-in-force memorandum, that there was to be a 15 percent reduction in force in all grades. In other words, you couldn't encompass it by reducing 30 percent of your low-grade employees. The 15 percent reduction had to be in all grades. So that meant 15 percent of the Grade 15s and 15 percent of the Grade 14s and so on.

Well, the Bureau had tried to outmaneuver the Civil Service Commission. They had division chiefs at Grade 15, and they had a lot of assistant division chiefs at Grade 15. Of course, they did this hoping that they could get the division chiefs moved up to Grade 16, but it hadn't happened. So now you've got about a dozen Grade 15s, 15 percent of whom have to be reduced. So here's where veteran preference comes in, you see. How many of these Grade 15s in this pool have veteran preference that you can't touch, you see. Well, I happened to be among that group.

So I remember Gene Itan was chief of the Irrigation Division. Sanford and I were the two assistant division chiefs at Grade 15. Sanford was not a veteran and I was. Over in the project planning, one man was a veteran and one wasn't. In the power division, I don't think either one of them were and so on.

So when this announcement came out that Aandahl had ruled that all of the assistants would be reduced, see, they'd all move back to 14, Grade 14s, then I smelled a rat, I said, "This is that slick Lineweaver protecting his boys, Itan and Golze, that aren't veterans."

Storey: Who were 15s also.

Dominy: Yeah. See, they were in the pool. They were not assistants; they were division chiefs, see.

Storey: So you separate the division chiefs from the assistants.

Dominy: Right. They take them out of the pool of Grade 15s.

Storey: Well, leave them in it.

Dominy: Yeah. Leave them in it, but--

Storey: You take everybody else out.

Dominy: Everybody else out. So you've more than accomplished your reductions in Grade 15 and protected what you wanted to protect. You see?

Storey: Now I understand.

Dominy: I smelled a rat immediately. This is old slick Lineweaver protecting his cronies. So I called Aandahl's office the next morning. I said, "I want five minutes with the Assistant Secretary."

"Well, may I tell him what the substance is?"

"It's a personal matter," said I, "but I won't take more than five minutes, probably only three."

So he was accommodating, and I showed up. He offered me a chair and I said, "No, I won't even sit down. I don't want to take up any of your time. I just have a simple question. Have you, in fact, issued orally, or in writing, supplemental instructions to your memorandum of such-and-such about your reduction in force?"

He said, "No."

I said, "Thank you very much. I thought that would be your answer." And I started to walk out. (laughter)

Storey: Piqued his curiosity.

Dominy: Of course. "Wait a minute! Wait a minute! What's this all about?"

So I said, "I just had a simple question and I've got my answer and I'll take it from here."

"Oh, no, no, no. Come on. Tell me what this is all about." (laughter) Oh, shit. So I told him Lineweaver had said that he'd issued these oral instructions to him, you know. "I didn't do that."

"Well," I said. "That's what I understand. Thank you."

So that afternoon, Lineweaver gets us all in there. He says, "I've interceded with the secretary and he's changed his mind." (laughter)

Storey: "And we're not going to downgrade you."

Dominy: No, we're not going to downgrade you. (laughter)

Storey: Oh, okay.

Dominy: Lord, that was funny. I tried to catch his eye when he was pulling this shit, but he wouldn't look at me. (laughter)

Why Senator Scoop (Henry) Jackson Was Upset over Handling of the Columbia Basin Project

Storey: One of the topics we generally discussed was your interest in making sure that Reclamation's programs were implemented in accordance with the law. Last time you mentioned it. I think that's where you got into some words with Senator Jackson, maybe, on the Columbia Basin Project.

Dominy: Yeah. Historically the law had been violated flagrantly with regard to delivering water absent compliance with the contract. The Reclamation Project Act of 1902 and all supplemental acts have supported the premise that water can only be delivered under a valid contract and that water cannot be delivered if the contract is in violation. Well, this had been ignored. Understandably, you can't cut water off to a farmer right in the middle of a growing season because the district hasn't paid the bill.

But we had the amendatory repayment contract program, which allowed us to clear up all those old indebtedness, and I had run that program for the Bureau and we had everybody in compliance. We had changed the repayment period up to 200 or 300 years in some instances in order to get them into a realistic repayment posture. So when I became Commissioner, I was resolved, absolutely determined, that I wasn't going to deliver water in violation of the law.

Storey: And the law was that you had to have a contract.

Dominy: You had to have a contract, and they had to be current with their payments.

Trying to Get a Valid Contract on the Columbia Basin Project

Well, here was the biggest project of all time and the one that had gained more national and international attention was the Columbia Basin Project. The contract had been written in advance of World War II with dollars far

different than the ones that was actually being used to develop the project, because most of the work was being done post-World War II, and I knew the contract was invalid. I knew the contract was onerous, that it called for "X" million of dollars' repayment, plus only a million and a half for drainage, and that all other drainage costs would be an annual assessment. Well, I knew that that was ridiculous. You couldn't possibly [pay on this basis].

We had learned a lot about drainage on irrigation projects after I came to the Bureau in 1946. They used to ignore that completely and just assume that you put water on the land and that it would find its way off without any plans. Drainage is an integral part of an irrigation project, and it's hard to know where those drains go in advance. You have to wait to do a lot of it after you've started using the project water and discover where the drains ought to go.

So I had worked with the Columbia Basin irrigation districts as Chief of the Irrigation Division, trying to get them to accept that these contracts were invalid, long before they were going to have to make their first payment. They were in the development stage. But I said, "Let's get these things revised, go to Congress and get it confirmed, and be ready." And I had been unable to get their attention. Everybody was just going along.

So now I'm Commissioner, and the problem is here. We're about to deliver water under a contract that

is onerous, because they had failed to cooperate with me in amending it. So the first thing I did was hold a mass meeting with the irrigation districts, three districts involved, with their directors, and I laid it out again very carefully, precisely, offered them my solution of an amended contract, which would have incorporated all the drainage costs, whatever they were, into the project costs and which would extend the repayment period to fifty years instead of forty, in order to make it look a little better to where they'd pay at 10 percent of the irrigation costs, including the estimates of drainage, with the power revenues picking up 90 percent, and they still rebelled and wouldn't cooperate with me.

So a few months later, I sent them a telegram that if they hadn't paid the first assessment under the existing contract on May 1, that I would not deliver water, that I would shut the pumps off at the lake, and what water was in the canals they could use, but that would be it until they paid up. Well, all hell hit the fan, you know. Here was the bellwether of Reclamation and the Commissioner was throwing this challenge in their face.

I'd only been Commissioner six months. I can take you over here to my files. Christ, there was newspapers articles all over the place demanding my resignation, that I be fired and everything else, the first year I was Commissioner. (laughter) But I was adamant.

But I gave them one more chance. I scheduled public meetings. I went over the heads of the district

officials and met with the waterusers before this May 1 deadline, in April. I had open house meetings, full, 3-400 people. Explained it to them carefully, precisely, in detail. I took all their challenges from the floor and answered their wild exaggerated opinions and so forth. Kept my cool. But the district officials still didn't capitulate and cooperate with me. So come May 1, they had to go borrow the money and pay the bill. They did. They paid the bill.

But meanwhile, these senators from Washington are furious, because I kept telling the people, I said, "If you don't like my proposal, take a different one to Congress. But we need an answer. We can't adjust this contract without approval of Congress, because we can't do it within forty years. We can't write off full costs of this project in forty years." So I was putting the heat on the senators, you see, and the congressmen, indirectly by answering these guys that if they didn't like what I was proposing, "Go direct to Congress. Go over my head. Get whatever you want. If Congress will approve it, I'll accept it, of course. I'm only telling you what I'm willing to recommend to Congress. Now, if you can get a better deal by going over my head and getting it direct, have at it."

Storey: They wanted a better deal than paying that 10 percent.

Dominy: Of course. Sure. They wanted to pay nothing. "That powerhouse belongs to us. Let them pay it all," you see. So it was a real crisis time.

So when Kennedy was elected, the odds were, of me being reappointed Commissioner was, zero to nil, because I'd had this problem in Alaska on Ramparts. That senator said I wouldn't be reappointed if Kennedy was elected. "Scoop" Jackson was Kennedy's campaign manager. He said I wouldn't be reappointed. [Warren Grant] Magnuson, who was second-ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, said I wouldn't be reappointed. Engle of California said I wouldn't be reappointed.

Storey: But Carl Hayden said you would.

Dominy: When Udall said, "If you want him reappointed, you've got to get these senators off my back," Carl Hayden calmed them down.

Storey: Whatever happened on the Columbia Basin Project?

Dominy: Well, Magnuson, his price of agreement with Hayden was that, "You've got to get Dominy out of that chain of the final decision on the Columbia Basin." The Secretary has to assume that himself, you know. So publicly I was removed from the chain of working out the final details of that amendatory contract. Everybody now recognized it had to be done, see. I'd finally accomplished that goal, that, by God, it had to be. The issue was here, it had to be solved.

Storey: So it became Stewart Udall.

Dominy: They appointed a special group of folks and used one of

my Assistant Commissioners. So I was in on it all the way, but behind the scenes.

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BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2. APRIL 8, 1996.

Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey with Floyd E. Dominy on April 8, 1996.

What you finally accepted was a proposal you'd originally come up with, refined a little bit.

Dominy: Right. It was a few words changed here and there, but it was my proposal. It was a fifty-year contract instead of forty.

Storey: And they would pay back 10 percent, I heard you say, "of the irrigation costs."

Dominy: Yeah. Irrigation allocation. Ninety percent of the irrigation allocation is paid by power, power revenue.

Storey: One of the -- maybe I'd better say this a different way. My granddad and grandma were on a farm. Well, both of my grandparents on both sides were on a farm, and they tended to be very tight with their money. My observation is that's a fairly characteristic feature of farm families in the United States.

Dominy: Well, indeed it is, because they never know when they're going to have any money. They have a good year or they have a bad year. If they're frugal, they're going to

protect it with great care when they've got it.

Storey: Did that affect Reclamation?

Dominy: Oh, of course.

Storey: And our relations with these groups?

Dominy: Well, of course. Like on the Columbia Basin Project, if you write a contract that the first group of settlers can pay, over the long pull that's going to seem very small, because as the project develops, they'll go into fruit, they'll go into other more productive, higher-income-yielding agriculture. So you have to draw a line. You have to accept the fact that what you do for the first group of settlers may seem ridiculously cheap. Like in California, when we started out, $3.50 an acre-foot for water on the Central Valley Project. It probably should have been $35 even then. That decision was made by Bill Warne, a Californian, who was Assistant Commissioner at the time.

Ability to pay, that principle, is written into the law, 1939 Reclamation Project Act.[72] They didn't tell you how to work it out. I was really the individual, as Chief of the Allocation Repayment Branch, that started working on those old projects, that attempted to define ability to pay. We actually worked out farm budgets and

72. The preamble of the Reclamation Project Act of 1939 states that it is "An Act to provide a feasible and comprehensive plan for the variable payment of construction charges on United States Reclamation projects, to protect the investment of the United States in such projects, and for other purposes." (Act of August 4, 1939, ch. 418, 53 Stat. 1187)

threw in there cost of living. What does it cost a farm family to live? You throw in their milk cow. You throw in their garden. You throw in this and that.

But the ability to pay from a farm based on 1902 standards would have been subsistence agriculture. Those guys didn't think a farmer should have indoor plumbing or electric lights, for heaven's sakes. They didn't think their kids should go to college or to the dentist. They were subsistence farmers. That's all a farmer was supposed to do in 1902 was live, exist. Not prosper, but exist. That's the origin of the 160-acre limit and all that crap. It was subsistence agriculture was what they had in mind in 1902 in the Reclamation Project Act.

Renegotiation of Repayment Contracts on Early Reclamation Projects

Storey: A while ago, you mentioned that some of the repayment contracts were changed to be 200 and even 300 years.

Dominy: Of course.

Storey: Do you remember any of those?

Dominy: Oh, yeah. Let's go down the list. When Reclamation started, we had seventeen western states. You had a senator from every state that wanted a project immediately, and you had no records. You had no soils [surveys]. You had no hydrology. You had nothing. So you had the Milk River Project in Montana, and it was

one of those that was in trouble when I started my Amendatory Repayment Project.

You had the Williston Project in North Dakota. It was in trouble when I started my Repayment Project. You had the Umatilla Project in Oregon. It was in trouble. Okanogan in Washington. It was in trouble. Orland in California. It was in trouble. Name them. Go down seventeen western states and all those original projects were supposed to pay out in ten years. Then they got extended to twenty years and then forty years, and they still couldn't pay.

Storey: So we're talking the Uncompahgre Project.

Dominy: Right. Uncompahgre in Colorado.

Storey: And Salt River is an exception.

Dominy: Salt River is an exception. But the Rio Grande Project. What was the one in Arizona we had trouble on? It was on the Gila River.

Storey: Oh, is that the Mohawk-Wellton?

Dominy: No, no. That was built later. It was one of the original projects in Arizona. There was one that was in trouble down on the Gila. Anyway, there was a project in every one of the damn states, at least one, that was in trouble, as I had worked on that, worked on the ability-to-pay principle and so on.

Storey: Of course, I think part of that might be traceable to the fact, too, that back then the money was supposed to go back into the states it originated from under that original initial law.

Dominy: Well, it went back into the Reclamation Fund.

Storey: Yeah.

Dominy: The Reclamation Fund was financed from public land sales and rentals.

Acreage Limitation and its Enforcement in Reclamation

Storey: You mentioned the 160-acre limitation rule, and one of the things that Mark Reisner talked about in his book that I am interested in is that limitation. If I'm recalling correctly, he asserted that Arleigh West, as Regional Director, had gone out and done a study on that, and that Mr. West had asserted that he brought you a list of violators. Do you remember anything about that? Is that true? Untrue? You don't remember?

Dominy: Yeah. I remember reading it in the book. I'm sure it didn't happen the way he described it. Let's take a look at the 160-acre limit. It was established as part of the Reclamation Project Act of 1902. At that time, all the lands that was expected to be developed under the Reclamation Law was public land. No private development had already occurred. The first water to be delivered was to be delivered there through the Reclamation project, so you had complete control of the

situation.

Now, look how the evolution came along without Congress ever changing the basic law. Take the Central Valley Project in California, for example. All the land was already irrigated. Now, you're putting a Reclamation-financed proposal on top of a privately developed existing irrigation economy that was in trouble because the groundwater was gradually falling. So it's all supplemental water. The land pattern is already in private ownership. There's no public lands involved. So the law doesn't fit at all. And yet Congress doesn't pay any attention to that nonsense. They just appropriate the money and approve the project.

So here's the administrators at Reclamation supposedly enforcing a 160-acre limit that has no applicability to the circumstances under which they're now existing. So Mike Straus came up with the commingling-of-water theory. Here's a guy irrigating 10,000 acres out there, and we come along and give him some more water. Well, we can give him 160 acres worth of additional water under the law. We can give his wife 160 acres of additional water under the law. We can give each of his kids, because it's 160 acres per individual. So this is the kind of nonsense that we began to live with, and it was nonsense, complete nonsense.

Now, we did break up a few big holdings. The law said we could accept recordable contracts and give the guy ten years to dispose of his excess land and so on, and we did break up a few of those big holdings, but it

was awful easy for the rest of them to assign it out to their in-laws and their nephews and their cousins, come into compliance technically.

Storey: Was it an issue while you were Commissioner?

Dominy: Oh, of course. It was never one that bothered me at all, because I recognized the nonsensical situation in which we were living.

I remember when Stewart Udall became Secretary, coming from Arizona, it was going to delight him if he could suddenly stick the Imperial Irrigation District in California with a 160-acre limit. And he had a solicitor from Arizona. (laughter) Now, of course, there was no question in my mind but what the Imperial Valley of California should have lived under the 160-acre limit just like everybody else, but they had a Secretary of Interior from California at the time that Hoover Dam was built and the All-American Canal was built, who said it doesn't apply because these guys are already here and they've already been developing water. Of course, the Hoover Dam and the All-American Canal is what made it possible to exist and expand.

Storey: Now we're talking about Harold Ickes?

Dominy: No, no. No, no. This was way before that. 1936. The Hoover Dam and the All-American Canal was built back in the thirties. So it was a guy from California who was the Secretary of Interior [Ray Lyman Wilbur]. I can't think of his name right now. It was long before my time,

too.

Storey: I'm getting confused. However, I've brought my cheat list here, if I can find the correct one.

Dominy: Find out who was Secretary of the Interior in 1936.

Storey: '36 is going to be Harold Ickes.

Dominy: No, no. '36?

Storey: Yeah. '33 to '46.

Dominy: Well, look back before Ickes.

Storey: Ray Wilbur.

Dominy: Yeah. Ray Wilbur.

Storey: Oh, okay.

Dominy: He was a Californian. [Tape recorder turned off.]

Storey: We were talking about acreage limitation and that sort of thing.

Dominy: I'm telling you about the year 1960. Secretary Udall decides that the Imperial Irrigation District that's been getting water since the thirties under a ruling by Secretary Wilbur (Storey: Ray Lyman Wilbur) that the 160-acre limit didn't apply, he decides, after consulting with his new solicitor, that it did actually apply. So we

have a big conference in the Secretary's office about what to do. Of course, technically under the 160-acre law, you have to sell it off at its pre-project value.

So here's a thriving irrigation district with lands valued at $3- $4,000 an acre in 1960 that now is in the third or fourth generation of ownership, as compared to who owned it in the thirties and what the value was in the thirties. So my suggestion was that you couldn't go back, that if you're going to now try to enforce the 160-acre limit, that you start where you are and you value it at its current market value, and then have the big landowners start to dispose of it to other people at current market values, that you can't go back.

Storey: Was Udall expecting Reclamation to enforce this?

Dominy: Well, he was toying with the idea that the Department of Interior would suddenly take on this task of enforcing the 160-acre limit. Well, the upshot of it was that nothing came of it, which is the only right answer under the circumstances. (laughter)

Storey: That's a tough issue. I imagine politically it would have been almost impossible to touch.

Dominy: You could politically make it a plus, appealing to the liberals and the have-nots. There was a small-newspaper publisher, Ben Yellen [phonetic] was his name. I have to think of the Russian president first and then I can think of Yellen. He was writing all kinds of editorials at the time about the failure to enforce the 160-acre limit in

the Imperial. He was in the Imperial Valley, had a little clientele there, so, of course, he was all in favor of this.

Storey: But not getting very far at the time. Were you ever sued over this or anything like that, that you recall?

Dominy: No, no. There was never any challenges. Wilbur's decision was wrong, but it stood up, was accepted.

Storey: That it did --

Dominy: The 160-acre limit didn't apply because the land was already irrigated by private initiative.

Storey: Glen Canyon was already under construction, I think, when you became Commissioner.

Dominy: Oh, yes. I was instrumental in all the preplanning and everything else as Assistant Commissioner.

Storey: It was another dam to produce hydro rather than to produce water?

Why Glen Canyon Was Necessary for Development of Water Resources in the Upper Colorado River Basin

Dominy: Well, Glen Canyon Dam was absolutely essential, if you're going to have the Upper Basin Project[73]

73. This is a reference to the Colorado River Storage Project (Act of April 11, 1956, ch. 203, 70 Stat. 105). Section 1 of the Act effectively explains the intent of the Act "In order to initiate the comprehensive development of the water resources of the Upper Colorado River Basin, for the purposes, among

(continued...)

developed. People don't understand this. They say, "Well, there's no water delivered to irrigation directly from Glen Canyon Dam." That's true. But when you had a law that says you have to deliver from the upper basin states 7.5 million acre-feet of water every year, not just now and then but every year, how can you hold back for yourself what you need if you don't have a big sponge down here to trap the water in the high-flow years so you can continue to deliver water in the low-flow years?

So you had to have Glen Canyon Dam, and you measured that water at Lee's Ferry. So you put the dam as close to Lee's Ferry as possible. You want it below the San Juan. You want it below the Escalante. You want it below all the other [tributary] rivers on the [Colorado] river. You want it as close to Lee's Ferry as possible. So you find a dam site immediately above Lee's Ferry and you build your sponge. You build your big holding tank so that you can meet that commitment to deliver annually 7.5 million acre-feet of water to the lower basin.

Now, some years the Colorado River flow is less than ~~4~~ [6] million acre-feet a year. Some years it flows 30 million acre-feet a year. So this Glen Canyon Dam and Reservoir was there for that purpose, to level out the

(...continued)
others, of regulating the flow of the Colorado River, storing water for beneficial consumptive use, making it possible for the States of the Upper Basin to utilize, consistently with the provisions of the Colorado River Compact, the apportionments made to and among them in the Colorado River Compact and the Upper Colorado River Basin Compact. . ."

flows of the river and meet the commitment under the Colorado River Compact and, of course, to create all that hydroelectric energy to pay for all those upstream irrigation projects.

Storey: It was when you became Commissioner that the controversy began, though, I think. I don't think it had really started before '59.

Controversy over the Colorado River and Apportionment of its Water

Dominy: Oh, yes, yes, yes. The controversy on the Colorado River had been there for years. The 1924 compact,[74] which divided the river between the upper and lower basin and said how much water each would have out of the Colorado River didn't solve the controversy. Californians didn't want any upper-state development. They didn't want Arizona to have any of it. And California was the big cheese. They had the most congressmen and so forth.

Now, the Lower [Colorado River] Basin divided up their 7.5 million acre-feet, finally, after a Supreme Court decision, 2.8 million acre feet to ~~Colorado~~ [Arizona] and 1.5 million was supposed to go to Mexico. None of the water originates in Mexico, but there was a decision made that 1.5 million acre-feet would be

74. The Colorado River Compact was signed in Santa Fe by representatives from the Upper Colorado River Basin States and the Lower Colorado River Basin States in 1922. The compact was ratified by Congress in Section 8(a) of the Boulder Canyon Project Act (Act of December 21, 1928, ch. 42, 45 Stat. 1057).

allowed to trickle on down into Mexico. A small amount to Nevada, less than a million acre-feet.[75]

Storey: You said 2.8 to Colorado. You meant to Arizona, did you?

Dominy: Arizona; 2.8 million acre feet out of the Colorado to Arizona, yeah. And then the Upper [Colorado River] Basin states, they finally decide that they had to agree among themselves as to how much went to each state. I can't remember now exactly how it stood out, but Colorado got the biggest bulk, and Wyoming, Utah, and New Mexico each agreed that a chunk of it was what they'd be satisfied with. Out of the 7.5 million acre-feet that belonged to the Upper Basin States, I think Colorado got around 4 million of it.[76]

75. The allocation of water in the Lower Colorado River Basin, among California, Arizona, and Nevada actually is based on the Boulder Canyon Project Act of 1928 agreement that the Secretary of the Interior could contract for distribution of the water: Arizona to receive 2,800,000 acre-feet, California to receive 4,400,000 acre-feet, and Nevada to receive 300,000 acre-feet. The Mexican Water Treaty and Protocol was signed in 1944, and recommended for ratification by the Senate, ratified by the President, and proclaimed by the President in 1945. It provided for 1,500,000 acre-feet of water to Mexico on the Colorado River. It also specified water agreements on the Rio Grande and Tijuana Rivers.

76. The Upper Colorado River Basin Compact was signed by representatives of Arizona,

Colorado. New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming on October 11, 1948, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The Congress consented to the Compact by Act of April 6, 1949. (ch. 48, 63 Stat. 31). The Compact allocated 50,000 acre-feet to Arizona and divided the remainder of the 7,500,000 acre-foot entitlement on the basis of percentages: Colorado to receive 51.75% (3,855,375 acre-feet), New Mexico to receive 11.25% (838,125 acre-feet), Utah to receive 23% (1,713,500 acre-feet),

(continued...)

Storey: But, of course, in the early fifties, the Sierra Club had opposed building the dam at Echo Park and after that, Glen Canyon was begun.

The Echo Park Controversy

Dominy: No. The Glen Canyon would have been necessary. Echo Park was not a substitute for Glen Canyon. Echo Park was merely a wonderful hydroelectric dam site, but it wasn't below the confluence of the [Green River] ~~Colorado~~, it wasn't below the confluence of the Escalante or the San Juan. It wasn't the answer of the big sponge I'm talking about.

Storey: Right.

Dominy: That had to be clear down at the lower end of the Upper Basin. That's where the big sponge had to be to solve your water management problem.

Storey: Right. But after we had started building Glen Canyon Dam, all of a sudden there began to surface all of this opposition to filling the dam, to completing the dam, and so on.

Controversy over Flooding of Rainbow Bridge National Monument

Dominy: Well, part of that was because of the Rainbow Bridge, and I'm very proud of my part in this controversy. The

(...continued)
and Wyoming to receive 14% (1,043,000 acre-feet).

environmentalists got written into the law that authorized Glen Canyon Dam, the Colorado [River] Storage Project[77] legislation, that none of the waters impounded by the dams of the Colorado [River] Storage Project would be built in such a way and managed in such a way that it would impound water within any national park or monument.

Now, of course, the one they were talking about was Rainbow Bridge and Glen Canyon Dam, because everybody knew that if you built Glen Canyon Dam to the elevation 3,700 feet, that water would back into that 160 acres involved in the national monument called Rainbow Bridge. So that was written into the law.

Storey: This was the Colorado River Storage Project Act in '56?

Dominy: Right. It was written right in the law. In other words, you couldn't build and operate Glen Canyon Dam in such a manner that you allowed any water to invade that 160-acre Rainbow Bridge National Monument.

Well, everybody assumed all you had to do is go down there and put a little plug in that side canyon, you know, and just keep the lake from backing up in there. No problem. So nobody made any real issue out of it, but nobody knew what they were talking about. It was the blind leading the blind. None of the people who

77. Congress authorized the Colorado River Storage Project by Act of April 11, 1956. (ch. 203, 70 Stat. 105). Section 3 stated, in part, "It is the intention of Congress that no dam or reservoir constructed under the authorization of this Act shall be within any national park or monument." (70 Stat. 107; 43 U.S.C. §620b)

wanted that in the act had ever been to Rainbow Bridge. Dave Brower had never been there. The Director of the National Parks had never been there. The Secretary of the National Park Association had never been there. Nobody that had insisted on having that provision in the law had ever been there. Nobody from the Bureau of Reclamation had raised any protest, because they hadn't been there.

So, now, I inherit this. Dexheimer didn't go down there and look at it. We're building the Glen Canyon Dam tooth and nail, and I became Commissioner. Nobody had made any plans to live with this act of Congress. So I called Lem Wiley, the construction engineer, and I said, "You and I have got to go in and look at Rainbow Bridge. Let me know how to get there and when we can do it."

So he called me back and he said, "We can fly into Cameron Ranch and rent a horse. We'll spend the night at Cameron Ranch. It takes all day to ride in there. We can spend as many days as we want. They've got a little campsite there with a spring. And ride a day out and have the plane pick us up again."

I said, "All right. Figure how many days we ought to be down there at the Rainbow Bridge site and work it out."

So we went in, and I was flabbergasted. Here is a remote canyon country with no access whatever, and you'd have to put a barrier dam below the monument.

You'd have to go above the monument, put in another barrier dam. You'd have to drill a tunnel from one canyon over to another, about two miles. And to make the estimate of what kind of volume of water you're talking about, what comes off of Navajo Mountain in a thunderstorm, what comes off when the snow melts, why, the violence to that scenic grandeur to perform this kind of construction would be so goddamn much more horrendous than to let a little water back in under that bridge.

You're not going to get up on the arch of the bridge. There's an arroyo 85-feet deep from the bridge abutments, and we're only going to put fifty-four feet of water in that arroyo. And there's a spring coming out of one abutment, so you know that water saturation isn't going to hurt anything. Anybody could tell that. You didn't have to have geologists. I got geologists to confirm that opinion later.

Well, I took all kinds of colored slides, and I went back and I said, "This is nonsense, absolute nonsense. The cure is far worse than the disease, and it will look much more like a bridge with a little water under it." Well, Udall agreed with me, but we couldn't convince anybody else, all those other hard shells. So I said, "Well, let's take them in there, Stewart. We can get a helicopter in there now. I know that we can land a helicopter up above the arch. There's a level spot up there about a quarter of a mile above the arch. No problem. So let's take Dave Brower, the Director of the Park Service, and all these guys. Let's take them in there

and rub their nose in it. They've got to agree that the cure is worse than the disease."

Well, that crazy Udall, when he got through, I had sixty-six people. I had in mind about six. When he got through, he had sixty-six people. Good God almighty. I had to hire Navy helicopters. They were so big they couldn't land in the canyon. We had to land them on a butte a half a mile away and then ferry them in on small helicopters. It was a real logistics undertaking, and I was scared to death we'd lose somebody. But we took them in there, and I personally walked with Udall, and Dave Brower, and the Director of the Park Service, and the Executive Secretary of the National Parks Association.

Storey: That would be Conrad Wirth?[78]

Dominy: Conrad Wirth. Dave Brower, of course. I don't remember the name of -- Smith was his name, the Secretary of the National Parks Association. I personally conducted that group above it, below it, all the possible sites, rubbed their nose in it. To a man they all said, "Well, we have to agree, but it's the principle of the thing! It's the principle of the thing! By God, you can't put any water into a national monument. No matter how bad it is. Stinking diesel --"

END SIDE 1, TAPE 2. APRIL 8, 1996.
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 2. APRIL 8, 1996.

78. Conrad (Connie) Wirth.

Storey: So they were saying, "we've got to have it regardless."

Dominy: Right. Well, I said to myself, "It won't be done with my compliance." So I had a model made of the area, topographic model, and I went to Congress. I said, "The law says I've got to do this, but don't give me the money." I was up front about it. I said, "The law requires me to ask for this money to build the structures to prevent this water from going in there, but it's nonsense. I don't want the money. I want you to write a prohibition right in my bill that says I can't spend any money."

"Well," they said, "that's legislation in an appropriation act. We can't do that."

I said, "No, it's not legislation. It's denial of funds. It's not legislation." [Laughter] Of course, I didn't consult any lawyers or a damn thing, but I made it stick.

Storey: Did they give you that?

Dominy: Yes, they wrote right in my appropriation bill for six years while we were building Glen Canyon Dam, "None of the monies appropriated in this bill shall be used to build any structures designed solely to prevent the waters of Lake Powell from entering Rainbow Bridge National Monument." I dreamed that kind of language up.

Storey: Did you do this in open committee?

Dominy: Yes. Yes. I took my topographic model up there. I didn't go off the record or anything. I ended up taking the committee's executive officer down there by helicopter so he could personally advise the committee.

Storey: And see what was going on.

Dominy: Right. And, of course, they said, "Well, why don't you go to the legislative committee and get the law changed?"

I said, "I've tried that route, gentlemen, but they're afraid to open up the bill for fear some other unwarranted amendments might be suggested. So you're the guys that's confronted with the issue. If you give me the money and tell me I have to spend it, fine. But I'm explaining it to you that I don't want it."

Well, this was tested in court. The Sierra Club and others challenged it. Got one judge in Utah, a Federal judge, to rule that we had violated the law and therefore we couldn't fill the reservoir above a certain level.

Storey: This was when they were suing to keep the lake at a specific level?

Dominy: Right. To keep it out of Rainbow Bridge National Monument. The first judge, a stupid ass there in Utah, agreed with them, but it was appealed and got reversed. The court said Congress had changed its mind by refusing the money, and actually changed the law.

Storey: And that was the basis on which you had filled the lake anyway, wasn't it?

Dominy: Right.

Storey: Begun filling the lake.

Dominy: Right. Right. Right. So Floyd Dominy is the guy who kept from wasting a lot of money and despoiling beauties around Rainbow Bridge National Monument.

Stewart Udall's Decision to Create Canyonlands National Park

Storey: Did you have any hand in Stewart Udall's plan to enlarge the monument and leave it without the dams and so on?

Dominy: Yeah. I flew him in the Bureau's plane on a beautiful day out of Page, flew him up the whole river, and that was the trip where he decided that he wanted the Canyonlands National Park. I showed him that whole area in the Bureau plane. Of course, his first grandiose plan, he didn't consult the Navajos, and he was going to have Navajo Mountain and everything else in it. The Navajos wouldn't go along with that. He didn't do enough homework before he announced that big grandiose scheme.

Storey: And, of course, Ickes had proposed, what was it, Escalante National Monument or something up in that area?

Lake Powell Behind Glen Canyon Dam Provides a Major Recreational Benefit

Dominy: Yeah. But the interesting thing about the whole deal is that 186 river miles of the Colorado and about 75 miles of the Escalante and the San Juan, which the lake [Lake Powell behind Glen Canyon Dam] occupies, that whole country didn't get 100 people a year using it. I'm giving them a great benefit saying 100 people a year. I doubt if a thousand people had ever been in that area, total. And now we have 3 million people using it as a beautiful playground on Lake Powell. Now contrast that with the remaining canyon country below Glen Canyon Dam to Lake Mead, the Park Service has had to limit that to 20,000 people a year because that's all it could accommodate it its natural state.

That's my answer to the Sierra Club and all those cock-a-doodle-doo about destroying the Glen Canyon country. We didn't destroy it; we changed it. We made it into a beautiful, beautiful lake and it's now a worldwide attraction. It's become the Taj Mahal of America. We get people from South Korea, Japan, Germany, and all around. Glen Canyon Dam, Lake Powell, is one of their objects when they come to the United States.

Storey: Some of the conservationists get very upset about the films and the book that you did. Tell me about those and why you thought they were necessary or appropriate.

Publishes *Jewel of the Colorado*, the First Government

Printing Office Book Done in Color

Dominy: Well, we had the Sierra Club fighting additional dams on the Colorado River with their $25 books and photographs of Deer Creek Falls, which was way above anything that would be affected by Bridge Canyon Dam. So I went to Carl Hayden, who was powerful enough he could get what he wanted, and I said, "You're also chairman of the printing.[79] I've got some beautiful slides of Lake Powell that I personally took without benefit of anything but an ordinary camera. I didn't have a lot of filters and I didn't have a lot of nonsense, just ordinary Kodachrome." But I said, "Let's put out a book on the beauties of Lake Powell to answer the Sierra Club nonsense about how we've destroyed that area and so forth."

"Well, let me see your slides." So I showed it to him. He said, "All right. Go ahead and put it together." So he put out a 75-cent colored book. The first colored book that was ever printed by the Government Printing Office is Floyd Dominy's *Jewel of the Colorado*. You've seen it, haven't you?

Storey: I think so, yes.

Dominy: They're my photographs. There's one right there [indicating a copy of *Jewel of the Colorado]*. Of course, all hell broke loose. I was accused of violating the law,

79. Carl Trumbull Hayden, a Democrat from Arizona, served for fifty-six consecutive years in the Congress, the last forty-two years in the Senate. He served as chairman of the Senate's Committee on Printing from 1933-1947 and co-chairman of the Joint Committee on Printing 1949-1953 and 1955-1969.

lobbying, and so on.

Storey: It's about a thirty-page booklet. Small size, though. Yeah, I definitely have seen this. What about the films?

Dominy: Well, the film was just another extension of this. It was the same idea. It was answering the Sierra Club's nonsense that we'd destroyed the beauty of this country.

Storey: When you went with Mr. Udall and flew up, and he identified Canyonlands, according to Russell Martin, you also proposed a dam below the confluence of the Green and Colorado River. Was that that trip?

Dominy: No, I never did propose any dam below the Green confluence other than Glen Canyon Dam. No, I think had I been Commissioner at the time, that I could have built Echo Park. Dexheimer and the Bureau people didn't put up any fight for Echo Park like I put up for Glen Canyon and Rainbow Bridge and so on. There was no real effort made to challenge the wild statements that the environmentalists make.

But like I say, Echo Park was not <u>essential</u>. It was a big money-maker, a wonderful hydroelectric site. Flaming Gorge is a substitute we built as an alternate to Echo Park, but it's not near as good a one, not near as much water involved, not near as much electric capacity, hydro capacity, but it was an <u>acceptable</u> substitute under the circumstances.

Construction Engineers and How They Influence

Projects

Storey: You have mentioned Lem Wiley. What was he like? He, of course, was the construction engineer for Glen Canyon Dam.

Dominy: Right. He was a very competent construction engineer, a dedicated man. There is little a construction engineer can do. The design has already been done, the contract's been awarded. His job is to see that the contract is carried out precisely, no shortcuts and so forth.

Storey: When you read Russell Martin, it seems like he's making all these decisions. He's negotiating with the Navajo and he's getting the state to build roads and all kinds of things.

Selecting the Townsite of Page, Arizona

Dominy: Well, he does a lot of those things. The selection of the town of Page was a critical political decision. All the Utah politicians wanted the site on the west bank, be more readily accessible.

Storey: In Utah, right?

Dominy: Utah. I remember my advice to Oly Larson and Lem Wiley was, "Select the best site. I don't give a damn which side of the river it's on. You've got to remember our supplies are going to come up out of Flagstaff, so I think it'll be Arizona side that you'll select. I mean the east side. It doesn't make any sense to me, because we

don't have a bridge yet, you know." At that time, we hadn't even made up our mind for sure we were going to build a bridge. Maybe use the dam as the bridge, same as they did at Hoover.

But when the first estimates came in that we could probably spend $3- or $4 million building a bridge and save that much money and more on the contract price, if the contractor can have access to both sides during construction, and then traffic problems of a road across the top of the bridge has been horrendous at Hoover. So it didn't take me very long to say, "Let's have a bridge." I made that decision very quickly after I got the full import of what was involved. So I knew right from the start that because our supplies were going to come up from Flagstaff and it takes several years to build a bridge, that we had to have the town site on the east bank.

Storey: One of the things that you walked into as Commissioner was a strike at Glen Canyon, wasn't it?

Dominy: Yeah. That came on soon after I was made Commissioner, yeah.

Storey: What involvement did Reclamation have in that, if any?

Labor Problems at Glen Canyon Dam During Construction

Dominy: This, again, was, in hindsight, a mistake in the contract verbiage where the government undertook to pay the

contractor 85 percent of any increased labor costs during the construction of the project. That played right in the hands of the contractor. Any strike he had, if he could identify it as labor costs, then he could load 85 percent of it onto the government.

Well, the strike was over housing and per diem. Labor agreed that when there was a viable city there with the normal capacity to serve the public, that any remote city in Arizona would have, that then the subsistence could cease. So when we had the sewage plant in and the water plant in and the trailer courts built and the grocery store and so forth, the contractor stopped subsistence payments, and the strike was over that. Then they settled the strike by raising the wages. So I said, "Uh-oh. You foul-balled. You don't get 85 percent, because it really was the subsistence that you were arguing about." And I finally won it in the courts.

Storey: But we weren't pressured to terminate the strike or anything like that?

Dominy: Well, we were unhappy, because we had certain commitments between the Upper and Lower Basin states and everything else that we wanted to get it under way, but nothing we could do.

Labor Strike in the Yuma Area

One labor strike that I settled later on in my career was when we had a commitment to build a bypass channel to avoid delivering highly mineralized water to

Mexico. There was a labor strike hit just at the time we had a cost-plus contract with Morrison Knudsen, negotiated contract, to build this. It had to be done in the wintertime to be ready to bypass this water the next spring. There was a general strike in Arizona.

So I had Secretary Udall send me a wire from his office to mine saying that this was a matter of international comity and that I should proceed to Arizona and do whatever is necessary to get that work underway. So armed with that telegram, I immediately wired the labor unions and Morrison Knudsen to meet me in Phoenix *mañana*.

So when I got them together, I said, "Well, the issue is very plain. This work has to start." This was Thursday. "It has to start Monday. Now, if I have to commandeer your equipment (I'm talking to the company) and put government employees operating it, that's what I'll do."

And I turned to the union and said the same thing. I said, "Now, either your people will be running that machinery on Monday or government employees will be running it on Monday, but it's going to be done. Now, if you guys can't get together on some kind of an arrangement, then it's my job. Floyd Dominy will be the construction superintendent." Now, I said, "It seems to me it's very simple. I understand the company's willing to agree that they'll pay whatever wages that the strike is finally settled on, retroactively. So why in the hell aren't you willing to put your union people on those goddamn

machines Monday with today's wages, knowing that if they settle later at fifty cents an hour more, that they'll be retroactively paid the fifty cents an hour? Now, why can't you agree with that? That seems sensible to me. But whatever. If you can't agree with each other on this deal, than I'll take over."

Well, they finally did. They finally accepted that arrangement. I worked up a press release that afternoon. So that labor strike got settled by Floyd Dominy in that abrupt fashion.

Storey: Now, what was the work they were going to be working on?

Dominy: It was a bypass channel to take real salty water out of the Colorado River that would normally go to Mexico and bypass it and dump it directly into the ocean. So you didn't have to put it out on the irrigated lands.

Storey: This was the Wellton-Mohawk water drain?

Dominy: Yeah. It was Wellton-Mohawk drainage water. During the winter months that was all the water that was in the water, was that real salty stuff.

Storey: Didn't want it getting down there.

Dominy: Didn't want it to get down and foul their land.

Issues Raised by the Mexican Water Treaty and Protocol of 1944-1945

Storey: Well, that brings up the issue of Mexico, though. Of course, in the fifties we signed an agreement that gave Mexico water both out of the Rio Grande and, I think, out of the Colorado, maybe in the same agreement. Did that cause you any issues as Commissioner?[80]

Dominy: The problem I had was that the treaty was very carefully written. It says 1.5 million acre-feet of water from any and all sources, including return flow from lands irrigated above. So quality of water was negated completely in that agreement that we were going to give Mexico 1.5 million acre-feet of water.

Now, the reason we're giving them 1.5 million acre-feet of water out of the Colorado River is because the people who were negotiating this had in mind playing the Rio Grande and Colorado off one against the other two. In the Rio Grande case, there was water coming from Mexico into the Rio Grande River. In the case of the Colorado, no water from Mexico reached the Colorado River; it was all United States water. So it was a tradeoff. We'd give 1.5 million over here and then you can give them less. You have to give Mexico less out of the Rio Grande, see. Again, a little politics going on. The folks who wanted to get more Mexican water, more water out of the Rio Grande, traded off 1.5 million Colorado River water.

80. The Mexican Water Treaty and Protocol was signed in Washington in 1944 and went into effect in 1945. It covered the waters of the Rio Grande, Colorado, and Tijuana Rivers. In the Colorado River the United States guaranteed annual delivery of 1,500,000 acre-feet of water to Mexico.

Arranged to Send Extra Water to Mexico as a Matter of Ethics and Equity

So my problem was strictly that under the law all I had to give them was 1.5 million water. If it was so damn salty you could walk on it, that's all right. You could still count it. It was wet. And I had a real problem, because I personally knew that that wasn't right, wasn't equitable, wasn't ethically right. So on several occasions I deliberately ordered my people to send a lot of water ~~back~~ out of Lake Mead to flush the silt out of the headworks of the All-American Canal, but we always told Mexico we were going to do it so they could arrange to salvage it as it came down the river. Of course, that made New Mexico and California and Arizona [say], "You're sending our water to Mexico!"

"No," I said, "I'm flushing the silt basin."

Storey: At All-American Canal.

Dominy: But I always did it at the time when the Mexicans could use it.

Storey: When they needed water.

Dominy: When they needed water. (laughter)

Storey: Who told you they would need water, or did you just do it on a seasonal basis?

Dominy: Well, I knew what time of year they needed the water. I

knew when they wanted to irrigate.

Storey: But there wasn't any official contact going on.

Dominy: Well, it was a mess. We had one big meeting. Secretary of State [Dean] Rusk, he called me over there with the state engineers in New Mexico and Arizona, Nevada. I had explained that I had planned to send some water down to flush the silt. The New Mexico state engineer, "That's our water! That's our water!"

I said, "Now, excuse me. You didn't listen carefully. I said I'd already violated the flood control pool, and I have excess storage at Lake Mead above the pool level. This is the water I'm sending down the river."

Storey: "I would have been operating outside of my operations plan if I didn't."

Dominy: I deliberately invaded the flood pool, and now I'm going to release that water to flush the silt. Of course, I did it at a time when Mexico could use it.

Storey: What about on the Rio Grande? Did we have problems there or issues there also?

Dominy: Well, we have a compact, like I say. It was reached at the same time.

Storey: But did it cause us any problems?

Dominy: No. We had a boundary commission that supervised the Rio Grande and the releases to the Colorado. That was a cinch job that somebody had, lived in El Paso and monitored this treaty.

Storey: Was that when we were building -- not building, but providing the design assistance for like Falcon Dam and those, or was that earlier? I've forgotten the dates on those.

Dominy: I'm sure that boundary commissioner was there right from the time they had that treaty with Mexico.

Storey: But they had a bunch of dams that they built along the border there, and we helped in the design of some of those.

Dominy: Yeah. I wasn't personally involved in that.

Reclamation's Art Program

Storey: When you were Commissioner, I believe the art program was done. Do you remember anything--

Dominy: One of them over there?

Norman Rockwell and Reclamation's Art Program

Storey: Yeah. The Norman Rockwell view of Glen Canyon, as a matter of fact.

Dominy: Right. Right.

Storey: Bud Rusho told me the story about getting that Navajo family to go and pose.

Dominy: I met Rockwell and his wife. When they agreed to come down there, I planned a trip so I'd be there when they were there. After he looked at the dam and the surroundings, he said to me, he says, "Commissioner," he said, "I don't paint objects. I paint people. I'm miscast on this assignment," he said.

So that's when I told him, I said, "Well, paint people. Paint them in front of the dam. Pose them in such a way that you get the dam in the picture. That's all I want." That's when Rusho moved in and found the Navajos and the dog and so on.

Storey: Where did the art program come from?

Dominy: I didn't personally take credit for it. It grew up with my publicity staff there. Ottis Peterson was my chief mouthpiece. I think his assistant was the guy who dreamed up the art program. I can't remember his name right now. I had a two-man publicity staff, Ottis Peterson and this other guy.

Storey: Were you involved in it in any other way?

Dominy: No, not except to approve it.

Storey: Didn't meet any of the other artists or anything?

Dominy: No. I didn't meet any of the other artists -- well, I think

some of them came through my office on the way out to a project or something. I probably met some of them, yeah. Rockwell was the most famous one, so I took a personal interest in that.

Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon

Storey: You served as Commissioner under, what, four presidents?

Dominy: Right.

Storey: Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon.

Dominy: Right.

Storey: How did their attitudes toward Reclamation vary?

President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Reclamation

Dominy: Well, Eisenhower, of course, he wasn't a hands-on President as far as Reclamation was concerned. He took a personal interest in pushing the button to get Glen Canyon started and that sort of thing, because that was politically popular, the political thing to do.

President John F. Kennedy and Reclamation

Kennedy was likewise. He wasn't a Westerner, but he was politician enough to know how important the Reclamation program was to the West and, therefore, to the nation, and he was very happy to participate in

groundbreakings and that sort of thing. I have two pictures in my collection where I'm seated right behind him when he's at the podium on groundbreakings, one in California and one at Colorado.

Storey: He was at San Luis, for instance. He dedicated Whiskeytown.

President Lyndon B. Johnson and Reclamation

Dominy: Yeah. Johnson, of course, was a Westerner and was a hands-on man as far as anything in the West was concerned.

President Richard M. Nixon and Reclamation

Nixon couldn't care less. He was a Californian, but as a congressman or senator he never took any active interest in the Bureau of Reclamation or water projects. He was from Whittier, southern California.

Of course, I was only there a year. I resent very much the statement that I got fired. I wrote Nixon in May of 1969 . . .

END SIDE 2, TAPE 2. APRIL 8, 1996.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 3. APRIL 8, 1996.

Storey: This is tape three of an interview by Brit Storey with Floyd E. Dominy on April 8, 1996.

You were saying that you resent --

"I resent the inference that I got fired as commissioner. . . ."

Dominy: I resent the inference that I got fired as Commissioner. I wrote Nixon in May. He was inaugurated for his first term in January, and in May I wrote him a letter saying that I would retire from the Federal Government at the end of the year, the first of December. I said, "Obviously, if you want to replace me as Commissioner prior to that time, I will be fully cooperative with your desires." Well, he didn't replace me as Commissioner, and I served until December 1, 1969, just like I told him in May that I would stay in government until that date. So there's the inference that I got fired, that they put in *Cadillac Desert* is completely false.

Storey: It's also in Russell Martin's *[A Story]* ~~*River*~~ *That Stands Like a Dam.*

Dominy: Yeah. He just took it out of the same thing.

Storey: Said that Jim Watt was sent to dispose of you.

Dominy: That's completely crap. James Watt, in those days, was a ~~flunky~~ political appointee scrambling around in Interior as an assistant to assistants to assistants. He had no standing whatever. It's complete nonsense.

Labor Union Issues During Dominy's Term as Commissioner

Storey: One of the issues that comes up often when I'm talking

to current managers in Reclamation are union issues.

Dominy: Union?

Storey: Yeah. Unions within Reclamation, especially in the larger projects like Hoover and Grand Coulee and so on. Did you have any contact--

Dominy: You mean Federal Government employee unions?

Storey: Yes, I do.

Dominy: I had no problem with them whatever, and the only contact I had with them, when I wanted to build a Federal office building for the Bureau, the Bureau of Reclamation Employees Union in Denver supported me wholeheartedly on that. They didn't come to me and I didn't come to them, but when they discovered I was trying to get a building, they were wholeheartedly in support of it.

Storey: But you never ran into issues with unions at powerplants or anything like that?

Dominy: No. Never. Not one time. Didn't even know they existed. As far as I was concerned, I had no participation for or against.

National Environmental Policy Act's Effects on Reclamation

Storey: As you were leaving Reclamation in '69, the National

Environmental Policy Act was winding its way through Congress, and I gather Stewart Udall thought that was one of his contributions, but, of course, it's been pointed out that we started Glen Canyon within three years after the authorization. The appropriation. Excuse me.

Dominy: It was authorized in '56[81] and we got started almost immediately.

Storey: So it was the authorization.

Dominy: Yeah.

Storey: It's been pointed out that because of NEPA [National Environmental Protection Act] we don't begin projects as quickly.

Dominy: Oh, of course not.

Storey: Do you have any perspectives on that?

Dominy: Oh, my God. I made a speech several years after I was retired. They got me out to some event in the Missouri Basin area. And I took the Missouri Basin Pick-Sloan Authorization Act.[82] Including the maps and everything else, it was about that thick.

Storey: About a third of an inch thick.

81. Authorization for Glen Canyon was included in the Colorado River Storage Project act in 1956.

82. The Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program was authorized by Section 9 of the Flood Control Act of 1944 (Act of December 22, 1944, ch. 665, 58 Stat. 887).

Dominy: Right. And I took it out there and waved it and I said, "This is the act of Congress that authorized the famous Missouri Basin Project, the Pick-Sloan Plan." I had the environmental impact statements for a little project in Wyoming that stood up a stack about this high. (laughter)

Storey: About a foot high.

Dominy: I said, "Here's what you go through now if you try to get even a small project authorized." I said, "Under today's planning, no way could you ever build the Missouri River Basin Project, no way could you ever get it authorized."

Storey: Well, what haven't I asked you that I should have asked you?

Dominy: I don't know.

Storey: Which skeleton didn't I rattle?

Dominy: Do you know the history of my federal building?

Storey: Yes, I believe you talked about that last time.

Dominy: That was one of my proudest moments. I had to whip an awful lot of people to get that. Then I had to violate all the rules to go direct to Congress. (laughter)

Storey: Yeah. You did that for your building and for your airplane, as I recall.

Dominy: Right. Right.

You said you'd read three books, and I thought you were going to quiz me about what you'd read in those books.

Storey: Well, I have as much as I saw issues that I thought ought to be addressed. Is there anything in there that you think needs to be corrected, from your point of view?

Dominy: You read those three books, I'm sure you'd find--you say McPhail--

Storey: Yeah. McPhee.

Dominy: McPhee.

Storey: *Encounters With the Archdruid.*

Dominy: Yeah. You'd say McPhee was fair. He was impartial. He had no preconceived idea about Dominy prior to undertaking the writing. You can't say that about the other two guys.

Storey: Marc Reisner and Russell Martin.

Dominy: Right. You'd have to say those sons of bitches were pretty prejudiced against Dominy before they even started writing about it, wouldn't you say?

Storey: I didn't think that about Russell so much, but I thought some of his conclusions were a little off the wall.

Dominy: Right. Right.

Storey: You know, Martin started out saying, "Actually what we have are two sides of an issue where both feel they're correct and they're trying to do the proper thing, given the circumstances."

Dominy: You might want to get a copy of this. Let me show you this -- from Salt Lake.

Storey: Your video?

Dominy: Yeah.

Storey: Well, let me ask you before you get up, whether or not researchers can use the information on these tapes and the resulting transcripts.

Dominy: Oh, of course.

Storey: Good. Thank you very much.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 3. APRIL 8, 1996.
END OF INTERVIEWS

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