



JOHN W. KEYS III
COMMISSIONER, BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
July 17, 2001-April 15, 2006

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS
JOHN W. KEYS III

1994-2006

Denver, Colorado
2007



**STATUS OF INTERVIEWS:
OPEN FOR RESEARCH**



Interviews Conducted by:
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Senior Historian
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Oral History Program
Bureau of Reclamation
Processed: 2006-2007
Printed and Bound: 2008

SUGGESTED CITATION:

KEYS, JOHN W., III, ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW.
Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation Oral History Interviews conducted by Brit Allan Story, Senior Historian, Bureau of Reclamation, from 1994 to 2006, in Denver, Colorado; Boise, Idaho; Washington, D.C.; and Moab, Utah. Edited by Brit Allan Storey. Repository for the record copy of the interview transcript is the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

JOHN W. KEYS III	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	i
STATEMENT OF DONATION	xiii
INTRODUCTION	xv
BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF JOHN W. KEYS III	xvii
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS	1
Early Life and Education	1
Early Acquaintance with Reclamation Projects	1
Decides to Seek a Job in the West	1
How the Decision to Become a Civil Engineer Was Made	2
Chose to Go to Georgia Tech	3
Interviewing with Reclamation	3
Took the Engineering in Training Exam	4
Offered a Job in Ogden, Utah	4
Life and Reclamation in Utah	5
Enters the Rotation Engineer Program	6
Assigned to the Hydrology Branch	6
Doing Seepage Loss Studies	6
Sizing Reservoirs	7
Assigned to Develop Computer Operation Studies for the Central Utah Project	7
Works on an M.S. at Brigham Young University	10
Development of Pseudo One and Pseudo Two, Computer Programs	12
Career Plan Developed in Utah	13
Moves to Bismarck and Becomes Branch Chief in Hydrology	14
How the Family Fit into Utah	17
Water Skiing on the Canal at Roosevelt, Utah	17
Doing a Seepage Study in the Altamont Area	17
Moving to Bismarck	18
Flood Studies	21
Precipitation Studies	22
Degradation Studies	23
Flood Plains	23
Ed Lundburg Was Project Manager in Bismarck	24
First Environmental Impact Statement for the Garrison Diversion Project	24
Status of a Project Manager	25
Regional Directors	25
Planning Projects, Then and Now	27
Concerns about the Garrison Diversion Project	28
Echo Park and Floyd Dominy	29
Commissioner Floyd Dominy	30

Commissioner Gil Stamm	30
Commissioner Dennis Underwood	30
Moves to Billings in 1971 as Regional Hydrologist	31
Finished Master's Degree in 1971	32
It Took a Long Time to Be Accepted in Bismarck	32
Billings Accepted Newcomers Quickly	33
Reclamation Grade Structure During Early Career	34
How Work Changed Between the Project and Regional Offices	35
Budgeting	35
Dealing with Problem Employees	36
Water Quality Studies on the Garrison Diversion Project	37
Reclamation and the Oahe Project	38
Poor Public Involvement and the Oahe Project	39
Evolution of Reclamation's Planning Processes	42
The 1972 Flood in the Black Hills	43
Bucket Survey in the Black Hills	43
Modifications of Buffalo Bill Dam	44
Providing Water to the Coal Fields in the Area of Buffalo Bill Dam	45
Appearance on <i>60 Minutes</i>	45
Yellowstone River	46
Dam in Paradise Valley	46
Evolution of Environmental Documents under NEPA	47
Environmental Statements Required Alternatives Were Added to Work	48
Trying to Get Around NEPA	49
"NEPA Was a Cultural Shift for this Country..."	50
Began Refereeing Football in Billings	53
Asked to Judge Rodeo	54
Hobbies and Flying	54
Leaves Billings to Be Chief Hydrologist in Denver	55
Became Head of the Colorado River Water Quality Office	56
Title I and Title II of the Salinity Control Act	56
O'Neill Unit on Niobrara River in Nebraska	57
Original NEPA Work on the Garrison Diversion Unit	58
Desalting and Effects on Landowners	60
Yuma Desalting Plant	63
Never Liked the Denver Office	65
Applied to Be Assistant Regional Director in Billings	65
Applied for Management Training	65
Applied to Be Assistant Regional Director in Boise in 1980	66
The Job of Assistant Regional Director	67
Didn't Travel Much as Assistant Regional Director	67
Why Regional Directors must Travel So Much	69
Salmon Issues on the Klamath River	69
Oroville-Tonasket Irrigation District	70
Gold Plating Good Projects and Raising Costs	74
Projects That Come in under Cost	74
Tough Jobs	76
Project Offices in Pacific Northwest Region	76

Ochoco Dam Replacement	77
Keith Higginson as Commissioner	79
Robert Broadbent as Commissioner	80
Dale Duvall as Commissioner	80
Reclamation Reform Act	81
Dennis Underwood as Commissioner	83
Dan Beard as Commissioner	83
Jim Ziglar Orders Reorganization of Reclamation by the Regional Directors	85
<i>Assessment '87</i>	85
Floyd Dominy as Commissioner	86
Ellis Armstrong as Commissioner	87
Gil Stamm as Commissioner	87
Teton Dam Failure Was the Low Point for Reclamation	87
Effects of the Failure of Teton Dam on Reclamation	89
Relationship of Denver Office and Regions	91
Quickly Wanted to Leave Denver	92
Dan Beard's Approach to Moving Responsibility to the Area Offices	93
How Responsibilities Are Split under Dan Beard's Reorganization	94
How Priorities Are Adjusting under Dan Beard's Reorganization	95
Combine Reclamation with the Corps?	97
Title Transfer	98
Water Rights and Storage Rights	101
Study Team to Look at Administrative Functions in Reclamation	103
Combining Upper and Lower Missouri Regional Offices	104
Amarillo Office Combined into Great Plains Region	104
The Issue of Resources Versus Money	104
Last Major Authorization Was Third Powerplant for this Region	107
Umatilla Project	107
Tri-Party Agreement for Recreation Management at Grand Coulee Reservoir	108
Power Settlement with the Colville Confederated Tribes	108
Decided Wanted to Be a Regional Director	109
How Important Contacts in D.C. Were	110
Maintaining Relations with Political Figures Key for the Region	112
There is a <i>loyalty</i> to Reclamation that I will <i>never</i> lose.	114
Commissioners of the Bureau of Reclamation	115
Gil Stamm	115
Floyd Dominy	115
Ellis Armstrong	116
Barney Bellport	116
Keith Higginson	117
Cecil Andrus and Teton Dam	117
Name Changes to Water and Power Resources Service	117
Training Program in D.C.	118
Bob Broadbent	119
Bob Olson	119
Dale Duvall	119
Reclamation Reform Act Was One of Duvall's Issues	120
Appointed Regional Director by Dale Duvall	120

Dennis Underwood	120
Dennis Underwood's "Strategic Plan"	121
Rebuilt Kirby Dam	121
Rebuilt Clear Creek Dam in Yakima	121
"... Como Dam was one that went to hell on us right at the end of an irrigation season"	121
Dan Beard	122
Jim Zigler	122
Dan Beard's Concerns about Reclamation When He Arrived	123
Eluid Martinez	123
Barney Bellport	124
We're Still Paying for Teton	125
Robert B. Jansen	125
Rod Vissia	125
Darrell Webber	126
Applied to Be Assistant Regional Director in Billings	127
Bill Lloyd	128
Harold Aldrich	128
Bob McPhail	129
Socialization Activities at Various Reclamation Offices	130
Went to Georgia Tech	133
Father Refused to Let Him Take over the Farm	133
Integration of Georgia Tech	133
Graduated from Georgia Tech in 1964	134
Had Thirteen Job Offers When He Graduated	134
Decided to Accept a Job Offer with Reclamation at Provo	134
Angers Dad by Not Applying for Job at TVA	135
Key Issues for the Region in Boise	136
Reclamation Reform Act	136
Extension of the Columbia Basin Project	136
Stabilizing the Region's Work Load	136
Oroville-Tonasket Project	136
Salmon Issue	137
Reclamation Reform Act	138
Waterspreading	140
Effects of Dan Beard's Reorganization on the Region	144
"'Big Problem Era,' like Salmon, like Waterspreading, like RRA ..."	145
CPORT Report of Dan Beard	145
"Blueprint for Reform" of Dan Beard	145
Reorganization under Dan Beard	145
Steve Clark, Jim Cole, and Jerry Gregg	146
Dan Beard Doesn't Support Recreation Activities	147
Region Not Doing Work Outside Reclamation as Formerly Was Done	147
Working with Native Americans	147
System Operation Review of the Columbia River	148
Revision of the Tri-Party Agreement for Grand Coulee	148
Participatory Democracy and Building Consensus	151

Water Rights Transfers	152
Issues Around Urbanization of Projects	153
Salmon Issues	153
Finding Water to Aid in Salmon Migration on the Snake and Columbia	153
Space-holder Contracts	154
How Managing the Water for Salmon Affects Power Production	155
Costs of the Salmon Programs	155
"Nature of Use" and Water Rights Applications	158
Reclamation Has Filed for a Change of Use of the Water in its Idaho Projects ..	159
Where Public Interest Plays into Change of Use of Water Rights	159
Idaho Requires Approval of the Legislature to Take Water out of the State	159
Staff Working on Salmon Issues for the Region	159
Competing Endangered Species	160
Management Training Program Assignments	161
Wife in Medical School	163
Hobbies and Avocations	163
Started Refereeing Football at Georgia Tech	164
Judging Rodeo	164
Moving into the SES	166
SES Review Board	166
Appointment as Regional Director Appealed	167
Making Friends When You Are a Manager	168
Plans for Retirement	169
Does Not Want to Work Further in Water Resources	169
Ochoco Dam Safety of Dams Issues	170
Como Dam Issues	172
Other Safety of Dams Issues	172
Dan Beard's Reorganization Four Years Later	173
Flattening the Organization	174
Dealing with a Downsized Budget	174
Changing Relationship with BPA	175
Revenues from Power Generation	176
WPPSS	177
BPA, Reclamation, and Salmon	177
Attempts to Appropriate Water Developed to Assist Salmon in Migration	179
Some Interests Wanted Even More Water out of Idaho for Salmon	179
Issues in Managing the Region	181
Working with Indian Tribes in the Region	182
Diversity Issues	184
Travel to Meet with Water Users	187
You Have to Visit Reclamation Offices	187
Coordination with Other Federal Bureaus	187
Traveling Is the <i>Pits</i>	189
Using Staff During Travel	189
They Always Send a Bird Dog with Me to Washington Meetings	190
Splitting Responsibilities among the Regions and Area Offices	191
How Staffing Has Shifted Around among the Offices in the Region	192
Effects of Automation on the Powerplants	192

Union Issues in the Region	193
Area Managers in the Pacific Northwest Region	194
Project Office on Broadway in Boise	195
Oroville-Tonasket Project	197
Claim Settlement on the Oroville-Tonasket Project	198
Salmon Issues	202
Yakima Enhancement Project	202
Salmon, Idaho Power Company and FERC Relicensing	204
FERC and the Salmon Issue on the Snake	205
Public Utility Districts in the State of Washington	208
SNAKE RIVER RESOURCES REVIEW (SR3)	210
Idaho Irrigators Did Not Want Others to Know What They Were Doing	210
Dan Beard and Eluid Martinez as Commissioner	213
Relationships with Customers	214
Dan Beard Expected Reclamation to Work with All Water Users, Not Just Irrigators	215
Yakima Basin Fish Issues	216
Fish Screens and Ladders	219
Umatilla Project	220
Dan Beard's Attempt to Make Reclamation a Water Resources Management Bureau	222
Recent Flooding in the Region	224
Protecting Salmon Redds on the Cle Elum River	226
Announcing His Retirement	228
Planning for Retirement	228
Salmon Issues	231
Protecting Water Reclamation Paid for for Salmon Runs	237
The Problems with Salmon Issues	239
Plans for Retirement	240
How the Issues and Related Travel Have Changed over the Years	241
Recreation Issues	242
Issues with BLM, Withdrawn Lands, and Recreation	243
Catch a Special Thrill (CAST)	244
Accessibility Data Management System (ADMS)	244
National Water Resources Association (NWRA)	245
Reclamation Reform Act (RRA) Was Really Written for California	245
State Associations of NWRA	246
Idaho Water Users Association	246
Reclamation Reform Act	247
Waterspreading–Unauthorized Use	248
Relationships among the Offices in Reorganization	249
Area Offices Were Very Successful in the Reorganization	250
Relations with the Technical Service Center in Denver	250
Jim McClure, Mark Hatfield, “Scoop” Jackson	253
Bob Smith, Peter DeFazio	253
Helen Chenoweth	253
Regional Hydrologist in Billings	254
It Was Cold in Bismarck	254

Life in Billings	255
Did Not like Living in Denver	256
Didn't like Being Chief Hydrologist for Reclamation	256
Career Planning	256
How Became Interested in Water Projects	257
Activities in Retirement	259
Flying up into Canada	260
Being Considered for the Job of Commissioner	261
Talked to Various People about Support for a Nomination	262
Interviews at the White House and Department of the Interior	263
Roger Patterson's Interviews Did Not Go Well	264
Offered Job by Secretary of the Interior	266
Hearing in the Senate	268
Coached by Spofford Canfield Throughout the Nomination Process	268
Flight up into Canada	273
Choosing Who to Call While Waiting out the Nomination Process	276
Preparing for the Senate Hearing	278
Did a Mock Hearing	279
Questions During the Senate Hearing	280
Immediate Issues When Became Commissioner	281
Klamath Falls	281
CALFED	282
4.4 Plan for Southern California	282
Job Appointments That Had to Be Made	283
Recap of Positions Held During Reclamation Career	287
"I thought I knew politics before"	289
What Was Learned from Various Commissioners	291
Admiration for Former Commissioners Has Risen	291
Biggest Challenges in the next Few Years	292
Endangered Species Act Will Be Changed Because it Is on a Collision Course with Water	292
Issues Related to Congress Assigning Projects to Reclamation Without Feasibility Studies	293
September 11, 2001, Attack on the World Trade Center	295
Developing a Security and Law Enforcement Program	297
Closure of the Road over Folsom Dam	301
Reclamation's Centennial	303
Wanted to Attend All the Local Centennial Events	305
4.4 Plan for Southern California	306
Quantification Settlement Agreement	306
The Issues of Beneficial Use and California's Allocation of Colorado River Water	308
Klamath Issues	309
Middle Rio Grande Issues and the Silvery Minnow	311
Drought in the West	313
Water 2025: Preventing Crises and Conflict in the West	314
Bureau of Reclamation's Centennial	315
California and the 4.4 Initiative	317

Las Vegas and the 4.4 Initiative	319
Klamath Project Issues	320
Water Right Settlement with the Nez Perce Tribe	321
Silvery Minnow Issues	323
Endangered Species Issues on the Platte River	324
Endangered Species Issues on the Colorado River	325
<i>Ciénega de Santa Clara</i>	325
Colorado River Water Quality Act, 1975	326
Reclamation's Budget	327
Water 2025: Preventing Crises and Conflict in the West	327
Issues Related to the Animas-La Plata Project	329
New Cost Estimate for Animas-La Plata Project	329
" . . . they said, 'The new cost estimate for Animas-La Plata is \$500 million.'" . . .	329
"Don't you guys tell anybody this. <i>Go back and redo it and be sure that you're right.</i> . . .	330
"	330
Dealing with Interior and the Congress as the Animas-la Plata Estimates Were Checked	330
Animas-La Plata Was Authorized on a Bad Cost Estimate	331
Effects of Abolition of Reclamation Instructions by Dan Beard	331
" . . . we told him, 'Hey, you better finish this project, by god, within the cost estimate that we got now. Yes, it can be indexed, but <i>your</i> cost estimate is \$500 million, and <i>that's</i> what we're going to finish this project as.'"	331
Issues Relating to Construction of Animas-La Plata by the Weeminuche Construction Authority of the Southern Ute Mountain Tribe	332
Barring Anything Unforseen, Animas-la Plata Should Finish On-time and Within the New Budget	333
Animas-La Plata Issues Caused Assistant Secretary Bennett Raley to Distrust the Denver Office	333
"To him it meant that the guys didn't know how to do good cost estimates. And, you know, we struggled with cost estimates the whole time I was there. . . ."	333
Managing for Excellence Studies	334
Mark Limbaugh	336
" . . . I couldn't have done my job without Mark Limbaugh. . . ."	337
Mark Limbaugh becomes Assistant Secretary for Water and Science	337
When Became Commissioner Thought He Could Work with Anyone	338
Tom Weimer	339
Bennett Raley's Involvement with the Colorado River	339
Quantification Settlement Agreement	339
Met [MWD] Built Diamond Valley to Store Water	341
Dennis Underwood and MWD	342
Dennis Underwood is Named General Manager of MWD	343
Roger Patterson Has Now Gone to Work for MWD	343
Nebraska's Over-development of Groundwater Resources	344
Klamath Project Issues	345
"The locals really wanted us . . . building <i>big</i> storage. . . ."	346
"It was like feeding jelly beans to the bear. You know, you give him your handful of jelly beans, and, when he gets done with them, he starts up your arm. . . ."	346

" . . . about 500,000 acres of land in that basin . . . 240 of it is the Federal project. The other 260 is on private water rights. . . . The Federal project bore the whole brunt of it. . . ."	346
" . . . there's still more acres being irrigated than should be. . . ."	347
" . . . it's a killer job for area managers. . . ."	347
Hupa Exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian	348
Middle Rio Grande Project and the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow	348
Prior and Paramount Water Rights of the Pueblos	349
Reclamation is Responsible to Maintain the Channel in the Aggrading Rio Grande	349
Combination of Dam Safety Officer Responsibilities with New Design, Cost Estimating, and Construction Functions	351
Why an O&M Officer Is Not Necessary	352
Reorganizations During His Term as Commissioner	353
Increasing Capacity on the Central Valley Project to Make the CALFED Program Work	354
Black Rock Dam Study for the Yakima Project	355
Water 2025	355
Works with Bennett Raley to Develop Strategic Plan	356
Fiscal and Authorization Problems for Water 2025	357
Issues with the Warren Act	358
Issues with Reclamation's Rural Water Supply Projects	359
" . . . Hurricane Katrina did us a big favor in Reclamation on desalting. . . ."	363
Title XVI of P. L. 102-575	364
Reclamation's Budget	365
"Bennett Raley was the assistant secretary, and he came to us and he said, 'I want you to eliminate a program . . .'"	366
Changes in Irrigation Efficiency	368
9/11, Reclamation, Security, and Law Enforcement	370
Reimbursability and Security Costs	372
Issues in Dealing with Security and Law Enforcement at the Dams and Powerplants	373
Training Reclamation's Managers at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC)	373
Issues at Folsom Dam	375
Bypass Bridge at Folsom Dam	375
Security at Hoover Dam and Other Locations	376
Hurricane Katrina and Reclamation	377
Gila River Indian Community Water Rights Settlement	379
Nez Perce Water Rights Settlement	380
Central Utah Project	382
Central Utah Settlement Act	382
"It should have been a wake-up call for Reclamation, but some of our folks just don't pay attention. . . ."	382
Eliminating the Drainage (Salinity) Program	383
"You <i>physically cannot</i> irrigate without drainage . . ."	384
Issues Involved in Disposing of Agricultural Wastewater from the Central Valley Project	385

<i>Ciénega de Santa Clara</i>	385
The States Want Reclamation to Run the Desalting Plant on the 100,000 Acre Feet of Saline Water That We Bypass to the <i>Ciénega De Santa Clara</i>	386
Teck Cominco Mine Slag Dumped into the Columbia River and Lake Roosevelt Behind Grand Coulee	386
What was accomplished that he liked	389
"... and then that damn Reclamation Reform Act came through, and it made enforcers out of us. . . ."	389
How Dan Beard and Eluid Martinez Interacted with NWRA	389
"Okay, the first order of business we're going to do is get back so that they [water organizations] trust us"	390
"Colorado River Water Users Association . . . got <i>mad</i> at us when we scheduled meetings around their convention. . . ."	391
"... by the time I retired I thought we had accomplished getting back close to the districts"	391
Title XVI	391
Improving Relations with Other Interior Bureaus	392
Water Rights Settlement for the Black Canyon of the Gunnison	393
Changing Operations at Glen Canyon Dam for Environmental Purposes	394
Truckee-Carson [Newlands] Project	394
Work In Hawaii on Water Systems	395
"... in the end the state ended up owning a deteriorated irrigation system" ..	396
Drought Work on the Island of Hawaii	398
Visiting China and Three Gorges Dam	398
"The Chinese really wanted us back in there doing consulting with them <i>on</i> . . . Three Gorges, and <i>on</i> the environment, and <i>on</i> endangered species problems. . . ."	399
"They had to move millions of people. They cut off several runs of fish and got in the way of several different habitats of fish, and so forth. <i>And</i> , building Three Gorges, potentially, could make a cesspool out of a fifty-some odd million acre-foot reservoir. . . ."	399
"They wanted to talk to us about the environmental effects of putting that dam in and catching the sewage from all of those places up above, and about a couple of the endangered species that they had <i>cut off</i> from their native habitat. . . ."	400
Touring the Locks at Three Gorges Dam	401
Touring the Powerhouse at Three Gorges Dam	401
"I would have to say that Three Gorges is just the mother of all projects. . . it's just humongous. . . ."	401
"... they <i>want</i> help to deal with some of the problems that they're having with the project. . . ."	402
Working with Assistant Secretary Bennett Raley Was Hard	403
Family Difficulties in 2004 and 2005	403
Special Events the Commissioner Is Invited to Attend	406
South Dakota Buffalo Roundup	406
Congressional Sportsman's Caucus	407
"... the holiday that just <i>characterizes</i> Washington, D.C., is July Fourth. . . ." ..	407
White House Kick-off for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial	407

Tours and Events at the White House	408
George W. Bush's Second Inauguration	408
Went to See Mark Russell on Inauguration Night	409
Easter Egg Rolls at the White House	410
"The centennial was a great time for me. . . ."	410
Maryanne Bach	411
Mike Ryan	412
Bob Johnson	412
Filling Vacancies Upon Arrival at Reclamation – Rick Gold and Kirk Rogers . . .	413
Bill McDonald	414
Approvals for SES Slots Where Candidates Have Not Completed the SES Feeder Program	415
Retirement this Time Was Not as Smooth as in 1998	416
Mark Limbaugh and Bill Rinne as Deputy Commissioners	416
Larry Todd	417
Making the Chief of Staff Position Non-political	418
Bob Quint as Chief of Staff and in Iraq	418
Eileen Salenick	419
Filling the Congressional Affairs Position	420
Gertel Harris-Brace	421
Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton	421
Retirement Activities as Commissioner of Reclamation	424
Activities after Retirement	425
Recomputation of Retirement Benefits upon Leaving Washington, D.C.	426

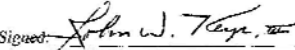
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**STATEMENT OF DONATION
OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS OF
JOHN W. KEYS III**

1. In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms, conditions, and restrictions set forth in this instrument, I, John W. Keys III, (hereinafter referred to as "the Donor"), of Moab, Utah, and Washington, D. C., do hereby give, donate, and convey to the National Archives and Records Administration (hereinafter referred to as "the National Archives"), acting for and on behalf of the United States of America, all of my rights and title to, and interest in the information and responses (hereinafter referred to as "the Donated Materials") provided during the interviews conducted December 8 and December 9, 1994; on March 23, March 24, July 24, and July 25, 1995; and on November 18 and November 19, 1997; and April 22, 1998, in Boise, Idaho; on September 11, 2002, and June 19, 2003, at my office in the Main Interior Building in Washington, D.C.; on February 5, 2004, in the offices of Reclamation on the Denver Federal Center; and at my home in Moab, Utah, on August 15-17, 2006, and prepared for deposit with the National Archives and Records Administration in the following format: cassette tapes and transcripts of those tapes. This donation includes, but is not limited to, all copyright interests I now possess in the Donated Materials.
2. Title to the Donated Materials is transferred to the Archivist of the United States. The Archivist shall accept by signing below.
3.
 - a. It is the intention of the Archivist to make Donated Materials available for display and research as soon as possible, but the Donor places the following restrictions upon their use: oral history tapes, transcripts, interviewer notes, and related materials shall not be available for research or review until one year after Donor retires from Reclamation.
 - b. The Archivist may, subject only to restrictions placed upon him by law or regulation, provide for the preservation, arrangement, repair, and rehabilitation, duplication, and reproduction, description, exhibition, display, and servicing of the Donated Materials as may be needful and appropriate.
 - c. For Donated Materials with restrictions, the National Archives will provide access to the Bureau of Reclamation, if the Bureau of Reclamation presents written permission of the Donor specifying the types of information and proposed uses of said information.
4. Copies of the Donated Materials that do not have Donor restrictions on their use, may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the National Archives, including the Bureau of Reclamation. Copies of unrestricted Donated Materials may also be provided to researchers. The Bureau of Reclamation may retain copies of tapes, transcripts, and other materials if there are no Donor restrictions on their use, and Reclamation may obtain copies of tapes, transcripts, and other materials at the time that Donor restrictions on the use of the materials ends.

5. The Archivist may dispose of Donated Materials at any time after title passes to the National Archives.

Date: Aug. 16, 2006

Signed: 
John W. Keys III

INTERVIEWER: _____
Brit Allan Storey

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

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Archivist of the United States

INTRODUCTION

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

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

A particularly interesting aspect of this interview is its clear demonstration of Reclamation's spoken shorthand regarding such things as projects, rivers, and dams. Reclamation staff, and water professionals in the West in general, say Hoover, the Colorado, Yakima, the Yakima, Grand Coulee, Glen or Glen Canyon, Central Valley, delta or bay delta, and a multitude of other commonly understood terms. Adding even more complexity to this shorthand is that in some cases the meaning must be selected depending on context. These examples, respectively, mean: Hoover Dam, the Colorado River, Yakima Project, the Yakima River or the Yakima Nation Tribes, Grand Coulee Dam, Glen Canyon Dam, the Central Valley Project or the Central Valley of California, the San Joaquin River-Sacramento River Delta on San Francisco Bay, etc. Recognizing that non-reclamation readers might look at his oral history interviews, Commissioner Keys and the editor inserted and deleted many words to assure clarity of meaning. The high volume of editorial clarifications made the text difficult to read in some locations. As a result most of the normal strikeouts and brackets to indicate additions have been removed from this copy to ease reading. A copy of the interview showing all strikeouts and additions has been deposited in the oral history file in Archives II, the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. Normal oral history editing has removed repetitive words and phrases as well as false starts from all circulated editions of the interviews.

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

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BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF JOHN W. KEYS III

March 25, 1942 – Born in Sheffield, Alabama

1964 – B.C.E. from Georgia Tech

July 1, 1964 – Started work for Reclamation at Provo, Utah. Worked in hydrology and computers.

1966-1968 – Worked on M.S.C.E. at Brigham Young University.

1968-1971 – Worked on Garrison Project in Bismarck, North Dakota, as project hydrologist.

1971 – M.S.C.E. from Brigham Young University with subsequent work at Colorado State University

1971-1975 – Regional hydrologist in Billings.

1975-1976 - Chief Hydrology in Denver.

1976-1979 - Headed the Colorado River Water Quality Office in Denver.

June 1, 1979- June 1980 - Training program in D.C. grooming for assistant regional director positions.

June 1980-1986 - Associate Regional Director in Boise.

September 16, 1986 - June 1998. - Regional Director in Boise.

June 1998-July 16, 2001 - Retired in Moab, Utah.

July 16, 2001-April 15, 2006 - Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation.

Retired in Moab, Utah

Registration—Registered Professional Engineer in North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS: JOHN W. KEYS III

Storey: This is tape one of an interview by Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, with regional director John W. Keys III, in his office in the Pacific Northwest Regional Office of the Bureau of Reclamation in Boise, Idaho, on December 8, 1994. This is tape one.

Could you tell me where you were born and raised and educated, please, and how you ended up at the Bureau of Reclamation?

Early Life and Education

Keys: I was born in Sheffield, Alabama, March 25th, 1942, attended public schools in Sheffield. We lived on a small farm about twelve miles outside of town, and my dad was a cotton, corn farmer, and then he was in the military. Then he worked for TVA as a concrete superintendent, after having been a labor foreman and a truck driver foreman.

Graduated from Sheffield High School in 1960, went to Georgia Tech and received a bachelor of civil engineering degree,¹ June 13, 1964.

Early Acquaintance with Reclamation Projects

In 1956, when I was just starting in high school, my mother and dad and brother and I took a two-week trip to see the West from northwest Alabama. During that trip, we saw Buffalo Bill Dam in northwestern Wyoming, we saw Hoover, saw several other Reclamation projects. With the decision to study engineering, I used several Reclamation books while I was in school.

Decides to Seek a Job in the West

In 1963 and '64, I started the interviewing process to find a job. My wife and I had decided that we wanted to go West, and we decided that I would not accept a job east of the Mississippi River. And in early '64, the recruiter from the Bureau of Reclamation, who was Russ Sparks, the regional personnel officer in Billings, Montana, came to Atlanta to interview graduating engineers from Georgia Tech. I signed up for the interview, and in those days, everybody was looking for engineers to do everything. I was very fortunate to have seventeen job offers when I finished, and three of them were from west of the

1. Note that in the text of the document the information in parentheses, (), is actually on the tape. Information in brackets, [], has been added to the tape either by the editor to clarify meaning or at the request of the interviewee in order to correct, enlarge, or clarify the interview as it was originally spoken. Words have sometimes been struck out by editor or interviewee in order to clarify meaning or eliminate repetition. To make the text easier to read, text that has been struck out is printed at 50% density.

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

Mississippi, the one with the Bureau of Reclamation, one with California Highways, and the other one was Slumberger.

My wife and I decided on the job offer in Utah, on the Central Utah Project, in the hydrology branch. June of '64, we moved to Utah, to Provo, and I went to work for the Bureau of Reclamation on July the first, 1964. That's how I got with the Bureau of Reclamation.

Did you want some other early history of Reclamation?

Storey: Why did you decide that you wanted to be a civil engineer? Did you start out wanting to be a civil engineer?

How the Decision to Become a Civil Engineer Was Made

Keys: No. Well, when I started out in college, yes. When I was a freshman in high school, my dad asked me what I wanted to do. I told him that I wanted to go to Auburn University and study agriculture, and come back and take the place. He told me that he would help me go to school anywhere I wanted to, and I could study anything that I wanted to *except* for agriculture.

I was pretty good in math, and I knew the people next door who was a surveyor, and I started looking at things to do, and by the time I was a sophomore in high school, I wanted to be an engineer. I applied to Auburn and Alabama and Georgia Tech. Those are the only three schools that I applied to.

Storey: You said Auburn "in Alabama" or "and Alabama"?

Keys: And Alabama.

Storey: Okay. At Tuscaloosa.

Keys: That's right. The University of Alabama, and Auburn University, and Georgia Tech. I was accepted early by both Auburn and Alabama, because I was an Alabama resident. I was accepted at Georgia Tech in April. My dad told me that he would pay my tuition if I could make enough money to do the rest of it. I had good summer jobs through high school and through college, and was able to do that.

Storey: Did he explain to you why he didn't want to support you in the agriculture program?

Keys: Yes. Agriculture in those days was *miserable*. There were poor crop prices, cotton and corn was on a roller coaster, it was up and down. He had seen the misery in northwest Alabama that farmers had to go through, and did not want his kids to do that.

Storey: That's interesting. That's basically what happened with Rick Gold, also.

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- Keys: Oh, is that right?
- Storey: Yeah.
- Keys: Well, I know Rick very well. Rick and I have been friends ever since he came to Reclamation.
- Storey: Rick and Darrell Mach, and a number of other folks.

Why did you choose Georgia Tech instead of Auburn or Alabama?

Chose to Go to Georgia Tech

- Keys: In those days, there were three renowned engineering schools. Now, Auburn was good, and was recognized as a good engineering school, but Cal Tech, MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] and Georgia Tech were the top three. If you looked at different programs, one of them was in front of the other. For the pure engineering, there was no better in the South than Georgia Tech, for the pure engineering.
- Storey: So you went there.
- Keys: I did.
- Storey: I was just curious. I taught at Auburn for three years.
- Keys: Oh, well, 330 miles from home, didn't know another single soul in the State of Georgia. It was quite an awakening for a farm kid, but it was good experience.
- Storey: Did you have any particular professors who influenced you at Georgia Tech?
- Keys: Absolutely.
- Storey: Who were they?
- Keys: George Slaughter was a hydrologist and Dr. Willard Snyder. Those two guys got me interested in water resources. When I went to Tech, it was going to be surveying and highways. All of my summer jobs had been in surveying and highways and that was what it was going to be. I got interested in water resources and, boy, I just loved it. Did extra projects with Snyder. Snyder was a guy that came from industry and had done water resources projects all over. And there was another one. George Sauers was the soils man. Those three guys were just fantastic, really good professors.

Interviewing with Reclamation

- Storey: When Russ Sparks came, did he talk to you as a group, to you individually? How did that work?

Keys: Individually. I have the sign-up sheet that he got when he came to Tech. They were doing some cleaning out of the personnel office up there and one of the guys gave it to me.

Took the Engineering in Training Exam

But it was an individual interview. He wanted to know about my engineering credentials in school, had I taken the EIT exam, engineering in training exam, and what was my feelings on registration. So I think he was trying to see if I was a good student. I was not a *great* student, but I was a good student. I was selected into Chi Epsilon, which is the civil engineering honor society.

At first he talked to me about going to work at Yellowtail Dam, on the Bighorn River, because they were in the middle of construction of that when he was there. But by the time they came around to job offers, Yellowtail was winding down, and they were hiring in central Utah, and he sent my application forward and they made the job offer there.

Offered a Job in Ogden, Utah

But the interview was a good interview. I asked him about what they were doing, and he asked me about what I wanted to do, and why I wanted to go West. It was a pretty good interview.

Storey: What did you tell him about why you wanted to go West?

Keys: I told him about my wife and I's discussion, and about my trip in 1956 out there, and how the Bureau in those days was widely recognized as water resource, construction agency. There was a lot of turmoil in the South in those days. It was a time to look to go somewhere else.

What year did you teach at Auburn?

Storey: '67 to '70.

Keys: Well, if you taught at Auburn, where are you from?

Storey: I was born and raised in Colorado.

Keys: You've got a little twang in your accent. Must have picked it up while you were down there.

Storey: I went to graduate school at the University of Kentucky, and ended up at Auburn for three years.

Keys: I had a good friend that was ag extension man down there, Warren McCord. I finished high school with Warren. Anyway.

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- Storey: Did Reclamation pay your travel expenses to move to Utah?
- Keys: Yes.
- Storey: How did that work?
- Keys: When I finished school, my wife and I had sixteen damn dollars in the savings account left. When I talked with them and they offered me the job and I accepted, they told me that they would pay moving expenses, they would pay the mover to move my furniture and whatever I had, and they would pay me travel, like three days, I think it was, to get out there. Then they would pay me temporary quarters for, I think it was two weeks, while I found a place to live while I was there. They asked if I needed a travel advance, and I said, "Absolutely." I think they sent me a check for \$700 and some-odd dollars for travel.
- Storey: That must have looked like a lot of money.
- Keys: Oh, God, did it ever. I was married at the time, and my wife and I had one daughter. We moved out there.
- Storey: Loaded up the car and came, huh?
- Keys: 1964 Chevrolet. I had had a '57 Ford all the way through school, and it died just before graduation. We bought the first new car we ever had, and financed with GMAC with nothing down.
- Storey: To get to Utah.
- Keys: To get to Utah.
- Storey: Did you have any trouble adjusting to the West and to Utah in particular?

Life and Reclamation in Utah

- Keys: No, none whatsoever. Just like a duck to water. We had close friends that did have a lot of trouble. Utah in those days was not the Utah of today. It was a very *close* society, Mormon society. The first month we were there, lived in an apartment, then we bought a house. We borrowed money from the credit union to put a down payment on a house, because we wanted to get something started. Paid \$14,800 for our first house, and borrowed the \$800 to put down on it. It was in Orem, right next to Provo.

The neighborhood we moved into was mostly professors and teachers at BYU, Brigham Young University. We were fortunate, because most of those people had been somewhere else, and knew that there was another side of life rather than Mormonism. They were very good to us. They did not push their religion on us. I was born and raised Presbyterian; my wife was born and

raised Methodist. When we went to Utah, there was neither one in Provo or Orem, so we went to the *Episcopal* Church and we were regular church-goers, and they left us alone. We got along very well with them. We did not have trouble adjusting at all. The fact is, just the opposite, everything was there that we wanted to do in the outdoors and traveling and that sort of thing.

Storey: What was your first job?

Enters the Rotation Engineer Program

Keys: Well, the first job was rotation engineer. The first six months in the Central Utah Project Office in Provo, I was on the rotation program. Most of that time was spent in the field, with the hydrology people, the design people, with the land classifiers. Gosh, they rotated me throughout the whole office. Honestly, I got tired of it before it was over. I was ready for a permanent assignment. Six months was a long time to me then. After that, I was assigned into the hydrology branch of the planning division. I spent a lot of time in the field doing hydrology, operation studies to size facilities for the Central Utah Project.

Storey: Would you tell me more about what you did there?

Assigned to the Hydrology Branch

Keys: Well, I went in as a GS-7, and the first six months I was the 7 in rotation, and then in the hydrology branch. I worked for several different people, but Bob White was the chief of the hydrology branch. We did a lot of canal seepage studies in the Uintah Basin, where we would go out and measure the seepage loss in the canals, and then come back and design the liners to reduce the seepage. We did operation studies to size the reservoirs. We did the final sizing studies for Starvation Reservoir, which is one of the key features in the Uintah Basin portion of the project. We did work on the Salt Lake Aqueduct for the municipal supplies in the Salt Lake Valley. And we did sizing studies for Jordanelle Reservoir.

Storey: Doing what?

Keys: Well, figuring how much water we could bring across the divide from the Colorado Basin into the closed basin, into the Salt Lake Basin, and seeing how many people that water would supply in the Salt Lake Valley, the size of the pipes, the distribution system, and that sort of -- it all changed after we did that, because the basic nature of the project changed. But in those days, it was a *big* irrigation project with a little bit of M&I water. Now it's a *big* M&I project with a little bit of irrigation water.

Doing Seepage Loss Studies

Storey: How do you do a seepage loss study?

Keys: Well, it was—people these days would say it was very crude, but we would go --

We would go into the field and pick a stretch of canal that we thought was losing water, and we would put different sections in it, and we would measure the flow at the downstream and at the upstream, and compute the difference. The flow downstream was less than the flow upstream, that's how much water we were losing. Then we would take transects different places in between and try to find where it was going out. We did that all with Price Meters, current meters, to measure the flow—the little spinning thing. I have one of the old ones at home.

Sizing Reservoirs

Storey: We were talking about seepage loss studies and how you did them. You mentioned also sizing of reservoirs. Tell me what that's all about.

Keys: Well, basically, we were looking at taking Colorado River water over into the Great Basin, the closed basin, the Salt Lake Basin. When you size a reservoir, you look at the water supply in the river above, and you size the reservoir to take advantage of the spring runoff, because that's your water right, that's where you get your stored water from. If you put it too big, you never fill it; if you put it too small, you spill it every year. So we had ways to do sizing studies for and operation studies for those reservoirs.

We sized Starvation [Reservoir], which was out by Duchesne, Utah. We sized Jordanelle [Reservoir], which they *just* finished constructing last summer, the summer of '94, which is the prime water supply for the city of Salt Lake. So those were some of the sizing studies we were doing in those days.

Storey: So you're looking to use historic flow records?

Keys: Right.

Storey: To figure out what you can basically store?

Keys: That's right. You pull together all of the records, you estimate records when you have to, when you don't have them exactly where you need them, you can extrapolate and do all sorts of things to get you a flow record where you need it. You project the water needs for Salt Lake City or for the irrigation parts, and then you run a study to see if it works.

Assigned to Develop Computer Operation Studies for the Central Utah Project

That led to the next phase of my career at the Central Utah Project, when they sent me to Salt Lake City for sixty days on a detail to learn to use a computer. We actually computerized those operation studies. For about a year

I was in charge of the computer operation for the Central Utah Project. That was 1966.

Storey: So you were modelling using the computer?

Keys: That's right. Now, this is in the early, early days of using the computer. We were using old Bendix G15s, which was a paper tape kind of thing, to do tailwater studies and earthwork studies. We were using the big computer at the University of Utah to do these modelling studies for the water supply studies. We were using some old stuff up at Brigham Young University where we actually learned to wire boards, 8080 boards. In those days, there were boards inside the machine where you were actually using currents to model with, and an 8080 board had eighty holes, eighty holes one way and eighty holes the other way, and you were actually routing electrical currents around in there to model a hydrologic system. We did a lot of that.

Storey: So this was a system that was in a room or on your desk or something *there* in Salt Lake?

Keys: No. In the old days, you had these big central CPUs, central processing units, and you either put all your stuff on paper tape or you put it on punch cards, *or* you wired 8080 boards and then you took it to the computer facility and they ran it for you. Then you got the results back, and it took forever to debug a program. Then you massaged the data to get it all to run, and it took lots of time.

Storey: Where did you send your tape or your cards or your boards?

Keys: Well, we used them on the big machines at BYU and at the University of Utah.

Storey: So you were actually doing the programming to create models that you hoped were going to work.

Keys: That's right.

Storey: How did you decide whether or not your models were correctly programmed?

Keys: We used the old handwritten studies that we had done. What we would do is we would put the model together and run the old handwritten stuff to check them. If they checked out, then we started doing the other model, in other words, changing the demands, or changing the water, or changing the size of the reservoirs, or the feed canals. We did a lot of stuff with it.

Storey: You went on a sixty-day detail to the regional office.

Keys: From Provo to Salt Lake. They would not let me stay in a hotel up there. I drove back and forth in a damn Studebaker Lark for sixty days.

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- Storey: That was your car or the government car?
- Keys: Government car. Had an accident in the damn thing one time, and it took me forever to get rid of the paperwork.
- Storey: How much of a drive was that?
- Keys: Oh, about fifty miles.
- Storey: What kind of roads?
- Keys: It was before the freeway days. It was the old highway from Provo to Salt Lake City, and they wouldn't let me keep the car at home. I had to go into the lot every morning, get the thing -- this is like at six in the morning, because I had to be there at eight o'clock, start of work. Then I'd drive back after hours at night. We did not travel one way or both ways on government time. It was on my time.
- Storey: Was that a characteristic of Reclamation management in those days?
- Keys: Sure. Well, it was not a characteristic of management, it was a characteristic of the work force. In other words, we didn't question. We didn't bitch and moan because we had to do it on our own time.
- Per diem rates. I'll tell you about per diem rates when I first went to work for Reclamation. The first thirty days you got thirty bucks a day, the first thirty days out in the field. The next two weeks it dropped down to \$16, and then you dropped to \$8.60 a day for everything, motel, subsistence, etc., and so forth. \$8.60 We used to stay in—I'm trying to remember the name of the hotel² then, in Delta, Utah, three bucks a night. Three bucks a night.
- Storey: Well, let's see now. You went up there for sixty-day detail.
- Keys: Yeah. Drove back and forth every day. Fact is, my wife *never* forgave me, because one of the days I drove up there, she had our second daughter, and I was not there when she was born because of it. My wife never forgave me for that. Still mentions it to this day. (laughter)
- Storey: Well, you still have the same wife, though, it sounds like. (laughter)
- Keys: Oh, yes.
- Storey: Then this turned into a one-year job?
- Keys: Yeah. I stayed in it for a year, in charge of the computer stuff for the office. It got too big for one person and I didn't want to stay in it. I was a hydrologist. I

2. The Half Moon Hotel in Delta, Utah

was not a damn computer operator—I didn't go to school to be a computer jockey or a keypunch operator. I wanted to use it as a tool, and I told them that. I stayed with it for a year, an opening came, and I went back into hydrology full-time, but using the machines as a tool.

Storey: So you were actually doing the keypunching?

Keys: Oh, we did everything. We did the keypunching, I took it up and put it into the machines, threaded the damn paper into the machines, and got the results out, debugged the programs. Then after we got the models up and running, I went to the guys and we decided what we wanted to do. I punched the stuff in and ran the studies for the office there. Like I said, I didn't want to be a computer operator for the rest of my life.

Storey: Who else was doing this in Reclamation? Who were you talking to?

Keys: The regional office had a pretty hefty computer shop in those days. It was the *start* of the computer era, and they bought a Honeywell in Denver. Biggest mistake they ever made, because they were saddled with the thing that was obsolete probably two months after they bought it. In Salt Lake City, they were just using the big mainframes at the University of Utah, so they weren't *wedded* to a machine. Like now, we're wedded to that cyber system that's down at Denver. They're trying to get rid of that thing, because it's old—when you buy a computer system, it's, most of the time, obsolete by the time you get it installed.

Works on an M.S. at Brigham Young University

I tell you, it was a real advantage to me. Two reasons. At the same time I was also going to school to get a master's degree. I had gone to the people at BYU, and they worked a deal so that I went early mornings and at night to get my classes, and they actually scheduled classes for me and a couple of other guys to get our master's degree. I got the classwork done between '66 and '68, when I transferred out of Utah. So the advantages to me is, number one, I learned computers. I had had a little computer work at Tech, starting basics and stuff, and it let me be progressive and learn computers. Everybody was scared to damn death of computers in those days.

Storey: Yes, I remember.

Keys: Oh, Lord, it was going to take everybody's job away, and it was going to make a number out of everybody and that sort of thing. But it let me get in on the ground floor and know what they were about, know how to use them, know how to get people to use them, and that was quite an advantage.

Storey: Sounds like you learned one other very important skill, and that's how to walk away from them, when you understood how to use them. (laughter)

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- Keys: Well, that's right. That was a conscious decision. It was not something that just happened. I wanted to get out of it, because, I tell you, *I learned engineering*, because I had to learn stuff before I got it onto the machine, and I had to work them through by hand to get them on there, because I had to understand. That was a big advantage. But boy, after a while, that was burdensome. That just got old awfully fast. That was not what I wanted to do.
- Storey: Well, you were going to BYU for your master's. Let me ask you the question again. Did you have any problems there?
- Keys: No. Funny thing. When you go to BYU, you have to go and be interviewed by the bishop of the local ward where you go to school, or where you lived, so that you can go to BYU. He has to sign off before you can go, whether you're a member or a non-member of the church. I knew the bishop very well. He just lived down the street from us. My wife had to go with me. He interviewed both of us before I could go to school there. He asked me did I drink, and did I fool around. I told him "no, but I drink iced tea, and I won't give that up to go to your damn school." He said, "I think we can live with that." (laughter) We knew him very well. They expected the kids that went to school there to abide by the agreement that they signed before they went there, and we did.
- Storey: Were there any professors *there* who particularly influenced you?
- Keys: Yeah. Dr. Jim Barton and Dr. Fuhriman, Dr. Dean Fuhriman, were the two fellows that went out of their way to help me. Barton was a very good water resources; Fuhriman was a good materials person. Fuhriman, just because he was there and took an interest in me and helped me set up classes; Barton because of what he knew in water resources. Those two guys were tremendous people. You see, I didn't finish it before I was transferred. I got the classwork done between 1966 and '68, and then I was transferred to North Dakota. I transferred. I was not transferred. But I transferred --
- END TAPE 1, SIDE 1. DECEMBER 8, 1994.
BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2. DECEMBER 8, 1994.
- Keys: I finished the thesis by correspondence with Dr. Barton. It took me three years to get the thesis done.
- Storey: Now, let's see. If I'm thinking correctly, you were in Provo for maybe a year, then you were in the regional office for a year?
- Keys: No. All of the time I was still in Provo. I went to the regional office for the sixty days on detail to learn to use computers. Then I was back at Provo doing the computer work for the Central Utah Project Office.
- Storey: In Provo.
- Keys: In Provo.
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- Storey: Oh, not in the regional office.
- Keys: No, no. I drove back and forth to Salt Lake a lot to use the computers, all of my work was in—all of the time I was in the Provo office.
- Storey: Then you got out of computer work basically.
- Keys: Yes. I was in hydrology for two years, then a year in computers, and then a year back in hydrology, the four years that I was in Utah.
- Storey: Doing the same sorts of things you had done before?
- Keys: Yes, except with a lot more responsibility. When I started out I was a [GS-]7, and after a year I got my GS-9, when I was a 7, I was working for a fellow who was a 9, and when I was a 9—and that fellow's name was Roe Allman—and I ended up supervising him later. But we were doing the canal seepage studies and I worked for him, and then Bob White was the branch chief, and I worked for him, indirectly. He was a 12, and I was a 9, there was an 11 supervising me, whose name was Lee McQuivey. I worked for him for quite a while that next year.
- Then when I was doing the computer work, I actually worked directly for the planning chief, who was Ed Wiscomb, chief of planning. Then when I went back to doing the hydrology for the last year, I was an 11, working directly for Bob White, who was the branch chief at that time.
- Storey: Were you supervising people then?
- Keys: When I was the 11, I supervised three people.
- Storey: Doing what?
- Keys: Oh, they did the dogwork of the operations studies. They did the keypunching and the modelling. We did more of the plan-formulation-type work.
- Storey: But were there other offices in Reclamation who were doing the same kind of computer modelling?
- Keys: Oh, absolutely. See, we were just one project office on the Central Utah Project. I knew people all around that were -- we had quite a network in those days of what they were doing and we would swap computer programs. The Denver office, I got a lot of programs out of Denver that we used in those days. Had to do a lot of conversions so that we could use them on our systems, but worked closely with some of the Denver people.
- Storey: Do you remember any names of the people who were doing this kind of work.

Development of Pseudo One and Pseudo Two, Computer Programs

Keys: Oh, absolutely. Gene Christofono was perhaps the greatest wizard on computers that Reclamation ever knew, in the early days. He wrote Pseudo One and Pseudo Two. P-S-U-E-D-O. And those two programs were light-years ahead of everything else, because they did tailwater studies, water surface profiles, that in the past it took you two days to do one trial of a water surface profile. And that thing, you put it in, and it just -- whoof, it ran it.

Right now you could go out into my office here and ask one of the young engineers to sit down and by hand compute a water surface profile. Can't do it. *Nobody* knows how to do them anymore, because it's so easy on the machines. But in those days we were doing them by hand. And Christofono took the most difficult chore that any of us ever had to do and put it on the computer.

Storey: And made it simple.

Keys: And made it simple. You betcha. Bob Strand and the sediment people, Bob Strand and Ernie Pemberton, and Whit Borland, they did a lot of computer work on sediment transport, degradation, erosion, and water surface profiles. Christofono worked for Whit in those days.

Storey: Before we go on, tell me what a water surface profile is.

Keys: It's the water surface level as it flows down a river. In other words, it has to have slope on it so it'll run downhill, and you're computing the profile of the water surface as it goes down the river. The reason you need to know that is you need to know how high to make the bridge so that the water will go through it, so that you know how high it is, whether it'll divert out into the canals or not and that sort of thing.

Storey: Okay, good. Who else?

Keys: Oh, those were some of the Denver guys. Those were the ones that I remember the most.

Storey: What about in other offices?

Keys: Mike Clinton was working some stuff for other regional office people in those days. Mike Clinton, his dad was *Frank* Clinton, who was one of the old regional directors. He and I are about the same age, except he's already retired from Reclamation, works for Bookman-Edmondson now. But he was doing a lot of the same kind of work for other offices in the region. I don't know, I can't remember who was doing that work for Grand Junction in those days, but Mike is the one that I remember.

Storey: Did you have a career plan --

Career Plan Developed in Utah

Keys: Yes.

Storey: –when you were in Provo? What was your career plan?

Keys: Oh, absolutely. My career plan was to work in the projects for a while–

Storey: In Provo.

Keys: –in Provo and I wanted to work in the projects, and it didn't have to be Utah, for a period of time, then I wanted to go to a regional office, then I wanted to go to Denver and do research. Denver in those days, to me, was research and big designs. I wanted to do that. It changed as I went along, but that was what I wanted to do, and I did it.

Storey: At what level did you want to be in the Denver office?

Keys: It didn't matter. I just wanted to go down there.

Storey: You wanted a variety of experience in different levels of the organization.

Keys: Yes. And after I had worked in Denver some time, I wanted to go overseas to do some overseas work and that sort of thing, to use what I had learned. Of course, that totally changed also. But my plan was to work at the projects, then at the region, then go to Denver. Basically, I did that.

Storey: Were you pursuing that goal when you decided that you wanted to leave Provo?

Moves to Bismarck and Becomes Branch Chief in Hydrology

Keys: No, not really. I wanted to be a branch chief, and I wanted a raise. The job ad came for the branch chief for hydrology in a *new* planning office that they were forming in Bismarck, North Dakota. Now, the Garrison Diversion Unit had been planned since the late thirties, but they were looking to finalize the plans and get it going, and they re-formed a planning division up there. Warren Weber had been selected to be the planning chief in Bismarck for the Garrison Project, and he hired a hydrologist as his branch chief, he hired an economist, a geologist, a report writer, a soil scientist, and formed that planning division from scratch. He selected me to be his hydrology branch chief.

Storey: Did you know him before?

Keys: No, I did not. I was twenty-six years old, and he didn't know whether he should hire me or not. He called Phil Gibbs, who was the regional hydrologist in those days, and said, "What do you think?"

Gibbs says, "Hire the young guy. You can't go wrong with the young guy." He didn't know me from Adam either, but he decided to hire me.

Storey: This would be the project construction office, really, for the Garrison [Diversion Project]?

Keys: Well, it was, but we were a planning office, inside the construction office, inside the project office.

Storey: You often hear stories, talking to Reclamation employees, about how staff moved with project construction engineers. Did you see any of that?

Keys: Oh, yes. I was not one, but I saw a lot of it. Oh, you betcha, especially the construction offices. The project office for Garrison was not the construction office, but everything that was done there was to prepare for construction.

You know, I'm very biased, of course, about that project office in Bismarck, about the planning, but after we got on the ground, we had probably the best small planning office in Reclamation. I mean, we put out stuff second to none. I had one young fellow working for me, Norm Roth was his name, R-O-T-H. We did the hydrology, and Paul Wold was the geologist, and he had a drill crew, and Ernie Smith was his second in command. Jim Petrick was the economist, and he had Ken Silvernagel working for him. Warren was there, he had Bob Manthey as his engineering tech, and he brought in Bob McCullough as the report writer, and we did damn good work. We worked together really well – for about two years. It took us a year to get all together and get ourself lined out and what we were trying to do, and then for the next two years we were a heck of a team. Weber was responsible. He was the one who pulled it together. He was an old planning officer from Great Falls, Montana. The project manager, when we first when there, was Ed [Edward A.] Lundburg, who later went down to Boulder City to be regional director, and he has since passed away -- a fantastic person. Then Ted Mann came in as the project manager while I was there, and he was still there when I left. I still exchange Christmas cards with him.

Storey: How long were you there?

Keys: Three years, '68 to '71.

Storey: So what was the hydrology branch doing? Well, let's back up. If he hired you as the head of the hydrology branch, you had to hire the hydrologists to go in the branch, right?

Keys: That's right.

Storey: What was that about for you?

Keys: Well, it was the first time I ever got to pick somebody, and he was a young -- I got the applications and I can't remember the other people, but Norm had finished at North Dakota State, had a civil engineering degree, and I got to pick him.

Storey: Norm --

Keys: Roth, R-O-T-H. I had a hell of a fight to get "supervisory" put in front of my name, in front of my title.

Storey: Got to have three people --

Keys: Well, that was the old rule, and we convinced them to stick it on there anyway, so I did get to claim I was a supervisor.

Storey: Why did you want that?

Keys: Oh, that was status. That was tenure.

Storey: Did it mean any money?

Keys: No, it didn't, but it was one of the chairs that you had to pass through to get up the line.

Storey: Well, I would like to keep going, but my appointment with you was over five minutes ago.

Keys: I think we can keep going.

Storey: Well, I do have somebody coming in about six minutes, unfortunately.

Keys: Oh, okay. Well, we got to Bismarck. Let's see, we're on again next week, is it?

Storey: Tomorrow morning.

Keys: Tomorrow morning.

Storey: I'd like to ask you whether or not the tapes and the transcripts from this interview can be used for research by people inside and outside Reclamation?

Keys: Oh, absolutely, certainly.

Storey: Thank you.

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2. DECEMBER 8, 1994. END OF INTERVIEW
BEGIN TAPE 1 SIDE 1. DECEMBER 9, 1994.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing regional director John Keys, of the Pacific Northwest Region, in Boise, Idaho. The interview is taking place in his offices on December 9, 1994, at about eight o'clock in the morning. This is tape one.

You were saying that after our conversation yesterday, you'd had some second thoughts on your stay at Provo that you might like to discuss, Mr. Keys.

How the Family Fit into Utah

Keys: Well, not really second thoughts, just some things to add. You had asked whether we had any difficulty adjusting to living in Utah or the Mormon culture that was there, and I had told you, no, and that's right. At times I think ignorance was bliss, because my wife and I did not know anything about the Mormon religion, or culture, when we moved there, and it was a learning experience.

We had very strong beliefs in our own religion, and that kept us, I think, from having a problem there. It worked out really well. When I moved into Provo, there was 103 people in the office, and there were four of us that were not Mormon. Of course, we kind of banded together and did a lot of stuff together. We hunted together and fished together and played cards together, and that sort of thing, and even some of us went to church together. It was an excellent learning experience, and I wouldn't give anything in the world for it.

Water Skiing on the Canal at Roosevelt, Utah

The couple of other things that I remember, long times in the field together. We used to stay in Roosevelt, Utah. There was a motel there that treated us nice. They had a good place to eat, and they knew that we were on the road, and they treated us nice. We used to go water skiing on the canal behind the pickup truck. A lot of people forget about those kind of things, and the good times that we had after work and evenings. Most of the time we put in a good ten- or eleven-hour day, because there wasn't anything else to do in Roosevelt, Utah. But after work there was still time to have good times. That was something I thought about last night, that should be in something like that.

Storey: Is this a large canal that you went water skiing on?

Keys: Oh, yeah. They were several hundred second-feet and that O&M road just runs right down beside both sides of it. You just tie a long rope on behind and take off.

Doing a Seepage Study in the Altamont Area

I never will forget. You were asking me about how to measure the seepage in a canal. I was sent to do a seepage study on a Class C canal up north of Duchesne, in the Altamont area. It was a big canal. It was about 500

cubic feet per second. The water was swift and I couldn't stand up in it, and yet I had to do the measurement. I was by myself. The top end I was able to measure from a little bridge kind of thing, and I got the top end done, and I got down and I could not figure how to get the bottom end done. I struggled across it and I got the tape set up to do the measurement, and I just couldn't stand up in the current.

So I pulled the truck up next to the canal. We carry these long ropes in there just in case we need them. I tied a rope onto the bumper of the truck, and I just kind of let myself across the canal with that thing using the rope to lean against, got almost to the other side, water took my feet out from under me, lost my notes, broke the current meter, and I was just on the end of that rope just like a fishing spinner. I finally got myself back over, had to do all the damn work again, and learned a lot from that. But those were the good old days.

Storey: You say you were just like a spinner, you mean going around and around on the end of the rope?

Keys: Oh, yeah, I must have done two or three loops on the end of that dang rope. But those were the good old days, a lot of fun.

Work was less complicated. A young engineer going to work didn't have to worry about budgets, didn't have to worry about politics, didn't have to worry about pleasing the commissioner or that sort of thing. He just got to work and build himself, and that was a fun time. So that was just some stuff I thought of last night.

Storey: Did we discuss why you decided to move to Bismarck?

Moving to Bismarck

Keys: Not in a great deal of detail. When a young engineer came with the Bureau in those days, we either came in as GS-5s or GS-7s. When I went to work, it was for about \$5,400 a year, and right after I went to work we got a raise, because engineers were hard to get and keep in Reclamation, but you always looked at the higher grades. My wife and I were sitting around one night and we thought that if I ever got to making \$10,000 a year, we'd just be in hog heaven. I got up to an 11, which got me to about, I think, in those days, about \$8,500 a year.

The lure of being a branch chief and having more responsibility and making more money was pretty strong. You had to move for your promotions in those days. It was not a written law, and probably wasn't even unwritten, but if you wanted to get ahead you had to move. We wanted to see the West. I told you that we said we would only take a job west of the Mississippi, but we wanted to live and experience different things. The opening came up in Bismarck, that I was telling you about, in that planning division, and I applied for it and got it. You'll notice later on, all of the moves were up, trying to get ahead in the Bureau.

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- Storey: They were promotions.
- Keys: Yes. I did move in-grade a couple of times—*later*, but all of the early moves were for promotions.
- Storey: Did you have a career plan?
- Keys: Yes. We talked yesterday about project office, regional office, and then going to Denver.
- Storey: That's right, I'm sorry.
- Keys: I don't know that it was a great plan, but it was something I wanted to do. I did it, but as you get closer to something, of course, your goals change. What's the old Chinese proverb? Don't wish for anything because it might happen. But it worked, and we had sort of a plan.
- Storey: What position did you move into in Bismarck?
- Keys: I was the hydrology branch chief in Bismarck. As we talked yesterday, it was the establishment of that division, the planning division, working on the Garrison and some new stuff there.
- Storey: And as I recall, three people maybe?
- Keys: There were two, me and one person in hydrology.
- Storey: One other person.
- Keys: I hired a young fellow from North Dakota State University.
- Storey: Was that a shocking entry into supervision there?
- Keys: No, it was easy. It never was by design how they bring people on. Sometimes people get thrown into a supervisory situation and it kind of eats them alive. I was fortunate. When I was in Utah, I did supervise a couple of technicians, but it was easy, because I was doing the technical stuff and I sent them to get data and stuff like that.

Norm Roth, that went to work for me in North Dakota, was an engineer, and it was more like a partnership. Just having one person working for you was easy because you were working together. It was not really the old traditional supervisor/worker thing. He was a good young man, and we got along really well, did a lot of good work together. But it brought me along. In other words, I still had to do his paperwork, I had to do his evaluations.

Then my next job in Billings, I went up to seven people, and then when I went to Denver, I went up to like thirty people or so. It was just a progression that worked pretty well, I thought.

Storey: Did we discuss the project superintendent yesterday?

Keys: Well, I worked for the planning division chief, Warren Weber, who had come in from Montana. Warren was a nice guy. He was divorced, but he was a nice fellow. He was balding on top, and he wouldn't admit that he was vain, but he had a vain streak in him, and he would let his hair on the side grow really long and then comb it all the way across the top. I never will forget one night he came to eat with my wife and I, and the wind was blowing like hell, and he came in, his hair was standing out about eight inches off one side of his head. But he was *really* good to us. He ran a good planning division, put out some excellent reports.

Storey: What reports that you were involved in particularly?

Keys: We were working on the definite plan report for some pieces of the Garrison Diversion Unit. We were putting out the design data reports for pieces of the canal system. I never will forget doing the water surface profiles and erosion studies for the Minot Extension Canal that went across the Souris River at Veryndre. Veryndre was a little railroad town, and I had to send the surveyors out in the dead of damn winter to do cross-sections of the Souris River. We were up there, God, it was thirty, thirty-five below zero, doing that dang stuff.

But we did studies of the Horsehead Flats and Winona units. We did a couple of pumping unit studies up on the Missouri River. We did a big study of the James River. We did a 110-mile water surface profile study of the James River. I still have an Indian hatchet head that I found on the flood plain down there when we were doing that. We did some good work.

Storey: What's a water profile study?

Keys: Part of the Garrison was to run water down the James River, from Jamestown Reservoir, which was fed by the McClusky Canal, down to the Oakes area. We had to be sure that the channel would carry that water and that it wouldn't flood roads out. So water surface profile study, you take cross-sections at regular intervals. For that 110-mile study we had about 200 of them. They weren't regularly spaced at a half mile, because you'd get them bunched up at controlled sections. But we had over 200 of them to take it down there. But you try to predict the elevation of the surface of the water as it runs down the river. It has to have slope on it to get down the river, and you predict what it is at regular points, and at the funnel points at bridge sections, and that sort of things. They're called control points.

Storey: This was similar to the, was it tailwater studies?

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- Keys: Tailwater studies.
- Storey: Tailwater studies we were talking about yesterday.
- Keys: Yes, same technique.
- Storey: Were there any changes in the hydrology work you did between Provo and Bismarck, or is that a fairly standard set of activities?

Flood Studies

- Keys: A little bit of both. It was fairly standard. We did operations studies that we talked about; we did water surface profile studies. My range expanded into doing flood studies. I never did flood studies in Utah, somebody else did those. Where I was the branch chief by myself, with the one other guy helping me, we had to do them all. We did precipitation studies to figure the maximum probable precipitation. We did the flood studies that went along with the precip studies. We did the degradation studies. We didn't do many of those over there in Utah.

Basically, it was different in that we had to do all of them, and we had to do all of our own work. Doing the degradation studies, we'd go out and do the core samples to get the materials that would be degraded, and that sort of thing. I got to use some of the soil classification knowledge that I had learned as a rotation engineer.

Developed some great friendships over there. The soil scientists that we worked with, I still correspond with some of those people.

- Storey: Why would we need to do flood studies?
- Keys: So you don't get flooded. We did them for several reasons. We had to size the side drains, it's called cross-drainage, where if you put a canal across a creek or across a drain, if you got a big thunderstorm, it could wash it out. So you sized the undershoot, or the overshoot, or how much you're going to take into the canal. So you do them to protect your facility. You do them to protect the towns that are involved around your facilities, so that you don't cause a problem, and we got a lot of flood control benefits for our projects from some of the flood studies. When we build reservoirs, we do flood studies for several reasons. One is to see how much water we're going to get, another is to size the spillway, to size the outlet works to protect the structure and that sort of thing.
- Storey: So you'd be doing tributaries as well as the main stem that you were working on?
- Keys: Absolutely. See, the main stem where we were working in North Dakota was the Missouri River, and the Missouri River went way and the hell and gone up

through Montana back to Yellowstone Park. So most of our work was in the tributaries.

Of course, the Dakotas are kind of different where we were working. We were on the east side of the Missouri River, which is fairly flat. A lot of glacial till soils, glacial moraine deposits that are really flat out there. The West Slope out in the Dickinson area is more rolling hills and the badlands kind of country, and we did work out there also. We were doing little water supply studies for towns.

We actually had a couple of floods while I was there. The Heart River that ran through Dickinson flooded a couple of times. The fact is, I've still got some old pictures the one year that we were out there, when the Heart River flooded.

The rivers up there were kind of strange. The Souris River came out of Canada into North Dakota, made a big loop into the state, and then went back into Canada, so that it flowed north. It would warm from the south, and that would create an ice jam up close to the border. It flooded, gosh, probably two out of the three years that I was there it flooded. So we dealt with floods several times.

Precipitation Studies

Storey: What are precipitation studies, and what are *they* intended to accomplish?

Keys: Well, you try to get a handle on what you can expect under different conditions. You don't size the facility on an average precipitation, you size it on a catastrophic event so that you can protect it, and you try to decide how well you want to protect it. Do you protect it against a storm that only happens once every year, or every other year, or every 50 years, or every 100 years, or every 10,000 years? You do these frequency studies to determine which level you need to protect against.

When we were sizing the spillway, we were using 10,000-year flood. When you size the culvert on your driveway, you probably use a one- and two-year study frequency. So we took records, we used records of previous events. We looked at the cover on the basin to see how much of it would soak in, how much of it would run off. You look at the slope. You look at how many people live there. The parking lot on the mall runs off a hell of a lot faster than the grass on your yard. The grass on your yard runs off a lot faster than the trees and stuff out in the woods. You do all that stuff to see -- fact is, that was the subject of my thesis that I did for my master's degree, was trying to predict how floods move down through a channel. It's called flood routing -- stream flow routing.

Storey: Routing?

Keys: Yes. Basically what you do is you take a flood, put it on the top end of the system, and route it through the system to see what happens with a water surface profile predicting the flow down at the bottom end.

Storey: Was your experience with computerization of predictions useful in Bismarck?

Keys: Absolutely. I did a lot of work with it in those days. I had a little contract with a private computer firm. There was not a big school system that we could use in Bismarck, and had to have a little private contract. There were about three of us in the office in those days that knew computers. A friend then started doing a lot of computer work, Ken Christianson was his name. He was over in the design division of the office, and they started up a lot of computer work and I worked with him very closely getting my stuff done.

Degradation Studies

Storey: What about degradation studies?

Keys: Well, when you cross a big river, you bury your pipe when you're going across it. You need to know how deep to bury it so that when you get a flood in the river it doesn't wash it out. Also, if it's in the spring, before you're running water, you've got to bury it, so that it doesn't float up and wash away. Pipes float up if you just put them in the bottom and they have air in them. They float. We had to know how deep to bury them to keep them from floating or to keep them from washing out. Interesting work there.

Flood Plains

Storey: Were you figuring out flood plains?

Keys: We worked a lot with flood plains in those days. Fact is, later on when I moved to Billings, I'll tell you about flood plain work with the FEMA, Federal --

Storey: Emergency Management.

Keys: --Emergency Management Agency. But yes, we worked a lot with flood plains. Like the flooding over at Dickinson that I talked about. We surveyed the flood plain to see what all was there, to see what level of flood would affect them. It was before a lot of attention was paid to flood plains. A lot of studies came out in the late sixties and early seventies about flood plains. People were just starting to pay attention. I mean, you'd have the big floods in Omaha and Kansas City and St. Louis and so forth on the Missouri in those days, and the Mississippi. But people, they didn't pay attention to where they built their houses. Late sixties, early seventies, they started paying attention. A lot of reports came out of that.

Storey: How would flood plain concerns *then*, differ from flood plain concerns now?

Keys: I think the big difference then is people just didn't pay attention. They didn't know where the lines were, and they did not have an awareness of the different frequency of floods that could happen. The old-timers knew. In other words, they knew that you didn't build in certain areas and that sort of thing. But [unclear] in those days and people moved into areas, didn't know, built houses, built subdivisions, and caused a lot of problems. Half of the city of Bismarck is in a damn flood plain, but probably couldn't have a town of Bismarck if they didn't build in the flood plain. Of course, the floods around Bismarck were mostly *not* from the Missouri River, because it was fairly well controlled by Garrison Dam, by Oahe Dam, and so forth. The floods around Bismarck were caused by ice, ice jams in the Missouri where the Heart River run in, ice jams where other rivers run into the Missouri.

Storey: Did your job change while you were in Bismarck, or was it the same job throughout?

Keys: No, it was pretty much the same. I was only there for three years, from 1968 to '71. No, it didn't change very much. I thought it was better because I was learning all the time, and as I told you yesterday, we got *good* while we were there. The first year we were building staff, building ourself as a planning team. Didn't talk about teams in those days, but we were a hell of a team. We were a division. There was about twenty of us in there. Good planning team.

Storey: Did you have any contact with the project superintendent?

Ed Lundburg Was Project Manager in Bismarck

Keys: Yes. Ed Lundburg was the project manager, a really a nice guy, forward-thinking guy. I was there in 1969 when the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was signed. Ed Lundburg called about five of us in, and he said, "The National Environmental Policy Act says we're supposed to do environmental impact studies of our projects. I want you guys to do one for the Garrison."

First Environmental Impact Statement for the Garrison Diversion Project

The first environmental impact study we did for the Garrison Diversion Unit was about twenty-five pages long, and it talked about ducks and geese and so forth, and it talked about our surveyors not leaving their lunch sacks laying around at the job site after they'd finished surveying, that sort of thing. About twenty-five pages long. The last one that they did for the Garrison, we couldn't carry in a wheelbarrow, it was that big. But the first one we did was about twenty-five pages long.

Storey: What kind of guidance did you have?

Keys: Very little. We talked with Mr. Lundberg and he told us what he thought, and then we just did it, with what *we thought* were environmental impacts. We talked about wetlands; we talked about ducks and geese. We didn't know, and,

of course that's why it was only twenty-five pages long or so. But it was a great experience. He was forward-thinking. When that act was first passed, who would have thought we'd be where we are now with environmental impact studies? But Ed was quite progressive.

One of his favorite old stories was how amazed he was when he went to Hoover and saw the towers on the canyon walls that were horizontal. In other words, you built a horizontal transmission tower so that you could bring the lines up from the powerplant and transition into the transmission towers for the lines going out across the land. He used to tell us how amazed he was the first time he went there.

Storey: Was he an electrical engineer?

Keys: No, he was a civil.

Storey: What was his management style like?

Status of a Project Manager

Keys: Let people do their job. He was a good leader. I think most of us these days get involved in stuff deeper as a leader than our leaders did in the past. I think we're more conscious of participative management now. I think the old guys just did it without thinking about it. They let the young guys do their job, and Ed never got in our way. He gave us our head and let us do what we thought was right. He talked to us, but it was always -- the project manager, the regional director -- we never wanted to see the regional director in those days. Nobody saw the regional director. But it *was not a casual thing* to go talk to a project manager. You put your coat on, you conducted yourself right. He never said anything, but that's the way it was. They were somebody special.

Storey: What do you mean when you say you *never* went to see a regional director? You didn't want to or it just worked out that way?

Regional Directors

Keys: That's just the way it was. They were doing something else. We were doing the work, and they were doing the other stuff, the budgets and the politics and that sort of thing. That's the way it should have been. They were not the -- God, what's his name? I'm trying to remember the regional director when I was up there. I'll think of it. Aldrich.

Storey: Harold Aldrich.

Keys: Harold Aldrich was the regional director. He was not the kind of person you got close to. I know his son, Rich, who is the field solicitor in Billings now. I know Rich very well. I got to go see Aldrich every once in a while, but never was comfortable with him. He was just not that kind of person.

- Storey: Did you know what these folks were doing?
- Keys: No. No, I didn't.
- Storey: Very often, to subordinates, it's a complete mystery what managers do and why they don't seem to be "doing work." (laughter)
- Keys: "Work." Oh, yes, absolutely. And there was a mystique about it. I didn't see anything wrong with it. I didn't want to go see him unless there was something to go see him about. He chewed my butt a couple of times.
- Storey: Who did?
- Keys: We're jumping ahead into Billings.
- Storey: When you moved into Billings?
- Keys: Yes. This is a story. We were traveling out of Billings into South Dakota, and had been to Huron. I was regional hydrologist then over in Billings. We had been to Huron to do some work on the Oahe [Unit], and we were flying back in a Bureau plane. It was a Piper Navajo. Bill Snyder was the pilot. We got to eastern Montana, and he lost all the navigation gear, and it was cloudy. He lost all the navigation gear in the plane, and the closest airport that he could put down in was in South Dakota, where is South Dakota School of Mines--Rapid City --

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1. DECEMBER 9, 1994.
BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2. DECEMBER 9, 1994.

- Keys: We put down there and we just sat there, and we sat there, and we waited. Bob Madsen was with me, and he had a meeting in Ennis, Montana, that night that he had to get to. We all got impatient, just got impatient as hell. Madsen says, "Hell, I'm driving home."

Bill Crosby and myself and Madsen and somebody--oh, Jim Verzuh, he was in the design division, we said, "We're going to drive, got to get there." It was a good eight-hour drive from Rapid City to Billings.

Snyder says, "Wouldn't do that if I were y'all."

We said, "Well, hey, Madsen's got to be there, so we're going to go."

We took off and we drove, and we got into a damn snowstorm around Buffalo and Sheridan, and we didn't get home into Billings until midnight. I mean, it took us twelve damn hours to drive. We had to pull up to the hangar at the airport to get our cars when we got home, and the flipping airplane was already back. We knew that Snyder took off right after we left driving, just knew it.

The next morning when we got in, Phil Gibbs, who was our planning chief, called the four of us into our office. He said, "What did you all do last night?" We told him. He said, "Aldrich wants to see you."

We went down and he said, "Whose idea was this?"

Madsen told him that he had to be at that meeting at Ennis, and Snyder would not tell us how long it was going to be. He just felt like he had to go. We said, "Since he was going, we went, because we didn't know—Snyder said it could be two days or it could be two hours, and we just had to go."

Aldrich says, "When you go out with that plane, don't you ever leave it unless Snyder says it's okay." Good lesson to learn. That's one of the good stories, too. The other one we were still at Bismarck. That was a Billings story.

Storey: When you were in Bismarck, did you sense or see any opposition to the Garrison Diversion Project?

Planning Projects, Then and Now

Keys: No, we didn't, because those were the good days. We had started doing the drainage studies to predict the water quality of the water coming out from the irrigation. We were still the good guys.

But there were things happening that were setting us up for a disaster. Some of our lands people were riding a high horse, and they were riding for a fall. There were people questioning what we were doing. They weren't opposed to it, they were questioning it.

I think if a person retrospectively looks back at it, it was the start of the change in the Bureau, because the way the Bureau had done, I say we, it was not go out and talk to the people that wanted the project. They'd tell us all they wanted to do, how they wanted to do it and so forth, and we'd say, "Fine."

We'd take that and then we would go back, collect all the data and design the best damn project you ever saw in your life, to take care of what they wanted, but we never went back to them while we were doing that. In other words, they told us what they wanted, but we never went back and said, "Here's what we're doing, here's how we're doing it. Does this fit what you need? Is there a better way to do it?" We never did that in those days.

That type of approach to things killed the Garrison [Diversion Unit,] and it killed the Oahe [Unit]. Now, it killed the Oahe a hell of a lot more than it killed the Garrison. The Garrison they're still reformulating, because they were further down the road. It killed the Oahe just deader than a nail. I worked on both of those out of the Billings office.

When I was there, we were still the good guys, but, boy, when I was in Montana, still working on it out of the regional office, boy, there were times that the groups opposed to the project were very vocal and strong.

Storey: But that was once you had moved to Billings.

Keys: Yeah. Yeah.

Storey: Were you seeing environmental opposition to the project?

Concerns about the Garrison Diversion Project

Keys: Not opposition—yet. They were asking questions. See, the water quality studies that we were doing were because of some of the environmental concerns. As you use water, you concentrate the materials that are in the water, and at times it gets excessive, the total dissolved solids gets too high, and that's salt, and you salt up lands or you concentrate it so much that it kills fish and that sort of thing. Those things had never been addressed before.

We were computer modeling return flows, and it was in my branch, the hydrology group, we had started looking at them. But they were asking questions. In other words, "You're bringing water over from the Missouri. What are you bringing with it?" In those days they were concerned about the Gizzard Shad. "Are you bringing Shad into the Hudson Bay drainage where they're not located now?" The Rainbow Smelt that was in the Souris-Red drainage system, "Are you going to introduce them into the Missouri backwards?" The Shad was the big one. I was thinking there was something else, but I can't put my hand on it.

We did some studies of the arsenic and selenium levels in the Missouri River. Fact is, there's a funny story with that, too. We borrowed a water thief, which is a sampling device that you let down in the reservoir in the water. It had two plungers on the end connected by an elastic strap. You dropped a weight down, and it triggered those two plungers, and the two plungers went into the end of the pipe, and you had a water sample from whatever depth you wanted. We borrowed one of those things from the EPA people in Denver. We took it up to the Garrison Reservoir to do some sampling. We got the samples out in the reservoir, but we needed one down by the dam. So us bright guys thought, "Well, hell, we can just go down to the intake tower at the powerplant and let that thing down and get our samples." Wrong.

We let that thing down and the unit sucked it in against the bars and we couldn't get it off of there. We tied it off, came back, and the rope was just hanging there. It sucked it into the generator. We had to call EPA and tell them that we lost their water thief. But we were sampling for arsenic and selenium, which at that time they felt was coming out of the mine drainages in Montana and Wyoming into the Missouri River.

Like I said, this is 1968 to '71, the *start* of the environmental movement.

Storey: That's right at the very beginning of the laws, at any rate.

Keys: Absolutely. I think some of the concerns on the Garrison were catalysts in the environmental movement, because we had never been opposed by a group of people on that kind of issue before. Now, that doesn't mean that there hasn't been opposition to projects before. You get down into the Colorado River, and the old famous story about Floyd Dominy and Flaming Gorge, about how he snookered the Sierra Club.

Storey: Glen Canyon, you mean?

Keys: No, Flaming Gorge.

Storey: Okay.

Echo Park and Floyd Dominy

Keys: About how he snookered them. They were looking at building the dam at a place called Island [Echo] Park, not the Island Park in Idaho, but Island Park down on the Green River, and it was right at Dinosaur Monument. The Sierra Club was just furious, and they fought that thing tooth and nails. Great dam site there, right at Dinosaur Park. I tell you, the guy that wrote *Cadillac Desert* talks some about it, but he didn't know the whole story; people didn't tell him. There was a great dam site there, and Floyd wanted to build it.

Storey: This is Echo Park?

Keys: Yes, Echo Park, not Island Park, Echo Park. Floyd wanted to build it, because it was a great dam site, good reservoir size, good head on the powerplant and that sort of thing. But the Sierra Club was just dead set against it. The Sierra Club went in and developed an offensive to stop it, did their homework outstandingly, and the Senate committee was having a hearing.

Well, Floyd found out what they were doing, and knew what their defense was, or their offense, whichever, and he came back to the Bureau guys and said, "Find the next best dam site." It was Flaming Gorge. He said, "Develop the plans for it and don't leave anything out. Be sure that you do it right," and they did. They went back for the hearing, and the Sierra Club – what's his name, Brower.

Storey: David Brower.

Keys: Brower. Led the presentation. They wanted to be first, and he led the presentation against Echo Park and everybody sitting there kind of big-eyed listening to him. Then everybody almost at once turned and looked at Floyd when he came to his testimony. Floyd got up and he said, "We agree with you,

and we have gone to the next best site and it's Flaming Gorge, and here's how it'll work, and here's how good it is, and here's the designs and we're ready to go to work tomorrow." The Sierra Club had no defense whatsoever. None whatsoever. And they approved Flaming Gorge.

Storey: This was a congressional hearing?

Keys: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. That's in the fifties. Because Flaming Gorge was pretty much done in the early sixties. That was in the early days of Floyd's reign in Reclamation. They tell me that that's a true story, and, hell, we worshipped the ground that Floyd Dominy walked on. He had his faults, and we laughed about his faults but, boy, what a commissioner he was.

Storey: Did you ever meet him?

Keys: Yes, I did.

Commissioner Floyd Dominy

Storey: What was he like?

Keys: He still calls here every once in a while. I'm a regional director now. He used to play regional directors like they were a piano to get done what he wanted. He still calls regional directors to get what he wants at times. He was just a brusque, brash kind of person, took control, walked into a room and he was in immediate control of the room. I've been fortunate, I have met or known every commissioner since Floyd. I did not know him, I just saw him a couple of times. Like I said, I've talked to him several times since.

Commissioner Gil Stamm

A couple of the commissioners I knew very well. Gil Gilbert B. Stamm I knew. I'd worked with him before he was commissioner, and got to know him very well. Of course, since then, one selected me, one worked with me very well, and we've got another one now. One was like a brother, but he worked us so hard.

Storey: Which one?

Commissioner Dennis Underwood

Keys: Dennis B. Underwood. Dennis Underwood was a good man. I honestly felt like a brother with Dennis Underwood. He pushed us harder than anybody has ever pushed me in my life. We're working hard now, and maybe harder than we were when we were working for Dennis, but we had not done that before Dennis Underwood. It wasn't what he told us to do, it wasn't whatever; we felt like we had to work hard to keep up with Dennis Underwood.

Storey: Really?

Keys: We're probably jumping ahead now.

Storey: Tell me more about Dominy. You mentioned that you all laughed about him.

Keys: When I was working in Utah, we had a guy, they brought him in to be our chief of property, his name was Vince Haight, H-A-I-G-H-T, and I think his mission in life in those days was to plan Floyd's trips. Once a year, Vince would put together a Green River boat trip for Floyd Dominy, and would arrange for the right gender of people to go along on that trip, put all the booze together and so forth, and planned the trip for Floyd. Floyd came out and had a great old time. The stories of Floyd's escapades with women around Reclamation are legend.

Storey: And legion, also.

Keys: And legion, yes. I don't think very many of us agree with what he did, or in these days we wouldn't even condone it, but, hell, he was the commissioner.

In those days, Interior *was* Reclamation. I mean, you talk about the Park Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service, and BLM. They didn't have anything to do with the Interior, they were just there. Reclamation was Interior. It's not that way anymore, and it shouldn't be. I'm not saying that's right, but Floyd worked the committees, he brought the money and the stature to Interior in those days. Like I said, it shouldn't be that way, but it was.

Hey, that was the dam-building era. That was what society needed in those days. Doesn't need it now, but that's what society needed in those days. Maybe that's what brought some of us to Reclamation, is that stature.

Moves to Billings in 1971 as Regional Hydrologist

Storey: Why did you decide to move on to Billings?

Keys: Promotion. Phil Gibbs had been the regional hydrologist since 1946, when the regional office was established. He was it for twenty-some-odd years—twenty—

Storey: About twenty-six maybe.

Keys: Twenty-six years, from '46 to '71. Twenty-five years. Well, almost twenty-six years. In early 1971, Tom Judah, the planning chief died. But Phil was promoted. He had been the hydrologist for twenty-six years, was promoted to be the regional planning officer.

The fellow that was his heir apparent didn't want the job. Bob Madsen had been in hydrology for years, but didn't want the job. Wanted to do something else. Phil agreed, and gave him an assignment to be a planning leader kind of thing to do plan formulations and stuff, and advertised the job.

Phil asked me was I interested in it, and I told him "yes." I applied for it and he selected me.

Actually, when he was first made planning chief was around Christmastime in '70. In early '71, he brought me to Billings on a detail to do a water supply study to raise Buffalo Bill Dam, model it on a computer. I went over there for about a month on detail and did that study for him on a computer. I never will forget, I was there during the Stanley Cup, and I watched it, one of the first times I got to see the Stanley Cup on TV, in Billings. But I did that study for him to raise Buffalo Bill. While I was there he asked me did I want the job, and I told him yes. I applied for it and he selected me, and it took us four months to get me approved to be the regional hydrologist, because I was too young.

Storey: Approved by whom?

Keys: By Washington.

Storey: By Reclamation in Washington?

Keys: Yes, sir. Hey, I was not even thirty years old and I was being promoted to a GS-13. That was something else in those days. People don't realize how important grades were in those days, but that was something else. I was twenty-nine years old, and they were promoting me to a GS-13. It took us four months to get it approved, from April to August.

Finished Master's Degree in 1971

It finally was approved, and my wife and I drove to Utah for me to get my master's degree. It took me the whole three years I was in Bismarck to write that thesis. I finally got it done and graduated in August of '71. We went back to Bismarck, loaded up, and moved to Billings, 106 degrees the day we drove through Terry, Montana, to move into Billings, but we loved it.

It Took a Long Time to Be Accepted in Bismarck

Bismarck was a cold town, figuratively and literally. Bismarck was an immigrant town. We had neighbors who had come over on the boat. Our next-door neighbors came over on the boat. A couple of times I went hunting out there and asked people to go onto their land that could not speak English. The people in Bismarck were very closed, and what it did was it made us Reclamation people that much closer together. We had some of the damndest parties you ever saw. We all belonged to the Elks Club because it was a place to go and do stuff together. While we weren't outsiders, it took us three long years for all of us to be accepted into Bismarck, I think, by the local people. When we left, we were great friends. I still have friends up there outside of Reclamation, but it took us three years to do it, and it took big efforts to do it. My wife was the chairman of the March of Dimes drive one year for the town.

She played on softball teams, she was in the traveling league, all over the State of North Dakota. We did a lot of stuff to be accepted.

Billings Accepted Newcomers Quickly

Billings was not that way. Billings was a cow town that just stood there with its arms open and said, "This is what we are, and come on in." And we loved it. There was a little difference in the climate, a little bit, a little better. Some of us called it "Banana Belt" because it was that much better than Bismarck. I'll tell you another story in a minute, but Billings was a great town. We loved every minute we lived there.

In 1969, Sunday morning, January the 19th, it was 41 below zero in Bismarck. The Monday morning to go to work, it was 39 below zero. Had a little '65 Ford pickup. I lived two miles from the office. When I went out that morning, the little red light wouldn't go off, the oil light wouldn't go off, but the truck was running, and I didn't think it was doing any damage. I got halfway to work, my truck quit. I did not have a hat. I had gloves and a big coat, but I didn't have a hat. So I walked on to work, about a mile. When I got there my hair was full of frost. I had frostbitten one of my ears. I went into the office, my ear was just killing me. I bumped into Ken Christianson when I walked in the door, and I said, "Christianson, you SOB, if I'm still here a year from now, you can kick me in the butt," because it was so cold.

Well, I was still there at the year, and I let the day go by, and then I went in and told him he missed his chance. That had something to do with it. We had three preschool kids, and it was hard on the family to stay cooped up like that.

It changed dramatically when we went to Billings. There was so much more to do in Billings, people were much more open, much more friendly. There was two colleges in town, a lot of stuff to do in Billings. We loved it there. I have a daughter who still lives there. We moved several times. She went back there and got both of her college degrees there, still lives there.

Storey: Did you prepare for interviews in those days?

Keys: Yes, I did.

Storey: How did you do that?

Keys: I was an engineer, and my approach, even though my job, I think -- my job in Billings that I got, *I wanted it* because it was progression. The regional hydrologist. I mean, I was going to be in charge of all of the hydrology for the whole Upper Missouri River Basin. *That* was something, and I wanted it bad. The guy that had the job before had had it for twenty-six years. In other words, nobody in God's world knew that hydrology better than Phil did. I didn't know

how to handle that. So the way I prepared is I talked to people that knew Phil, and I tried to learn as much as I could about the Missouri River Basin.

I went into it, and his first statement out of the box was, "I did this job for twenty-six years, but I will not get in the way. It will be your job if you get it." That was such a relief, and I then told him what I had done, and he asked me what I wanted to do in Billings. We talked about projects and so forth. Yes, I tried to prepare for interviews. I still do. I still do.

Storey: If you'd look at that preparation, sort of generically instead of for a specific job, what do you think you do?

Keys: What do I think I do? First thing I try to do is make myself comfortable and be friendly with the person. If the person's not friendly, it's harder for me. I don't deal well with people that aren't friendly. I try to get to know something about the person that I'm talking to, and then I try to find out as much about the job that I can that I'm trying to go into, and then I formulate some questions to ask the interviewer about what he expects out of me. I would say those are the three keys to it. What does he expect out of me?

Reclamation Grade Structure During Early Career

Storey: You mentioned people don't understand how important grades were in those days. Could you talk about that?

Keys: Well, our people *now* don't understand how important they were in those days, and it's because in those days there were a lot less 14s. Our project manager was 14, and he was in charge of *lot* of people. Most of the working-level, the journeyman-level person in those days was a GS-9. Our journeymen-level people here now are 12s. But our journeyman-level person in those days was GS-9. You had to be in some level of supervisory responsibility to get 11. It meant more. We had to move for them. Crap, these people these days they come in, they expect to go all the way to a 13 without ever moving or selling a house. You didn't do it in those days. If I had not moved, I'd probably still be sitting down there in Provo, Utah, as a GS-11, maybe a 12. Now, that office has gone through several RIFs [reduction in force] and changes and all that sort of thing, and what I said is probably not right, but a person had to move for grades in those days. And *we benefitted* from it. If I had made a mistake in my career, it's not having to move between being an assistant regional director and being regional director.

Storey: When you were here?

Keys: When I'm here, that's right. Now, if I'd had to move, it would have caused me a big-time problem, and I don't know that I'd have done it. I probably just wouldn't be a regional director. But that's one of the big mistakes I've made, because I've been in this job too long. Maybe that's something you want to cover later or now, it doesn't matter, but that's a true statement.

Grades were important in those days. It had status, it had power, it told people that you had paid your dues, in other words, you had moved a number of times to get to where you were. It was an engineering feat to get to the higher grade levels in those days. It was very important to some folks.

How Work Changed Between the Project and Regional Offices

Storey: How did your hydrology responsibility change between a project office and a regional office?

Keys: That's an excellent question. In the project office, I was about 98 percent technical. I had one person working for me. Two percent I did with him, and like I said, we mostly worked as a team, or pair, or co-workers rather than supervisors.

When I went to Billings, I had seven people when I went there. My job was about 70 percent technical and about 30 percent administrative. So that big change there, and I had to deal with a problem employee, one who had been carried by Phil Gibbs for twenty-six years, who did not do very much. I hired another person who turned out to be bad. I ran into the realities of supervision, but I loved the job. It was a perfect combination of technical and administrative. So it changed.

Storey: Were you into budgeting then?

Keys: Yes.

Budgeting

Storey: Were you in budgeting over at Bismarck?

Keys: No. Warren did it all.

Storey: Your division chief.

Keys: Yes. Even my stuff in Billings was very simple. We had a great budget officer, his name was Gene Wilde. He could have done it all himself, but I wanted to know how he did it and what was in there, and he showed me. Then every year he would sit down with me and we'd go through and develop the budget for my branch. He was a great guy.

Storey: Did you have a program that you wanted to start up where you had to get new funding?

Keys: We had several.

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2. DECEMBER 9, 1994.
BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1. DECEMBER 9, 1994.

Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey with John Keys on December 9, 1994.

Keys: ... have a new program of my own, but I was part of several new programs that got started, and I was able to participate in the formulation of the budgets and the preliminary plans and stuff as the hydrologist on the group that was putting it together.

Storey: One of the things I've had a little fun, I think, is the way to put it, doing is figuring out how the budget process works, and how to get the money in, and how to justify it, and all of that. Did you have any trouble with that?

Keys: Yes, I did, because I didn't know how to do it. I didn't know where the money came from, I did not understand the appropriations process, and that's why I say Gene Wilde was such a good person. He taught me that stuff. Even though he taught me, I didn't know it in depth, but I knew enough to get done what my branch needed to do as part of an overall effort. Actually, it was not until later when I went into that salinity control office that I understood and knew how to work budgets. But that's when I started learning was in Billings.

Regional hydrologist was a great job. I got to work in the Missouri River all the way from headwaters, down into Wyoming, into the Dakotas. Our region ran out in South Dakota. It was very important to me to be registered in the states that I worked in. I had taken my engineer exam in '69, in North Dakota, and passed it. Then with reciprocity, I was registered in Montana and Wyoming, mainly in case I needed to be in court or whatever. But regional hydrologist is a great job.

Dealing with Problem Employees

Storey: You mentioned that while you were in Billings you had two problem employees. How did that play out?

Keys: Took care of one of them, tolerated the other one. The one who had been there for years and worked for Phil that was unproductive, I wanted to fire his butt, and I put together justifications on three different occasions and went to Gibbs, and said, "I've got to get rid of him."

Gibbs says, "Well, now, John, you don't want to really do that, do you? Here's a guy that's been working with Reclamation for thirty years, and he does all right. He's got his limitations, but you need to learn to work with him and not against him." I learned from that. Jim had his pluses, and as long as I kept that in perspective, I was okay. It was my own impatience that caused a lot of the problem.

The other one, I had hired the guy. We had a lot of work to do. It was not the harried stuff we're doing now, but we had a lot of work to do. I heard a rumor that he was reading books on the job. I went to him and I said, "Hey,

I've heard this, and if it's going on, stop. You got more damn work than you can take care of, and you shouldn't be reading books on the job."

He said, "Okay." Didn't say whether he was doing it or not, but just said, "Okay." I caught him another time sitting there reading a damn book, with his desk drawer pulled out, reading it. I came in and he closed the damn drawer. I just confronted him. I told him that that was not going to happen again, and then it happened again, and I got rid of him.

Storey: What kind of process did you have to go through?

Keys: I didn't fire him. He actually wanted out by that time, because he had other problems. He didn't get along with people, and he had other problems that showed up that we didn't recognize before. When people knew that I was trying to get rid of him, they started coming and telling me his bad stuff then. Before I could take any action, he got another job. Went to work for Corps of Engineers.

Storey: I take it this was unrelated reading material.

Keys: Yes. Novels and crud like that. He had a characteristic that, at first it didn't bother me, but then after all that started happening, it just drove me crazy. He'd smoke a damn pipe, and I'd go in and give an assignment to him, and I'd explain it to him, and he'd sit there and puff on that damn pipe and he'd say, "O-kay." That got to be such a grate on me before he left. "O-kay." Gees.

It was an introduction to supervision that I never had to do before. I'd never had a problem employee before. The young fellow that came to work for me, we were just elbow to elbow, working like crazy, and it never entered into any of our minds to do something on the job that wasn't job-related, and yet here was a guy that I'd hired to come in and do a job, and he wasn't getting the damn job done, and yet he's there reading his damn novels. That was just foreign to me. Why would anybody do that? So it was a great learning experience.

Storey: How long were you in Billings as the regional hydrologist?

Keys: I was there four years, from '71 to '75. It was a great, great working experience.

Storey: Now, by that time, I would think NEPA was kicking in more and the various other environmental laws and so on.

Water Quality Studies on the Garrison Diversion Project

Keys: One of the things that I took with me from Bismarck to Billings was the water quality studies on the Garrison. We made a couple of bad mistakes in doing them, and we were working on them over there. We were negotiating with the

Canadian government, went to Ottawa several times, went to Winnipeg several times, but it was the water quality of the return flows going back into Canada that was causing the problems. You irrigate those till soils, and they had a lot of salts in them. Dissolve the salts and then the crud ran into Canada. We were working with that.

The big opposition came up to the Oahe Project, and we did return flow studies on Oahe in South Dakota. We were over there and the Oahe was -- actually went to court on the NEPA statement and the water quality issue when I was there, testified in court as an expert witness. We won the case and lost the project.

Storey: Tell me more about the Oahe Project. Oahe Dam exists, right?

Keys: Yes.

Reclamation and the Oahe Project

Storey: How did we lose the project?

Keys: Oahe Dam, you've got to understand the Pick-Sloan Plan.³ The Pick Sloan Plan was a coordinated plan between the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation to develop the Missouri River Basin. The Army Corps' part of it was to develop powerplants and the flood control on the Missouri River. They went in and built the reservoir system. They built Garrison, they built Fort Peck in Montana, Garrison in North Dakota, Oahe in South Dakota, Big Bend, Fort Randall on down the river, and Oahe was built. Pick was the general from the Corps.

The Sloan part was for us to come back in and pump, divert water out of the reservoir pool behind those dams for irrigation. Garrison came out of the Garrison, Oahe Project took water out of Oahe Reservoir, there were several little pumping units at Fort Henry, and all up and down the river were little pumping projects. The Oahe, they were going to pump water out of the reservoir above Oahe there, just above Pierre, into a canal and irrigate about 250,000 acres of South Dakota in the James River Valley.

That's the classic, where they went in, formulated the project without a lot of local participation, and then when the project was actually funded and started, the people said, "God, we don't want that," and they killed it. It was a lot of sensitivity on the environment cost of it. The channelization of the James River, the drying up of wetlands, the taking of some of the prime farm lands to irrigate other lands, the conversion from good dry farm agricultural base and to an irrigated agricultural base, that a lot of them didn't agree with, that's what killed Oahe.

3. Referring to the Missouri Basin Pick-Sloan Program, named after deputy regional director of the Bureau of Reclamation W. Glenn Sloan and Colonel Lewis A. Pick, the Missouri River Division Engineer and subsequently Lieutenant-General Pick, Chief of Engineers.

Storey: So what didn't get built was the distribution and irrigation system.

Keys: Well, actually, we had built the pumping plant, and it's still sitting there, by the way, we had built the first section of the canal, the Oahe Canal, and then it stopped. I don't know what they did with the canal. They may have filled that baby back in, but the pumping plant's still sitting there. Took all the gear out and, I don't know, they may be using it for something else now.

It was different than the Garrison. See, the Garrison was far enough along, they had built the McClusky Canal, they had built this, that, and the other, and now they're trying to convert Garrison into a municipal, rural water supply, industrial-type water project. Still working on Garrison.

But the Oahe, they just killed it, because it was not far enough along. I think we probably only lost about \$100 million on that.

Storey: I'm a little confused about, if we went in and we talked to the people and they said, "We want X," and then we designed X, maybe plus Y or something, I don't know, why did they then do a turnabout in the way they were thinking?

Poor Public Involvement and the Oahe Project

Keys: I think the environmental movement had a lot to do with it, but our people didn't feel like it was their project. In other words, we went in and we found out what they wanted, then we just went off and did it. We didn't keep them involved in the process, and it wasn't theirs. It was something that somebody was doing for them, or to them, or in spite of them, or something like that. It was not something that they were part of.

You see, these days we do big-time public involvement. We go find out what they want, then we go back and say, "Okay, how do we do that?" And we say, "You've got to help provide the money for this thing. Big government's not just going to take care of it for you. You've got to help do that, and you've got to help take care of some of the environmental problems, because we're not going to run over one piece of the environment to help your piece of the environment." So you've got to do all the coordination stuff, and then you've got to fight for the money to build it, and you've got to build it right, then you've got to operate it, and you've got to provide the money to operate it. You've got to do the agreements. We do all that stuff now because it has to be their project. That's not the way it was in those days. It was a Reclamation project and you did it for them, or to them, or in spite of them, or whatever.

We just didn't keep them involved so that it was their project. If we had done, maybe we would have recognized the different needs. We would have recognized that you don't go in and channelize the James River, that there's other pieces there that have to be looked at. The meanders have a place, and the ducks, and the sediment, the way it runs down the river and so forth. Maybe we would have recognized that and done it differently.

Storey: The Oahe Project was killed while you were in Billings, is that right?

Keys: Yes.

Storey: How do you go about killing a project of that size and scale? How does it happen?

Keys: Oh, God. Local group of people started questioning, and they didn't like what they heard. Then they went to the environmental groups and got them involved, and they started questioning. We kept, every time they'd question and we'd say, "Okay, well, we can do this," and we'd do something to answer their question. We answered their questions, but we didn't really change the project. We were just answering their questions. They said, "Well, we don't want it."

We said, "Wait a minute, your board of directors has signed a repayment contract."

They said, "We don't want it." So they got themselves elected to the board of directors, and then they negated the contract. They went back to Congress and said, "We don't want it. Don't fund it," and they didn't.

Storey: They took away the money that was in the --

Keys: Well, they took away control of the district board of directors first, they voted it down, and then they went back and killed the funding.

Storey: Through their congressman. David and Goliath.

Keys: Yes. Oh, absolutely.

Storey: In a way.

Keys: Absolutely. I wish I could remember the name of the guy in northern South Dakota. His name was John See. We were good friends. I knew where he was coming from. I knew that he hated that project--hated it. He was a farmer. I couldn't understand that. I mean, here we were trying to help him diversify his operation. He was a dry farmer. He suffered at times when he didn't get rain, and I couldn't understand why he didn't want irrigation water. I still don't. I still don't understand for his operation, why he didn't want irrigation water, other than that it was more important to him, the other aspects of the project were more damaging than he could live with. Anyway, and we used to have some great discussions. It was David and Goliath. That's a good way to put it. Their approach to it was to get themselves elected to the board of directors, and they did it. They did it, and killed it.

Storey: Their peers elected them.

Keys: That's right. What they did, you see, irrigation district elections are traditionally nothing events. A guy decides he wants to be on the board of directors, hell, most times he can get thirty votes and be elected, because the farmers just don't go vote. Well, by God, they learned over there that they had to vote or they got what they got. These guys, they went out, they challenged the election laws for irrigation districts.

At that time there was all sorts of rules about whether you could vote in the district elections or not. You had to own so many acres, you had to be a full-time farmer, and so forth. It didn't matter that me or you that owned a quarter-acre lot still had to pay the ad valorem taxes, we didn't have a right to vote in that election. Well, they challenged that and won. Then every wahoo that got water, or had to pay the ad valorem tax, could vote in the district election, and they elected their people into the seats.

Storey: Do you have a sense of whether or not they represented a majority of the people?

Keys: The old or the new boards? The old boards?

Storey: The new board that canceled the contract.

Keys: The new board did, yes, it did. I think it did. Yes, I do. I think the majority of the people did not want the project.

Storey: Now, don't I recall that George McGovern ran into the Garrison Project and it was one of the reasons he was defeated for reelection?

Keys: Well, you could say that about almost any issue, to say that's the difference in the election. It was a piece in it. It was actually the Oahe -- well, no, it was the Oahe and the Garrison both that got McGovern. They used those two projects as examples of big government gone amuck. It was trying to force on people a project, and yeah, they used those.

Storey: What was the reaction in Billings as all of this was unfolding?

Keys: Couldn't believe it. Why in the hell didn't they want that project? We were going to pour millions of dollars into there. Why didn't they want that? What did we do wrong? Then this thing about not talking to them slowly dawned on several of us.

Bob Madsen, the fellow that I talked about a little earlier who wanted to do plan formulation and so forth, he and I talked about that a lot, and they actually started planning projects different at that time because of that. The meeting that Madsen had at Ennis when we drove back from Rapid City, that was one of the driving things, because he wanted to be back at that meeting with local people, planning a project over at Ennis. It was the start of a new way to do planning--public involvement.

Storey: Now, this evolution that took place in Reclamation's planning, was that just something that happened in the region or did that spread?

Evolution of Reclamation's Planning Processes

Keys: It was happening all over. I think the passage of NEPA was probably the catalyst that got that kind of thing started, but it was happening all over. I know it was happening with us. Down in Utah and Colorado they started questioning the Central Utah Project, and stopped it, and changed it. Down in Colorado, they were planning the Narrows Unit, they stopped it. That was stopped for good and it should have been.

In the Colorado River Storage Project Act projects, all of those little ones in southern Wyoming and western Colorado, they stopped some of those. I don't know about this area over here. I didn't know about Pacific Northwest much in those days. But the areas that I knew about changed. It wasn't us up there that did it, I think it just was going on all over the place. People learned from the Garrison. They learned that you don't run over opposition.

Storey: Got to listen to them.

Keys: Work with them, give them some say.

Storey: What other projects did you work with besides Garrison?

Keys: Oh, gosh. Garrison and Oahe were a big part. I worked on Anchor Dam. Anchor was that big sieve up in Wyoming. It doesn't hold any water. We were trying to come up with a plan to make it hold water. It was built in the fifties on a marsh and limestone formation, and it had big sinkholes that developed in the reservoir and never did hold any water. We were trying to put a liner in it to make it hold water.

I worked on the enlargement of Buffalo Bill Dam. In other words, I'd done that modelling study before I got the job. We then followed through with the water supply studies, did the work on the tunnel for the spillway.

Worked up there around the Great Falls area on the East Bench Unit. Worked on the Milk River Project up in north central Montana.

Storey: What was going on on the Milk River?

Keys: There were a couple of old Bureau projects up there. We were trying to retrofit, do some water conservation, give them a better water supply.

Worked on the Black Hills flood in '72. Fact is, I was in the Black Hills flood in '72.

Storey: Tell me about it.

The 1972 Flood in the Black Hills

Keys: My wife and three daughters and I were going East on vacation, June of '72, and we were going to go drive to Rapid City and spend the night, and then go on to Chicago and down to home. Home was in Alabama, Georgia. We got to Rapid City, checked into a motel, and then were going up to see Mount Rushmore. The kids wanted to see the thing. As we drove up the canyon, it was just raining like hell. We got up to Mount Rushmore and couldn't even see the mountain, it was raining so hard. So we started down the mountain, and got to about Keystone, and it was raining and hailing, and I had to stop the car, it was raining so hard. Couldn't see.

Finally, I just had to go, so we got on back down to the motel, went to bed, eleven o'clock, whatever. Had set the clock to get up early the next morning to get on the road. Clock didn't go off. We wake up and it's bright, it's daylight. What in the world's going on? We hear all this noise outside. I dressed and went outside and the flood had hit. The water had come halfway across the parking lot where we were staying. It didn't get any of the cars or anything, but everybody started -- went to the office in the motel and they were talking about several hundred people getting killed in the flood that night.

I then went to the sheriff's office, told him who I was, and that I was the hydrologist, and what was going on, did they need any help, and I found out the magnitude of what was happening.

So I called Gibbs up, my boss, Phil Gibbs, and I said, "Here's what's happened." I said, "Do you need me to stay here and do anything?"

He said, "No, the best thing you can do is get out of their way, because it looks like there's several hundred people killed, and they need to do their disaster work before we can do anything." He said, "Why don't you call Denver and set yourself up a bucket survey. Talk to the operators up at Pactola, and see if they need anything, and then you get that done and then go on on your vacation," and he would take care of it for me.

I did that. I set up the bucket survey, talked to the operators up at Pactola. They didn't have any problem; it happened below Pactola. Pactola was out of the damage area. I was able to get through town. God, we saw the cars stacked up against the fences and the motels with water lines up on the roofs and stuff, and left.

Storey: What's a bucket survey?

Bucket Survey in the Black Hills

Keys: When you have a real thunderstorm or rainstorm event, you never have gauging stations to tell you how much it rained, so you don't know the magnitude of the storm or how much water you had that actually caused the

flood. So you send a group of people out, and if somebody had an old bucket sitting outside, you measure the water in the bucket, or you measure the water in an old bathtub, or you measure the water in anything that's sitting around that you can get some idea. You talk to people about whether it had rained before and how much water might have been in it. You piece together how much rain you got out of that storm event. That's a bucket survey.

You'll find a gauging station here or there, and you kind of correlate the official number with what happened, and it can be very accurate. We did that on that one. When I was Bureau hydrologist in Denver, later, we did that one on the Colorado Big Thompson flood, that big flood up the canyon up there in '76, I think it was, or '77, yeah, '76. That's a bucket survey.

Storey: What did you do with the data?

Keys: Well, you take that data and you try to compute the runoff to see how -- the other thing that happens in a flood is you don't have gauging stations on the flood to say what the flow was, because it either washes out your station, or it's too big for your station to measure, puts your station under water, or you only have it at once place in the basin. You're lucky if you have two gauges. It's out of this world if you have three. But you then try to figure how much of that ran off, how much of it goes into the ground, how much of it was stored and so forth. You see if there were any failures in there. The Rapid City flood, there was a local dam that filled up, debris caught the outlet works in the spillway, and then it let loose. You try to get an instantaneous estimate of what the flow was when that thing cut loose. That's how you use the data.

Storey: It sounds as if your motel was a fortunate choice.

Keys: Oh, God. People didn't think about that thing in those days. Hell, I never thought about a motel, whether it was in a flood plain or not. I still don't think about motels, but I am absolutely aware of when I buy a house where it is.

Modifications of Buffalo Bill Dam

Storey: I'll bet you are.

The Buffalo Bill Dam modifications you mentioned. Why was a modification necessary?

Keys: More water. Buffalo Bill was one of the first projects built by the Bureau of Reclamation. The original surveys were done before 1910. I think it was actually finished in 1911, '12, in that era. Its water supply was for the Shoshone Unit, on the Shoshone River there, which is a tributary of the Bighorn, runs down into the Bighorn down in Bighorn Lake, which is Yellowtail Reservoir.

But they were chronically short of water for the number of acres that they had. Cody needed some water, the town of Cody. The little powerplant was undersized, and there was terrible dust storms off of the reservoir when the reservoir was drawn down. The enlargement was to provide more water, and we did several different scenarios of raising it ten feet, fifteen, twenty-five, thirty, so forth. We did studies to put some dike systems in to cover those mud flats, or dust flats, and build bird, waterfowl islands in the area behind those dikes. But they needed more water.

What we did is looked at taking off the top part of the dam and adding on twenty-five or thirty feet and so forth. But it was more water.

When we first got started, they were actually looking for more water for the coal fields, but then the environmental movement said they didn't want to use a lot more water for the coal fields in southern Montana. So it's mostly irrigation and M&I.

Storey: How much increase was there?

Keys: Oh, gosh, 150,000, 160,000 acre feet.

Storey: By how much elevation change?

Keys: About thirty feet.

Storey: Thirty feet.

Keys: The coal field's an interesting thing. Phil Gibbs --

END TAPE 2, SIDE 1. DECEMBER 9, 1994.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2. DECEMBER 9, 1994.

Providing Water to the Coal Fields in the Area of Buffalo Bill Dam

Keys: Phil wanted to serve water to the coal fields in the worst way. He actually did a lot of studies of building a dam on the Yellowstone River, or had us doing studies building a dam on the Yellowstone River, up in the Paradise Valley, up by Livingston, to serve water down in the Decker-Burnie [phonetic] area. We looked at water out of Buffalo Bill for it, and his dream was to build a reservoir up there, then a pipeline out of the Yellowstone, up to the coal fields, for them to have a gasification plant and to have water supply into the powerplants there. Of course, that didn't come to happen, but we did a lot of studies on it.

Appearance on *60 Minutes*

I was on *60 Minutes* in 1973 or '74. We had a public meeting in Glendive, Montana, on water supply into the coal fields, and "60 Minutes" was there. We had the public meeting, gave our talks and so forth. After it was all cut, I think

I only made about a seven-second appearance on "60 Minutes," but Safer was there, Morley Safer was there. It was a big controversy. That's another one that got killed, that probably should have been killed.

Storey: Why was "60 Minutes" there?

Yellowstone River

Keys: Because of several reasons, the controversy of developing coal strip mines in the rolling hills of south central Montana, and the controversy of putting a dam on the Yellowstone River. The Yellowstone River, the greatest uncontrolled river in the United States, and we wanted to put a dam on it, taking water out of the Yellowstone and using it for that, the depletions, and so forth. Quite controversial, and it killed it. "60 Minutes" didn't kill it, but the public sentiment did. Made a movie star out of Wally McCrea. McCrea was a rancher that owned a pretty good-sized ranch down there. Hell, I still see him on television every once in a while with his cowboy portrait stuff. But they killed it. And it should have been.

Storey: How does "killing it" work?

Keys: It makes the government, and not just Reclamation, but it makes a government agency realize that you have to listen to the people and build the projects that the people want, and if they don't want something then it shouldn't be done. It makes the public aware of what you're really doing, and all of the impacts, rather than the plus sides that we always present and not realizing what the downsides of the project are.

Storey: Are we talking about the opposition being local people? One of the traditional controversies is, "Those New Yorkers are telling *us* what to do." How does this work, from your perspective?

Keys: That one was local and national. The national people had a lot to do with that one, the coal field thing. The Environmental Defense Fund, the Sierra Club, were in there big time – I mean big time. They spent a lot of money opposing the Yellowstone River work. But if I would say what caused it, the national people didn't cause it, it was only when the local people allied themselves with the national, did the national people have some sort of say. Montanans aren't that easy. They don't let New Yorkers come in and tell them what to do. But if they agree with the New Yorkers, they'll work with them to get something done.

Storey: Can you remember the name of this dam site?

Dam in Paradise Valley

Keys: The one in Paradise Valley?

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- Storey: Yeah.
- Keys: God dang. No, I don't, but I'll think of it.
- Storey: Is this the one that would have affected a gold ribbon fishing stream?
- Keys: Yes.
- Storey: Gold ribbon's the right term, isn't it?
- Keys: Blue Ribbon.
- Storey: Blue Ribbon.
- Keys: Yes, it is. And it's got a name, I just can't pull it out of my gray matter right now.
- Storey: Did you do environmental statements when you were – I mean, were you involved in them when you were the regional hydrologist?
- Keys: Yes, absolutely.
- Storey: You mentioned before, the twenty-five page Garrison Diversion Environmental Statement.
- Keys: That's right.
- Storey: How had they changed? How did they change?

Evolution of Environmental Documents under NEPA

- Keys: They became big-time documents, and they had some direction. When we did that first one, we had no direction, didn't know what should be in there. By that time, there were many rules and regs and requirements for EISs and so forth that had to be met. In those days, there was actually a hydrology appendix for the EIS, and that was my responsibility. As regional hydrologist, I did the environmental appendix for the later Oahe EIS. That's the one I went to court on. Later on, I did one on the O'Neill Unit in Nebraska. The one for the coal fields, I did the hydrology one for that one. I still have copies of them laying in a box in my attic somewhere.

So they became more organized, more focused, more in depth, they meant more. That was the big change.

- Storey: They provided more information.
- Keys: Absolutely.

- Storey: And in providing more information, they became more costly?
- Keys: Oh, Lord, yes.
- Storey: Were you involved in any of the budgeting for doing an environmental review, an environmental statement?
- Keys: Yes. That coal field one, they asked me what it would take to do the hydrology, and we put together the cost, and then followed through on getting the money to do it.
- Storey: Doing the hydrology for an environmental document, I would think is different from doing the hydrology for a project. Is that true?
- Keys: A little bit. Not much, but a little bit. Basically, most of the time we would do the hydrology for the project, and then go back and say, "Okay, what else do we need to look at for the environmental impact statement?" In other words, how much sediment will it deposit in this area, or how far will it draw down the water table over in that wetland, or that sort of thing. It was mostly an expansion of the planning hydrology for the EIS work. See, now they're together. We do the EIS work as part of the planning process, and produce the draft environmental impact statement as part of the planning process. So there are some differences, but it's a lot the same work.
- Storey: What kinds of things would you be adding that you wouldn't normally do for project planning?

Environmental Statements Required Alternatives Were Added to Work

- Keys: Mainly alternatives. In the environmental impact statement, you do environmental alternatives as opposed to alternative studies for sizing or routing or whatever. We would do a "no action" alternative. In other words, what happens if you don't do one, and we would have to look at the flood that would happen with no flood control there. If we didn't do the water conservation project, you're still going to have the wetlands there, and how much water are you taking away if you do the water conservation project? Addressing the alternatives was a big difference between what we did before and the EIS work.
- Storey: How did Reclamation react to having to do these environmental studies? Do you have any memories of that?
- Keys: Oh, absolutely. We fought it. We fought it tooth and nail. See, when NEPA was first passed, we went out and tried to hire ourself an environmentalist to give us credibility, and the first one they hired was Woody Seaman [phonetic] for the whole Bureau. I never will forget Woody. He was really a nice guy, and he was very capable, but the environmental community thought he sold his soul to the devil when he came to work for us.

I never will forget. We had him out in the Garrison. I'd already moved to Billings. We took him out to the Garrison, and they could not have done it worse if they'd planned it. We had him on a field tour, and we went by where they were doing the construction on the McClusky Canal, and we got there just as they set off a big charge. They blew the hell out of ducks and lizards and frogs and stuff, all over the place, and Woody was just standing there with his mouth open watching it. I never will forget that. Couldn't have planned it worse.

Trying to Get Around NEPA

Reclamation fought it. What we tried to do is hire ourself people to help us get around it. In Billings we hired Ely P. Denson as our regional environmental specialist. The guy was a game hog. He hunted and fished and, hell, he had a leopard stuffed in his living room. He would go out and shoot three or four deer a year, in other words, how ever many tags he could get, and he never released a damn trout in his life. He was a game hog. We used him to try to get around NEPA. Now, in a lot of cases we came up with good work, but at first we were trying to get around the act, and then it took a while for us to start working with the National Environmental Policy Act.

Storey: Could you explain more about what you mean when you say you were trying to get around NEPA?

Keys: We had to build a project, we couldn't be bothered with NEPA. Those people didn't know what they wanted. They were just wild-eyed environmentalists trying to stop something. They didn't know what they were talking about. We knew what they needed. They needed water. They needed irrigation development. Get those guys out of the way. I'm being facetious to some degree, but that was the belief of a lot of the management in those days, is we needed to get around NEPA and not work with it. It was only when we understand and had to work with NEPA did we really get something started, and that's where the young people in our organization came in. That's where the Keyeses of the world came in and said, "Look, this is not all bullshit."

Storey: Could you expand further on how that evolved, how the evolution occurred?

Keys: Well, take the Garrison. When we first started with the Garrison Project, the return flows, in Reclamation's mind, was a boon to Canada. "Canada, you ought to want that water. It's putting water in the Souris River, which runs dry and putrid part of the year. You ought to want that."

Canada says, "Well, I don't know whether that's a good deal or not. It's got more salt in it, it might be bringing gizzard shad with it, and so forth. I don't know whether we want that or not."

We said, "Well, come on, Canada. We need to get rid of it."

They said, "Well, we don't want you to dump it on us."

Then we said, "Well, yeah, I guess that's right." This is over fifteen or twenty years now. We said, "Maybe we ought to make another use out of it, or maybe we should build the project different so that it doesn't get over there in the first place." So that's really kind of how it evolved.

It took getting younger people. It took getting good environmental people, who were not just the wild-eyed people, getting them into Reclamation, and for us to be able to work with them. It took that for it to work, and for us to understand it. If you look at how long, I think it's exceptional that we've only had the National Environmental Policy Act for twenty-five years. I would say the first ten of it we spent fighting it, and then we started getting something done.

Storey: If you think back on those days, you've mentioned a couple of people who were hired to deal with the NEPA issues. How did the way we hired people in order to deal with NEPA change?

Keys: I think that we hired those people right at first to get around it, like I said. Then we started hiring young people to work with them, to get the work done, and as the young people came in to work for them, they started changing attitudes, and saying, "Gees, do we really want to channelize the James River? Look at what that does. Look at the wetlands that it takes out that are necessary to the central flyway. Look at what it does to this little fish over here. We can get the same water down there, but there's another way to do it without channelizing." I think those young people coming in made the difference.

"NEPA Was a Cultural Shift for this Country. . ."

I think you could say that about almost any organization and any cultural shift that happens in an organization. NEPA is a cultural shift for the whole country. NEPA was a cultural shift for this country, and our agencies typically lagged behind cultural shifts, but it gets there. That was NEPA to Reclamation.

Storey: Did the professions of the people we were hiring change? You've called the two original folk environmentalists, I believe.

Keys: I'll tell you. There were two types of people we worked with in those days. They hired Woody to give us some environmental credibility. The other approach is to take one of us engineers and turn us into an environmental specialist, and several regions did that very well. But it was only when we started getting the good environmental people that things started happening. Phil – what is his name, that was in lower Colorado, who now works with Montgomery? Sharp, Phil Sharp, I think, was the first true environmental specialist that Reclamation had, and he was in Boulder City, Colorado.

Storey: Boulder City, Nevada?

Keys: Yes, in the regional office. He was the regional environmental specialist. I think he was the first true environmental specialist that we had, who started Reclamation on the right track. He developed a lot of good young people working with him.

Storey: He was a biologist, was he?

Keys: Yes, he was. Ron McCowen [phonetic], one of our area managers, worked under him. Wayne Deason, environmental specialist in Denver, worked under him. A lot of people – Bill Rinne, that's down there now, worked under him. A good man. A good friend.

This region was the same. They went out and hired the director of the Idaho Fish and Game Department to be the environmental specialist for this region. A lot of people said, "Hell, the regional director just hired him a hunting buddy." And in some cases that was true, but the young people that came to work for him made the difference. The Doug Jameses of the world, the Monty McClendons [phonetic] of the world, made the difference. Is that not true in most cultural shifts?

Storey: I think it does happen. Occasionally, you have one of the older folk who picks it up also. Did you see any of that?

Keys: Not until I got to Denver. Not until I got to Denver.

Storey: The National Historic Preservation Act was actually probably the first of the environmental laws in 1966. Did you see anything going on with that while you were in Billings or in Bismarck?

Keys: We didn't do anything with it.

Storey: Is there anything else we ought to talk about, about Billings?

Keys: Billings was a great place to work. I got to do a lot of stuff there. Every year we used to measure the seepage out of Yellowtail [Dam]. We would shut down the powerplant, shut down all the diversions, and then measure the seepage. I never will forget, the first year I went down there, took me and my crew and we met the USGS people down to measure the seepage. We went around to the sidestream where some of that water came out, measured, came back around, and I ran into Harold Herganrader, who was one of the project people. He said, "Dell Adams wants to see you." Dell Adams was the superintendent at Yellowtail.

I went over, and he said, "Didn't see you this morning."

I said, "No, we had to get started early out there."

He said, "What project is this?"

I thought, "Oh, here it comes," and it did.

He said, "This is the Yellowtail office. You're in my project. You come onto my project, you come and see me." He chewed my butt up one side and down the other for us not checking in with him that morning when we came on his project. And I deserved it. Good lesson.

Storey: Was that considered standard courtesy?

Keys: Absolutely, and I expect my people to do it now. Damn right. When you go onto somebody's project area, you let them know that you're there and what you're doing. I thought somebody else had done it. Bad assumption. I thought Gibbs had called him. Gibbs used to call him when he did it, but it was my job, and Gibbs expected me to do it. Good lesson.

Automation. When I was in Billings, we had the first automated gauging station to measure stream flow in our region. You see, to measure flow, you go out and you do the thing with the current meter. You've got a gauging station that measures level, and you correlate the flow with what the level in the river is. You've got an automatic recorder that records those levels. But in the old days, you had to go out there and pull off the charts to see what the flows were.

We installed on the Willwood Canal on the Shoshone Project, the first automated one. You had a telephone in the gauging station house, and you called that number. It physically lifted up the receiver, and it beeped a number of times to tell you what the water level was, and you let it go and it'd beep, then you'd wait and it would do it again, then it would set itself back down. That's the first automated gauging station we had.

Right now we have a hydromet [phonetic] system in this region. I can go in that other room and I can pull out flow level, the temperature, the precipitation, anything you want to know about any gauging station in this region. I can do that, and I think the oldest piece of data will be fifteen minutes old. But in the old days we had to go out and pull charts to get information. But that was the first automated station we had. That was a great advance.

Storey: Were you in charge of the gauging stations? Is the regional hydrologist?

Keys: For Reclamation, yes. I sure was. I installed a bunch.

Storey: Yeah. How often did you have to go out?

Keys: Well, my guys were out pulling charts all the time. I took turns going out there once in a while.

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- Storey: Well, I guess maybe I should phrase this differently. How often did a gauging station have to be visited?
- Keys: Thirty days. We had thirty-day charts on most of them.
- Storey: These are the things about this wide and forever long.
- Keys: Yes. That's right. They were on drums, and it wound up on this drum, and it was run, some of them by clocks, because you didn't have electricity into them. Some of them had electricity were run by power. The old Type F Stevens recorders. Yes, that was my responsibility.
- Storey: Once again, I'm interested in how you measure seepage on a reservoir. You mentioned Yellowtail.
- Keys: Okay. We closed off the powerplant, closed off all the diversions, and we went down below the dam, below where you could see the water coming out of the canyon walls, and we measured the flow in the river. There were a couple of little creeks that come around the side thing there, and we measured the flow there. We waited several hours to let it settle down and we measured. That was the seepage out of Yellowtail.
- Storey: So you just cut off all the outflow.
- Keys: That's right.
- Storey: Measured all of the inflow to the area where you were. Okay, so you weren't measuring the reservoir per se.
- Keys: Oh, no.
- Storey: You know, I had this vision, well, if we did it on the canal this way, we're going to measure how much the --
- Keys: Yes.
- Storey: Not practical.
- Keys: There's a couple of other things.
- Storey: Our time is pretty much up.

Began Refereeing Football in Billings

- Keys: Let's talk a minute about other things that we did. I had an avocation that I started in college that I have carried through, and I still do it. I referee college football now. When I was in college, I started refereeing intermural and high school freshmen games. When I went to Utah, I refereed high school football,

and actually did a championship playoff game down there. I went to North Dakota, I refereed high school ball, and got started doing college ball. In 1970, I refereed three games in the North Dakota Collegiate Athletic Conference, first college games I worked. I have progressed from there, and I have been working college football ever since. That was one of the avocations.

Asked to Judge Rodeo

When I went to Montana, they came to our football association. The Northern Rodeo Association came to our football association, said, "We're having trouble with judges. Are there some of you guys that we could train to be rodeo judges?" I did that and I judged rodeo for two seasons in Montana.

Storey: In colleges?

Keys: No, this is professional rodeo.

Storey: Okay.

Hobbies and Flying

Keys: Hunting and fishing. Always have hunted and fished, everywhere I've been. Love it, still do, and so forth. Run rivers. I had a canoe that we used on the Missouri River and in the Yellowstone. In Colorado, I had that canoe and a little raft. Here, I've been big-time river rafting, ever since I came to Idaho. Kayaking. I'm a pilot. I fly. My wife and I own our own plane now, fly into the back country to fish, camp, so forth. We have done stuff indigenous to the area, because it's a great time and great place to do stuff. My wife and I traveled to all of the parks in Utah, and wherever we've lived. Developed great friendships with the Park Service people that we know. Reclamation's been a great life experience for my family.

Storey: Does college refereeing occupy a lot of your time?

Keys: Takes my weekends in the fall. I have to spend time during the year studying the rules and going to the clinics and that sort of thing. It basically takes my weekends in the fall.

Storey: Well, I'd like to continue, but I know you have a plane to catch. Once again, I'd like to ask you whether or not the information on the tapes and transcripts can be used by researchers inside and outside Reclamation.

Keys: Yes, they absolutely can.

Storey: Great. Thank you.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 2. DECEMBER 9, 1994. END OF INTERVIEW.
BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1. MARCH 23, 1995.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing John W. Keys III, regional director of the Pacific Northwest Regional Office, in the regional Office in Boise, Idaho, on March 23, 1995, at about one o'clock in the afternoon. This is tape one.

Mr. Keys, last time we left off that you were getting ready to leave Billings. Can you tell me how and why you left Billings, where you ended up?

Leaves Billings to Be Chief Hydrologist in Denver

Keys: Well, basically, in the early days when I worked with Reclamation, if you wanted a promotion, you moved for it, and GS-14s were few and far between around Reclamation in those days. I had been the regional hydrologist in Billings from 1971 to '75, and in 1975, they advertised for the chief hydrology job in Denver. I applied for it and *got it*. There were some personal things involved in going to Denver, but basically it was to move down there for the promotion.

The personal thing in my life at that time, my wife was doing her undergraduate study, she wanted to be a medical doctor, and at some time we were going to have to move close to a medical school, and there was one in Denver. So it fit with our future plans at the time, so I applied for the job and got it.

I know my family did not like the thoughts of leaving Montana. Montana still at times seems like home to us, although it's been twenty years since we left there. Fact is, I'll tell you a story. My dad, in about 1976, after we had left Montana, he called me from Alabama, he called me when I was living in Denver. He said, "TVA's hiring."

I said, "Well, that's good."

He said, "No, no. TVA's hiring, and they've got some jobs that are comparable to what you're doing."

I said, "Well, that's good, but I've got a good job."

He says, "What do you mean?" He said, "Don't you want to come home?" He said, "Don't you ever get homesick for home?"

I said, "Well, I hate to tell you this, but the only place I was ever homesick for was in my life was Montana." I swear, I think he was going to write me out of the will because I said that. But we loved Montana. It's a great place to live. Sometime my wife and I may even look at going back up there.

But anyway, we moved to Denver to take the job, chief hydrology. Had four branches that reported to me there. I had water utilization, which was headed by Al Gibbs; I had flood hydrology that at first was headed by Harold

Grout, and then by Fred Bertle after Harold retired; we had water quality, and the groundwater people were in that. And – what was the other one? Sedimentation. Had a sedimentation section. Boy, they were good people. Sedimentation section was headed by Ernie Pemberton. They were just super people to work with.

Right after I moved down there, I was called back to North Dakota, in fact, for some court work on the Garrison Diversion Unit. Then I was called over to O'Neill, Nebraska, on some court work on water quality, two different court cases.

Became Head of the Colorado River Water Quality Office

I only stayed in the job as chief hydrologist for a year. John Maletic, who was at one time the chief land classifier for Reclamation, passed away, and he had gotten everything ready for an office to open on Colorado River water quality. The Colorado River Water Quality Office was set to open and John passed away. He was on a trip to Yuma, Arizona, working with the Colorado River water quality, had a heart attack and died at the Ramada Inn there.

Jim O'Brien, who was the chief of planning and O&M for the Bureau in Washington, called up and asked me was I going to apply for that job. I told him, no, that I didn't think I was qualified for that job, that I needed some more time as chief of hydrology. He said, "I want your application Monday morning to be the chief of the Colorado River Water Quality Office." I talked to him for a while and told him several times that I really needed to stay where I was. It was not a move, but it was a different job, and it was a raise, GS-15.

Finally, he convinced me that I ought to take that job, and I did. Then we had to get the papers through and they signed my papers on the Fourth of July, 1976. They physically signed them on the Fourth of July –

Storey: On the Bicentennial.

Title I and Title II of the Salinity Control Act

Keys: – which was on a Sunday afternoon. My appointment was effective immediately. There were good things about that job and bad things. The good things, I got to work with some really close friends and good people, and I got to see and work in different parts in the country, the Colorado River Basin all the way from the mountains down to the Gulf of California, and it was in water quality, which was kind of exciting in those days, mostly dealing with salinity and the Title II program. The Title II was the stuff in the United States. Title I was the big desalting plant on the river down at Yuma. But it was a good job, and it got me a 15. I was a 15 for a little over ten years, which is not a bad grade to get stuck at. I was a 15 longer than anything else. But it was a good job. I got to go and see and do a lot of things in that job. Stayed in it for three years in Denver there.

Storey: Tell me more about it.

Keys: In the early seventies, the crisis of salinity in the Colorado River reached a level that required a lot of work with Mexico to "clean up the Colorado River." The legislation that was passed to do that had two titles to it. Title I of the Colorado River Salinity Control Act was for the construction and operation of a desalting plant at Yuma. It was to deliver a certain amount of clean water below the Wellton-Mohawk Project to the river, to be used as dilution. Very expensive, over \$100 an acre-foot it finally ended up costing. The treaty was satisfied if they got that done and so forth.

Title II of the Salinity Control Act called for actions to be done in the United States to keep salinity from getting in the river in the first place. Examples were the Grand Valley Project in Colorado where the irrigation was over Mancos Shale, and any water that got down onto the shale dissolved salt and put it into the river. We had a project there to minimize the seepage and waste from the project so you reduced the amount of water that hit the shale and dissolved salt and went into the river. The Paradox Valley was an old spring and deep well that discharged *highly* saline water into the river, and there we were looking at capping it, or catching and evaporating all the water that came out. Several others, the seepage projects and the Uinta Valley in Utah, the springs and so forth on the Virgin River, other irrigation projects where you were trying to minimize the amount of water that got down. At one time we had thirteen units in the Title II program, but I don't know where it is right now.

Our job was to work with two regions, the Upper Colorado and the Lower Colorado, to implement Title II and get those projects built. Las Vegas Wash was another project down close to Las Vegas and Boulder City. I got to work with two regional offices, the two regional directors very closely, in trying to get those projects up and going. When I left there in '79, we had construction work under way on Grand Valley, and were in pre-construction on Las Vegas Wash. We had done pre-construction on Paradox Valley, on the well, and had planning studies going on the rest of the units.

Bob Strand was my assistant and programs officer. Great friend, good worker. Erroll Jensen was my groundwater man. Mike Bessler was my desalting expert. Anyway, it was a great office to work in, and had an office on the thirteenth floor of Building 67, probably the best view out of the whole office of the front range. So it was a good job.

A lot of travel, got to go to D.C. a lot, got to go into Southern California and work with the – I was chairman of one of the agency boards that worked with the federal agencies that did salinity work, got to work closely with EPA.

O'Neill Unit on Niobrara River in Nebraska

One of the things that we did while we were there, we were called in on this O'Neill Unit in Nebraska. O'Neill Unit was a construction project to build a dam on the Niobrara River, but the environmental people didn't want it to happen for two reasons: one, the effect on the groundwater, and the other was it would take water out of the river that the Sandhill and Whooping cranes depended on in the Niobrara. They brought me in on water quality, because most of the groundwater over the Ogallala Aquifer in those days had high nitrate levels. We came in and put together an agreement with EPA and the farmers where they would actually do a nitrogen balance for the corn, and account for the nitrogen in the groundwater before they put their fertilizer on, because they were over-fertilizing. When they accounted for the nitrate in the groundwater, that meant they didn't have to put quite as much on. That was fairly innovative in those days.

Storey: Saved them money.

Keys: Saved them money, saved adding to the nitrate problem in the groundwater. Pretty good. The project was never built because they never could get past the environmental arguments, and maybe rightfully so.

Storey: Did you have to shepherd through the environmental statement process?

Original NEPA Work on the Garrison Diversion Unit

Keys: Yes. I don't know whether we talked about it, but let me back up and bring you from NEPA in 1969. The National Environmental Policy Act was passed in 1969. I worked for a project manager who was fairly farsighted in those days. Ed Lundberg was his name. In 1969, he called four of us together, and he said, "This National Environmental Policy Act is about to be passed. Take that draft of the act that we're working with, and write me an environmental statement for the Garrison Diversion Unit," which I was working on at the time in Bismarck.

Me and the other three guys did that, and we came up with about a twenty-five-page document for the Garrison Diversion Unit environmental impacts. It was stuff like how we designed the facilities to provide for seepage, take care of it, how we would have our survey crews clean up their sandwich wrappers after eating lunch out on the job, that sort of thing. We wouldn't let them write "BM" for benchmarks on the headworks and things, because it insulted some folks and other folks that didn't know what it meant. That was the kind of stuff that was in there, twenty-five pages. We thought we'd done a hell of a job. I think the last time that an environmental impact statement was done for Garrison, you couldn't carry one in a wheelbarrow, it was that big.

On over into Montana, we then did an environmental impact statement for the Oahe Project, and I got called into court to testify on that one that was challenged by environmental people. They ended up killing the project because of it, because of the environmental effects. We won our lawsuit on the

impact statement. We won the lawsuit on the impact statement and lost the project.

Wrote several impact statements on the San Juan-Chama when I was doing the hydrology in Denver. Then on the Salinity Control Program, we wrote a *big* environmental impact statement on that. We actually were challenged in court on that one also. So I had a lot of involvement with National Environmental Policy Act through the years.

Storey: Did you have staff that was assigned to doing that or how did that work?

Keys: Most of the time, well, in the salinity control office, we put together a team to do the EIS, of our people, Bureau people, other agency people, the state people, the Salinity Control Forum people - had a big team working on it, and divided up the tasks. Our people did most of the work, but we had a lot of people working on it.

Storey: Now, the first one, O'Neill was it?

Keys: Well, O'Neill was one that I worked on while I was in Denver.

Storey: That was the very early one. No, the one in Bismarck.

Keys: That was Garrison.

Storey: Oh, the Garrison, excuse me.

Keys: Garrison was the one.

Storey: When was that?

Keys: 1969.

Storey: The same year the act was passed.

Keys: Yes.

Storey: Yeah, it took quite a while for that to evolve into what it eventually evolved into.

Keys: Yeah, it probably took ten years for the NEPA to take full effect on the Garrison.

Storey: The Title II work at Grand Valley, that was actually *on* a Reclamation project?

Keys: Yes, Grand Valley was an old Reclamation project, built in – I think it started in 1916 or so. A lot of the facilities were old, the concrete canal lines were cracked and broken, in some places even washed out. They were still flood

irrigating most of the lands there, a lot of wastewater, a lot of tailwaters, a lot of over-applications. The approach that we took was to line canals, line laterals, encourage sprinklers, the use of sprinklers, shepherd the water as much as possible on applications. In other words, we put in irrigation management services to tell them how much water to put on, when to put it on, and that sort of thing. We provided a lot of money in there to get that done.

Storey: Was it reimbursable money?

Keys: Some was and some was not. Well, the on-farm work we did mostly with the Soil Conservation Service, and they had their own Great Plains Program that was 75 percent cost share, so the 25 percent was reimbursable. Most of the work that we did on the main canals was not; the on-farm work, about three-quarters of it was not reimbursable, so some was and some was not. We worked very closely with the Soil Conservation Service and used their programs with monies to help defray cost in there.

Storey: I think Paradox Valley, for instance, didn't involve a Reclamation project.

Keys: I'll tell you, Paradox was a fairly unique thing, in that it was a source of *highly* saline water. Seawater is about 33,000 parts per million. This stuff was 250,000 parts per million. I mean, you could actually see it coming up out of the ground, it was so viscous at times with salt. So it was a very local source that you could get a hold of, get it out of there, and do a lot of good in a short time. At that time, our approach to the thing was to just capture it, put it in an evaporation pond just so it stayed out of the river. After I left, they found that really the source of it was an old oil well that got drilled, and they looked at going back in and casing it, and plugging the thing to keep it from coming up. I think that's where they actually ended up. If they have finished it, that's what they ended up doing.

Storey: But that I can see we would pay, it would be non-reimbursable and so on.

Keys: We would pay for that, yes.

Storey: Having a situation where you were going in and saying, "You've got to change your project, you've got to change your *practices*, in order for us to reduce the salt that's flowing into the river," looks to me like it would be a tough job. Did it turn out to be?

Desalting and Effects on Landowners

Keys: More than any of us ever dreamed. It was my first experience at working with landowners to really make change in what they're doing. In other words, to convince them to go from the old flood irrigation, which they were very comfortable with, which gave them a good living, and *to them* it didn't do any harm. In other words, their land had pretty fair drainage, they could run water through it without it hurting - whatever. We had to convince them that what

they were doing downstream was hurting somebody else, and that it was for the good of everybody concerned that they change. That's why we were so free in not requiring a lot of repayment, because of the change to them, and really, the only benefit, at times, to them was a little bit smaller O&M on some of their facilities. In other words, somebody was going to have to rebuild something anyway, just he did it a littler earlier or something. So that was one of the reasons it was mostly non-reimbursable. But, yes, that's different to have to tell somebody they've got to line a canal, or line a lateral, or convince them to use irrigation management scheduling and that sort of thing.

Storey: This irrigation management scheduling, that's basically looking at an agricultural practice. Is the idea that you go in and you tell them how to do it for a while and then they learn it so that we can go away?

Keys: That was the original idea. Basically, IMS was set up to work with them to get the changes made, in other words, put in the new laterals, the lined laterals, or put them in pipe, and then move them to a new application method, either gated pipe, or sprinklers, or at times we even looked at drip and that sort of thing. And, then give them the technology to say how much water they needed, when they needed it, and how much fertilizer to apply with it, pesticide, the whole bit.

Our schedule was to do it for five years with them, and then they would take it over. In most cases, what it meant is we worked with them for five years and left, and they went back to doing what they were doing before. There were some places where it paid for itself, like in Nebraska and Kansas, because there they were pumping groundwater. The less groundwater they pumped, the cheaper it was for them, so it paid them to do scheduling. But people in Grand Valley or some of the people in this region at that time, when we left, they quit doing it, because it meant more work for them. It's work at times to manage water rather than to do the best you can to hold it down.

Storey: What was going on at Las Vegas Wash?

Keys: During the war, there was an industry built up there in Henderson called Basic Management Industries, and basically they produced exotic metals for the war effort. After the war, it went into different metals that had -- the plants are all still there, but they were producing different -- oh, they were producing molybdenum, and . . .

Storey: Magnesium, I think.

Keys: Magnesium and several other exotic metals. I don't even remember the names of them. But the groundwater mound under that plant had built up and had a lot of crud in it, dissolved salts, and even some heavy metals that we were trying to keep out of the Colorado River. Our plan there was to actually build an underground reservoir. In other words, build an aquifer. The aquifer necked down before Las Vegas Wash dumped into the Colorado, and we were

going to build an upside down dam. In other words, instead of the dam being shaped like that, it was going to be shaped like that. [Demonstrates.]

Storey: So the wide part would be on the surface.

Keys: That's right. We would just block the stuff from getting into the river, and we'd build some kind of treatment plant to treat the excess there. Fact is, I think they're actually doing some of that right now. I don't know that they've got the treatment plant done, but I know they have built the dam. Basically, it was to keep the crud out of the river. We were working with the company, with the State of Nevada, and the Colorado River Board of California, getting that one done. Interesting project.

I was down there for a meeting. There's a couple of other little stories, but we were down there for a meeting when they had one of those floods then. Las Vegas is, and what the people don't realize, that Las Vegas, Nevada, is one of the most flood-prone cities in the United States. It's not because you get big volumes of water like you do at Omaha, or someplace like that, but you get a damn thunderstorm come through there and dump five or six inches of rain, that place just goes to hell in a basket. If you look at Las Vegas, you'll see flood channels all over the place there. One of them runs right under Caesar's Palace. That's what they're there for is those thunderstorms.

To tell you a story about Las Vegas. When I was chief of hydrology, the first time I ever went to Boulder City for a meeting, and we went down and got there for the meeting early in the morning. We went down to Boulder City, and we just couldn't wait to get done with the meeting to go back and gamble. We went back up there, and we were supposed to be down there for three days. Lost every nickel I had that first night. (laughter) Borrowed enough money to eat off of from another guy, got home, had to write a check at the damn parking lot to get my car out of the parking lot at Stapleton.

This next time we went down there, not quite as bad, just couldn't wait after the meetings to go back, and then didn't do very well. After that second time, I never, unless the meeting was in Las Vegas or there was some reason to stay, I never stayed in Las Vegas. I always went to Boulder City, stayed at the El Rancho Boulder. I got to know the people and every time we went down, I just didn't go and gamble, got enough of it.

Storey: Where were you staying in Las Vegas, do you remember?

Keys: There was a place called the Villa Roma, the old Villa Roma was right down the street from the Stardust. It was actually on one of the side streets down from the Stardust. They would give us government rates at the Villa Roma. Dump of a place, but it was good rates.

Storey: This is where you went to gamble those two times?

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- Keys: The Stardust, yes.
- Storey: Stardust. What did you do? What did you play?
- Keys: Oh, blackjack.
- Storey: Blackjack.
- Keys: I was just a damn country kid that didn't know what the hell was going on.
- Storey: I sat down at a seven card stud game once, and it went so fast I couldn't keep track of it. I didn't care for it.
- Keys: I like to play cards but, boy, I just never had the nerve—when I'm with people, we'll go and play a little bit, but not—it was probably good for me. I guess a guy could get hooked on that kind of thing.
- Storey: I think you could.
- Keys: So I think it was good for me. After that, I always set a limit. You take \$20 out, and if you lose it, you quit.
- Storey: The project at Yuma, sort of the ultimate desalting solution, did you go through alternatives, while you were there, for that proposal?

Yuma Desalting Plant

- Keys: When I first went on into the salinity control office, we actually had a test facility set up at Yuma. They were testing the different ways to treat the salty water, the different desalting methods, reverse osmosis, and there were about four different kinds of reverse osmosis that they were doing with the companies themselves. Oh, man, it's been so long I can't even remember the different kinds of desalt – well, evaporation, flash evaporation was one of the methods, reverse osmosis, and there's another one that essentially is a filter kind, but they looked at the three methods. They settled on reverse osmosis, and then they did a lot of research on the different kinds of membranes to use with reverse osmosis. Then they settled on that and they've got them installed. They're either installed or in brine pickle solutions in the warehouse down there right now.

They had started construction on the plant in '79 when I left, but it was not completed until just, oh, gosh, three or four years ago. I was on the Budget Review Committee four years ago when we looked at actually whether we should put that thing into operation or not, and as you know, it's never been in full operation. They've tested it a couple of times and right now it's pretty much on the shelf because it's so expensive. The floods that they've had down there have filled the groundwater up to the point that you can't do it any good

by dilution. Until that groundwater amount goes down from the last floods, it doesn't make any sense to run the desalting plant.

Storey: You said they made the decision to use the osmosis process. Who was "they"?

Keys: Basically, it was the Salinity Control Forum and the International Joint Commission (IJC). See, the IJC was involved because it was – the desalting plant was built to meet the treaty with Mexico.

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1. MARCH 23, 1995.

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2. MARCH 23, 1995.

Storey: You were saying that --

Keys: I was involved on the Title II side, but there was another guy [Hal Taylor] who was really in charge of Title I. They had a team from Reclamation, and industry, and from the International Joint Commission, and the states that decided on it, but it was mainly an economic decision of which one to go with.

Storey: So at the time they thought the reverse osmosis would be the most economical approach?

Keys: It probably still is. The question is whether you need to do it in the first place, not which method they were going to use.

Storey: Well, it's nice that we got floods for a little while, (Keys: Yes.) that naturally dilutes the salts, I guess.

Keys: We did a little bit of work for them on the brine stream and what you did with that, and basically was put it down the Gulf of California, Santa Clara Slough.⁴ But we did a little bit of work with that, but mainly the Title I people were in charge of that.

Storey: Brine stream, was there a lot that would be a by-product there?

Keys: Oh, yes. With reverse osmosis, you still end up with a brine that you have to dispose of. Somebody's always got to live downstream. See, if you do evaporation, two bad things with that: one, you lose the water, and, second, you've got to deal with what's left over. It's not the kind of salt you can just put in a salt shaker and sell it to somebody. It's got other stuff in it that's pretty bad stuff at times. Well, with reverse osmosis, you *never* get it down to a solid. You end up with a real brine that you have to dispose of, and in those days we were putting it down Santa Clara Slough. I'm pretty sure that's what the final solution was.

4. Also known as the *Ciénega de Santa Clara*.

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- Storey: You said you were in this job for three years. Was that job going well when you left?
- Keys: I could have stayed in that job for a while. There were a lot of things going on at that time. I never did like living in Denver. Denver, to me, every time I ever decided to do something in Denver, it seemed like about 103,000 other people decided to do the same thing at the same time. There was always crowds and there was always traffic, there was always living close together.

Never Liked the Denver Office

And I never did like the attitude of the Denver office. The Denver office was not called "ivory tower" for nothing. I never liked it, never could get used to it, and I wanted to get out of there.

Applied to Be Assistant Regional Director in Billings

In 1978, late '78, I think it was even early '79, the assistant regional director's job in Billings came open. That was my job! In my own mind, that was *my* job! I filled out the application and sent it in, and a fellow that I had worked for at one time was the regional director. His name was Bill Lloyd, who you've known. He was regional director, and he interviewed me for the job, and didn't give it to me. That put me into a funk for about three weeks, and I would have probably *strangled* him on sight if I had seen him. There were two reasons for that: one, is that it was *my* job, and the other is the guy that he put into it. I just did not agree with what he did. I had some growing up to do, let's put it that way.

Applied for Management Training

Finally, I came to accept the fact that I had to do something else if I was going to ever get out of Denver or go any further. About that time, there was an advertisement that came across for the Secretariat of the Interior training program to take a person to Washington, D.C., for a year to a year and a half, give him different assignments, and get him ready to be an assistant regional director. Cliff Barrett, who I have known for a while, who was actually my supervisor, suggested that if that's what I wanted to do, I ought to apply for that. He told me he wanted me to stay in the job that I had. I reported to the assistant commissioner in those days. He said if I wanted to go further, that's something I ought to think about. So I applied for it and was accepted. My wife had just finished her first year of medical school. She had three more years of medical school to go.

So in 1979, I reported to work on the first day of June to D.C., and this secretariat training thing was assigned directly to the Secretary of Interior, with the secondary responsibility to report to the commissioner. I worked for Cecil Andrus and Keith Higginson for a year, a little over a year. I worked a couple of months with the Water Resources Council, a month for the White House,

four months on a congressman's personal staff, a couple of months in the assistant secretary's office, whatever the balance is back in Reclamation in different assignments.

Storey: That was a program you created?

Keys: No, it was a program that they were – I don't think I caused it to go in the ashcan, but it was one that they were starting to just get people the experience of working in Washington, and get them ready, give them management assignments and training to get them ready to be assistant regional directors. Then to be regional directors at some time, I guess. I tell you, it was the precursor of the SES [Senior Executive Service] Development Program. See, they have the SES development program now that took its place. I went and did it for a year. The regional director, who had been in Billings, had been reassigned to Boise, and his assistant retired.

Storey: That was Bill Lloyd.

Keys: Yeah, who had not selected me before. When I went into this job, they told me that the first assistant regional director vacancy that came open was mine. This one came open. He called and said, "I'd like you to apply for that job."

Storey: Who's "he"?

Keys: Bill Lloyd. And I said, "I didn't know that it worked that way."

He said, "Yeah, I know that they promised you the first one, but I think I'll want you to apply."

I said, "Well, okay."

I went and talked to the personnel people, and I said, "What the hell's going on here? You promised me the first one, and he calls and asks me to apply."

They said, "Well, he has that prerogative."

I said, "What if he don't select me?"

They said, "Well, the next one's yours."

I said, "Baloney." (laughter)

They said, "You've got to play his game."

Applied to Be Assistant Regional Director in Boise in 1980

So I did, I applied, went through his interview, and he selected me. He didn't have to, so I felt pretty good about that. Never did forgive him. (laughter) Bill Lloyd's a good friend. He selected me to come here in June of 1980.

Storey: To succeed him?

Keys: No, to be his assistant. To be his assistant. I was his assistant for six years, from 1980 until 1986.

Storey: So when was this that you finally moved to Billings?

Keys: To Boise, again.

Storey: Back to Billings, wasn't it? Oh, he had moved over here and then he – I see.

Keys: He had been reassigned from Billings to here as regional director.

Storey: So that was in '80.

Keys: That was in '80. He came here in February 1980. They just moved him down here, and left the guy, Joe Marcotte, who was the assistant that got the job that I wanted, they left him as regional director in Billings, and moved Bill down here, and I was his assistant for six years.

Storey: In those days, what did an assistant regional director do?

The Job of Assistant Regional Director

Keys: Everything. Bill Lloyd and I had an agreement. I'll tell you, I have been in the job that I am in right now too long. I've been in essentially the same job for fifteen years, because the way Bill and I ran this place, if anybody talked to me, they were talking to the regional director. If Bill was here, they talked to him. If I was here, they talked to me, and he had delegated me enough authority that I felt pretty much in control. I had programs that I was responsible for. Didn't have people reporting to me of his, but he was really a good man.

That thing about the selection thing always grated me, but he was a great man to work for, because he delegated to me as much or more than I ever wanted, and it was *mine*. I was in charge of programs, I negotiated contracts for him, I negotiated labor stuff for him. Basically, he let me do about everything. It was that old deal about having two people in one box, and if you talk to one you're talking to the other. It worked *really* well. He was a good man to work for.

Didn't Travel Much as Assistant Regional Director

I couldn't travel much in those days. When I went to D.C., my wife and kids stayed in Colorado, and I went to D.C. by myself, rented an apartment and stayed there that whole time by myself. They stayed in Colorado for her to go on with med school. When I got the job here, we sold the house in Denver, Arvada to be exact, and moved furniture, kids and everything up here, and my wife went back and lived with a schoolteacher that we knew very well, to finish med school. She had two years there and me and the kids were here, and I did not travel very much. Bill liked to travel and traveled a lot. I ran the place while he was gone. I traveled a little bit, but not very much, because I had those kids here. It worked out pretty good.

Storey: Well, I noticed earlier you didn't say, "I had to go," you said, "I got to go."

Keys: I got to go.

Storey: Here and there.

Keys: Here and there, right.

Storey: When you were head of the Colorado River Water Quality Office.

Keys: Oh, yes.

Storey: I take it that means you like to travel.

Keys: Yes, in those days I liked to travel. I had *not* done a lot of traveling before. I mean, I had traveled, like when I first went to work in Utah, the travel was out to do work, and a lot of times we went out Monday morning and came back Friday night. It was into the Uinta Basin, down to Delta, down into southern Utah and around. North Dakota, we went out to work on the project different places, and we were out for two or three days at a time, but it was all right there on the project. When I was in Montana, most of that was around the region.

Denver, we were going all over the place, all over the United States, and mostly into the Southwest. This job here I've been all over the world. The world, that's not quite right, I've been to Canada and Mexico and the Soviet Union, but I'll tell you, until I got to where I was traveling so much that it got to be a real hassle, I liked to travel, and still like to travel, but I do too much now.

Storey: Is that one of the things that regional directors have to be willing to do?

Keys: Yes. I don't think you can be a regional director without traveling. Oh, God, last year I traveled 101 days out of the year.

Storey: That's a lot of travel.

Keys: Unless you lost count, there's 250 working days in a year.

Storey: Why does a regional director need to travel so much?

Why Regional Directors must Travel So Much

Keys: Because people want to talk to the regional director. Indian tribes, they don't want to talk to area managers, they don't want to talk to division chiefs – they want to talk to Commissioner Dan [Daniel P.] Beard, but Dan can't be everywhere, or the commissioner, whoever it is. I'm the closest thing to him that there is, and that's who they want to talk to.

Irrigation districts want to talk to the regional director. The travel a lot of times is when we go meet with other regional directors. We're the representatives of Reclamation to the NWRA, National Water Resources Association. I give talks all over the place. I speak at law symposiums, I speak to college classes, meet with all of the state water resources associations.

This is going to sound strange: we carry the flag for Reclamation. Now, Dan Beard doesn't completely agree with that. He wants his area managers doing a lot of that, but we carry the flag for Reclamation. I like doing that. I don't like all the travel right now, but I like carrying the flag for Reclamation.

Storey: Well, you came and sort of settled in.

Keys: 1980, I moved here. My family didn't come until August, but I moved here and found a place to live. We were over in the Federal Building in those days. I took Harry Stivers' job. Harry had been the assistant director here for a long time, ten or fifteen years, and worked for Bill, good assignment.

Storey: Your wife then moved back after she got her medical degree?

Keys: Yes, she came here in '82. She got her medical degree in '82 from the University of Colorado, and was fortunate enough to get the residency assignment here in Boise. There is a family practice residency here, and she is a family practice doctor. She got the residency assignment and came here in '82, did her three years of residency and has had her practice ever since here. It's probably the thing that keeps me from moving, because of her practice, not that I would have wanted to move anyway.

Storey: What kind of issues were you having to deal with back in '80 when you came here?

Keys: As assistant regional director?

Storey: Yeah, well, as assistant regional *cum* regional director.

Salmon Issues on the Klamath River

Keys: Well, no, that's right. 1980, the salmon issue in the Yakima River was just coming to the surface. In the fall of '80, they called up on a Friday afternoon and said, "You can't cut off the water on the Cle Elum River," and we had to deal with keeping salmon redds, which are egg nests, wet. We were having to use irrigators' water to do it with, and they were screaming that they wanted to save the water. The tribe and the fisheries people were screaming at us that we had to keep water *on* the redds.

Storey: It has to be the right temperature, too.

Keys: It has to be the right temperature, the right depth so that it doesn't freeze, all of the above. They took us to court, and we kept the fish alive that far. We tried moving some nests—didn't work. We came up with a way to do it with the least amount of water that could be released. The judge made a ruling, Judge Quakenbush, in the Spokane District Court. We dealt with that thing all that fall and winter. It was the start of our real work with salmon.

Worked on discipline problems. Had a project superintendent with a drinking problem, with an ego problem. Dealt with that.

Oroville-Tonasket Irrigation District

We tried to work with the Oroville-Tonasket Irrigation District⁵ in getting their system built, one of the worst districts I ever had to work with in my life. We're still in court with them not paying. I've been working with them for fifteen damn years, and we're still in court with them.

Worked on operational issues in the Upper Snake River Basin, up around Jackson Hole, and the Minidoka Project, trying to keep water in the river for the fish and the floaters, and that sort of thing.

Worked on flood control operations like through Boise here, over in Scoggins Creek in Oregon. We had flood events in those early days, the Oahe Basin there had several different events. Those are some of the things we worked on.

Storey: What did a flood event mean to you as the regional director or the assistant regional director?

Keys: It differed. Like in Boise here, we had to work with Corps of Engineers to make the storage space available to catch the flow, and then when we went to higher releases through Boise, we did a lot of contacts with the higher-level people, the mayor, the governor, and so forth, about the flow levels that were going to go through town. Our guys were doing all the technical work, and we were doing a lot of the contact work to be sure that they understood how

5. The Oroville-Tonasket Unit of the Chief Joseph Dam Project was a pumping project which obtained water from the Similkameen and Okanogan rivers. The powerplant revenues of Chief Joseph Dam, a Corps of Engineers project, supported irrigation development.

serious it was. Worked with FEMA to plan different things because we knew that was a lot of water on the watershed. But mainly my job was talking to mayors, the governor, FEMA and that sort of thing.

Storey: And saying what?

Keys: Tell them what the levels we were expecting, tell them what we were trying to do to keep it as low as possible. We'd go to the irrigation districts and ask them to run water through their canals to keep it out of the river, talking with the press when we got water in the veterinary's headquarters over there. Damn veterinary went down and built right next to the river, and every time he got water in, he yelled to the press that we were screwing him. I would go talk to him and then I'd talk to the press, the radio and the television and that sort of thing.

Storey: Is this sort of a public relations, political function of the regional director's office?

Keys: Yes. I'll tell you. The way it was then, the way a *lot* of it is now, the assistant regional director's job is mostly working with agencies, other Federal agencies, state agencies, districts and that sort of thing. The regional director carries the flag. He talks to the press, he goes and meets with the governor. When they need somebody to make a pronouncement, he goes so that it has the full weight of the Bureau and that kind of thing.

Lately, I've been just head over heels in details, working with other regional directors, with Bonneville Power Administrator and that sort of thing, on big issues, big policy-type issues. But the division of duties at times does go along those lines. The assistant handles those one layer down from the regional director or agency head for the other agencies.

Storey: Tell me more about the Oroville-Tonasket situation and the court involvement that we have. That's a fairly recent project, as I recall.

Keys: That's been going on since the mid-seventies. The Oroville-Tonasket Irrigation District came to the Bureau in the mid-seventies and said, "Our old system is on its last legs. We would like it rebuilt." It's a 10,000-acre project in north central Washington, right up on the Canadian border. They said, "Our system's falling down and we need it rebuilt, and while you're doing it, we'd like you to put it in pressure pipe so that we can irrigate with sprinklers instead of siphon tubes and open canals."

The early designs had the water coming from pipes that they were going to put under the river and collect the water – rainy wells is what they're called. In other words, you put a slotted pipe under the river, and it pulls the water out, it doesn't have sediment or any problem. Well, that was too expensive, and the materials, you couldn't drive the pipes under the river and so forth. So they put pumps in the river.

In the early eighties, we were installing those big pumps in the river, three different divisions of the project. The first one was the – let's see. There are three divisions. The first one's got two main pumps on it, Crater Lakes and – I can't remember. The second one is Bonaparte-Tonasket. You're testing my memory.

Storey: The details of that aren't so important as what happened around them.

Keys: At any rate, we started putting the pumps in, and the pumps were pumping Cordell and Crater Lakes, Bonaparte-Tonasket and so forth, and the third unit was Osooyus. We put the big pumps in the river and they were pumping a lot of sediment in the spring and early summer. The river was just loaded with sand, and we were pumping that crud into the overhead sprinkler system and it was eating up pipes, it was eating up sprinklers, and they were yelling and screaming and just really after us.

Storey: Not to mention pumps, I would think.

Keys: Oh, absolutely. What we had done, we had gone to Denver and said, "Help us solve this problem," and they came up with a sediment separator, based on pretty much like an old cream separator out of a dairy. It was a centrifuge kind of thing that was supposed to get sediment out. It didn't work, and it was just eating everything up.

We went back to Denver and said, "Look, it's not working. Help us fix this thing." So they put another one in series on the damn thing. In other words, one right after the other, and it still didn't get it out, or enough to keep it from eating everything up. Had to implement a damages program to pay folks for the damages to their crops and to their system.

Then we went to a sediment pond approach where we were taking the water out of the river, letting it settle that crud out, and then pumping it up, and that seems to be working pretty well.

The district all of the time is yelling at us that it's costing them more to run the project than they'd anticipated, and we kept saying, "Look, it costs money to run a pressure system." We looked down the river at several other pump units, and it was costing them \$100 to \$110 an acre to operate the project. These guys were complaining that it was going to be more than \$60 an acre. Well, their cost here are over \$100 an acre now, and they've taken us to court saying that it's costing them too much to operate and maintain the project, and they have not paid their construction assessments for the last three years. So they're in arrears over a million bucks.

We had threatened several times to take them to court, so I guess in their eyes the best defense is a good offense, so they filed suit against us. Their total claim is for more than the original project was going to cost. The total claim's in excess of \$30 million. The rest of the story is the project started out to be a

\$36-million-dollar project, then it went to a \$57-million-dollar project, then it went to an \$88-million-dollar project. We had to go back for reauthorization every time. The last time we went back, I don't know why Bill Lloyd didn't testify, but I got to go back and testify to Senator Evans, Senator Daniel Jackson Evans⁶ from Washington. He just raked me up one side and down the other for the inefficient Bureau, how we were hurting those poor farmers, and this was the last time we'd better come back there and ask for more money to build that project with, we'd better straighten out and all this kind of stuff. He really let me have it.

Storey: Were they basing their expectations on our figures or their figures?

Keys: Back in the mid-seventies, we did a "definite plan report" on what was going to happen there. There were some estimates made of repayment and O&M at that time that were about in the \$60 range for repayment and O&M, and that's what they were basing it on. They had not included power in their estimates. Power's a big part of their project. So they were basing it on some estimates that we had given them, but some false expectations of their own that they were going to have a hell of a deal.

Storey: What happened that caused the project cost to go up?

Keys: Well, there were two things. One was the *first* time the separators didn't work, when we went to the second bank of separators. Then the next time when we installed the sediment ponds, the price went way up. I don't know. I think the thing was underestimated in the first place, also. The first jump, thirty-six to fifty-seven, was just bad estimates. There were some damages involved, but it was bad estimates. Next time it was because of changing out a lot of that damaged stuff and installing the sediment ponds that caused it to go up.

Storey: We were talking about the Oroville-Tonasket Project and the increase in costs. Have you seen that happen on other projects in the region?

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2. MARCH 23, 1995.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1. MARCH 23, 1995.

Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey with John Keys on March 23, 1995.

I asked about whether you had seen other projects escalate in cost the way the Oroville-Tonasket did.

Keys: Yes, we've seen several of them go up like that. I've seen them go the other way. But it seems like a lot of times we do good engineering around Reclamation, get a good project together, then we start building it and we start

6. Senator Daniel Jackson Evans was appointed to the Senate September 8, 1983, to complete the term of Henry M. Jackson.

gold-plating it. Before we get done, we would end up with a gold-plated project that costs more than we started off with. I have seen that happen a number of times.

Storey: Do you have any specific examples?

Gold Plating Good Projects and Raising Costs

Keys: Oh, yeah, we overran at Whitestone-Coulee. That was a little project that we built up in the Okanogan area. We overran on several units of the Columbia Basin Project we were working on where the cost ended up being more. The Tualatin Valley Project over at Hillsboro was more. The Soldier Meadows Safety of Dams Project was more than it should have been, or more than it started out to be. There are several examples.

Storey: What about in the other direction where we came in under cost?

Projects That Come in under Cost

Keys: I've seen several in *recent* years that came in under. A good example is this Ochoco one that we just did this past wintertime. We got a great contractor, came in with a value engineering proposal. We ended up two months ahead of time and almost a million dollars under cost. So I've seen it go the other way also.

Storey: That's good. Very nice. It's nice when you get a contractor that's good to work with, too.

Keys: Hey, the key to building any project is a good contractor. I've seen, this past year, examples of some of the best, and over my career I've seen some examples of some of the damn worst. But it makes the project to have a good contractor.

Storey: Can you give me an example where things didn't go well and the kinds of issues that came up and so on?

Keys: Oroville-Tonasket. That thing's been a disaster from start one. We had Copenhagen, a bad contractor. We struggled. That Oroville-Tonasket was the epitome of a disaster, it seemed like. I ended up having to replace the construction engineer up there, who got into a bad situation. We had a bad contractor on phase one, Copenhagen. The Kidd-Sanazuzu [phonetic] contract was terrible. Just finished the court settlement on that thing this past wintertime. They've been in and out of there for seven for eight years. But O-T [Oroville-Tonasket] is a great example of having difficult contractors to work with.

Storey: You mentioned problems with the project engineer at Oroville-Tonasket, and you mentioned maybe a different one, where there was a drinking problem.

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- Keys: Yes.
- Storey: Traditionally, employees believe it's very hard to deal with those kinds of issues. Is that really true?
- Keys: You're damn right. It's one of the hardest things in this world to have to do. Now the two – there were two –
- Storey: I don't want to use any names.
- Keys: I won't use any names. There were two superintendents at Yakima, both of them had a drinking problem, and I had to deal with both of them. The situation at Oroville was not a drinking problem, it was just basic personality-conflict-type approach to doing the job. At Oroville, the engineer was not getting along with the districts, he was in constant conflict with the contractors, and even some conflicts with our own people there. It got to the point where I just had to take him out of there.
- Storey: Did you move him to another position or what?
- Keys: Yes. Brought him into the regional office, gave him a special assignment, and he did a good job.
- Storey: What about the two Yakima Project folks?
- Keys: The first one, we tried to deal with it, got a bunch of promises. Didn't work. We tried to deal with it again. Bill Lloyd did the first confrontation, or consultation session. Then I did the next one. On the second one, it didn't work, and we removed him from the job, offered him a job here in the regional office. He accepted it, and the day before he was going to report, he retired. He had plenty of years to retire and age both, and he worked odd jobs around Yakima there for a few years and then passed away.
- His replacement came in. Bill hired him, and I did some checking, and when we were doing the checking, some people said, "He had a problem but we think he's over with it." Bill decided to take a chance on him. For the first couple of years it was okay. Bill left, and then it wasn't okay. I had a couple of run-ins with him.
- I don't tolerate drinking very well. It's one of the things in my life that I don't tolerate at all, and I had a couple of run-ins with him. I went to human resources and got their advice on how to consult with him and take care of it. A lot of problems and this lasted for about three months. It happened again. Did it again, had the consultations. We ended up replacing him, and he left the Bureau – went to work for an irrigation district, he's since left that job. He's still knocking around the basin.
- Storey: Is it something about Yakima?
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Tough Jobs

Keys: It's a tough job. Yakima's a tough place. I've been working in and around there for fifteen years and it's a hard place.

Storey: Why?

Keys: A lot of irrigation districts, Indian tribe, not enough water to satisfy everybody, the need for additional construction. It's a tough job, a pressure job.

Storey: One would think, for instance, Grand Coulee would be a similar kind of a job.

Keys: Grand Coulee's a hard job, but in different ways. Grand Coulee is a tough job because of the unions and because it's so inbred. Grand Coulee is a government town. They expect everything to be done for them. They expect to be able to tell us how to run it. Our people, some deal with it and some don't. It's a meat-grinder job. I think Grand Coulee is harder on people than Yakima is. For some reason, the two people we had at Yakima are gone, but Coulee's ground up a bunch of people. Been four or five different project managers there since I've been here. Warren Jamison was here when I came, then Rudy Ethridge, then Dan Tracy, four of them. Now Steve Clark, so there's been four project managers at Grand Coulee while I've been here.

Storey: The other project offices, I believe, are the one in Boise, the Snake River Area Office, is that its name now?

Keys: Yes.

Project Offices in Pacific Northwest Region

Storey: What does that one cover?

Keys: Well, now it covers the whole Snake River Basin above Ice Harbor. Ice Harbor's the dam at Tri-Cities. Before this past year, the Central Snake office just covered the Boise Project and eastern Oregon – Boise, Payette, and eastern Oregon. We had a project office in Burley that handled the Upper Snake River Basin. But now Jerry's Gregg office here is in charge of the whole Snake River Basin, and the Burley office actually reports to him.

Storey: Then there's a Lower Columbia office.

Keys: We established a Lower Columbia office to be responsible for western Oregon and western Washington. In the past, before last year, we had operated all of those projects and done all of that work out of the regional office here. Dan, Commissioner Beard, felt that there should be an area office in charge of all of the areas in the region, and we established that area office about this time last year.

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- Storey: That's in Vancouver, Washington, I believe.
- Keys: Yes, that's where his office is.
- Storey: How large an office is it?
- Keys: I think he has nine people, nine or ten people.
- Storey: I guess I'm ignorant. I don't know what projects are in western Washington and Western Oregon.
- Keys: It's mainly central Oregon where most of the projects are. Central Oregon Irrigation District, North Unit, Crooked River Project. We've got work going on the Deschutes River, Tualatin Valley, Rogue River, Medford Irrigation District, Arnold Irrigation District. We've got a series of little dams and reservoirs down Immigrant Powerplant, Green Springs Powerplant, Ochoco, Prineville, there's a bunch of them in Central Oregon, not much in western Washington. There are some tribes over there that have asked us to do a bunch of work for them.
- Storey: You mentioned that we had a construction project at Ochoco that came in under budget and everything. Could you tell me about that?

Ochoco Dam Replacement

- Keys: Probably one of the touchiest situations I ever went into in my life. We knew that we had a problem in the dam at Ochoco, in about 1989. We had been studying the dam for a few years and had put some piezometers in to monitor pressures in the dam. In 1989, the piezometers all took a big jump. What that indicated is that the piping in the dam – piping is when the water washes a tube back down to the downstream side – had reached the piezometers. We were watching it really closely, and then in late '93 and early '94, actually in early '93, the piezometers went crazy again and indicated that we were close to failure of the dam. We had it scheduled to be repaired in '95 and '96, but these piezometers said, "You've got a sooner problem than you think."

So Christmastime, just before Christmas of '93, we had a big knock-down drag-out meeting in Denver, and they said, "You can't store water in that facility anymore."

So we went to the local people and said, "No water next summer. We are physically going to drain the reservoir for the summer of '94, and then we'll fix it and have it back ready for '95."

Well, when I went into town, there was stuff in the paper about how I could get beat up at the meeting and all this kind of thing. Crap, they had sheriff's deputies at the meetings and people yelling and screaming. Pretty tough situation. It's the only time that I know that it's been done in the Bureau,

where we have actually drained a reservoir and given zero water supply to a large portion of the project for a year.

So we started draining it right at Christmastime, '93-'94. We said, "We'll get in there as soon as we can in '94 and get it rebuilt." We got that good contractor. We hit the ground early. We took the old dam down, rebuilt it, and had it storing water at the end of November. It's finished. We've still got to do some work on the spillway, but we've got it storing water. The spillway can wait. We're storing water now, and they'll have water this summer.

Storey: Were we liable for damages because of the water cutoff?

Keys: No. If you look at Reclamation contracts, there are provisions for not delivering water supply. When people sign a placeholder contract, they're not guaranteed delivery of water. They get the water from a certain amount of storage space, and there are provisions in the contract to cover that.

We've taken other dams down in the past. We took Jackson Lake all the way to bedrock, where it could get to bedrock, but there we had American Falls to fall back on. They took American Falls down and they had Jackson to fall back on. So we've done it before, but we've never left anybody without water before, until this Ochoco.

Storey: How many water users do you suppose were involved?

Keys: Well, there was about 8,500 acres that got no water supply. There were probably about 150 water users that had no water.

Storey: So the work was done last summer, and we're back on line?

Keys: Two months ahead of schedule. One of the hurdles that we always have to get past is our Denver office. They're *super* safe, and they just will not take any risk at all. Basically, the way we sold it to the local community over there is, we said, "Look, below this dam is the city of Prineville, and it's a city of about 6,000 people. If that dam goes, 80-some-odd percent of area of this town will be underwater, and it's not slow-moving water, it's moving. There will be loss of life and loss of property, and we won't take that chance." Publicly we came out okay. Those 150 or so irrigators were hurt, and we had a damage program for a thing that could have been our fault. We had met with a group of them in August and said, "You'll have some water next year." And some of them planted some crops. They grow spearmint, they grow mint, and there are some grasses over there that they had planted, based on our telling them they were going to have water the next year. We paid some damages there, but for the overall, we did not. Tough situation. But that's what I meant, you get a good contractor and, golly, you can do a lot of stuff.

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- Storey: You mentioned working with two regional directors when you were in the Colorado River Water Quality Office. Those would have been Upper and Lower Colorado?
- Keys: Right.
- Storey: Who were they?
- Keys: In the Lower Colorado, when I first went there, it was Manuel Lopez, probably one of the most prince of a fellows you ever met in your life. He left and Bill Plummer was the regional director after he left. The Salt Lake regional director at first was—what the hell was his – Dave Crandall??. What was his last name? I can't remember his name.
- Storey: Do you remember how he was to work with?
- Keys: Good. Left me alone. Bill Plummer was the regional director for a while there. Plummer was – I'm sorry – well, yeah, Plummer. Plummer was both places.
- Storey: And Cliff Barrett maybe?
- Keys: That was before Cliff went to Salt Lake. Plummer was Upper Colorado, and then he got moved to Lower Colorado. After Plummer was Ed Hallenbeck down there.
- Storey: How was Plummer to work with?
- Keys: Different. Plummer and I got along pretty well. There were people that just hated his guts. He came out of OMB [Office of Management and Budget] and at times people felt like he was – pretty much the way people feel about Ed Osann now, over there trying to do a number on Reclamation.
- Storey: What about commissioners? Who was the commissioner when you were in your training program in Washington?

Keith Higginson as Commissioner

- Keys: I worked directly for Cec Andrus, but Keith Higginson was the commissioner. Higginson and the governor, Mr. Andrus, at that time, both had an axe to grind with the Bureau. They both came from Idaho, and they blamed Reclamation for the Teton Dam failure in '76. They *really* had an axe to grind. Keith had things he liked to do and things he didn't like to do, and at times there were even rumors, like there are now, that they were getting rid of the Bureau. During their tenure, they changed the name of the Bureau to the Water and Power Resources Service, WPRS, people called us.

When I was back there, I was working in the assistant secretary's office,. Guy Martin was the assistant secretary and Dan Beard was his deputy. The day the name change was approved, I saw people dancing around the table talking about "the Bureau's dead" and that kind of crap. I'll never forget that. Different.

But Keith Higginson was a good guy to work for. I got along very well with him. He had been the commissioner when I was working the last year or so on the Salinity Control Program, so I knew him before. He was good to me while I was back there, good by the assignments, and he didn't bother me, and talked to me about how to do things and so forth.

Storey: What about Robert N. Broadbent?

Robert Broadbent as Commissioner

Keys: Bill Lloyd did most of the work with Bob Broadbent. I knew him fairly well. I still see him every once in a while, still talk to him. But when he came into office, he said, "I'm a politician. You folks handle the technical and I'll handle the politics." He held to that pretty much. I think we coasted while he was there, just doing what we'd always been doing, no real earth-shaking things happening, no new authorizations. We coasted. Then he became assistant secretary, and we were without a commissioner. Robert N. Olson?

Storey: Tom Olson, I believe. No?

Keys: Olson.

Storey: Robert.

Keys: Bob Olson. He was acting for damn near a year, maybe a little over a year. Thought he should have got the job. And we were coasting then. We coasted until the administration changed, the second round of Mr. Ronald Reagan's term.

Storey: Let's see.

Dale Duvall as Commissioner

Keys: C. Dale Duvall was next.

Storey: Yeah, Duvall was next. I was wondering, were you regional director when –

Keys: Duvall appointed me.

Storey: Okay, were there any rumors about why it took them so long to replace the commissioner? Anything you would credit, I mean?

Keys: Yeah, there were some rumors about whether we were going to be around. There was a time that they took a look at combining the Corps and the Bureau one of the times. That kind of rumor was floating around almost constantly.

Storey: I think Paul Rachetto was on that team, as a mater of fact.

Keys: Yes, he was. That's right. That he was. So that stuff was floating around. I don't know whether there's anything to that or not. We never knew. We knew that on the next change of the administration they just said, "That's not a possibility," and they appointed Duvall, who was an unknown to us.

Storey: How did he work out as commissioner?

Keys: He was not a good commissioner.

Storey: Why?

Reclamation Reform Act

Keys: Well, he didn't know anything about us, to start off with. He didn't manage the Bureau. His approach to management, just let things run itself. He picked off a couple of issues, and these were going to be *his* issues, and Reclamation Reform Act⁷ was the big one. He made a big deal about enforcing the Reclamation Reform Act.

Bill Lloyd had ignored it. Bill came in in '80, before Reclamation Reform Act. It was passed in '82. They screwed around and screwed around getting the rules and regs together, and in '85 and '86, Bill just didn't pay any attention to it. Fact is, I think that's one of the reasons Bill retired, is he knew that he was going to have to enforce Reclamation Reform Act.

One of the things Duvall asked me when he interviewed me for the job is, "Will you enforce Reclamation Reform Act?" I told him, yes, if it was the law. He said, "It's the law."

I said, "I'll enforce it." Put me in a bad spot. I had to go back to every irrigation district and tell them, "Here's what it says. Here's what you're going to have to do."

Hell, I sent \$100,000 bills to districts that didn't comply. Some of them are still outstanding. I had to do it. They understood that I had to do it, but they didn't agree with the law. Some of those guys that are my best professional friends, but . . .

Storey: These guys are over the acreage limitation?

7. Reclamation Reform Act of 1982 (96 Stat. 1263; 43 U.S.C. §390aa).

- Keys: Mostly it was over non-reporting, where they didn't report acreages. Most of it was non-reporting, technical damn stuff. Damn few of them were over the acreage limitation.
- Storey: Nine hundred and --
- Keys: Nine-sixty. Not very many in this region were over that.
- Storey: There were other regions that have that problem more.
- Keys: California, big-time. Duvall interviewed me in a damn car on the way to the airport.
- Storey: Just the two of you?
- Keys: Came here for a meeting on the Reclamation Reform Act, in fact. I had sent the application in. Bill Lloyd retired on May 23, '86, and I think it was about the end of June, early July. Duvall was in town for it. Interviewed me on the way to the airport. As he let me out he says, "Well, that sounds pretty good. I'll see what I can do." He started the paperwork, and I was confirmed on the sixteenth of September.
- Storey: That must have been a short interview.
- Keys: Whatever it takes to drive from the old Federal Building to the airport --
- Storey: Maybe ten minutes?
- Keys: Ten-, fifteen minutes.
- Storey: Then came Dennis Underwood.
- Keys: Dennis Underwood.
- Storey: What was he like as a commissioner?
- Keys: Well, before you get to Dennis Underwood, there's another thing about Duvall. We never felt that Duvall was in charge of Reclamation. Jim Ziglar was running Reclamation from the assistant secretary's office, and that hurt Duvall. We were actually glad to see them both leave, and they brought Dennis in. Dennis came in with the George Bush Administration. The first time I met Dennis was this time of the year. God, what year would that have been? '90?
- Storey: Must have been --
- Keys: The election was in '90, so it would have been '91.
- Storey: No, the election would have been in '88, I believe.

Keys: That's right, '89. This time in '89. That's right. I met Dennis at the NWRA meeting in Washington, D.C., for the first time. Then it was a few months before he was confirmed.

Storey: Had they announced their intention to appoint him at that point?

Keys: No, it was rumors. A couple of weeks later it was officially announced that he was going to do it. Mostly rumor. I think he had been proposed to the White House at that time. He was the executive director of the Colorado River Board of California at that time.

Dennis Underwood as Commissioner

Dennis Underwood was an outstanding engineer. He was a person who had a genuine compassion for people, cared about people. He had no idea in this world how to manage an organization. His greatest challenge up to that time, as far as management went, was to run a sixteen-person office. I think he tried to run Reclamation like a sixteen-person office. He never let *anything* go through the Washington office that he had not read and modified and edited, *every* contract, *every* report, *every* letter that went out under his signature. He expected his regional directors to be in control of everything, to know about *every* minute detail that was going on in his region, to know *every* aspect of our budget.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 1. MARCH 23, 1995.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2. MARCH 23, 1995.

Storey: He wanted an answer right away.

Keys: He wanted it right then. A few times you could get away with saying, "I'll get back to you," but he wanted to know. You were *expected* to know everything going on in the region. Like I said, he ran the Bureau like he ran his small Colorado River Board of California office.

Storey: With 1,300 people it's a little hard to do.

Keys: Try 8,000 people. He was in charge of 8,000 people, trying to run it like he ran 16 people. With me having 1,300 people, it was hard to know everything that's going on. That's probably what you were saying. And that's right. I put in more hours during -- no, that's not right. This past two years have been just hell for us under Dan, not because of Dan, but because of all the big issues we've got going on -- the salmon issue, the waterspreading issue, some people things, reorganization on top of it. But Underwood's was all technical. Dennis Underwood is a very technical person.

Storey: And then his successor was Dan Beard.

Dan Beard as Commissioner

Keys: Dan Beard. I had heard that Beard was going to be the commissioner. Fact is, they kept Dennis Underwood on an extra ninety days, and that was to his discredit. I think it cost him some jobs. Dennis Underwood still doesn't have a job, since he was commissioner. He got a couple of little consulting assignments. He still doesn't have a job, and Dennis Underwood needs a job.

But I had heard that Dan was going to be it, and I knew Dan. You see, one of the things that I had been strong on my whole career is keeping relationships, as the regional director, assistant regional director, keeping relationships with the congressional people. I go back to Washington two or three times a year. I don't meet with the member most of the time, but I meet with their staffs to let them know what's going on, and what they need to know about our region, what I need to know. It's worked very well. One of the stops that I *always* made was that committee, that subcommittee back there, and I knew Dan from stopping in to see him. Of course, I had worked with him when he was deputy assistant secretary, I worked with him a couple of months that time. I always stopped to see him, let him know what was going on. We got along. I got some things done working for him. It worked very well.

I heard that he was going to get the assignment, and I went in and talked to him. I said, "I hear that you might be commissioner of Reclamation."

He said, "I asked for the job."

I said, "Are you going to get it?"

He said, "I got a good chance."

I said, "Well, I'll tell you what, if you get it, I can work with you."

We talked about some projects and stuff. I get along very well with Dan. I like Dan Beard, as I told you before.

Storey: Let me ask you whether or not you're willing for the tapes and transcripts from this interview to be used by researchers from inside and outside Reclamation.

Keys: Yes, I am.

Storey: Good. Thank you very much.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 2. MARCH 23, 1995. END OF INTERVIEW
BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1. MARCH 24, 1995.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing regional director John W. Keys III, in the Pacific Northwest Regional Office, in Boise, Idaho, on March 24, 1995, at about nine o'clock in the morning. This is tape one.

I think when we broke off yesterday, we were talking about Dan Beard as commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation.

Keys: I think that's right. Well, I think I was telling you just as we broke off, about how before he became commissioner, I had worked with him in his job as Chief of Staff for the House committee and subcommittee, and how I talked with him before he became commissioner, and he told me that he had *asked* for the job. I told him at the end of that conversation that I thought I could work for him.

I would say that I think Dan Beard so far has accomplished something that we have been trying to get done in Reclamation for about ten years, and that is to shift our direction away from the old big projects and the high dam thing.

Jim Ziglar Orders Reorganization of Reclamation by the Regional Directors

Probably one of the worst experiences that I ever had in my whole career was the deal with Dale Duvall and Jim Zigler. When I became the regional director in 1986, Jim Ziglar was running Reclamation from the assistant secretary's office. Duvall, at times, was not in control of Reclamation. In '86, at the program conference in Durango, Ziglar got all of us together and said, "I am going to change the Bureau and you folks ought to talk about what direction it ought to go to. And I want you to do it, you, regional directors." It was called the PMC, Permanent Management Committee, in those days. "And we're not going to let anybody know what you're doing until you announce it."

For the next year, we met, at times on a weekly basis, trying to reconfigure the Bureau, talk about the direction that it should go, and put together plans to do that. We did that, and at times I had to get some help from people and stuff, but we didn't let our people know what it was about. We didn't talk to Congress; we didn't talk to the states; we didn't talk to the constituency; we didn't talk to our own people. But that was the way Jim Ziglar wanted to do it.

Assessment '87

In October, the first of October 1987, we announced *Assessment '87*, and it was a report that we had put together. We went back to Washington, D.C., and they had at that time the six regional directors and the commissioner sitting up on a stage, the big stage in Interior, with all of Reclamation's people there, and it was announced. The people there were furious. We were Benedict Arnold seven times. A pretty low point.

Each one of us was sent back to our offices to explain what was going on, and it was downsizing, it was elimination of the Amarillo regional office, it was divestiture of facilities, centralization of a lot of stuff into Denver, downsizing the Washington function, and so forth. We put implementation plans together and it went nowhere. We struggled through that for another year, year and a half, 'til Duvall and Ziglar left.

I think a lot of us kind of greeted Dennis Underwood with open arms, looking for the leadership that we had not had from Dale Duvall. Dennis recognized that something had to be done, and his approach to the thing was a little different in that he thought we should put a strategic plan together for how Reclamation ought to operate, which was really a pretty good idea. But Dennis, in his own inimitable way, couldn't get it done. The strategic plan was not a strategic plan. He would not let go of it so that it was our product; it was Dennis's product. He reworked every sentence that was ever put into that thing. It really turned out to be a catalog of services.

Dennis was trying to get us off into working for other agencies, which at the time was a good idea, and we did a lot of it in this region. He wanted us to be everything to everybody, and never say no to anybody. While that was a pretty good deal, it wasn't what Reclamation needed, because it stalled or delayed the inevitable of us actually having to give up some stuff and serve new constituencies *and* water needs in the Western United States. It set us up for Dan Beard.

Dan came in and basically he did the CPORT [Commissioner's Organization and Review Team] report and the blueprint for change and so forth, 180 degrees from the way it was done before. Complete involvement with all of our people, selling it on The Hill, talking to our constituents. A lot of constituents didn't like it, but at least they knew what was going on and they had some say in it. We're not there yet. I hope we're closer when Dan leaves, if he leaves in the next year, at the end of next year. But I think we're on the right track.

Now, as I said, there are some things that are happening that I don't like. I don't like the politics. I don't like them dumping all of these people on Reclamation. I think that's wrong. But I guess if you look at it from the Clinton Administration's side, that's how they get their ideas and their permanence, or their influence or permanence on an agency when they leave, is to leave their people in that organization. So I guess I understand it from that point of view. I don't like it, but I guess that's the way it is. But I think Dan has got us on the right direction.

Is that what you wanted to hear?

Storey: I didn't have any preconceived ideas about what I wanted to hear, but it's interesting to hear this evolution from commissioner to commissioner.

Floyd Dominy as Commissioner

Keys: Hey, I've worked under nine different commissioners, started with Dominy. I saw Dominy several times, met him a couple of times. He was an impressive person in those days. Floyd Dominy had the knack and the ability to work with committees and subcommittees better than *anybody* Reclamation's ever had. He got things done with Congress. We were outstanding technical people in

those days, and Floyd got it done with the committees and subcommittees in Congress.

Ellis Armstrong as Commissioner

The next one, Ellis L. Armstrong. I met Ellis Armstrong. They brought him in as assistant regional director into Salt Lake City before he was commissioner, for a few months. It was just to get him ready. I never felt that Ellis Armstrong knew what Reclamation was about. The momentum from Dominy and the technical expertise of Reclamation kept us going while Ellis Armstrong was commissioner.

Gil Stamm as Commissioner

The next one was Gil Stamm. *All* of us loved Gil Stamm. Stamm was the *only* commissioner that had come up through the ranks. He was from this area here. He was from Boise, southern Idaho. He came up through the ranks, through the O&M, operation and maintenance end of the organization, at one time was the assistant commissioner for O&M, and then he was commissioner. We loved Gil Stamm. Gil served our traditional constituency very well. We finished up a lot of the old projects that we were working on, we did work on some of the old projects that needed to be done, we had an excellent planning program in those days, trying to prepare for more facilities. Gil did a good job of perpetuating Reclamation. He did some innovative things. That Salinity Control Program was one that Gil worked on, that he helped get up and started. I met with him several times about it, showed him around the projects and everything. Gil Stamm was one of *us*, and we all loved him for it.

Teton Dam Failure Was the Low Point for Reclamation

After that, it's been political ever since Gil left. Well, Keith Higginson came in after Gil, and Keith came in with a chip on his shoulder at first. I think I told you yesterday, Teton Dam failure was the low point in all of Reclamation. I mentioned some low points for me personally, but Teton Dam was *the* absolute low point for Reclamation, because it told the world that we were vulnerable. We'd made a mistake, a bad mistake, cost eleven people their lives, cost 300 and some-odd million dollars to mitigate the damages. Keith Higginson and Cec Andrus never forgave us for that. There were accusations that environmental impact studies were not correct, that we got in a hurry in the designs to get past some of the environmental impacts. I don't know whether they're true or not.

But I never will forget the day the dam broke. I was in Washington, D.C., 1976, June 6th. I was in D.C. on the fourth of June for some work. I was the Chief of Hydrology in those days. I was in D.C. on, it was either the Oahe or the Garrison, one or the other, and we had to stay over the weekend, because we had done the stuff on Friday afternoon and we had a Monday morning briefing. I was scheduled to fly to Boise Monday afternoon for a meeting here

in Boise on the Oakley Fan Project, an irrigation development down in southeastern Idaho.

I walked over the Saturday morning to a friend's, another friend was there on a detail, his name was Norm Warp, who has since passed away. But I walked over to where he and his wife were staying. They were good friends of my family's. Norm said, "There's been an earthquake in Idaho, and one of our dams is failing."

So we walked over to the Interior Building, to the Bureau of Reclamation offices. God, the halls were just like an anthill. People were running back and forth in the halls there trying to find out what's going on, and then we heard that the dam had failed. All of the time everybody thought it was an earthquake that caused it, and then as things got put together, it turned out it was not an earthquake. I've got another story about that a little bit later. But we were there all afternoon. He and I were just observers, because we didn't have anything to do with it, except that I was supposed to come to Boise the Monday afternoon after we got done. Sunday morning, we were back over there, and you just wanted to be part of what was going on. I asked the people from Boise at that time if I should come ahead for that meeting, and they said, "Yeah, come ahead."

Monday, we got our hearing done, and I flew to Boise. As we came in, we were in a 737, when we came across American Falls Reservoir, the floodwave had just hit the top end of it, and it was dissipating. You could see the brown fan at the top end of the American Falls. Even the pilot had said something about the dam failure. We saw the river and where the dam had been. Scary sight.

I came on in, and we had our meeting, and, hell, it was a worthless meeting, because nobody wanted to think about anything but Teton. The whole process after that, I was out of. It being in Denver, we helped them with the flood work; in other words, how high the flood wave was and that sort of thing. Then July, a month later, I was out of hydrology, I was over into the water quality office then. I was just out of it 'til I came back here.

When I came back in here in 1980, after the Washington assignment, we were still dealing with the mitigation from Teton. We actually gave people land to replace lands they lost to the flood. I finished up a lot of those deals as assistant director when I was here.

I told you there was another story about the failure and the earthquake. There were design people who felt, until the day they left, that it was an earthquake that caused the failure. It was not an earthquake that caused the failure. It was a seepage problem that they missed and a route got around and came back under the spillway, piped it out, whoosh, it's gone. But there were design people until the day they left who felt that it was an earthquake.

When the dam failed, the eddy at the bottom – it failed on the right side, an eddy came back around to the left side, covered the powerplant up with 100 and some-odd feet of material. In the powerplant we had a seismograph. Also in the powerplant we had the units installed, and we had some capacitors in there that had PCB in them. The EPA required us to get the PCB out of there. So we did a contract. This is after I came back here, we did a contract with an outfit, and we told them they could have the units out of the powerplant if they would excavate down, get them out, and let us get the PCB capacitors out at the same time. I can't even remember who the – it was some outfit that was trying to put a little powerplant down on the Snake River that got the bid. They dug it out, got a way to get down in there and get them out, got the capacitors out.

I was over there two days after they opened it up to get in. Bob Bruneel was the construction engineer. He and I went in there, and we found the – they had already found it – but we went in to where the seismograph was, and they opened the seismograph up, hoping to see if there'd been an earthquake. One of the guys from Denver was *there*; he wanted *to see* if there had been an earthquake. Well, the damn thing had gotten wet, and you couldn't tell anything about it, so it was inconclusive.

I never will forget. That was the most spooky place in this world, to go down in that powerplant. It was moist and damp and dank. God, there was sediment. At a door there would be a sediment mound, and it would kind of fan out into the room. Boy, it was a spooky place. We went throughout the powerplant, looking. I even picked up a couple of little things as souvenirs, and I still have them.

Effects of the Failure of Teton Dam on Reclamation

So Teton was the low point of the Bureau. It told people that we were human, and that was pretty hard to handle for Reclamation. It changed the way we did business forever. It made us over-design stuff two or three times, made us review the hell out of stuff. We still suffer from Teton, because there are people in that damn Denver office that still review things a hundred times before it comes out. Pretty hard to get away from.

Well, anyway, that got us to Higginson. Higginson was a good commissioner. He was an engineer, he knew the Bureau, had worked with us a long time. Except for that chip on his shoulder about Teton, he did things very well. He always felt that we ought to have a different name. He and Mr. Andrus and assistant secretary Guy Martin and those folks were responsible for that WPRS [Water and Power Resources Service] fiasco. Fortunately, when they went out and Commissioner Bob Broadbent came in, he changed it back to Reclamation.⁸

8. During videotaped oral history, in which the editor participated, prepared by the Mid-Pacific regional photographer for the Reclamation Managers' Meeting in Denver in 1992, former commissioner Floyd E. Dominy stated that when the Reagan Administration staff succeeded the Clinton staff at the Department of the
(continued...)

Reclamation don't mean anything. Hell, we were formed in 1902 to reclaim the desert. Reclaim? Hell, that's not the right word, even for the desert, because that implies that there was something there before that you could claim, and, hell, we weren't reclaiming the desert. We were carving something out of the desert, but we weren't reclaiming it. Then you get into us building hydropower projects and irrigating land. What the hell does that mean for reclamation? It doesn't mean anything. But hey, that's who we were. That's just like somebody telling you, "Your name tomorrow's not going to be Storey." Or telling me that my name tomorrow is not going to be Keys. Keys don't mean anything to me. It doesn't mean that my nose is thirty degrees off of center, or that I'm black, or that I'm white, or anything. It doesn't mean that, it's just who I am. Same thing with Reclamation, and that's how we all felt about it. So it was good to see Commissioner Broadbent do that.

Broadbent, commissioner-wise, was pretty good. He worked with us very well. Didn't get much done while he was there. I think it was just a holding spot for him to be assistant secretary, which he did shortly after. Then, of course, it sat vacant for about a year while Bob Olson was there, and then Dale Duvall was appointed.

We talked about Commissioner Duvall yesterday. Dale Duvall never understood what he was. He never understood what being Commissioner of Reclamation meant. I don't think he really grasped the real depths of what we were doing. He grabbed onto a couple of issues and they were his issues. He tried to run with them, and I don't think he ever understood that. I think Underwood understood it too much and he tried too hard to keep it whole. That's just Keys' estimate of the commissioners.

I've been really lucky to know those people. Floyd Dominy don't know me from an ant in a hill, but the rest of them from then on, I knew fairly well. Gil Stamm, until he died, used to call me every once in a while. I still see Dale Duvall. I still see Bob Broadbent in Las Vegas. He's the manager of the airport there, or he was until a year or so ago. He still may be. I've kind of lost track the last few years, but I used to stop and see him all the time. Dennis Underwood and I still talk regularly. So I've been lucky to be in a position to talk with those people.

Storey: What about the chief engineers? You would have started about—

Keys: The only Chief Engineer we ever had while I've been with Reclamation was Barney [B. P.] Bellport. See, after Barney left, they didn't call it Chief

8. (...continued)

Interior he called up James G. Watt, then the newly confirmed Secretary of the Interior, and told him he should change the name from "Water and Power Resources Service" back to the "Bureau of Reclamation". William C. Klostermeyer, formerly an assistant commissioner of Reclamation, stated that when he and the acting commissioner met with Watt for their first briefing with him and were ordered to change the name back to "Bureau of Reclamation." A number of Reclamation employees have expressed concern about the name change in oral history interviews.

Engineer anymore. Barney left in the early seventies. If there ever was a king, it was Barney. Nobody told Barney what to do. He was *the* final word on engineering and what they did down there, and I think we still suffer from it. It gave them that "ivory tower attitude" that us field folks were just out there to gather data and to be their hand servant. And there's a lot of that attitude still around.

When he was Chief Engineer, he was in charge of *every* construction project under way at that time. Regional directors didn't have *anything* to say or do about construction. It was *his*. The construction engineers at one time even reported to him. They didn't report to the regional director.

That cut off right after Teton when – oh, gosh, the fellow that was in charge of the Teton investigation team became assistant commissioner. That's when we didn't have a Chief Engineer anymore. What was his name? He was from private industry. He was in charge of the Teton investigation, then they made him assistant commissioner. I can't remember his name. But anyway, that's when we didn't have Chief Engineers anymore.

We've had Assistant Commissioners for Engineering and Research, called ACER. They tried to take over as Chief Engineers. I think we wouldn't *let* them be king. I know there was a lot of resistance to us regional directors being in charge of construction and contract administration and that sort of thing for a while. When Rod [Rodney J.] Vissia left here, that's when that got done. He went down and took this guy's place as assistant commissioner after he left. God dang, I wish I could remember his name. It was not Gampolli. Bob was his first name. I'll think of it. Robert B. Jansen But I don't think we would let them be king again. They shouldn't be.

Relationship of Denver Office and Regions

Storey: Tell me more about the relationship between the Denver office and the regions.

Keys: Well, when I went to work with Reclamation in 1964, I had a perception of Denver as the place where everything happened in the Bureau. I thought at that time that I would work in the field for a while, then I would work in a regional office for a while, then I'd go to Denver. That was the seat of the Bureau. I worked in the field for a while. I worked in the field for about seven years. I worked in the region for four years, and then I went to Denver.

When I got there, I had already seen the feelings of people in the field about the attitude of the Denver office. Hey, in the field, we called it the ivory tower, because the attitudes were that they could overrule us on anything, that they were the *final* say on all technical decisions in Reclamation, and while we could do some planning in the field and data collection in the field, and some drainage work in the field, and that kind of thing, if there was a decision to be made, they made it. When I got to Denver, every fear that I had about that was

confirmed. For the year that I was chief of hydrology, I could see myself being put into that thing.

Quickly Wanted to Leave Denver

We had a case. I always wished I could remember. I think it was on the San Juan-Chama. Our flood people did a flood. The flood people, they did design floods to tell us how big to make the spillways and the outlet works, and what surcharges to deal with, and what scours to deal with after the flood, and that sort of thing. But we did this flood study and they came through and told us to change it, and my flood guy said, "I can't change that." We asked, "Why?" And he showed us. They came down, they said, "Change it." We struggled with that a couple of weeks, and ended up changing it because they told us to. My flood guy got really upset. Not at me, I mean, hell, he and I were kind of in the same boat. He put a bunch of letters in the files to protect himself, and nothing ever came of it because the project was not built. But it told me that I was in the wrong place.

Storey: When you say, "Change it," what do you mean, change it?

Keys: Cut it back.

Storey: They wanted to make the design flood smaller?

Keys: Make the spillway a little bit less. It would bring the cost down within the benefit-cost ratio. See that's what caused the damn problem at Teton. They took some shortcuts to get the B-C ratio down, didn't get all of their stuff done out on the right flank of the dam. Seepage got around there and came back under the spillway and washed it out.

That was pretty tough, and that told me that I didn't belong there. When I went over into the water quality office, I was in Denver, and I was in the E&R center, but I was separate, because we were doing the work in the Colorado River Basin. I wasn't in that design chain, or the planning chain, or the O&M chain, or the administrative chain. I was outside of that, and I worked with the regions out of there. That was just a place for us to be so that we were central to everything going on in the Bureau. I still didn't like working there. As I was telling you yesterday, I *had* to get out of there. It came to a head when I didn't get that job in Billings. I just had to do something else to get myself out of there.

I'll tell you. Right now, there are some really good people down there. There are some people that I think the world and all of. If Felix Cook asked me to do anything, I'd do it for him. If Jim Malila asked me to do anything for him, I'd do it for him. Then there's a number of other people down there that I feel --

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1. MARCH 24, 1995.

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2. MARCH 24, 1995.

Keys: ... still some attitudes down there that are destructive.

This Ochoco Project that I was talking about, we came in ahead of schedule and under budget. It was a fight from day one to keep those guys from gold-plating that thing. We're still fighting them on the spillway. We are still fighting the added cost of twenty different people looking at a design, rather than five or six general people going through it and saying, "It's okay." They still send it to this branch, and that branch, and this section, and that bunch, and so forth, and everyone of them have to sign off on the damn thing. And to prove that they're worth anything, they've got to make a change in it when it comes through there. We're still struggling with that. I've talked to Felix about it, he struggles with it. I don't know that we'll ever get past that attitude.

Those people down there now feel abandoned by us in the field, and, by God, they're right. They're getting dues, and some of them don't deserve it, because they haven't been there that long. But it's that old feeling that people in the field got so tired of having to deal with.

Anyway, there's great people down there, individuals, but I'm afraid that at times their old ways still govern their actions. I don't know whether you get that from anybody else. Having worked there, I really came away from there jaded. I didn't *like* it when I was working there, and when I came away from there I didn't *like* it.

Dan Beard's Approach to Moving Responsibility to the Area Offices

See, that's another reason that I like Dan Beard's approach. I agree with him that the work of the Bureau is at the field level. Regions have a place in coordinating basinwide activities, but the real work with the constituents has to be done at the field level. That's one of Dan's big deals is to get it out to the area managers, and the day-to-day stuff, I still feel, I agree with Dan, that it should be done at the field level. That's how we're trying to do business here.

Storey: Doesn't it bother you? One of the things I keep seeing is tension about the area offices not having detailed knowledge about all of the specialized things that go on – the Endangered Species Act, the Historic Preservation Act, all of those kinds of things. How do you see that working out so that it works properly?

Keys: Well, before I say anything about it, I'll tell you, we're not there yet. We're a year, April 17th last year, is when we made our big change. So we're still only a year to a year and a quarter into the big change to get the stuff back out to the area offices. So we're not there yet.

On a local basis, the area managers and their people *have* to understand the Endangered Species Act, and when there is an action required by it, or

something to keep something from being listed, they'll be doing it. And the region's part is to coordinate that over the whole basin.

Salmon in this area is a good example. We're working with Jerry Gregg's people to obtain water on the Snake River side. We're working with them on the flows so that we don't spill the Idaho Power Company powerplants's water, so that we meet the requirements of the snails, so that we can flush out the river, we can keep the instrument flows going. But that water is coming down the river to be part of the flush to the ocean for the salmon. On Jim Cole's [phonetic] side of the hill and Steve Clark's power facilities, we're doing the same thing. We are working at the reservoir levels that will work to bring the water down. Clark's people and Cole's people look at what that does to their reservoirs, what it does to power generation. This regional office looks at what it does for the fish flush.

We're not completely there yet, but I see a part for both of us in that thing. I know Jerry Gregg, in particular, is frustrated, because he wants control of all of it. Cole and Clark like the way we work now. Jerry wants more, and we're trying to give Jerry more. He has picked up environmental people, he's picking up a saline person, he's picking up all the people that he needs to make him a full-service office. Let him do it.

Now, we have people here that don't agree with that, that still disagree, and Jerry is, in their opinion, is too far out in left field. But I don't see a conflict yet. Is that what you meant?

Storey: Well, yeah, I think so.

How Responsibilities Are Split under Dan Beard's Reorganization

Keys: So I see a role for both for us. In other words, the activities on the ground, that's his. The coordination throughout the region, throughout the Columbia River Basin, not the region, is what we're here for. I see a role for both of us.

It's kind of hard. I tell you, it's kind of hard, after having run things out of this region for all of the years, to get away from that. I think that's what our people are struggling with.

Storey: Of course, you become set in your ways and, "This is the way we've done it," and it becomes very difficult to break out of that pattern.

Keys: One of the hard things for me is having worked for twenty-nine or thirty years with a conception of what a manager is, and then to say to yourself, "In the future, you're *not* going to manage all of those people. You're going to be their coach, and be sure that they have what they need to get their job done. But *they* are going to manage it, and you're going to coach them in doing that, and if they screw up, you help them get themselves back going. Don't yell at them for screwing up, unless there was some other problem there, other than just

trying something that didn't work." So far I'm dealing with that okay, because I've got good managers. I'll tell you, in Reclamation right now, and I know there's twenty-seven area managers in Reclamation right now. I know every one of them, and I have the two best. There are some good ones. There are some guys out there that I would do anything in this world for, but I have the two best – Jim Cole and Steve Clark. There are no better.

Jerry's pretty good. He's young and he's still learning, and one of these days he will be excellent. He's a good one now, but he'll be an excellent area manager one of these days. I'm still struggling with Ron for him to decide and figure out what an area manager is. But I have two of the best. No, not two of the best, *the* two best. And there are some good ones. There are twenty-seven area managers and I have personally at one time or the other worked with over half of them. That's a pretty good feeling. That's a pretty good feeling.

Storey: But here we are, we're reducing staff, we're reducing budget, and for these folks to take on new responsibilities, they have to have new staff and new budget.

Keys: Do they?

Storey: Well, that's my question, I guess. How do you deal with that issue?

How Priorities Are Adjusting under Dan Beard's Reorganization

Keys: First off, I don't have a good answer for how you get it done, but I'll tell you what we're trying to do. Yes, there are new responsibilities; yes, it takes more people; yes, it takes more money. There is no more people; in fact, there are less people. There is no more money; in fact, there is less money. In fact, there is a *lot* less money, and it's going to be a *lot* worse in the future. How you do it? You don't do all of the things that you've done in the past, because when we were a single constituency agency, which we were for a lot of years, we did stuff for them that should not have been done for them. We are still doing stuff for them that should not be done for them.

Storey: We're talking about for our constituents, the water users?

Keys: The water users, that's right. We were doing, are still doing, things for them that we should not be doing. We just flat have to *wean* them from us in a lot of those facilities and a lot of those services.

You should ask "what are those?" We have maintained the titles to every facility we've ever built. We've kept them. Why? As a guarantee that they'll pay for them. Well, most of them are already paid out. Why do we maintain the titles? Why do we keep the water rights? Because we have to keep people on board to maintain those water rights and titles. All of the lands, managing the lands around the reservoirs, it's time for us to get out of doing a lot of that stuff.

I have on staff a weed and pesticide person who advises districts on what pesticides to use, what weeds they have to get rid of. Why do we provide that service? Because we have in the past. Do we need to? No. No, that's not our job.

At Grand Coulee, we have the powerplants there. We had a fire in 1981, a bad fire in a tunnel, and after that, God, we built all this stuff to take care of fires. We hired a fire department, we hired a bunch of people to be the guards, the security guards and so forth, and haven't done anything since. Why? With them sitting around, they picked up the 911 service for a four-county area right in that area. Should we be doing that? Hell, no! We just made the decision to get rid of us doing the 911 service, turn it over to the counties. They are screaming bloody murder at Grand Coulee right now. I was up there last week and some lady just called me a liar in front of everybody up there, when I said that the counties would pick it up and do as good or better job. And they *will*. Why do they think they're entitled to a *special* service from Reclamation just because we're there? They're not.

So that's just two instances that I think we're doing things we shouldn't be doing. Now, can I ever get it down to where we're not doing a bunch of that stuff so that I don't have to have extra staff? I don't know. We're sure going to try. I guess we'll probably end up with some balance between doing some old stuff and some new stuff, and everybody's going to be mad. That's probably where we'll end up, that people we were doing the old stuff for said, "Oh, God, you ran away and left us. You're not doing anything for us anymore." The new people said, "Oh, God, you're making all these promises about what you're going to do, and you're not doing half of them." Both of them are going to be right. That's where we're probably going to end up.

Money's going down. When I started as regional director, the Bureau of Reclamation's budget was \$1.3 to \$1.4 billion a year. Last year it was 700 and some-odd million dollars. We were told this past weekend, at that meeting in Nebraska, that the new budgets, they're going to reduce us by \$594 million over the next five years. That's \$125 million a year. So from the 700 and some-odd we had this year, we're going to go down to 650 or so. We're still going down. Remember that there's inflation in there, 3, 4, 5 percent a year. So it's even worse than it looks number-wise. So, yeah, we're going down.

Can we do everything that Dan Beard wants to do? Hell, no. We can't do all of the nitpicking little old stuff that Ed Osann wants us to do. He wants us to do energy conservation studies on refrigerators and stoves and that kind of crap. Get out of here. We can't do that kind of stuff. But it'll shake down.

Are we going to have less people? Yes. Safety-of-dams program, we've probably got two more years of safety-of-dams work, and that's going to be gone. There'll be a little bit here and there, but, hell, I've got a big geology staff. I've got drill crews that do the safety-of-dams work. Two years from now, they're going to be gone. I'll still need a geologist or a couple of

geologists. Hell, I've got a dozen now. Drill crews, I won't need any. I need some drilling done, I'll go contract them.

Dive team. I've got a dive team. Now it's collateral duty stuff. Do I need a dive team? Yeah, we need a dive team. That's not it, we need dive services. Can I hire it somewhere else? When we formed it, no, we couldn't. Now there's probably that service out there that we can get on contract. So it's a different way of doing stuff.

Are we going to have to have a RIF [reduction in force] to do it? Maybe. Maybe targeted. Get the drill crew into the geologists, whatever. Overall? Hell, no. We're still trying to deal with the buyouts. The downsize is part of that. A year and a half ago, we were at just under 1,300 employees in this region. At the end of next year, we'll be down to 1,000, and so on. This regional office was damn near 300 people before. One of these days we'll be down to 200 people.

Storey: What are you now?

Keys: About 225. So it's just a different way of doing stuff. Is it right? I don't know. The only fear I have is that – well, not the *only* fear, *a* fear that I have is that we're going to get down and not be a resource-based agency in one of these times, and we'll just be another agency that has to live off of appropriations and they'll decide there's better way of doing that. I don't think that's coming in my career, but that could come later.

Combine Reclamation with the Corps?

You should ask what I think about combining us with the Corps of Engineers. I think it's a good idea.

Storey: Hey, I've got a good person to ask questions. (laughter)

Keys: I think it's a great idea.

Storey: Really?

Keys: Yeah, I really do.

Storey: You'd like to work for a general? (laughter)

Keys: No. I'd like the general to work for me. I think if they did that, they'd get the military out of it. In other words, the civilian functions, I think they'd get the general out of it.

Storey: And retain the Corps of Engineers actually for the military construction work?

- Keys: Well, they could do military construction work, but they don't need a general over there in charge of the Corps in civilian functions. The general could come into that outfit and say, "I need so-and-so work done on this base," and they could send the people and do it. The general don't have to be in charge of the whole outfit.
- Storey: Tell me more about why you think it would be a good idea.
- Keys: In this basin, we work hand and glove with the Corps. We don't compete for projects. They'll come up with an idea and launch off on a study, and I'll call them up and ask them, "What the hell are you doing here?" I'll quote some old Noel Weaver agreement that says that they won't do something in the basin, and we get along just fine. They do flood control. They can do flood control better than any of us in Reclamation *ever* could, and it's theirs. I agree to that. Transportation, large system, it's theirs. I don't want anything to do with it. Hydropower, they got their dams, we got ours. Why shouldn't they be together? Because we have an agreement that we operate it as one system. They don't get into irrigation. We even market the irrigation storage out of their facilities for them. We don't have competition. Why shouldn't we be together? I feel very strongly that we ought to be together.
- Storey: That's interesting. They have done studies on this, and they keep turning them down.
- Keys: I even had a person on one of the study teams when they looked at it. Paul Rchetto was on the study team about three or four years ago when they looked at it. Personally, I just think it's a good idea. Duplication? Damn right there's duplication. The general's there and I'm here. He's got a deputy and I got a deputy. He's got administrative people, I've got administrative people. Sure, there's duplication, but *not* on the ground. Not on the ground. There could be a heck of a savings there.
- Storey: So combining, the new agency would end up with the navigation, flood control, irrigation, all different kinds of water resources activities.
- Keys: That's right. I think it's a good idea, but I don't know if we'll ever see it.
- Storey: Well, they keep talking about it.
- Keys: Yeah. They're downsizing, we're downsizing. They're consolidating, and we're moving out to the field. It would be interesting to see if they could do it.
- Storey: You mentioned a couple of things that we keep. One is title. Of course, right now we're talking about transfer of title for some aspects of the projects. How far do you think that should go?

Title Transfer

Keys: I think there are some facilities that are of a national importance that have to remain in Federal ownership. Those are the large dams, the powerplants, the storage facilities that have multiple uses and importances. In this region, I think all the powerplants should stay in, like the Grand Coulees and the Hungry Horses and the facilities here. The reservoir system, the big reservoirs, where there are multiple uses and so forth, will be called on to meet lots of uses in the future. I would hate to see them tied up with single-purpose ownership. Those should stay in Federal ownership.

The canals, the laterals, the diversion dams, some of the small distribution reservoirs, even some of the mid-size reservoirs that you could put covenants on to protect releases, may be candidates for title transfer. But all of that smaller stuff should be gone. The lands, we should go back through again and look at all the lands that we hold title to or have under withdrawal, and those that are not absolutely necessary should be turned over to one agency, like BLM, to manage, and those that remain should go with the facility. Where those lands remain with the facility that we should keep in national ownership, we ought to look at concessionaires to run the recreation at some of the facilities. But I think that *all* the small stuff we shouldn't hold title to.

Storey: One of the issues that keeps cropping up is people think we ought to say, "We'll be happy to sell these to you." The Congress is looking for sources of revenue and all that kind of thing. How do you react to that?

Keys: I don't think that there's any way you're ever going to get any money out of it. Why would they buy it when they have such a great deal now? What's the value of it? How do you value a canal? This New York Canal runs through town here, with 2,000 second-feet in it. What's the value of it? Who in the heck knows? In a lot of cases, the irrigation people paid the allocated cost, so they paid for some of it. They haven't paid for all of it, of course, and in some cases, a very small part.

I think you've got to do an economic evaluation of the whole situation and forget about them paying some fair market value. Look at what it's going to cost you in the future. In other words, you do a present worth analysis of what it's going to cost you, Reclamation, to hold title for the future, and if it's cheaper to just give it up without any payment for it, do it, because chances of getting any payment back are pretty small.

Storey: Yeah, we're on.

Keys: Really, I think you can do that kind of analysis. You can show savings in the future to Reclamation. See, that was one of the reasons we failed in '87, because they had all of these big pie-in-the-sky dreams about all this money we were going to pull in by getting fair market value for canals and lands and so forth. What they found out is that our water users aren't stupid. I don't mean that in the wrong way. But if you had an agency dedicated to serving you water, and he held title to what you were using, and he came to you and he

said, "Been doing this for you all these years, now I want you to pay me for that facility so you can do it yourself," he'll say, "Wait a minute, did I miss something here?" They said, "Well, yeah."

Well, what we found out is that most of the people *want* the ownership, but mainly they need the water, and if they can have the title to it without it costing more, they'll probably take it, and be responsible for the annual inspections and all that sort of thing. But if we're going to come and charge them to take it, then that's something else. And you can't just make them take title. If you could make them take title, there would be no Love Canal problem. Remember the Love Canal that started the Superfund Program. You end up with a big hazardous waste dump there and the United States had title to the damn thing. Well, if you could just give title to somebody, we wouldn't have a Love Canal problem.

So the same thing's true of the canals. Now, we don't have Love Canal problems, but if you look at some of our facilities, the potential for liability is tremendous in some areas. There's a 2,000 second-foot canal through town. What happens if one of the walls breaks, one of the canal walls? You put a 2,000 second-feet out into a subdivision. Hell of a problem. Well, the State of Idaho's helped out with a tort limitation law that limits the liability of those kind of facilities. And liability is one of the big issues. What we'd probably work out with them is that they have liability insurance or bonding up to a certain level, and we indemnify anything above that. In the State of Idaho, that's not too hard to do, because of this Tort Limitation Act that they passed. So I just think it's a pretty good idea.

Storey: Do you see it as actually happening in the near future? Short term? Long term?

Keys: I think you're going to see a few of the easier ones done fairly soon. I say easier because none of them are easy. All of them have details that we're going to struggle with, but some of them are easier to do than others. I think you're going to see us do some of them. I think you will see us ending up divesting ourselves of title to, I think, a lot of the facilities. I don't think you'll ever see all of them. We may even have to get into a court situation, where we're trying to force somebody to take title, because there's some of them that just flat won't take it. The older people just don't want to worry with it.

Storey: It's sort of an odd situation for us to be in, isn't it?

Keys: Yes, it is. In my neighborhood, the people across the street traded houses with another family, and they moved about three-quarters of a mile away. When they moved, they took their cat with them. The cat came back to the old house. The new people there didn't want the cat, wouldn't let it in, didn't feed it. So the cat stays in the neighborhood. Before this year, this winter, every day he made a round of the neighborhood, and he was very well fed. Well, this year, I saw him out there one snowy morning, and I fed him. Then it got to be a habit

of every morning and every evening, I would just put a handful of dry food out for him. Well, he stays there now. Well, why does he stay there? I mean, he's at the back door. Our cat's in the house, he stays outside at the back door, but he stays there. Why does he stay there? Because he knows I'm going to feed him. And these people have been with us all these years, they expect it, they know we're going to be there, and we can't convince them not. Now, I'm going to have to wean that cat away from it if I ever want him to not be outside there. I'm going to have to wean some irrigation districts to do for themselves. I don't want this cat catching the birds, and I don't want him harassing the squirrels, so I'll probably keep feeding him. But I'm probably going to have to wean some irrigation districts.

Storey: What about retention of water rights? I think there're some big issues involved there.

Keys: Oh, there really are. Retention of water rights is one of those big issues. I personally don't feel that there is a problem with transfer of water rights, also. On the big storage facilities, we'll retain the water rights there because we're still operating them. But on the individual water rights, I don't think we ought to hold onto them.

There is a train of thought that says if you don't hold onto them, you got no way of providing water for the Endangered Species Act problems and that sort of thing. The damn water right doesn't provide water anyway. It just says you got a certain place in time of right and so forth. I don't have a problem divesting ourselves of those water rights.

Storey: You don't, then, see a public interest in the Federal government retaining the water rights?

Keys: I see a public interest in us retaining the water rights to the big facilities, but not to the individual districts. You've got to under --

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2. MARCH 24, 1995.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1. MARCH 24, 1995.

Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey with John W. Keys III, on March 24, 1995.

Water Rights and Storage Rights

Keys: If you hold a water right, it doesn't guarantee you any water. What a water right says is that you have the right to divert water to a certain piece of land, and you have the right to use that water beneficially. That means that if you do some conservation work on your lands, that you still only have the right to enough water to irrigate with. It doesn't mean that you have the right to how much you were diverting before, and that you can take that saved water and

peddle it, or use it on some more land, or anything like that. That's not what a water right does.

Now, the storage rights in our reservoirs are different. They don't have the right to a certain amount of water. The people that own those have a right to the water that accrues to how much space they own. There, if they do some conservation, they can market what they have left over.

But the United States, with Reclamation, does not have any leg-up on the other water-right holders. The water rights that we hold for our projects are the same water rights that you as an individual would have if you went out and filed on the same stream. The only difference would be the time, in other words, the place in line. The old appropriation doctrine says, "First in time, first in right." If I was there first, mine's better than yours. If you were there first, yours is better than mine.

Public interest, the states own all the waters, and we can get rights to use them. I personally feel that the states can provide that public interest, or public trust, as it's called, as well as we can. You probably won't find people to agree with that very much, but that's my feeling. I'm pretty much a states' righter, a states' rights person, when it comes to water.

Storey: Well, of course, that's the way the system has evolved in the last --

Keys: The problem you get into, in this state, we've got more lawyers per person in this state than any other place in the country besides Washington, D.C.. There are only three attorneys that fully understand water rights. There's a couple more that are pretty close, but you've only got a handful of attorneys that really understand water rights. Almost none of the water, recreation, environmental-associated organizations understand state water rights. Almost none.

Wendy Wilson and her crowd down here, they don't know crap about state water rights, and they yell and scream because so-and-so is stealing water, and they're drying up the river and so forth. They don't understand state water rights. Most Federal agencies don't understand state water rights. Corps of Engineers don't even have to have them. They use the War Powers Act and the Navigational Servitude to build their projects. They don't even apply for water rights. They say they're above them. It's hurting them. Because now you can see that the Federal agencies can call on every acre-foot of their storage to meet salmon flows. I can't do that out of our system because of state water rights.

They're killing recreation. They're killing fish, resident fish, to try to save the salmon operation. That's one of the byproducts of not having state water rights. Bonneville Power has no water rights. Of course, they don't own any facilities, so they don't need them. But we're fairly unique that we have to have them. I think it's a good deal. I firmly believe in Section VIII of the 1902 Reclamation Act.

Storey: You talked about Ziglar coming to the regional directors, at that time the EMC,⁹ and saying that he wanted to change Reclamation. Did the EMC recognize that Reclamation needed to change?

Keys: Not totally. It was not a person-by-person thing. I don't think any of us really realized at the time. We knew that we had to do something else, but we didn't know it was as crucial as it was, or that times had changed as much as they really had. Society itself changed. I don't think we really fully accepted it. I think around Reclamation, outside of the PMC,¹⁰ I think there's still a nucleus of people that don't recognize that need for change.

We did it because assistant secretary Ziglar told us to, and maybe that's one of the reasons it was not as successful as it should have been, is that we were doing what Ziglar was telling us. We didn't even agree with the way he was doing it. This thing about being secret, *none* of us agreed with that, but that was the way Ziglar wanted it. There were a couple of times that things leaked out and Ziglar just raked the people over the coals, that let a thing or two slip out.

No, I don't think we all recognized it, and I'm in that crowd. I'll tell you, that was a strange time, because when he started that thing, in July of 1987 – '86.

Storey: '86, I think you'd said.

Keys: '86. I was just the acting regional director. See, I was not appointed until September of '86. Hell, I was just acting. I had never been to a PMC meeting before, and I didn't have a grasp really of what was going on. So I would put myself in the oldtimers at that time. I didn't recognize that we had to change, and I didn't have nerve enough to speak up and say, "We ought to go public with this thing." That's a rationalization, not an excuse, I guess.

Storey: Can you sort of walk me through the evolution of your thinking as this evolved?

Keys: The first hint that we had to do something different came in about 1985. Maybe it was a money thing in those days. We got word that they were looking at combining the Upper and Lower Missouri regional offices, the Denver regional office and the – well, no, let me back up. I need to back up a step before that.

Study Team to Look at Administrative Functions in Reclamation

In '83, late '82 and '83, they asked me to lead a study team to look at the administrative functions of the Bureau to see if there was a better way to do it.

9. The Executive Management Committee.

10. The Permanent Management Committee. The earlier name of the EMC.

Me and a team put together a proposal that said, "We ought to do some combining of administrative functions, and let Denver Office do the administrative functions for the Lower Missouri Region, which was right there in Denver, and save a personnel office and a contract office and so forth, and around the regions we ought to do a few more things." I've still got a copy of that report downstairs.

I went to the PMC meeting to give them a report on that, and there were a couple of people there that laughed. There were several people that took it seriously. William Klostermeyer took it seriously, and several other people took it very seriously. But they didn't do anything. Let it set on the shelf.

Combining Upper and Lower Missouri Regional Offices

Then in about '85, word came that the commissioner was looking at combining the Upper and Lower Missouri regional offices, and that's the Denver and Billings offices. To some of the regional directors, that was incredulous. Why would they do something stupid like that? The decision was made on money, and basically the Lower Missouri regional office and its region had not generated enough programs to support itself. They said they were going to get rid of a regional office, so they combined it. They made the one big region, called the Missouri Basin office, whatever it was, Missouri Basin region.

At that time, my own thinking was, "Well, maybe that's a better way to manage the monies that we have coming in." It didn't dawn on us that resources was the real issue. In '86 and '87, when we were doing the thing with Ziglar, it still did not dawn on us that the resource issues were what were driving the money issues. This is the way I feel. It's probably not right, but it's the way I feel. We were still dealing with the Bureau as program issues, which meant money rather than resource issues.

Amarillo Office Combined into Great Plains Region

The one result in '87 is that we did away with the regional office in Amarillo because it didn't have enough revenue and program to support itself, and they made this big honking region called Great Plains. They put them all together. It was done. Program and fundwise, still didn't consider it a resource.

The Issue of Resources Versus Money

Then the resource problem started to eat us alive. The Garrison went down because they didn't consider the resources. The Oahe had already gone down because we didn't consider the resources or the people. We got into big-time Endangered Species Act problems around the rest of the Bureau. The Colorado River has the chubs and the squawfish and that kind of thing. We got the salmon up here. The spotted owl thing happened over at another agency.

We got to looking at it and said, "Good grief, could that happen to us?" Then slowly but surely, the requirements of other water users that we weren't serving became apparent, and there was a move to reach out to them by Dennis Underwood. "How can we help you?" Then it started dawning on us that, "Hey, it's resources and not just money, and there are other outfits out there that need water besides our irrigators. There is only so much water there to go around, and you can't build more big dams and make water. You can't do it. So how are we going to do this?" That was where it really started happening.

Dan came in at the right time and just said, "Look, you can't dribble yourself into this thing. We're just going to make the big cut, and here's the way it's going to go."

So that's really kind of the evolution, I think. I'd say it all happened over the last ten years. To pat our region on the back, I think it started a little earlier here. We got into some of the salmon problems, some of the fish-versus-power-generation problems, in the early eighties, probably three or four years ahead of some of the other regions.

Anderson Ranch is a good example right here close to town. When it was built, it was built for power generation and irrigation water supply, and that's, by God, the way we operated. Crap, we peaked the powerplant to meet peak demands, and in the summertime when they needed irrigation water, we just released it and washed everything out.

Fly fishermen and some of the people came to us and said, "Hey, you're killing the fishery. Isn't there a better way to do it?" And our people here found a better way to do it. They operate all of the storage in the basin as a single source of supply, and at times we sacrifice Arrowrock, just flat sacrifice it, to keep the instream flows and the minimum flows in Anderson and at Lucky Peak whole. They like it, and *it works*, and we're all proud of it. But we did that before the real move came, and our people are pretty good at that.

Storey: Define for me resources and program. I know you're talking about this, but I'm not quite sure that I fully understand.

Keys: In the old days, programs kept us alive, the monies that we got. I told you Floyd Dominy was a master of dealing with the Congress. He dealt with them to keep the money coming in, to keep us building projects, to keep the studies going that fueled the pipeline into construction. We were an outfit that managed resources for construction. If somebody came to us and said, "We need 100,000 acre feet of water for an irrigation development," or, "We need 50,000 acre feet of water for a city supply," we built a project. We didn't look at all of the projects that already had been built and say, "How do all of these fit together?" We just built them a project.

My definition of resources is water resources, land resources, the fish resources. In other words, the fisheries, both anadromous and instream flows.

The wildlife are resources. We managed resources for construction, and what we found out is you can't do that, because there is an end in sight. If you don't look at the resources, first off, you damage them, and second off, you run out of a job. So we looked at saying, "Look, we're going to do construction, but we will do construction to manage the resource, rather than managing the resource to do construction." Big difference. Because you still have to build some things to manage your resource, and the tools you still need, but your end product is not just doing construction.

When I say we managed resources, we look at how we can make total use of that, and I think we're doing a pretty good job of it right now. If you're going to move water for salmon, you get that block of water, and you go to Idaho Power Company and you say, "Look, we got to get this water down the river for salmon. It has to be shaped at this time of the year. Now, can we move it ahead of time and frontload your system, and then you draw below and us backfill, so that we can maintain this steady flow for the fish down the river, and so that we don't spill any of your powerplants, and so that we can maintain this minimum flow in the Middle Snake River, where we got this algae bloom built up that's miserable, lousy, polluting, and so forth, and the fish farms down there are creating a problem on the river, and so that we can *not* damage those endangered snails that are in there? That's how you manage a resource without having program. You understand?

Storey: Yeah, I think I do.

Keys: We still need program, but different kinds. We are not building facilities anymore, and that could be a danger. That could put us in the same realm as the Park Service or BLM or whatever, where we depend on appropriations for our funding, rather than on the contracts or on the O&M repayments from districts. Big difference.

Storey: We haven't really had any major authorization since the late 1960s, I think.

Keys: It depends on what you call major. We have only had two new project authorizations in this region since that time.

Storey: What are those?

Keys: The Umatilla [Project]. When it was authorized, it was about \$50 million. Now it's up to about \$100 million with inflation and things that we've added on to it. And the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Program. It took us fourteen years to get the Yakima authorization done. We started on it in 1979, and we *just* got the law passed last fall.

Storey: What was that for?

Keys: Well, it's not even for what it started out to be. It started out to be a reservoir—needing another reservoir. What we ended up with is a water

conservation project that does *not* have any reservoir in it. What we did is we split the effort up into three parts. One, the first phase, was providing the fish protection and passage facilities, ladders and screens on the Yakima River. The second phase is what we got authorized, and that's water conservation. Look at the basin, see what you can do with water conservation, and decide whether you need some more storage or not. Then if you do need storage, that'll be the third phase of what you're trying to do.

Storey: A very non-traditional kind of approach.

Last Major Authorization Was Third Powerplant for this Region

Keys: Absolutely. You're right that there has not been a "big authorization" since the sixties. Actually, the last major authorization was Third Powerplant at Grand Coulee, for the Bureau and for this region.¹¹ That was completed in '79, '80, in that era there. The authorizations that the Bureau has had since then have all been the same relative size level of our Umatilla and Yakima stuff.

Storey: What's the Umatilla Project? Is it a traditional construction project?

Umatilla Project

Keys: We're doing some traditional construction, but it's not a traditional project. The Umatilla [Project is] one I'm kind of proud of, because we started it after I got here, and we are going to finish it up soon. The old Umatilla Project was built back in the teens and early twenties, and basically it developed a water supply for irrigation in the valley over there, built McKay Reservoir and canal system and so forth. Mid-sixties, you have the tribes winning court decisions that said they *were entitled* to the traditional fishing places and fish in the river.

On the Umatilla [River], what that meant is that the government had sold the water twice, and that while we developed the project for irrigation, the tribes had a right to water in the river for fish. Incompatible. So rather than going to court, the Umatilla Tribe said, "We'll work with you to take care of the problem, and as long as we can keep negotiating and see some progress, we won't go to court and put them out of business."

So our people came up with the idea that we could pump Columbia River water out of the Columbia River from the McNary [Dam] pool, over to the irrigators, and replace their water supply with Columbia River water, and then leave the Umatilla River water in the Umatilla River for the fish. That left

11. The act to authorize the Third Powerplant at Grand Coulee went into effect June 14, 1966, as P.L. 89-448, 80 Stat. 200. It was the last really large authorization for the Pacific Northwest Region, or Region I as it was formerly known. The last really large authorization for Reclamation was the Colorado River Basin Project Act of September 30, 1968, P.L. 90-537; 82 Stat. 885; 43 U.S.C. §1501. It authorized the Central Arizona Project and many smaller projects, and it expanded the Central Utah Project. The Animas-La Plata Project in southwestern Colorado is discussed elsewhere by Commissioner Keys, and it is the last major dam construction project authorized by the Colorado River Basin Project Act.

water in the river for the fish, it also gave you Umatilla River water as attraction to the fish coming back, so they knew where to go. We're just about done with that.

Now as everything turns out, we're not building it big enough, and we're having to do other things to try to provide some more water. I don't know where that's going to end up, but the first part of it is pretty close to being done. Big pumping plant on the river, several facilities in the basin to make it work, reworking one of the dams under Safety of Dams Act, a couple of big relift plants, redoing some canals and laterals, and that sort of thing. Good project. *Great* cooperation with the Umatilla Tribe. Good project. I'm kind of proud of that.

Tri-Party Agreement for Recreation Management at Grand Coulee Reservoir

I'll tell you another one that I was really proud of. When I came to this region, there was a thing called the Tri-Party Agreement, and it was for the recreation management operation of Grand Coulee Reservoir. Tri-Party was between the Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, and the BIA. Now what's missing there?

Storey: The Indians.

Keys: That's right. Exactly. The tribe was yelling at us, and several different starts were tried, to get the Tri-Party Agreement renegotiated, because the tribes wanted some stuff done. It boiled, and it boiled, and it boiled, and Bill Lloyd left, and finally we had to do something about it. I *personally* negotiated with the tribes and BIA and the Park Service, and we came up with a Five-Party Agreement¹² that said, "Tribes, you're responsible and have the authority to do the recreation on the reservation side of the reservoir. Park Service, you have the rest of the reservoir." And it's working. I developed some friendships with people on the Colville Tribal Council that last until today. Good friends. I was really proud of that. I had to do a lot to make that work. That was good.

Storey: Well, recently we've had a settlement where they're taking, I believe, a portion of the power? Is that correct?

Power Settlement with the Colville Confederated Tribes

Keys: That's another issue. That was an old claim and an old lawsuit that started way back. We didn't have anything to do with that. Bonneville [Power Administration (BPA)] was the main negotiator there. I don't know why that one was settled. I'm still not sure that I understand. I understand the case, but it seems kind of different, but unclear.

12. The five partners are the Bureau of Reclamation, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Spokane Tribe.

Storey: You said a little while ago, you can't build new dams. Could you talk about that?

Keys: There are instances where the construction of new dams is going to be necessary, and I think that we will be called on to do that. But our commissioner says no new big dams, and I think he's very serious about it. In most cases, new storage facilities won't do us any more good, because you can't make new water.

There are a couple of places where there are flood waters that are not being used that you could make good use out of. But I will tell you, I personally feel that if we put a dam on any of the remaining uncontrolled rivers, that it would be a crime, like the Yellowstone, like the Salmon River, like the Bruneau or some of those, or the – what's the name of that site? We've got a dam site down below Palisades that they had asked us to build several years ago, and we did a bunch of studies on it. Memory's the second thing to go. I can't remember the dam site.

But I think that if you can ever reach a consensus on building one, you ought to build it, because that means everybody agrees that it's necessary. Until you get to that consensus-building process, I don't think you're as likely to get it done. I *hope* that you never see another single-purpose one. That may be heresy to some folks.

Storey: When did you decide you wanted to be a regional director?

Decided Wanted to Be a Regional Director

Keys: 1979.

Storey: When you were in the training program?

Keys: No, when I went *into* the training program. That's why I went into it. I was working in the Denver office when that assistant regional director's job came up in Billings. I hadn't thought about moving, except that I knew that I was not happy working in Denver. When that job came open, as I told you yesterday, in my own mind, that was my job, because I looked at it and I said, "I have worked in the field, I have worked in the regions, and I have worked in the Denver office. For me, the best place I fit into that whole process is in a regional office." At that time I said, "I can use what I've learned in three places, in that assistant regional director's job, and work on different projects around that region."

END TAPE 2 SIDE 1. MARCH 24, 1995.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2,. MARCH 24, 1995.

Keys: As I told you, I was really upset about it for a while, but then I realized that I did not know very much, or very little, really. I had testified before Congress, I

had testified in court cases, but I didn't know a lot about the upper workings of Reclamation. I felt that if I were going to be an assistant regional director or a regional director, I needed to learn. That made my decision to go into that secretariat training program. That's when I decided that I wanted to be a regional director.

I had heard, in talking to Cliff Barrett, who was my boss in those days, that you needed Washington office experience to do that. That was one of the reasons that I went back there, to get the training and to get the Washington office experience.

I can tell you the exact time and place and so forth when I decided to go to Washington in the training program. I was running on a canal bank in Grand Junction, Colorado, in the spring of 1979, and that secretariat training program had just been announced, and I was still just madder than all hell at Bill Lloyd for not taking me to Billings, selecting me for that assistant's job. I was running on the canal bank. We were over there for some salinity control meeting. I physically stopped and said, "If you keep this up, you're going to kill yourself. Now make your decision of what you're going to do, and quit this screwing around with yourself." And I did. I said, "What I'm going to do is go home and talk to my wife, and tell her that I need to go to this Washington assignment and see what we've got to do to make it work." And I did.

Storey: Was it while you were in Washington that you started making contacts with the congressional staff?

Keys: Yes.

Storey: You mentioned yesterday about how you built a relationship where you'd go in and talk to them.

How Important Contacts in D.C. Were

Keys: Before I went back there, I did not know -- I had been back and met with them to explain stuff to them, and I had testified before a subcommittee on the Salinity Control Program. I did not know how it worked or how important it was.

When I went back, my first assignment was with the Water Resources Council. I worked with them, and it started dawning, but it wasn't clear. Then I worked in the White House for a month. It was there, but I still didn't grasp it.

I went up and I worked on Congressman Mike McCormick's personal staff for four months. McCormick was an engineer. He was a nuclear engineer off of Hanford, but he was an engineer, and we thought alike. He took me under his wing and showed me how it worked and had me in charge of his issues with Interior. I was his Interior person for three-and-a-half months. I'd only been

there two weeks, and he and his chief of staff came and said, "You are our Interior rep for the rest of the time you're here."

I went to hearings, I went to private meetings, the smoke-filled-room meetings, I went *on* the floor with him, I talked to people in the field on how to get stuff done, and it was crystal clear that if we, Reclamation, did not have a relationship with that Congress, we couldn't get anything done. It was clear in the job that I was in that if people didn't keep a steady stream of information going in and out of there, they forgot about you. Even if you didn't have something that you needed done, they still forgot. I wanted a close enough relationship with those people that if they had a question, or if something came up that they needed something, why they'd call me.

That taught me a lot, and that's where I developed that need for that kind of relationship. Before I left there, I knew somebody in every congressional office of the region that I was going to. Now I don't quite have that, because there are some that don't have anything to do with us, and others that are key. Right now, I have close contact in three of the four in Idaho offices, two of the three in Montana, one of the three in Wyoming, three of the eleven in Oregon, and five of the however many in the State of Washington. I talk with them regularly.

I also talk to people on the committee staffs, the appropriations committee, the authorizing committee over on the department side. I think it's very important, *not* because it pumps me up or anything like that. If they've got a question, I want them to think of me to call. If I need something, they know that I'll come, and that I won't come unless it's something we absolutely need. I won't abuse the relationship that I have with them. That's the kind of relationship that I think is absolutely necessary.

At times, Washington office and their politics gets in the way. I am apolitical. They know that. I have been very adamant about staying apolitical. Ask me, "Are you a Democrat or Republican?" I'm not even one. I'm a Hatch. I believe in the Hatch Act. I have worked with the Republicans just as well as I work with Democrats. Very important.

I'm going back there next week, testify before a committee, and while I'm there, I'll meet with three of those offices. I don't need anything. I just want to say, "Mark, we're still there. Umatilla's doing really good." Mark Walker, is on the appropriations committee staff.

We'll go by and see Jane Gorsuch on Congressman Mike Crapo's side. She called. She's a good friend. We brought her out here. I took her fishing, physically took her fly fishing on the south fork of the Boise, Bill Anderson Ranch. My own equipment, I provided the lunch and so forth. Hey, we had a good time. I'd do it anyway; why not take her along? She bought into it. She is a great supporter of us and what we're trying to do.

I'm going to meet with Congressman Craig's office. Congressman Craig has the best staff. He and Crapo have the best staffs of anybody in this region.

Now you should ask why I don't go to see some of the others. For example, Bob Packwood, Senator Packwood, State of Oregon. There are two senators there, Packwood and Mark Hatfield. You go to see Packwood's people and they say, "Hi. Whatever you want to do with water, we'll do whatever Senator Hatfield says." So we send them stuff, and when they have letters and stuff to answer, we give them drafts or whatever, but we don't spend a lot of time with those people, because they have agreements with Hatfield's people that they'll support him on anything he does with water, because Hatfield knows water, and Packwood concentrates on other things.

The King County people in Seattle. We have *nothing* going there. We send them stuff regularly so they know who we are, but I don't go see them a lot. I go see District Four, District One, and the two senators. That's where our projects are. The same with Montana, the same with Wyoming. Very important.

Storey: So you prepare sort of briefing packages for these folks with some regularity?

Keys: I put a book together every year for them called *The PN Overview*.¹³ I'll give you a copy of it before you leave if you want. Every year I put it together. It says, "*Here's* our region, here's what's going on, and *here's* our budget for this year and next year, and *here* are the special things that are happening: ESA, snails, salmon, waterspreading," whatever the special issues are. We do it every year. When I go to see them, if there's a hot issue or an issue that could be hot, or something they're interested in, I prepare a little briefing paper for them and give it to them. Do it every time.

I typically schedule an hour for each one of those meetings. And I don't insist on seeing the member. If I get to see a member, a congressman or a senator, that's gravy. Some of them I got to know very well. There's a couple of them that are close friends, I mean, professional friends. I get Christmas cards from them, and when I would be out with them, we talked about personal stuff. Bob Smith from Oregon, one of the nicest guys I ever knew. But I don't insist, I never have insisted on seeing one of them. Some of them insist on seeing me, and that's good, but I deal with staff. Staff's where things get done.

Storey: Yeah, I would like to see your briefing book.

Keys: Okay. I'll give you one of the overview books.

Storey: I don't need to take one, I don't think.

Maintaining Relations with Political Figures Key for the Region

13. PN is the Pacific Northwest Region.

Keys: I use them for the congressional people, I use them with state people. See, I try to do the same things with states. Governor Andrus was a close friend because I used to work for him, but I worked with him more after he got back here than I did even when I worked directly for him.

We meet with the governor of Washington and Oregon. Hell, I went to meet with Governor Batt over here just three, four weeks ago on the BO, the Biological Opinion, for the salmon.

I met with Governor Roscoe from Montana to *personally* give him the damn thing, because I didn't want him getting it in the mail, and I wanted him to know what was in there, and I wanted him to be able to tell me what he thought about the cussed thing. He did. He didn't like it. But he thanked me for coming and giving it to him rather than sending it to him in the mail. I put a lot of stock in keeping contacts with those people, and I work hard at it at times.

Storey: And that's part of the regional director's job?

Keys: Damn right it is.

Storey: Was it part of the assistant regional director's job?

Keys: I did some of it. Ken Pedde does a little bit of it now, but I do most of it. I do most of it. One of the big discussions is, where do the area managers fit into this? I have an understanding with them. They deal with the local staffs, in other words, the congressional staffs, the senator staffs here in town. They handle most of that. I handle the Washington stuff.

I think that is a *big* part of the regional director's job, to maintain those relationships. If you don't do it, who does? And if you don't do it, what does that mean to Reclamation? It means a lot. The three key people in the governors' organizations, the director of water resources here, the director of water resources in Oregon, the director of the department of ecology in Washington, I know those three people just as well as I know my closest friend. We work very closely together.

Storey: A whole new dimension of what it means to be a regional director for me.

Keys: Oh, is it? Hey, that may not be the most important part. I think our own people are the most important part of the job in trying to keep them organized and address the problems. That's probably the second most important part of my job.

Storey: Well, I hate to say it, but we have once again used our time.

Keys: Okay. After you're going back through this stuff, I know you've got to ask your questions, but after you go back through this stuff, if you see some blanks that we've left in there, feel free to give me a call. I'd be more than happy to fill you in.

Storey: Well, I do see some blanks, and I think probably we ought to try to get together again.

Keys: Well, you know, there are people – I tell you, I went back this past winter. We went back to Michigan to visit the Herman Miller Corporation plant where they build furniture, office furniture. Herman Miller started out as a family company, building just house furniture, and reached a point where they had to do something else, and they went big-time with office furniture and so forth. It's still pretty much run like a family business.

There is a *loyalty* to Reclamation that I will *never* lose.

Reclamation is a family agency. It has been run like a family. At times that's caused problems, at times it's been good. There is a *loyalty* to Reclamation that I will *never* lose. I don't care who they put in as commissioner. I don't care how many political people he brings in with him. I don't even care at times what direction they put us in. We're a family organization, and we care for each other. I don't know how long *you've* been with Reclamation, or whether you've picked up that feeling. If you've worked in the Denver office all your time, you may not have gotten that feeling. But if you get out in the field, *especially* in the small towns, the small offices, and the regions, I think you'll find that. I think that's why it's so hard on some of our people to go through the big changes that we're doing right now, is they see a threat to that family relationship that they've come to depend on.

The VSIP buyout that's under way, the reason that is so disconcerting to people is that the people that are leaving, the couple of hundred people we're losing out of this region, are the old people. Not old, physically-aged people, but the people that have been here a long time, who have been part of that tradition and culture. It's a cultural thing. Hell, more than anything else it's a cultural thing. I, for one, don't want to lose that.

Storey: Well, I appreciate your spending time, and, as you know, I need to ask you whether or not the information on these tapes and any resulting transcripts can be used in research.

Keys: Absolutely.

Storey: Good. Thank you.

Keys: I have no problem whatsoever.

Storey: Thank you very much.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 2. MARCH 24, 1995.
BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1. JULY 24, 1995.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing regional director John W. Keys, in his offices, in the Bureau of Reclamation's regional office in Boise, Idaho, on July 24, 1995, at about 2:30 in the afternoon. This is tape one.

Commissioners of the Bureau of Reclamation

One of the things, Mr. Keys, I'd be interested in is your impression of the commissioners that you've known since you came to Reclamation. I think you must have known Gil Stamm, for instance.

Gil Stamm

Keys: Very well. Gil was the first commissioner that I ever knew before he was commissioner. The first one, Floyd Dominy, they tell me that Floyd was a Reclamation career person, and I think that's probably right, but Gil was the first *and only* career professional that I ever had the chance to work with as commissioner. So, yes, I knew Gil, and worked with him before. Worked on the Garrison Project with him before he was commissioner. I think I got my GS-14 and 15 while Gil was commissioner.

Floyd Dominy

The first one I knew was Floyd. I mean, I didn't know him, but I saw him a couple of times, and I heard a lot about him. Of course, we all stood in awe of him in those days. He was an *imposing* person, both from reputation and how he got things done and so forth.

Storey: Tell me about him.

Keys: Well, you've got to remember that in those days I was a GS-7, GS-9. I may have been a GS-11 engineer working for Reclamation. As far as we knew, the commissioner sat on a throne in D.C., and that kind of thing. But we heard of him, and there was two sides of him that we heard. The one was the social side, of which he was just a rascal, and then the other side was how he could get stuff done. The other side was that he was a very astute politician. He worked the committees of the Hill better than any other Federal agency in Washington, D.C.. I firmly believe that that was true in those days.

The center of the Interior Building, they didn't have Floyd Dominy on the seventh floor for nothing, with the Secretary of the Interior on the sixth floor. He could get things done. He worked very closely with the committees on the Hill, and was probably better at that than any commissioner that Reclamation's ever known, bar none, even the first one.

Storey: But you didn't ever see him doing that, personally?

Keys: No, I didn't. Hell, I was just a young engineer. I was not high enough to even know what was going on, but that's what we heard. A lot of that's been substantiated throughout my career. I see stuff that Floyd did and so forth. Quite a person. His rascal side, crud, he used to come into the region. We had a guy on our staff who was a supply person. His name was Vince Haight, H-A-I-G-H-T. I think the only reason he worked for Reclamation is to plan two annual outings for Floyd Dominy on the Colorado River and on Glen Canyon [Lake Powell] Reservoir. His stories with women were legendary in those days.

Storey: They're still legendary throughout Reclamation.

Keys: There's never been one like him since. And, Lord, most of us hope there's not. But those are the two sides that we all heard about Floyd.

Ellis Armstrong

I never will forget. They brought a guy down to meet us in Provo, had a dinner for him. We all went. They were going to make him the assistant regional director, and we all wondered, "Why in the world are they doing that?" We met him, and they made him the assistant director, and then they kept telling us that the reason they were doing that, is he was going to be the next commissioner.

Of course, it was Ellis Armstrong. And they did, and he did, and he was. I've known eight or nine or ten different commissioners, but in all of those that I knew, he was probably the least effective of all of them. He'd been with the Department of Transportation, I think, before. Maybe the comparisons were too strong for Ellis to be successful no matter how good he was, but, to us, he seemed very ineffectual. He didn't know how to work the Hill. Didn't even make an effort to do it. We took a nose dive in those days. I mean, really, really took a bad nose dive.

It was good, then, when Gil came in. Gil was a working person's commissioner, knew all of us. In those days there were probably 10,000 people working for Reclamation – 9,000-, 10,000. I would bet that Gil Stamm knew half of them. I was working in North Dakota at first on the Garrison Project when I first got to know him. He was chief of O&M in Washington, D.C.. Washington, D.C., was the heart of the organization in those days.

Barney Bellport

Barney Bellport had the Chief Engineer's office. He was *king* of construction. All the construction engineers reported to him. Regional directors didn't have anything to do with construction; that was *Barney's* stuff. But policies and management of all the monies was out of Washington, D.C..

Very strong O&M, very strong planning, very strong budget and program work. Gil ran a very good O&M shop in those days.

I got to know him when I was working on the Garrison Project. We were working with Canada on the return flows from the project and the construction and so forth. Gil was a really good person to work with.

Then he was made commissioner after Armstrong left. He was a good man to work with. Again, I don't think he could do the things on the Hill that Floyd Dominy did, and it hurt him. I don't think anybody could do what Floyd was doing. The *times* wouldn't let somebody do that.

Storey: The times were changing.

Keys: Sure they were. The winds they were a-changing. Floyd was the right man at the right time and he did it. I think Gil even felt the pressure to do it, and couldn't get it done. But he was still a good commissioner.

Keith Higginson

Of course, then after Gil was Keith Higginson. Keith came into the job with a chip on his shoulder. The chip was a pretty big chip, but he came in with a chip on his shoulder. The chip was Teton Dam. He and his Secretary of the Interior, former governor of Idaho, Cecil Andrus, had a real thing about Teton. The secretary had actually opposed the dam when it was being formulated and so forth. Then . .

Storey: We're talking about Cecil Andrus, right?

Keys: That's right.

Storey: He was opposed to us building a dam in Idaho?

Cecil Andrus and Teton Dam

Keys: Well, I don't know that he was opposed to building a dam in Idaho, but the environmental people had so many strong objections to Teton Dam, and Governor Andrus was an environmental governor. But they really did not like it. Then when it failed, it was just like, "I told you so." They took their pound of flesh.

The administration at that time was trying to get rid of the Bureau. I saw a dance around the table when they changed the name from the Bureau of Reclamation to –

Storey: Water Power –

Name Changes to Water and Power Resources Service

Keys: Water and Power Resources Service by Cathy Fletcher, Guy Martin. I don't know whether Beard was in the dance or not, but he was there. Got rid of the Bureau. Now, see, at that time, I was not in this region. I was working in Denver in the Colorado River Water Quality Office. I got to know Keith first, because I reported directly to the assistant commissioner in that job. I got to know Keith very well, because he did not put everything into effect we were trying to do on the Colorado River, and we were almost kind of fighting him to get our stuff done. I got to know him a little bit.

Then I went to Washington on a special assignment. It was the secretariat training program, twelve- to eighteen-month program, to have assignments to prepare a person to be an assistant regional director.

I'm going to get to your other question probably before you want me to answer it.

Storey: That's fine.

Training Program in D.C.

Keys: When I decided to be a regional director. I went there on that program, and I reported directly to Keith Higginson. Actually, Cec Andrus was my direct boss, but you never got to see him very much, and therefore I worked for Keith. For that year I got to know both of those people very well. Cec Andrus is a friend of my family now, and when we came back here and he came back, it helped this Pacific Northwest Region because I knew Cec Andrus pretty well, and we got a lot of stuff done with him. That's not a brag.

Storey: It's just fact, yeah.

Keys: I'm serious. It really helped me do my job because I knew him. He called regularly for stuff. I couldn't tell you to this day whether it helped or hurt me to know Keith that well. We worked pretty well with Keith on some things, and other things we didn't work as well with Keith on, after we both came back to this region. But at that time, I got to know them very well.

I felt sorry for Keith Higginson at the end. Keith was not done right. Keith never made the conversion from being a state engineer to being commissioner. It just was not his bag. Then when the time was for him to leave, he didn't want to leave. He talked to the new secretary.

Storey: Oh, Jim Watt.

Keys: Jim Watt. He went to Watt's people and he said, "I'm not political. I'm not a Democrat and I'm not a Republican, and I want to stay on as commissioner." He was led to believe that they were going to keep him, and then Watt fired him in a public meeting. Keith Higginson, until he was sitting there in that

public meeting, thought he had a job. Watt fired him in front of about 2,000 Department of Interior people.

Then to make matters worse, Keith was going to set up a consulting engineering business in Salt Lake City with a friend of his, Jack Barnett. In fact, they still don't do it, they don't pay the moving expenses of political appointees. Keith had a moving company load all of his furniture in a moving truck. The thing turned over and burned in the middle of Kansas, and he got a dollar and a quarter a pound for everything he owned. So it was not a very good end –

Storey: Oh, my.

Keys: – to his administration.

Bob Broadbent

Of course, Jim Watt brought in Bob Broadbent, who stayed for a while. Broadbent's forte, and he made public pronouncements to this effect, was that we would handle the technical stuff and he would handle the politics, and he did a pretty good job at it, good enough to be appointed assistant secretary. Broadbent came here several times and was a very friendly person. We did not do a lot under Bob Broadbent. We put off a lot of stuff, like RRA, Reclamation Reform Act, and some of the tough issues.

I came here in 1980, which was during the election year. In other words, Keith was still the commissioner. I came here as assistant regional director on June 1, 1980. We watched the election, and then Broadbent came in. We just did not get to do very much in those days. I mean, we kept stuff going, but it was not one of our more dynamic times.

Bob Olson

When Broadbent moved out, we were a year without a commissioner. Now, I count Bob Olson as one of the commissioners I served under, because he was acting for –

Storey: For a year.

Keys: – at least a year. Maybe a tad more than a year. But close to a year one way or the other. Bob didn't dare do anything. He wanted the job, so he didn't ruffle any feathers. But he was a good man. Bob Olson would have made a good commissioner. He tried to do some stuff, but it just didn't work. Then he quit and went to Western Area Power Administration.

Dale Duvall

They appointed Dale Duvall as the commissioner. Duvall was an accountant, CPA, from Creston, Washington, and had worked for a construction outfit, and thought he knew what the hell was going on with engineering and construction, but he didn't.

Duvall's approach to the commissioner's job was to get a couple of issues and he would be the expert on those issues, and would let the minions handle everything else.

Reclamation Reform Act Was One of Duvall's Issues

Reclamation Reform Act was one of his issues. He ran that horse into the ground, and we all suffered from it, because it became an enforcement program. The problem was that *none* of us knew anything about enforcement. We still don't. We are *not* a regulatory agency. He tried to make us a regulatory agency, and we did poorly at it. Hell, Teton made us look bad, but we could have gotten over Teton. The *regulatory* functions turned our constituencies against us. RRA turned our constituencies against us, because we were in there trying to enforce it. We were told if we don't enforce it, they'll get somebody in that could. When we tried to make it easier, some of our regions, this one, tried to make it a little easier, we got slapped down.

Appointed Regional Director by Dale Duvall

Duvall hired me. That's not quite right. Duvall promoted me to being a regional director. Bill Lloyd was the director. May 23 in '86, he retired. I acted for about four months-, five months, and then was appointed under Duvall's selection. So I probably owe him my appointment, but he was a duck out of water. Just did *not* know how to handle it.

Dennis Underwood

Of course, after that, we got Dennis Underwood. Dennis Underwood was the commissioner that I knew. I did not know him at all before he was selected. Got to know him better than any commissioner I ever worked for. Underwood tried to run the Bureau the way he ran his sixteen-person office when he was in charge of the Colorado River Board of California. In other words, he did not know how to handle or manage a large organization. He was the workingest fool I ever saw in my life. He worked us hard. If this salmon thing hadn't come up, I would probably tell you that I worked harder under Dennis Underwood than I ever have in my life. That's not true with the salmon stuff and how we've been running for the last two years, two and a half years. But God, Dennis was a worker. But he was a friend. He wanted to be a friend with every employee in Reclamation. He also wanted to proofread everything that came out of Reclamation—reports, letters, laws, you name it, it went across his desk, and he had to have do something with it. That was his downfall. He couldn't handle the volume, the large stuff – everything got hung up.

Dennis Underwood's "Strategic Plan"

His big thing was a "strategic plan" for Reclamation, but it wasn't a strategic plan. In other words, he called it a strategic plan because he wanted to show where we were going to get and how to get there. It turned out to be just a catalog of stuff that we could do. We ought to be doing this and ought to be doing that, and we could do this, and we could do that. It turned out not to really be a strategic plan. Took forever. One of its downfalls is it took too long to put out, and we spent too much time on it.

Rebuilt Kirby Dam

But Dennis Underwood was a good man. The man probably could not ask me to do something that I wouldn't do for him. I still talk to him. I called him just two weeks ago. Under his tenure, we rebuilt three dams for irrigation districts and other organizations. The first one was Kirby, that we entered into a joint agreement with the Forest Service and the State of Idaho, to build up here in Atlanta, and the reason we did it is to keep the heavy metal materials out of our reservoirs. This old dam that was falling down from mine days, and it was falling down letting that crud come down the river. So we helped them rebuild the dam to hold it there. It worked really good, Kirby Dam at Atlanta, Idaho.

Rebuilt Clear Creek Dam in Yakima

Clear Creek Dam up in Yakima. It's the first one in Reclamation that we ever breached ourself. Cut holes in a concrete dam so it couldn't hold water, and then we rebuilt it, and that worked very well.

". . . Como Dam was one that went to hell on us right at the end of an irrigation season . . ."

Then Como was one that went to hell on us right at the end of an irrigation season up in Montana. We had to hustle like crazy to get the money for that thing, because we had to have it built before irrigation season next spring. Dennis and I worked with Senator Burns and got the money for it, and we got it built. We just rededicated the thing about three weeks ago. I called Dennis up to tell him the good feelings that the district had about it and how good the ceremony went and so forth.

But Dennis was a good man. I really liked Dennis Underwood. He wanted to stay, like Keith did, and actually was extended about ninety days or so. Dennis, bless his heart, worked so hard at his job, that he didn't prepare himself for when the job was gone. He ended up not being able to find a job. Took him two years, two and a half years, now. It's taken him that long to develop a business to support himself. Just now this summer is it really all together for him. That's how hard the man worked. I felt sorry for him. There was nothing I could do for him. But I really felt sorry for him for a while.

Dan Beard

I knew Dan Beard. I worked for Beard for two months when I was back on that twelve-month assignment, working for Keith Higginson and Governor Andrus. Dan was the deputy assistant secretary, and I worked for him for two months doing *stuff*, learning what the assistant secretary's office was about. I helped with some policies on water and that sort of thing. I got to know him fairly well.

When he went on the committee staff up there, I used to stop by and see him. I worked the Hill two or three times a year, letting them know what we were doing, letting them know the funding requirements that we have, what things might jump up and bite them, find out what might jump up and bite us, what are the issues that they need directed, and so forth. Dan was one of my regular stops when I was back there, so I knew him before he was commissioner. Sometimes he was a son of a bitch, and sometimes he was a nice guy. I guess a staffer has to be that way on a committee. But he really was good to me when I was there. He would talk to us, tell us what the problems are and that sort of thing. We even had him out here and flew him around the Yakima and Columbia Basin Project one time when he was chief of staff on that committee.

I was back there during the change of administration, '93, and went by to see him. He closed the door, and he said, "What happens if I become commissioner of Reclamation?"

I said, "Well, I hadn't thought about that." I said, "Can you do that?"

He said, "Yeah." He said, "There are some changes that are being made, and I think I'm the one to do them, and I have *asked* for the job."

I said, "Well, I hadn't thought about it much, but you've supported some of the stuff that we've done, and I guess if that happens, I can work for you."

Then we talked a lot of details about stuff, and, lo and behold, it happened. We've had a pretty good relationship. Dan Beard has been very supportive of the programs that we have going in this region, has left us alone. He has not gotten into our business as other members of his staff have gotten into the California business. Now, it's true that he was working a lot with them in his previous job, but he's left us alone. To me, it's a compliment that he likes what we're doing, thinks we're handling it pretty well. Some of his staff I have to kind of fight off every once in a while.

Jim Zigler

I like Dan Beard. He's been a good commissioner. He made the changes happen that we tried to do under Duvall. Actually, it wasn't Duvall. Duvall, he didn't know enough about Reclamation to do that. Jim [James W.] Zigler, the

assistant secretary, was calling the shots in those days. Zigler said, "Change the Bureau of Reclamation." But he didn't know how to do it, and what he did is he tried to get us *top* executives together and put this thing together secretly and then spring it on everybody, including the Congress. It didn't go anywhere in '88 when we tried to get it done. It just didn't happen.

Dan Beard's Concerns about Reclamation When He Arrived

Beard was one of the most severe critics of that when it was happening, because there was not congressional involvement in putting the plan together. When Beard came in, he said: "Reclamation's going to change. If it doesn't change, there won't be Reclamation. Somebody's got to do the jobs, but there won't be Reclamation to do it unless we change this organization."

In his viewpoint, there were two things terribly wrong with Reclamation. One of them was Denver. Denver, that ivory tower there that says, "We know everything, and we'll develop the policies, and so forth." And the other was the way we were organized: too many layers, too much concentration in Denver *and* in the regional offices. He set out to reduce Denver, take away that power base, and not just put it to the regions, but distribute it out to the area offices, and flatten the organization. He only wanted – still only wants – two layers between any person in the region and me. Some places we're there, and some places we can't get there because of unions and the way things are set. But those are the two main emphases that he had. And we've done it. Like I said, the two-level thing, sometimes it can't work because of the unions and contracts and that sort of thing. But Denver's down. They are *not* the force that they were.

Dan Beard's been good for Reclamation, *in spite of* his reputation. He's got some real crackers with him back there that I think are bad for Reclamation. He should never have brought Ed [Edward] Osann into Reclamation. I'm not sure that was his choice, but he should never have let it happen. The man's mean.

Storey: I understand that's changing pretty quick here.

Eluid Martinez

Keys: Well, it should. I hate to see Dan leave. I don't know what to expect from Eluid Martinez, if he's confirmed, and I've heard that he'll be nominated just as soon as Dan leaves. I don't know what to expect from him. I hear he's more conservative, that he'll fit in, that he'll sail right through the confirmation. I don't think you're going to see him come in and try to wholesale change stuff that Dan's done. I think there's too much good to it. He'll probably try to work the constituency back – in other words, the irrigation constituency – back into the fold, and that's good. It needs to happen. It needs to happen. We can't fight the world, and that's pretty much what we're doing right now. Even our old constituencies we're fighting at times. So I think there's some things –

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1. JULY 24, 1995.
BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2. JULY 24, 1995.

Keys: There was messages on Friday that he Martinez was coming tomorrow, but that's not going to happen now. I don't know why. Our people were scrambling around putting issue papers for him together Friday, and then this morning they said he's not going to be there. I think he's really just kind of staying out of the process until Dan leaves. But anyway, he's not coming in tomorrow after all. I've met him a couple of times. He's a nice fellow. He's a quiet person. When he was State Engineer in New Mexico, I worked with the State Engineers Association a couple of times, and gave talks to them and was on program, and met him. He seems like a very nice fellow.

Barney Bellport

Storey: What about the chief engineers you knew? You mentioned Barney Bellport. What was Barney Bellport like?

Keys: King. Had his own elevator. You didn't cross Barney Bellport. He was *the* chief engineer. He had all of the construction engineers reporting to him. He hand-selected every one of them. They handled all the construction contracts out of Denver under him. The field was just there to collect data, and he probably fostered the feeling and the attitudes down there that nobody knew anything but them, and that ivory tower complex that's still there in some places.

Barney was a smart man. Barney could manage people really well, but that attitude – I'll tell you, when I first went to Reclamation, 1964, I went to work in the project office. My plan was to work in the project office for somewhere between five and ten years, then go to a regional office and work for a while, up the ladder kind of thing, and then to go to Denver; in other words, where all of the designs, where the real fountain of engineering expertise was. That's when I first went to Reclamation. That's what I thought I was going to do. Boy, the attitudes that those guys had was just *terrible*. I mean, they looked down their nose at us.

Well, it was just the attitude that caused – and maybe it was the way I was brought up. Maybe it was the very reason that I came West or whatever. But that attitude just really grated on me.

But anyway, Bellport was a good Chief Engineer. I don't think he wanted to retire when he did, but Teton got him. They brought the chief, the head of the investigative team, in after Barney left.

Storey: Are you confusing Barney and Harold Arthur, by chance?

Keys: Oh, yes, I am. You're right. Harold Arthur. You're absolutely right. I'm not confusing them, but Harold Arthur was just an extension of Barney Bellport,

raised at his knee, and took over. You're right. Harold Arthur. How could I forget that? But Harold was just an extension of Barney. Came up under him, was his assistant for a long time, and then Teton got Harold. There was no difference between Barney and Harold.

Before they built Building 67 we were all over – we; I wasn't down there then – but they were all over in the other old buildings on the Federal Center, and Barney wanted a building. He had Reclamation *design* a building for his engineering organization. He got into a fight with GSA, and he lost, and they did a bunch of crud with it, and it ended up looking like a fourteen-story trash rack, square damn thing, because GSA wasn't going to let him do this and that and the other, ended up looking atrocious.¹⁴

Barney's offices were on the fourteenth floor, over in the northwest corner. There were six elevators – five elevators, and he would go to get on one, and he'd have to wait, because it would come up, and anybody that was there, it would stop and get them and come on up and so forth. Then it would take its time going down. Well, he had that fixed. He had one of them expressed, so that if he needed that elevator, he punched it and it came. Doesn't do that anymore, but that was Barney doing it.

We're Still Paying for Teton

Teton got Harold, and it was that arrogance. It was just flat that damn arrogance that caused that thing. Now, there was shortcuts made and other things done that shouldn't have been done, but it was the arrogance that caused it. We're still paying for it. We over-design stuff. We're more expensive than anybody else because of that. Still paying for it. We do safety-of-dams work that, hell, we're going back the *third* time on one of our dams, and it's just causing me a fit. But it's because of Teton.

Robert B. Jansen

What was that guy's name? It starts with a J. Bob [Robert B.] Jansen. Bob Jansen was his name. He was the head of the investigative panel that investigated the failure. He came from some engineering organization in Seattle, I think. Bob Jansen was his name. They made him chief engineer for a little while, and they chased him away. The *system* chased him away. Never was effective.

Rod Vissia

Then the regional director from here, Rod Vissia, took the job and held it for a while, and essentially changed the job, started the real changes in the job. Regional directors were given a lot more. It was a combination of the

14. Compare this to Floyd E. Dominy's oral history memories regarding the authorization, design, construction, and GSA involvement in Building 67 on the Denver Federal Center.

commissioner and the changes there in the chief engineer's office, that regional directors were given control of everything in their regions. Construction engineers reported to us, contracting reported to us, and so on. That happened under Vissia.

Darrell Webber

Then, I think after Rod went to South America, Darrell Webber took over the job. But it was not called "chief engineer" anymore.

Storey: No, they had changed it to something like assistant commissioner.

Keys: It changed under Jansen. Under Jansen it went to being the assistant commissioner.¹⁵

Storey: So it went Jansen –

Keys: Jansen.

Storey: – then Vissia.

Keys: Vissia.

Storey: And then Darrell Webber.

Keys: Then Webber. Of course, now—well, when Darrell left, I think Felix Cook has got a part of it, whatever.

You asked me when I decided to be a regional director. I had done pretty much what I said I was going to do. I worked in the project offices for seven years, four in Utah and three in North Dakota. I went to the regional office as regional hydrologist in Billings.

Then I was offered the chief hydrologist job in Denver. I went to it, and I didn't like it. I liked hydrology. I loved hydrology. I didn't like the Denver office, I didn't like the politics of it, I didn't like *Denver*. It was too big a town. Never lived in a big city like that before.

I'd been in the chief hydrologist's job for a year, and Jim O'Brien had established this Colorado River Water Quality Office, and John T. Maletic, who was the water quality, land classification expert for the Bureau, he was the

15. During Leslie N. McClellan's tenure, 1948-1958, the title was changed to "Assistant Commissioner and Chief Engineer." Barney Bellport's title was Director, Office of Design and Construction, though many people even into the 1980s and 1990s referred to that position as "chief engineer." During Robert Jansen's tenure from 1977-1979, the title became "Assistant Commissioner for Engineering and Research" (ACER). During the realignment of Reclamation in 1994, while Daniel P. Beard was commissioner, the position was abolished.

pusher behind getting that office established. A month before they were to move into their new offices, had a heart attack and died in Yuma, Arizona.

I had done a lot of water-quality work as a hydrologist on the Garrison, on the Oahe Project, and on the O'Neill Unit in Nebraska. O'Brien called me up and told me to put in for the job. I told him I really didn't think I was qualified for that kind of job. It was a GS-15 job, office head. I liked hydrology, didn't want to leave it that much. O'Brien called me back to Washington, D.C., and he said, "I want you to put in for that job." He said, "If you don't, I'll put you in myself." Of course, O'Brien was chief of planning. He was Assistant Commissioner for Planning and Operations in those days. So I did, and I got it. It was a strange deal. My papers were signed on the Fourth of July 1976.

Storey: On the Bicentennial.

Keys: Fourth of July 1976. I was in that job for three years, and I still *did not* like working in that Denver office. I worked out in the field a lot, both with the Upper Colorado and the Lower Colorado regions. *Liked* the people out there. *Liked* the West Slope of Colorado where we were doing work. *Hated* Denver. *Did not like* that office.

Applied to Be Assistant Regional Director in Billings

Bill Lloyd had been appointed to be the regional director in Billings and put out the advertisement for an assistant regional director. That was my job. I saw the advertisement, filled out the application, and as far as I was concerned, that was my job. I wanted to go back to Montana in the first place. I knew the region, I knew the river, I knew the people, I knew the projects. That was my job. Then he didn't select me, and I thought, "Well, son of a gun." But the decision was made when I did that that – I'm not sure that I looked past the assistant's job, but the decision was made to be a regional director then. I was miserable damn to live with for about three weeks after that.

I was over in Grand Junction for a meeting, and I was out running on a canal bank one night, about three weeks after that. The job ad had come out for this special secretary training program, to go back to D.C.. One of the lines in that thing said it would prepare you to be an assistant regional director, *and* it said that you would be placed in the first available assistant regional director spot. So when you applied for it, you're really applying for two things at one time. So I was out there and I said, "If I'm going to do it, that's the way to do it." So I went home and I applied for it. Cliff Barrett selected me. Had a panel of regional directors and Cliff, and I reported at first to Cliff.

Storey: That's when Mr. Barrett was still in Washington?

Keys: Well, he was the Assistant Commissioner for Planning and Operations, I think it was in this case.

I went to that job in Washington, and it was set up to be twelve to eighteen months long, and right at when there were ten months gone, there was at least two months left, the assistant director's job in this office here opened up.

I called Bill and asked him about the job. I told him the conditions that were in the assignment that I was in. He said, yeah, he knew those were in there, but I could apply for the job. So I got mad at him the second time. The first time was when he didn't select me for the other job. Then he made me apply for a job that I thought was mine. I mean, the first time I just thought it was mine. The second time, the paper said it was mine, but he made me apply for it, and he made me interview for the damn thing. But then he selected me. So whatever.

Bill Lloyd was a nice guy, and I really enjoyed working for him, but there were two times in my life when I thought he did me dirty. I'm not sure that he did, but I thought so at the time. But anyway, that's how I got it in my mind to be a regional director.

Bill Lloyd

I tell you, Bill Lloyd did me a bigger favor than any supervisor I ever had. What he did is, when I came into the region, he said, "Here's how I want to run the region. If somebody talks to you, they talk to me, and if you make a decision, you're making a decision for me." He said, "I won't turn something over unless it just has to be done," and he never did. When he was gone, and he traveled a lot, I was regional director. Just pure and simple. He let me have the freedom – I guess the new word for it is empowerment or whatever – but he let me have the freedom to be my own person.

When he left, I never missed a beat, just never missed a beat, because everybody knew me, knew what I was doing, and so forth. Now, in the long run, it probably wasn't the best thing for me to be the director here, because, hell, I've been in this region and been doing regional director work now for over fifteen years. That's bad. People know their way around me, they know what pushes my buttons, and so forth. So I probably should have moved between being assistant and being the director. Fact is, I know I should have. But Bill really did me the favor of preparing me for it by letting me do it. But he was really a nice man.

Storey: Who was the regional director when you were out in Billings?

Keys: Harold Aldrich.

Storey: What was he like?

Harold Aldrich

Keys: He was about 5'3", with a little-man complex. He was a good regional director, but he was strong. He was a very strong person. You didn't cross Harold. Don't get me wrong. I was a branch chief. I was the regional hydrologist, which was the branch chief for hydrology chief. I probably met with him every other month or so. I did not have a lot of interaction with him. But we were afraid of him. We were afraid of him. He didn't put up with crud. Ran a good program. Kept the region with money, represented us to all the water user organizations very well, was well respected by the other agencies. I would say he was a very good regional director, but he handled our region like the military. I don't even know whether he was military or not, but we were handled like a military organization. Like I said, in the four years that I worked there, I probably met in his office with him maybe a dozen times at the most.

Storey: He was regional director throughout that time you were there?

Bob McPhail

Keys: No, I'm sorry. Right at the end, when he retired, a fellow named Bob McPhail came in as regional director. I think he was an engineer. In fact, he was an engineer of some kind and was a political appointment. He was not career; came in from the outside.

Storey: Oh, really.

Keys: He had worked for Reclamation before down in Nevada, I think, on Saddle Mountain or one of those – Stampede, I guess it was. That's not right. One of them, anyway. But his was more of a political appointment. McPhail was a nice fellow, young fellow, progressive. He did a pretty good job. So McPhail was regional director when I left there.

I smile because he brought in an assistant in there. I'm trying to remember his name. I'm getting really terrible with names right now. He had this assistant that he brought in, Ron – what the hell was his last name? Ron, who was a disaster. I mean, he was just an accident looking for a place to happen, and it happened so many times it was pitiful. Funny stories. (laughter)

Storey: Tell me a story.

Keys: I'll think of his name before we get done. Ron. Before he was appointed, we all were over in Bismarck working on some Garrison stuff. We were staying at the Fleck House, and we went down to the Four Winds Restaurant in Bismarck to have supper. God, they were still drinking when several of us left. We went over there about eight o'clock, and they were still drinking when we left. About midnight, him and two or three of them go back to the hotel, and he's laying there about two o'clock in the morning, and he gets chest pains, and just gets scared to damn death. Go checks himself into the hospital and they keep him there for four days for beer chest pains.

He got appointed and he got married just as he was coming on, and it was his fifth or sixth marriage. He got married just before he came on *permanently*. They finally got his appointment done. He bought this house up on the rims in Billings. Well, there's no water up on the rims in Billings. He was having to buy water, have it trucked up there and put in a cistern, and there's no natural gas service up there. So he was having to buy oil and take it up there. Well, his solution to that whole thing, wintertime got there, so he shut off all the house but one room, and him and his wife were living in this room. Then everything froze up, and then it thawed. It ruined the house, put water all over everything, just ruined the damn house.

Then his wife was out of town, and then he went out with this schoolteacher, and they were going to go rafting on the river. They got out on the damn river, and he didn't know crud about rafting. His raft sunk, and him and this schoolteacher got hung up on an island. Yellowstone County Sheriff's Department had this new rescue boat, new pontoon boat with a big motor on it and everything. They had had some deal with the TV station that the first call they had, they were going to take the TV people out with them, so they could see this new boat in action. Sure enough, the damn TV people were there, and this new boat's whizzing around, they get Ron and his girlfriend off the island, and TV cameras were there.

His wife comes back and her friends said, "Hey, guess what we saw on television?" Wham. Number six divorce. (laughter)

Storey: My Lord.

Keys: What the hell is his name? Ron. I can't think of his last name. Don Glaser can tell you. Glaser was there with me at that time.

But anyway, they were some of the funny times.

Storey: Can you think back over your career at Reclamation, and at different times characterize for me the way socialization went within Reclamation?

Socialization Activities at Various Reclamation Offices

Keys: Yes, I can, because it's at one of its low points right now, all around Reclamation. You've got to remember that when I first came into Reclamation, it was in Utah, and I was a non-Mormon in a Mormon community. There were 107 people in the Provo office at that time, and there were 104 of them that belonged to the Mormon Church. There were three of us that didn't.

The socialization that we did, my family, was through our church. I was probably stronger in my church at that time almost than any other time in my life, because it just kind of forced us into it. My wife was Methodist and I was Presbyterian, and there were neither one in Provo, so we went to the Episcopal church, and most of our socialization was around that Episcopal church.

Three different times there, we tried to have Christmas parties, and Christmas parties were a miserable failure, because they'd come and they wanted to eat, but then, God, they didn't want to do any dancing or anything, and the young people, we were all trying to get stuff going, and it never did work out very well.

Storey: You mean a Reclamation Christmas party?

Keys: Yes. First off, the Mormon people are very tight with money, or they were in those days. This is thirty-one years ago. They didn't want to pay any money for a Christmas party. I mean, if they wanted a steak dinner, they'd go buy a damn steak and cook it. They didn't want to go out and pay to have a steak dinner somewhere with all the Reclamation people. But we forced it two or three times, and the parties were not good. People, they'd sit around and complain and look and talk and so forth. The women would be over there and the men would be over there, and our wives would just give us a fit for doing that. So they weren't very successful.

But *then* we moved to North Dakota, and the Reclamation family was very strong in North Dakota. They knew how to have parties, and we had a great time and developed great friendships in North Dakota. When we went to Billings, it was even better. Those were the years for us where we recognized a Reclamation family. We had dances, we had casino-type parties, picnics, and, doggone, the only reason you didn't go is because you were sick or out of town or something. A lot of people participated. I think back, and probably the friendships that we had in North Dakota and Montana are stronger than anywhere else in Reclamation. We did stuff together.

Went to Denver. They didn't do crud together down there. They had softball teams and tennis teams, and –

Storey: Golf, all that.

Keys: Golf league, yes, that kind of stuff. It was so big that this clique would have their deal and that clique would have their deal. If you weren't a member of a clique somewhere, boy, too bad. The hydrology people that I was with, we'd get together and do some things. We'd go to the dog races, or go to a Bears baseball game,¹⁶ or to the high school basketball tournament. But things with families and dinners and stuff, the little offices did it, but, boy, overall, didn't do very much. Now, you could probably get a different story from somebody that was over in the engineering side. I was always on the planning side, and then the Colorado River Water Quality Office. Maybe they did stuff, but, boy, we didn't know about it.

16. Beginning in 1948, the Denver Bears were a minor league baseball franchise in Denver, Colorado. Subsequently known as the Denver Zephyrs, the team moved to New Orleans after the 1992 season. The Colorado Rockies then moved into the Denver market. The Denver Bears played at Bears Stadium, known in later years as Mile High Stadium.

The year I was in D.C., they didn't do anything. They had a Christmas party. That was about it – drunken Christmas party.

Then came here. When I first came here, Reclamation was still Reclamation. Came here the first of June 1980, and we had dances and Christmas and a picnic, and they were very successful. Had a good time.

Starting in '88, when we started this move, at that time to centralize, and then with Dan's stuff to decentralize, morale was just pretty poor. We canceled our summer picnic this year, because we couldn't get anybody interested in going. We had a Christmas party last year. I think about twenty-some-odd people showed up. Can't get them to come out anymore. We push it, push it hard, but get very little participation.

Storey: Out of how many people in the office?

Keys: Two hundred fifty, 230. But in those days, my wife and I think back to the times that we had in Billings and Bismarck. Bismarck was a cold town. It was cold weather-wise, but it was a town that was mostly immigrants who came to America to farm and then moved into town, either moved and farmed out there, or retired into town. It was a very cold town, hard to get into. Took us two years to really feel like we were part of the town. As a result, we retreated into Reclamation. Most of us were the same way. It made us all close together.

Montana was just that way. Montana was a friendly place, in those days. I don't know how it is now. God, it was just like they were standing there with their arms open when we moved into town. People were friendly, Reclamation was a family kind of thing. My family—fact is, one of my daughters still lives in Montana, in Billings. But it was a great place to work in those days. I have friends who lived in the construction camps, and just the—

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE 2. JULY 24, 1995.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1. JULY 24, 1995.

Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Allan Storey with John W. Keys, on July 24, 1995.

You were talking about construction camps.

Keys: Construction camps at times got into – oh, there were always arguments that the construction engineer was having to settle and stuff, but they were very close together because they were there for a short time. Most of the time the people in the construction camps didn't get to know the local people very well. A lot of strong bonds formed among the construction people. You can still see that in some of the construction people. So those were the good old days of Reclamation, I guess.

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- Storey: What about moving from the South to the West? Did you find that a strain or welcome or what? You were from outside Birmingham, as I recall.
- Keys: Well, Birmingham's about 100 miles south. I was from the Muscle Shoals area of Alabama and my wife was from Atlanta. Met her when I was going to school at Georgia Tech.
- Storey: I'm surprised you didn't go to Auburn.

Went to Georgia Tech

- Keys: Well, I was accepted at Auburn, but then right at the last minute, I was accepted at Tech. In those days, Tech and Cal Tech and MIT were kind of in an arm wrestle. One year one was the best in the nation, the next year the other. Georgia Tech just had a – well, they had Bobby Dodd, for one thing, but it had an allure there that it was a good school, and I wanted to go to the best that I could.

My dad and I had an agreement. I had been working through high school, summers, and odd times, and stuff. The agreement was that he would pay my tuition, whether it was in-state or out-of-state, if I would handle the rest, and we were able to do that. My tuition the first year, I think it was like 700 bucks a year. The last year it was up to 1,000, \$333 a quarter. He kept his part of the deal and I did too. It was a good school. So I went to Georgia Tech.

But anyway, at the time I was finishing Tech, the South was in a turmoil, 1964. The Freedom Riders were coming in for voter registration. The way of life that I had come up through was not there anymore.

Father Refused to Let Him Take over the Farm

Agriculture was miserable. I was born and raised on a farm. My dad worked at TVA to keep the damn farm going. I never will forget, he asked me one time what I wanted to do. I told him I wanted to go to Auburn, study agriculture, and come back and take the farm. That's when we made this agreement. He said, "I'll help you go *anywhere* that you want to go to school, and you can do anything you want to *except* come back here and take this farm." He said, "I'll sell it out from under you before I let that happen," because agriculture was such a tough way to make a living in the fifties and early sixties. It was a really bad time for agriculture.

Integration of Georgia Tech

But all of this was going on in the South in those days. Right across Piedmont Avenue from school was Lester Maddox with his axe handles, and yet at Georgia Tech, President Harrison called us together, when I was a sophomore, fall of '61, and he says, "We're going to integrate this school," and

he said, "We're going to do it with you or without you." He says, "If you've got a problem with that, you'd better just leave now, because it'll be without you. If you don't leave and you cause a problem, we'll help you leave." We never had a demonstration, we never had an incident on the Georgia Tech campus when they integrated in '61. It was to President Harrison's credit that that happened. He called an all-student meeting. There were 6,400 kids at Tech when I went there. If you were in the infirmary or your mother died, you could be excused from that meeting. He had all of us there and told us that. I'm telling you, it never had a hitch, that any of us knew about. I mean, maybe there were some people that tried to cause problems and they expelled them or something. But as far as I know, there was never problem when they integrated Tech, to his credit.

Graduated from Georgia Tech in 1964

But anyway, all that was going on. When I finished at Tech in '64, *everybody* was trying to hire engineers. I'm telling you, they were hiring engineers with the telephone company, the railroads, the highway departments, *everybody* was hiring engineers, and we were in high demand. When I finished at Tech, I had thirteen job offers. My wife and I sat down and said, "Where do we want to end up?" She was Deep South family, too. We were both just sitting at the supper table and said, "We won't take a job east of the Mississippi River."

Had Thirteen Job Offers When He Graduated

I had an offer from Slumberger Oil Well Survey and Company. I had a job offer from the California Highway Department, and the Bureau, and the Corps of Engineers, that were west of the Mississippi River. Russ Sparks was the personnel officer in Billings, Montana. He came down and conducted the interviews at Tech. He said, "If you come to work with Reclamation, we'll put you on construction on Yellowtail Dam in southern Montana." I filled out the application and sent it in.

Decided to Accept a Job Offer with Reclamation at Provo

I guess what they did is they took them all back and then circulated them around Reclamation. I attached a résumé and all that kind of stuff to it. Got a phone call from Provo in Utah offering me a job. The money was better with Slumberger, but we were going to be on the road a lot and move every two years with them. One of my summer jobs I had been on the road a lot with the FAA, and I didn't really want to be on the road that much. So we decided to come with Reclamation. I had gotten really interested in water resources my senior year in college anyway, and they were water resources people. I decided to do it.

God, when we finished, I'd had it with school—my wife and I, we had one daughter. My '57 Ford *died* the week before graduation. Traded it in for a

Chevrolet, and me and GMAC owned a Chevrolet, and we went West in it. We never had a problem. We moved into that tight Mormon community. But the little neighborhood that we lived in was mostly professors and teachers at BYU, Brigham Young University, and they had seen the other side, and they were very open, tolerant. They didn't bother us, let's put it that way.

I had other friends that came in, got in little communities, hated it. I mean *just* hated it. My friend – I think Roger Weidleman still works in Loveland, came in from Michigan, came out of school at Central Michigan. Hated it. We both checked in the same day, July 1, 1964. He left in September. They moved to California, worked in the Sacramento office.

Angers Dad by Not Applying for Job at TVA

But we stayed there for four years and never had a problem. I can never remember a time regretting the move to the West. Fact is, made my dad really mad. In 1975, we had moved to Denver, and my dad called up and he said – and he knew what I did, and what level I was. He called up and he said, "TVA's hiring."

I said, "Well, good."

He said, "No, you don't understand, they're hiring and they need somebody – chief hydrology."

I said, "Well, that's fine, but I am chief hydrology."

He said, "No, you don't understand. It's your chance to come back home."

I said, "Well, I hate to tell you this."

He says, "Don't you get homesick?"

I said, "I hate to tell you this, but the only place I was ever homesick for in my life was Billings, Montana."

He *really* got mad, got really, really upset with me, wouldn't talk to me for a while. Not long, but he really got upset. That's the way we felt. We have *never*, my wife and I have *never* regretted coming West and where we've lived.

An interesting thing. Something that we talked about in our house is, somebody ask you where you're from, ask Brit Storey, where you're from. You think back to where you were born and raised and so forth. Me, too. I was born and raised in Alabama, so I'm *from* Alabama; I'm from the South. My wife is *from* Atlanta. What you do when you've got three kids, one was born in Atlanta, and only lived there for four months before she was moved to Utah, the other two were born in Utah, and they spent three years in North Dakota, four years in Billings, Montana, four years in Denver, Colorado, and then the

last part of their upbringing in Boise, Idaho? What do they say when you ask them where they're from?

Storey: Tough, isn't it?

Keys: I asked them, and every time we ever ask them where they're from, it's where we lived at that time. An interesting perspective. I've thought about quite often. But my kids have done well.

Storey: Well, now, let's see, you became regional director in '87?

Keys: '86. September 16, 1986.

Storey: How can you remember these dates? Important milestones.

Keys: Well, I guess so.

Key Issues for the Region in Boise

Storey: What were the key issues for the region then as opposed to now?

Reclamation Reform Act

Keys: There were several. Reclamation Reform Act was one that we were really struggling with, and the extension of the Columbia Basin Project, the second half of it, which is still not done, and trying to keep funding together for a program.

Extension of the Columbia Basin Project

When Bill and I first came here, we looked at our current year's budget and our next year's budget, and every time we would look at the out years, the budget would come along flat for two years, and then it would drop off of the table. We would say, "My Lord, what are we going to do two years from now?" Then we'd start hustling, and the next year we'd be there, and the next year was okay, but it just dropped off the table after that. We said, "Isn't there something that we can do so that we've got some stability here?"

Stabilizing the Region's Work Load

We reorganized planning so that we had state liaisons, and we had them out hustling business. When I took over in '86, we were just getting that going, where we were actually hustling business on a cost-share basis with states. Yakima Project, the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project, was part of it. It was a way that we could get some stability, so we were working on that.

Oroville-Tonasket Project

The Oroville-Tonasket Project was a pain in the rear. We were working on that. We were just finishing the big screens and ladders in the Yakima Basin. The salmon problem was *haunting* us. I mean, it was out there, but nothing had been listed and we just knew something was coming. We were working on these screens and ladders in the Yakima Basin, trying to help out up there.

Salmon Issue

So big issues, Reclamation Reform Act just driving us nuts. We were finishing the screens and ladders in the Yakima Basin. The Oroville-Tonasket we were trying to get finished up. That son of a gun's still not finished. Well, it's finished, but the lawsuits are not over. Yakima, we were trying to get it going, and we just got that one authorized last year and got it funded this year. Those were the big issues then.

Storey: Tell me more about the Oroville-Tonasket.

Keys: Back in the mid-seventies, the government worked with the Oroville-Tonasket Irrigation District, which was an old dilapidated gravity system that took water out of the Similkameen River and the Okanogan River for irrigation. They came to Reclamation and got us to do a study to show how they could modernize the system, go to sprinklers, *firm* up their water supply, put some conservation measures in with it, and have a good system. Went to Congress and got the thing authorized at about \$32 million.

As they got started building it, the technologies that were put in there to take care of the sediment, the Similkameen River and the Okanogan – the Okanogan, the Similkameen, the Osoyoos River, they're all just full of sediment during the runoff. The first idea was to put rainy wells under the river. That's a pipe that you put under the gravels. It's got holes in it that you collect water and then pump it out. But they're *very* expensive, and when you've got a degrading situation, in other words, where the river's actually digging down, it doesn't work very well.

So Denver came up with this idea of sediment separators. They're like a cream separator. It has a centrifugal force in there to force the sediment out, collect it and so forth. We built it, didn't work. We went back to them and said, "Look, it's not working. What can we do?"

They said, "Well, we'll put two in series." Didn't work.

Well, we had to get the project reauthorized, because we were past appropriations ceiling. We went from thirty-two to up to sixty-some-odd million dollars.

Put this second level in, still didn't work. We were past our ceiling again. Had to go back the *third* time and got the ceiling raised to \$88 million. Then we put in settling ponds. We pumped the water out of the river, let it settle, then pump it out to the irrigators, and they're *still* not happy. You've got to realize that we've spent \$88 million on a 10,000-acre project. It don't take a rocket scientist to figure out that that's \$9,000 an acre. Ain't a piece of land in that *valley* worth \$9,000. And they're still not happy. They've got us in court. They're saying that the system's too expensive for them to operate, and yet their expenses are not much higher than other people down the valley that are sprinkling. They've got a good system, it works, but they're not happy. I have struggled with that ever since I came into this region fifteen years ago.

Storey: Is the reason they're upset is because they're having to repay the \$88 million?

Keys: Well, their repayment capacity is probably ten cents on the dollars, so I think they only have to repay seven-point-some-odd million dollars. They say that the O&M on it's too high, costs too much to operate and maintain it. Like I said, we don't agree with that. They want us to forgive the debt and then set up some kind of *annual* funding from Congress to keep the thing going.

I refuse to do that, just refuse to do it. The previous congressman didn't agree with them. I don't think the current congressman agrees with them. I don't know. I don't know how it's going to end up. But it's an embarrassment. It's an embarrassment to Reclamation for that to happen. Other regions have got their own OTs. If you talk to others, they've got them, if you get them to admit it. Just suck up money, and you can't ever please them, and so forth. But, boy, we sure got ours.

Reclamation Reform Act

Storey: Tell me about RRA in this region. I'm told, I think, that RRA is a problem only in two regions, really, a serious problem, and that's Mid-Pacific and Pacific Northwest. You mentioned that it was a problem back then. What were the issues back then?

Keys: Are you talking about RRA or are you talking about waterspreading?

Storey: No, I'm talking about RRA, the acreage limitation issues.

Keys: Okay. Two things about RRA. In 1982 – no, that's not right. It started in 1978. There was a lot of movements and political rumblings to enforce the 160-acre limitation that had been part of Reclamation law ever since 1902. Reclamation, over the years, recognized that it took more than 160 acres, or 320 acres for a family, to make a living on, as you got into the modern era. Most of the time it just kind of turned its head and didn't enforce it.

There was a lot of movement among political people when they were looking at subsidies and so forth that said it has to be modernized *and* enforced.

So the big problem was in the Central Valley. There are thirty – Tenneco owns – some of the rumors say they own a million acres down there. I don't know whether that's right or not, but whatever it is, 30,000, 70,000, 300,000 acres, it's more than 160 acres.

So the *big* problems are in California. Congress wrote a bill to take care of the California issue, and the rest of us suffer with it. That's my opinion of Reclamation Reform Act.

Storey: That's the Reform Act of 1982.

Keys: That's correct. That's correct. Now, in this region, we have a few pockets that are problems. Columbia Basin is the big one, and they're scattered around. There's one or two here. Everywhere there's one or two. So Columbia Basin was our big problem. They then did a bunch of compromising to get the law passed, and it made it miserable. God, the reporting forms and the definitions of leases and renters and operators and how you find somebody, or there's no provisions for finding anybody. You have to charge them full cost, and full cost on some projects is nothing. Full cost on others is *humongous*. I mean, just out of sight. So there was a lot of things done, a lot of things not done.

My predecessor's approach to it was, "I'm not going to pay any attention to that. Won't stay around. We're not regulatory people. I'm not going to pay any attention to that."

When I was appointed to the job, Duvall said, "Your predecessor didn't enforce Reclamation Reform Act. If you're appointed, will you administer the Reclamation Reform Act?"

I said, "I'll do whatever you ask me to do on Reclamation Reform Act."

That meant that I had to enforce it, and we did. As I told you before, it turned our constituency against us. We had people that just thumbed their nose at us, and we sent them a bill for a couple of hundred-thousand dollars. We had little old ladies in rest homes that didn't know, couldn't. They're leasees, leasors, whatever. Didn't inform them, and they ended up with big bills. The law was just miserable. It was not *written* to cover places like Idaho and Oregon and Washington. It wasn't written that way.

There's a few *bandits* up in the Columbia Basin which are causing problems. Our region is the only region that's ever prosecuted a Reclamation Reform case. There's only been one, and we did it. The guy's name was Mike Brown. He just flaunted it and we prosecuted him.

Storey: And we won?

Keys: Yes, we won. We didn't get him in jail, but he was put on probation for so many years. He's still a bandit. I dislike the law.

Dan was working for George Miller, and George Miller, by God, we were going to enforce it if he had a *breath* left in his body, and Dan was with him. We kept asking for changes to be made that needed to be made, and never got any relief at all. Now Dan came in, he's trying to change some things, because of the lawsuit, that NRDC lawsuit, and he's catching hell about it. Senator Dirk Kempthorne from Idaho just scathed him here in the papers, and is probably going to do something in Congress with the thing this time. So I don't like RRA.

Storey: What are the problems specifically with it? You mentioned things like definitions of leasees and operators and so on.

Keys: Forget about all the politics and all of the real technical stuff, what's a lease and what's a rental agreement, what's an operator shift, and all this stuff. The problem is that anybody that farms, irrigates, over forty acres, has to file a pile of forms about that thick.

Storey: Maybe a quarter of an inch thick.

Keys: Every year. That's right. Every year. The districts are responsible for – they have to hire people, all of them have had to hire attorneys to fill the forms out. The forms are very difficult. I tried to fill something out myself one time. Very difficult. It put us in a role like the IRS. Some of our people would give them advice, and it would turn out to be wrong, then we'd fine them. Just like you go to the IRS and get help on your forms, and if it's wrong, tough.

Storey: It's too bad.

Keys: Too bad, and that's what happened to us. It was a very unpopular law. I think the districts had to spend tons of money to do it. I've still got people that I have to pay to administer the thing, that as far as I'm concerned, it's wasting money. It's a *waste* of taxpayers' money to administer the Reclamation Reform Act. Those forms and the constant harangue from us to get them done was the most onerous part to the irrigators. That's what really caused the problems. And it put us into their business. We were never in their business before. It put us in their business and we didn't belong there.

Waterspreading

Waterspreading, same kind of issue. They'll tell you that me and Roger are the only two that have got that problem also. They've all got it, they just don't admit it, because if you admit it, you've got to do something about it with waterspreading.

Storey: Was waterspreading an issue back when you became regional director?

Keys: Yes, but we ignored it.

Storey: Tell me about it. And why did we ignore it?

Keys: Because we didn't know how to take care of it and we had too many other things to do. Waterspreading, again, is a technical issue. I can simplify it for myself, but some of Dan's minions back there don't agree.

There're two kinds of waterspreading. The first one is when a project's authorized, there's a maximum number of acres that can be irrigated that's authorized. One form of waterspreading is that they're putting that water on more than that number of acres, which if the project's authorized for 10,000 acres, they're irrigating 12,000 acres. They're waterspreading to 2,000 acres. That's the one kind.

The other is when a project's authorized, it has a distinct boundary, irrigation district boundary. In some cases, they have taken water off of project lands and moved it outside of those boundaries. That's waterspreading. In simple terms, that's what it is.

We've got it in this region. *At times* Reclamation encouraged it. That's before I came here, but in the fifties and sixties when agriculture was struggling so bad, we had irrigation districts going bankrupt yearly. They would come to us and our people would say, "How can we get out from under this?" The answer is we would say, "Look. Conserve some water and bring in more acres, because it expands your assessment base, it gives your community more income, has more farmers to charge accounts to and that sort of thing." Our people did that. They encouraged it at times.

Well, we had a *zealot* among us named Jim Cook, who forced the issue in 1983. He started thrashing around, saying we were illegally letting people use water outside of boundaries and for more acres, and he pulled out data to show it. He got the attention of the commissioner's ear at that time. I think it started under Broadbent. It was just something that if you admitted you had a problem, you had to do something about it, and none of us admitted it. Cook was haranguing around and so forth. We all had to do reports, and, yeah, we had it. I don't know how the other three regions kept from showing it up, but it showed up.

END OF TAPE 2, SIDE 1. JULY 24, 1995.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2. JULY 24, 1995.

Storey: You were saying you didn't know how the three regions didn't show.

Keys: I don't know how they kept from identifying waterspread lands because it goes on everywhere. Farmers fallow lands one year, and they bring another piece in, and basically it's all caused because we didn't keep up with the paperwork, didn't keep the contracts up to date and that sort of thing. I think if we had done that from day one, we'd have been all right, but we didn't. We've got a big problem. Then of course, Dan comes in and all of his environmental

organizations that support him want something done about waterspreading, and I'm under the gun right now, and I'm going to do something about waterspreading.

Storey: But the regs that were published were for all of Reclamation, weren't they?

Keys: No.

Storey: They were for this region?

Keys: No.

Storey: No?

Keys: No. Two years ago, this region, we knew we had a problem and we said, "We'll put together a policy to take care of it." My people went to the irrigation districts and the water users and developed a policy to take care of waterspreading. Basically it allowed mitigation so that if somebody was using some water, rather than just dry up that land, they could provide back to us the water that it was keeping out of the river, and we were going to take care of it.

The environmental community, with Dan coming in, said that was atrocious. We didn't involve them and they didn't like the process we came up with. We said, "Fine, we'll do it over."

So we went to the water users and said, "Give us three people from the water user community." We went to the environmental community and said, "Give us three people." The reason three is Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. We went to the states and said, "We want to represent each state government. We don't care what department it comes from, maybe it probably should be water resources, but you decide." So we got three from the states, three from the tribes, three from the environmental organizations, three from the irrigators, and said, "Okay, task force. Develop a process to take care of waterspreading." And they did. We sent it forward and said, "This is the process that we want to use in this region."

Dan and his people didn't like it. They said they wouldn't let us go ahead with it. They said, "The problem is bigger than just the Pacific Northwest region. We want a policy for all westwide Reclamation. This happened last summer. They hired Zell Steever and said, "Develop a policy from their start. Develop one for all the West."

Well, they floundered around and floundered around, and finally realized that you can't develop a policy for the whole West because it's a case-by-case thing. There are no two cases alike. They had put all of their expectations in the environmental community that they were going to have a policy for handling waterspreading all over the West. Well, Steever was really struggling. We had a meeting in Kearney, Nebraska, this spring, and they were

struggling. Steever was saying, "We've got to do this," and "We've got to do that," and so forth.

I don't know, maybe you heard this story, but I had enough. I said, "Dan, you're *never* going to come up with a policy to handle the whole thing. These guys are trying to write rules and regs from Washington without knowing crap about what's going on in the regions. Give it back to us regional directors and *we'll* solve the problem. I'll develop a policy for my region that'll solve it and get it off your back. If it's not good enough and they yell, then you yell at me and I'll change it. But I'll take care of the problem." And he agreed, and he gave the problem back to us regional directors. This happened this spring, in March.

Well, Steever is still screwing around out there trying to come up with some guidelines and this, and that, and the other. He's just wasting time. We didn't have time to get anything done for this year, but I've got my people pulling out what we did last year, and we'll come out with a little policy, and we're going to work through it in this region.

The environmental people keep yelling about the Class Six land issue. Class Six land is that when the original land classifications were put together for projects, said those lands were not irrigable. Well, hell, they were done when we were doing flood irrigation.

Storey: Out of the Fact Finders Act.

Keys: That's right. And now, hell, we've got sprinklers that go over hill and dale and over gullies and so forth, and all of that Class Six land's irrigable.

Storey: Or you can level some of it, too.

Keys: That's right. You can do stuff you never could do before.

Well, the environmental people are saying, "Well, you've got to solve the Class Six –"

I said, "Class Six is not an issue. It's number of acres and it's project boundaries, and that's what we're going to concentrate on."

Some of them are not going to be happy. Water Watch of Oregon's already complaining to Dan. But we're going to handle it. We'll handle it.

Storey: Why should they be upset about this?

Keys: They say that it's keeping water from the streams. See, the issue with waterspreading is they're not taking more water out of the stream to irrigate with. What they're doing when they spread it over more acres is they're

conserving, and then the return flow that would have come off of the old acreage doesn't get into the stream.

So what we're saying is, "That's right, it doesn't. So let's mitigate it. Irrigation district, you put up how much water was getting to the stream that's not getting there now, and we'll leave your acreage alone, as long as it's inside the boundary and within the number of acres."

Storey: And how do you figure out how much water was getting into the stream?

Keys: Oh, there's models to do that. It's complicated, but its doable.

Storey: Well, I'd like to continue, but our time is up for today, and we have another two hours scheduled for tomorrow morning, I think, too.

Keys: Sounds good.

Storey: I'd like to ask you again whether or not you're willing for the information contained in these tapes and the resulting transcript to be used by researchers inside and outside Reclamation.

Keys: Yes, you can.

Storey: Thank you.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 2. JULY 24, 1995. END OF INTERVIEW.
BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1. JULY 25, 1995.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing John W. Keys III, the regional director of the Bureau of Reclamation in the Pacific Northwest Region, in the Pacific Northwest regional offices in Boise, Idaho, on July 25, 1995, at about one o'clock in the afternoon. This is tape one.

Well, I think we had pretty much covered acreage limitation and waterspreading. I'm interested, though, in how the reorganization has affected the region, the way you do business, the way you relate to other offices and so on.

Effects of Dan Beard's Reorganization on the Region

Keys: When Dan Beard came on and actually started looking at Reclamation and how we did business, we were ahead of him. We had a meeting in the region that spring, like in April, when Dan was still in his confirmation process, and we said, "In this region, how are we doing business, and how are we going to do business in the future?" We looked at our traditional organization, which was the old 200, 400, 700 organization type – 200 being design construction, 400 being O&M, and 700 being planning with all of the others.

"Big Problem Era,' like Salmon, like Waterspreading, like RRA . . ."

What it turned out is we had gotten into the "big problem era," like salmon, like waterspreading, like RRA, and we found that we had assignments for a specific problem all over the place. We found, when we started looking at salmon, that we had five different people or organizations *inside* this region, that had some responsibility for salmon. No central place, no person, just almost impossible to have accountability.

So our regionwide staff meeting, which is what we used to call it, where the division heads out of the region and the project managers would come in, we got together and said, "How should we reorganize this region to handle those big problems?" Put together a group of people from the region. They came up with a report, and that report said, "We need to reorganize this region along a team or group concept, so that when a big problem comes in, like the salmon, we have *one* focus, and they can pull people in to help them. We can have one place to focus the problem on." We had our report out. Our report came out almost exactly the same time as Dan Beard's CPORT¹⁷ report came out.

CPORT Report of Dan Beard

Now we had input into the CPORT, and a lot of our stuff went in there, but then when Dan came back and said, "Regions, how are you going to implement CPORT?" We had our report done, and we turned it in. Then Dan came out with his blueprint, and our stuff fit very well.

"Blueprint for Reform" of Dan Beard

Now, we had to take it several steps further with Dan's thing. First thing we had to do is flatten it out some more, with less levels of supervision, *and* we had to downsize big-time. I started out a year and a half-, two years ago, with almost 1,300 people in this region. We're down now close to 1,100. A year and a half from right now, we'll be under 1,000. So we will have gone down about 25 percent in this region. So we had to make some changes in that. But in this region, we like to think that we were ahead of that curve.

Reorganization under Dan Beard

I think if you'll look around the regions right now, we're still ahead of it. This region and Great Plains were the first ones that said, "We're going to do a big reorganization to a team concept way of doing things." Roger Patterson was the first one to really jump on the area office concept. Roger right now has a better working area office set-up than any of the rest of us. Our team concept works better than the rest of them. Neil's getting there. Charlie Calhoun, Upper Colorado Region and Lower Colorado were behind the curve, because

17. The Commissioner's Program and Organization Review Team (CPORT), 1993.

their regional directors were retiring, and they didn't do anything when this all started. They're just going to see what happened. "Well, we'll see whether it works or not, then we'll decide what to do." Well, Dan came in and just kind of pointed the finger and said, "Hey, get on the bandwagon." So Charlie did and is doing really well. Larry Hancock, Lower Colorado, I think, is still kind of lagging back. I don't know what's going to happen to him now, but they're still kind of behind the curve down there. But we like to think we were ahead of curve in the reorganization.

How is it working? Pretty good. When we got off into it, we recognized that it was just humongous change for all of our people, so we hired trainers to come in. We trained a trainer kind of thing, and then we put on a special course for every employee in the region. Didn't make them go, but out of the 1,300 people at that time, we had about 1,000 went to it, to deal with change. Just, hey, we're going to live with change, and here's some things that we can do to make ourselves more acceptable to it, to deal with it.

Some people didn't do that. I had several people come to me and say, "God, I can't live with this." And I suggested that they look somewhere else, then. We had a lot of people take advantage of the buyout because of that. Good friends. I lost some of the best friends I ever had out of that deal. Lost – I mean they're not working here anymore, because they didn't feel that they could live with the kind of change that we were trying to deal with.

So, still is it working? We take two steps forward and one step backwards kind of thing. It's doing pretty well right now. Still got a ways to go. The hardest thing we're trying to deal with is, what do we *don't* do in the future that we've been doing in the past. The new stuff we can pick up pretty easily. The other endangered species that are coming along, the tribal work that we're picking up, that's easy to handle. It's trying to decide what you're doing now that you shouldn't be doing anymore, or that you should be doing different, or that you should be having somebody else do. That's the hardest part for us to do, and we're still struggling with that. Area office concept side, in most cases is doing very well.

Steve Clark, Jim Cole, and Jerry Gregg

Steve Clark's the power manager. *Outstanding* manager. Just can't say enough good about him. He handles that Grand Coulee and Hungry Horse office just like a charm. Jim Cole is the Upper Columbia area manager. There is no better manager than Jim Cole. Jim and Steve are what Reclamation's about. Jerry Gregg is a good, *young* manager, has only been a project manager three or four years before this all came along, was part of the teams, putting stuff together. A real comer, and doing really well.

The fourth one, the Lower Columbia, I'm really struggling with it, because I put a person in there that had never been a project manager or superintendent

before, and he don't know how to do it. We're really struggling with it. So overall, it's doing well, trying to take care of some problems.

So in a nutshell, that's reorganization. This is all gone on over the past two and a half years.

Storey: Tell me more about what we're not doing, or trying not to do.

Dan Beard Doesn't Support Recreation Activities

Keys: Trying not to do. I'll focus a little bit on the operation and maintenance side. Dan says we aren't to do much recreation, so we're not doing much recreation. We're trying to find concessionaires and other agencies outside to do it. We're trying to minimize the work that we do for irrigation districts, like review of operation and maintenance, doing pesticides or transformer testings. In other words, the day-to-day stuff, we're trying to just get out of and let the districts handle it.

Region Not Doing Work Outside Reclamation as Formerly Was Done

On the design and construction side, we are *not* doing outside work like we used to. This region is not hustling work from EPA on hazardous materials. We do a little bit of outside work for other Interior agencies, when it's on dams or stuff that we know about, but we're not out there hustling work like Denver's doing. There's a couple of other regions that are hustling work outside. I don't believe in it. I believe in filling valleys, and not long valleys, in our work schedules, and that the work that we're doing for Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs fills in some valleys. If you ask me how long my valleys are, I'd say they're six months to nine months. If you look at some of the valleys that Denver's working with, they're probably two years long. I don't agree with a two-year long valley, in work efforts and so forth. So those are some of the things that we're trying *not* to do.

We are getting more into the facilitation mode between water users and states. Like in Oregon, we are into a number of basins there – John Day, Deschutes, Wallowa, Grand Ronde, Illinois, Rogue – run all those basins in a facilitation mode, *trying* to promote water conservation, trying to promote instream flows for fish, and at the same time say, "States need to work with the irrigators to make this water available. Environmental organizations, don't just throw sand in the gears, get in there and help out," and it's working in some cases. Some cases it's still dragging, but it is working in some cases.

Storey: And then all that's complicated with the Native Americans.

Working with Native Americans

Keys: Absolutely. The system operation review that's under way on the Columbia River is almost done. When we started that thing about six years ago, we went to the tribes and said, "Need input. Need your help. Need you to participate." Got nothing. Got down to the last two years from the end of it, the tribe showed up and said, "That's not right. Why didn't you have us in there?"

System Operation Review of the Columbia River

We said, "Well, we tried." Wasn't good enough. They wanted money then to come in and participate right at the end. We made some money available between us and the Corps and Bonneville. They said, "It's not enough."

We're still trying to deal with that. I just this summer met with all fourteen tribes from the basin. We took a lot of flak because they didn't agree with what we came up with. Still trying to figure out what to do. They want us to put it on hold. Can't do it. So, big problem.

We have worked very well with tribes on our *own* issues. This system operation review is a joint study between the Corps and Bonneville and us, and it's pretty hard to say you're in control of something when you're working with other agencies that close. On our own level, we've done pretty well with the tribes, like we work with the Shoshone-Bannock tribe on American Falls and the lands below. We work well with the Colville and Spokane tribes around FDR.

Revision of the Tri-Party Agreement for Grand Coulee

Fact is, one of the first things I did – I forgot it yesterday when we were talking – when I came in as regional director, there was an old tri-party agreement between the Park Service, BIA, and the Bureau, on recreation operations of FDR Reservoir behind Grand Coulee. The tribes raised the issue and said, "It should not be a tri-party agreement, it should be five; those three parties, plus the Colvilles, plus the Spokanes."

I was the Bureau representative in that negotiation, and we exceeded all of our expectations with the agreement that we got. We exceeded our expectations, I think the tribes exceeded their expectations. Ended up with some really good friends on the Colville.

Storey: How smoothly is it running, though?

Keys: Oh, okay. Every once in a while there's a little clinker that shows up, but overall it's not doing too bad.

Storey: Good.

Keys: What we did is we let the Colvilles be in charge of recreation on their lands, Spokanes in charge of recreation on their lands, and then the Park Service kept

responsibility for ours. We also went into some agreements on handling cultural resources. Overall, it's doing pretty good. We had the Colville Tribe do some shoreline debris removal and shoreline protection work for us under a contract. We agreed in that process to open up our contracting to tribes, and 638 contracting came along about that time, worked pretty well. A lot of good came out of that.

Storey: 638 is minority?

Keys: Yes. So the tribal issues are hard to deal with, but we've been fairly successful.

Storey: Do we have any difficulty dealing with – they like to say nation-to-nation status.

Keys: Government-to-government.

Storey: Government-to-government.

Keys: Yeah, we do. There are times – I try to get it down to the area manager level with the relationships. There are times when that won't work. When it's time to go see the Tribal Council, I'll do. They would rather have the commissioner there, or even the secretary, but I'll do. There are lots of times when they won't even *talk* to our area manager. Some of our staff people they won't talk to. Staff has to talk to staff, not the Tribal Council. It makes it kind of difficult sometimes.

I was asked in a meeting over here just a couple of weeks ago, one of the Tribal Council people from the Shoshone-Bannock asked me who I represented. I tried to be very diplomatic and say that I represented the people in this part of the country and so forth. What he wanted me to say is I represented the government. He finally asked me, didn't I represent the government. I told him I was *one* of the representatives of the government. It's hard sometimes.

Storey: Where do we deal with the Shoshone-Bannock?

Keys: Their reservation's at Fort Hall here in eastern Idaho, and our whole Minidoka Project is around the Fort Hall Reservation. Just had a big water rights settlement through the Snake River adjudication with them. We've got some cultural resources on some Bureau land down below American Falls Reservoir that we've been working with. So the Shoshone-Bannock are pretty good people. We've had good luck with them.

Storey: We also have Kootenai, I guess.

Keys: We don't have much with the Kootenai. The Salishan-Kootenai Reservation at Flathead, we've got a little bit at Hungry Horse, and then we had some people

up advising on the Flathead Reservation. So we don't do very much with the Kootenai.

In this basin, we have the Shoshone-Bannock, we have the Shoshone-Paiute at Duck Valley, which is on the Owyhee River, we have the Burns Paiute on the Owyhee River in Oregon. Then we have the Nez Perce, which is on the Snake River. We don't have a close connection with them, but the Snake River runs through there, so we have to work with them.

In Washington, we have the Colville, Spokanes, the Yakimas. We've done a little bit of work for the Skokomish. The Lummi are wanting us to do some stuff. In Oregon, we have the Warm Springs – Warm Springs, mainly – and the Umatilla, the confederated tribes of the Umatilla Reservation. That's three tribes, Umatilla, Cayuse, and Walla Walla. So we have a number of tribes to work with.

The Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission represents four of the Stevens Treaty tribes. We work with them very closely. They've got an excellent executive director named Ted Strong, who's a Native American. We work with them a lot.

Storey: Do we have a group or a person who specializes in Native American issues?

Keys: We do. Fact is, we've got several different levels. Joe Miller used to be the level in Washington for the Bureau.

Storey: Yes, and he's retiring or has retired.

Keys: Has retired. There's a lot of uproar about who's going to take his place. In the region –

Storey: I had heard that Larry Hancock was assigned to that.

Keys: Yeah. That's another story sometime. But at the region, John Dooley is moving in to be our Native American coordinator for the whole region. Then we've got two different ones at the area office level, Jim Brooks over here, at the Snake River office, and B. J. Howerton in Yakima handles it for the Upper Columbia. We don't have one down below, because it's a pretty small area.

Storey: But it gets complicated.

Keys: It's extremely complicated.

Storey: And I know your archaeologists are working on the Native American Graves Protection Act stuff.

Keys: They really are.

Participatory Democracy and Building Consensus

Storey: One of the things that's come up, it was described to me as participatory democracy, which is the system within which we function nowadays, where we have to go out and get input, and do environmental statements, and take review comments, and so on and so on, and then ultimately, if we don't please them, we're liable to be sued.

Keys: That's right.

Storey: And the reality of the situation is that if you take any issue, say recreation as an example, we have the rafters who want water flows in the rivers, we have the flatwater recreationists, we have the fly fishermen, we have the trollers, and it goes on and on. We can't get a majority for any given position. How can we manage as an agency in a situation like that?

Keys: It's getting harder and harder. But what you just described is what we go through in *every* one of our area offices. It was easy in the old days. We had one constituency to please, and it was the irrigators. I mean, that was the gospel. When Dan came in – and we were doing a lot of it before, but when Dan came in, he said, "We're not going to abandon them, but they're not our only constituent. They're *one* of our constituents, and you will treat them all equally." We try to do that.

Let me tell you about the approach that the Minidoka office uses on the Snake River in the Jackson Hole area, and this is one of the approaches that seems to work. Doesn't make them all happy, but they feel like they're part of the process. May 20th every year, whatever that Thursday is around May 20th, they go up to Jackson, and by that time they have the forecast that we use to operate for the summer, and they know how much water is going to come out of Jackson Lake and the Upper Snake River drainage into Idaho. So they know how much water they're going to have to release out of Jackson Lake.

So they go to Jackson, and in a *public* meeting, they put a blank paper up there with the axes of the hydrograph, in other words, flow on the vertical axis and time on the bottom. That time line is the summer. They say, "Okay, we've got X acre feet of water that we have to move down from Jackson into Idaho for the water rights. How do you want to do it?" The recreators are there, the fishermen, the floaters, the flatwater people from Jackson Lake, the fishery biologist from the state, the Chamber of Commerce people, the outfitters, all of them are there.

In that public forum, we shape how we move that water. In other words, do we want to just bring it up to a certain level and hold it level all summer? No, rafters don't like that and the fishermen don't like that. Do we peak it in June? In others words, do we just peak it and let it tail out to a real low flow at the end of the summer? Or do we peak it in July, or do we wait and peak it in August, or do we go up and down every week? How do we do it?

They physically plan the release of that block of water in front of the public. The benefit is they feel like they have input. They might not agree with the way it comes out and, yes, you should ask me how you decide how to do it.

Storey: Yes, please.

Keys: Well, it's by consensus that, hey, we can have it good here as a floater and it's going to tail out, or as a fisherman, I can have it good out here with low flows, and then I'm going to suffer a little bit in the early part. By consensus, we develop that thing in front of the public there. That's one way to do it. That works very well for that one.

Jerry tries to do the same thing over here on the operation of some of the flows through Boise. Now, it gets complicated at times when you're in a real low-flow year or real high-flow year. High-flow years, you have to make flood releases and that kind of butches it up a little bit. Low-flow years, you're having to conserve every drop, and you may not be able to release as much as you thought. But that's one way to do it.

That's caught on. Minidoka does it up there. Jerry does it here in the Boise Basin. Don't have to worry about it in the Columbia Basin Project, because they just pump what they need out of the Columbia River. Yakima is quite different, because there's never enough water there. They just keep it full all the time, as full as they can. But that's one way we do it. It seems to work pretty well.

But, the key to the whole thing is we have to involve a lot of different publics now in the decisions on how we release water. Now, we can't jimmy the water rights. In other words, there are certain delivery requirements that we have to make to the irrigators, and there is a little flexibility sometimes on how soon we start deliveries or how high we run them or some of the rotations or whatever, but basically we still have to meet the water rights. But there is some leeway that we can shift some waters around.

Storey: Are you seeing pressure for transfer of water rights, particularly toward urban areas?

Water Rights Transfers

Keys: Absolutely. Seeing pressure for transfer from urban areas *and* for other uses. Urban areas in this valley, in the Boise Valley here, I think if you compared a map of the project when it was first built, the Boise Project, there may not even be any of the lands being irrigated now that were irrigated then because of the buildup in this valley. It's a continuously changing irrigated area. That'll keep happening. There *are* interests out there that says when the water's taken off, you can't put it on other lands. I don't think that's going to happen. They want that water made available for insteam flows and other stuff.

Issues Around Urbanization of Projects

But urbanization is one of the *tough* problems to deal with. It's more than just water. Stormwater runoff. Stormwater runoff goes into our drains and our canals. If we ever have a fifty-year flood in this town, I'll probably be covered up with lawsuits, because our system won't handle it. We're trying to get some relief from that, but stormwater runoff is a big problem associated with that kind of development. The encroachment of houses and subdivisions on the farmland moves you out into the less hospitable lands. You're getting into the marginal lands now for irrigation. Unfortunately, the farmland around here was the best place to live. So a lot of changes there. A lot of changes.

The other change is one that we're trying to precipitate, and that's actually taking water from the system to help salmon. Maybe you want to talk about that in the salmon issue rather than in exchanges.

Salmon Issues

Storey: Let's talk about that issue now.

Keys: Well, when I first came into the region in 1980, the Northwest Power Planning Act had just been passed. Basically, the planning act was a stopgap to try to keep salmon from being listed as endangered. The act itself supposedly gave equal treatment to the salmon that the power industry was being afforded in the basin, so that there was opportunity for the salmon to not continue their downslide to extinction. They came in with a lot of money trying to take care of the salmon.

The answer that the power industry liked was barging them. It didn't work. The dams were still killing them coming down the river, still killing them coming up the river. 1990, Oregon trout and several others, including the Idaho Fish and Game Department, petitioned the listing. 1991, there were three listings, the Snake River sockeye, the Snake River spring and summer chinook, and the Snake River fall chinook. They combined the spring and summer as one run. We have been dealing with biological opinions ever since, and the operation of the system to accommodate power generation, irrigation deliveries, *and* the movement of salmon.

We got two assignments out of the salmon issue. One was to provide 427,000 acre feet of water *down* the river every year, to help meet flow targets at Lower Granite Dam and McNary Dam. Lower Granite's on the Lower Snake River, and McNary is on the main stem of the Columbia.

Finding Water to Aid in Salmon Migration on the Snake and Columbia

We are trying to purchase back into federal ownership storage space to accommodate that release of 427,000 acre feet. Tough duty. We're having to go through a water-right change to accommodate that, and we're just in a

deadlock with the State of Idaho in doing it. Got hearing's coming up next month, and then hearings this fall, and I have to go back to the legislature in January to get it approved if we get the water-right change.

A lot of me is in this solution, because early on, the fish interest pointed at the irrigators up here and said, "They're depleting all the water, so it's affecting the salmon," even though there's no salmon runs up the Snake River here, not past Hell's Canyon. They pointed and said, "You're depleting the waters," and that from our federal reservoir system we ought to be releasing big volumes of water to help the salmon.

Space-holder Contracts

Well, it's a federal reservoir system, but the federal government doesn't own the storage space behind it. We have what we call space-holder contracts. Irrigators hold onto it, use it for irrigation, and it's not just a case of releasing the water, you've got to *buy* it back. That's pretty tough sometimes.

The irrigators are very suspicious. At first the fish advocates and the National Fishery Service were targeting big volumes out of up here, up to 2 million acre feet out of the Snake River Basin. The irrigators and the governor just said, "Not going to happen." Governor Andrus said, "You're not going to take any water out of here unless –"

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1. JULY 25, 1995.

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2. JULY 25, 1995.

Keys: He was saying, draw down the reservoir system in those lower four Snake River Dams that belong to the Corps of Engineers, so that the fish could get in a natural channel and come up, and then the velocity would carry them through there. When they looked at us for additional water, the irrigators said, "You're *not* going to take our water for the salmon."

We came up with a plan and in 1991, we first released about 430,000 acre feet for salmon. It seemed to work pretty good, and we refined that, and four out of five years we will have delivered about 430,000 acre feet for salmon. The problem we got into is the farmers were very suspicious that if we supplied that much, they'd come back for more. We put our own credibilities on the line in saying, "No, if you can help us get that much water, we will hold it at that level," and that's what we're trying to do now. Now, there are people out there wanting more water, and they're not giving us any water, we're having to buy it, beg, borrow and steal, and the whole bit, to get it down there.

This water-right change process that we're under way with right now, there have been 198 protests against that water right change. In other words, they just don't want to see it happen. Helen Chenoweth, the representative from this area, just gives me a fit. I had to go back to D.C. about a month ago and meet with her. Got nowhere. It's a tough deal. It's a tough deal.

How Managing the Water for Salmon Affects Power Production

On the Columbia River side, we're operating Grand Coulee ten feet lower than we used to. Pulling water out of Hungry Horse. Of course, pulling that out of Libby, and Dworshak, and it's changing the way the river's operated. It's not we're changing the power generation that much, but it's changing the time in the year a lot of the power's generated.

So a lot of changes to accommodate the salmon. Is it going to do any good? I wish I knew.

Storey: What's it costing us?

Costs of the Salmon Programs

Keys: A lot. Bonneville Power estimates that they spend somewhere between \$350 and \$500 million a year on salmon. We're spending somewhere between \$10 and \$20 million a year on salmon. About 22, 23 percent of our overall budget's being spent on salmon.

Storey: For this region? Where are we getting the water from? We're buying it?

Keys: Buying it. We're buying water from our own reservoirs to run down the river for salmon. Most of it right now we're renting through the water banks, but we have an active program under way to buy back storage space, so that we can have it to operate when we need it.

Storey: What's it costing us?

Keys: Well, through the water bank, on an annual basis, water out of the Upper Snake River is \$8.45 an acre-foot. Now, you get \$2.50 of that back if you don't use it, or if the system refills next year, you get \$2.50 back. We have to pay the \$8.45 up front. In the Boise Basin it's about \$5.50, and I think it's about \$5.50 in the Payette River Basin. That's just for annual water. Pay it this year and it's gone down the rathole and gone.

We're trying to buy back into federal ownership, storage space, and we have bought two pieces. We bought 6,600 and some-odd acre feet back from Salmon River Canal Company. We bought 15,900 and some-odd acre feet back from Canyon View Canal Company, and for American Falls storage, we paid 150 bucks an acre foot. For Palisades about the same. For Ririe space, it's about \$100 an acre foot storage space.

Storey: When you buy storage space, are you buying water?

Keys: Nope. You're buying an acre-foot of *space* in a reservoir, and what you get waterwise is the *yield* from that acre-foot of space next year. If the runoff in the basin is 50 percent, chances are you're going to get a half an acre-foot.

- Storey: So you are, in effect, buying water.
- Keys: No, you're buying space.
- Storey: Well, but let's see.
- Keys: I'm not being argumentative.
- Storey: No, I understand.
- Keys: You get the water from the space.
- Storey: I don't understand something, is what's wrong. But when you buy the space, say the reservoir filled up 100 percent every year.
- Keys: Then you get an acre-foot for every acre-foot of space that you own. But if it only fills half, in most cases you only get a half an acre-foot. The confusion you've got is the two different kinds of contracts that are prevalent around Reclamation. One is a space holder, or a repayment contract, and the other's a water service contract. If you have a water service contract and you buy an acre-foot, you're buying water. Water service contract means that you're buying an acre foot of water.
- When you have a repayment contract, or space-holder contract, all you're buying is space, and you get the yield from that space. Now, you can carry over to next year. In other words, if you have your acre-foot full this spring, you only use half of it, you can carry the other half over until next year, and if the reservoir does not fill, you got it. If the reservoir fills, then everybody starts out even again.
- Storey: But this isn't, for instance, a situation where our storage space maybe is in the top ten foot of the reservoir, and that top ten foot has to fill up.
- Keys: No.
- Storey: Everybody gets a proportion.
- Keys: There are some people with better rights in a portion of Palisades and there are two or three different levels in Jackson Lake. But the basic idea is you buy an acre-foot of space and you get the yield from that space.
- Storey: Which is a percentage of whatever flows in. So right now you want space in Granby, which is full up to the gills.
- Keys: Well, our whole system is full to the gills right now, also. This is the first year in about ten years that we have filled our system.
- Storey: Good water year.

Keys: Good water year.

Storey: Yeah, for us. And for up here.

What are you anticipating we might have to spend in order to try to guarantee that 427,000 acre-foot?

Keys: We started off with about 100,000 acre feet of Reclamation storage space. With these two pieces we bought, we're up to about 120,000, 130,000 now. So we've got about 300,000 acre feet more to buy. Potentially, that could cost, gosh, anywhere from \$100 to \$200 million dollars. But, if you look at how much it would cost you to build new storage space, it's cheap if we can get it at that price.

I think I'm off a decimal place on that. If I've got to get 300,000 acre feet at \$100, that's \$3 million, \$30 million, so say it's \$50 million instead of \$100 million. So about \$50 million to buy it all. Yeah. I missed a decimal place there.

Storey: What's the average yield out of the basin from our projects?

Keys: Depends on which reservoir you're looking at. On the Upper Snake system, American Falls is the best reservoir, because it's low down and there are a bunch of springs in it that help it fill up every year. And the upper space is the best, because it's up there right where it comes off, and that's Jackson Lake. The middle one, Palisades, is not as good as those two. American Falls probably has somewhere around 95 percent chance of fill. I can only remember one year, in the fifteen I've been here, that the American Falls didn't fill. I can remember *several* years that Palisades did not fill. It's probably got an 80, 85 percent reliability. Jackson's in the 90 to 95 percent.

Storey: I don't think I asked my question correctly. What's our total storage capability?

Keys: In the Snake River Basin, we have 5.2 million acre feet of storage space.

Storey: And what do we, on average, have in storage?

Keys: On the average, it probably has 4 million acre feet, carryover somewhere around a million acre feet.

Storey: So we're talking about, for salmon, about one-eighth of the average storage capacity of our system. Am I thinking correctly?

Keys: Well, it's actually under 10 percent; 5.2 million acre feet of storage space total, and we're trying to take 427, actually, say – well, 10 percent's a good – in other words, if you –

Storey: Roughly, yeah.

Keys: – 4-point-some-odd million, 10 percent of it's 427,000, so about 10 percent of the yield from the basin.

Storey: And the farmers are up in arms.

Keys: Oh, yes.

Storey: Isn't Idaho one of the states that's more conservative about its water rights?

Keys: Oh, absolutely.

Storey: So, for instance, if we free up something, say from water conservation, we freed up something, the water right might just pass to the junior rights?

Keys: Yes.

Storey: Is that what our case is about right now with the Water Board?

"Nature of Use" and Water Rights Applications

Keys: No, the case is, the water rights that we hold are only valid for irrigation and power generation. When you file for a water right, you file for a nature of use, which tells how you are going to use the water. The nature of use of our water rights now are only for irrigation and power generation. So we are having to change our water rights to allow the use for salmon, for instream flows. Instead of calling it salmon, it's for fish and wildlife purposes. We have strictly filed for that change of nature of use for all of the 5.2 million acre feet of storage space. The reason for filing on all of it is so if somebody wants to put it in the water bank, then we can take it down the river and use it. Right now only by special act of the legislature can we do it. That act runs out this year.

Storey: Very complex.

Keys: Anybody that tells you that they understand water rights, you ought to hold onto them, or don't believe them, one or the other, because there are only a few people that *really* have a good grasp of water rights.

Storey: So because we did not file – is this an instream flow, in effect?

Keys: Well, yes and no. In this state, the state is the only one that can hold a right for an instream flow. What we're saying is, we want to release it for fish and wildlife purposes to be used *in* the Lower Snake River in Idaho. So it's not an instream flow, it's a particular use for the movement of salmon.

Storey: So even though it's our water, we technically cannot use it for the purpose we want to use it for.

Keys: That's right. That's exactly right.

Reclamation Has Filed for a Change of Use of the Water in its Idaho Projects

- Storey: Because that hasn't been defined as a beneficial use for our water.
- Keys: That's correct. And we have filed for that change. That's the one that's got the ninety-eight protestors. I doubt that it will come out whole. In other words, I doubt that we will get everything we're asking for. We'll have to make some concessions along the line.
- Storey: Has the issue of the doctrine of public interest come into any of the discussions so far?

Where Public Interest Plays into Change of Use of Water Rights

- Keys: It has not come in yet, but it will be part of it. Public interest is one of the things that the director of Water Resources Department has to consider when he grants or denies our change of our water right.
- Storey: But do they define very narrowly or do they define broadly in this state?
- Keys: Public interest has been defined very narrowly, and is very seldom used in this state. They don't believe in it very much.
- Storey: So it's an uphill battle.
- Keys: It really is.
- Storey: How long do you think it will take Reclamation to work this through, probably?
- Keys: Have to have it done by Christmas.
- Storey: Because that's when the law runs out that gives us special authorization?

Idaho Requires Approval of the Legislature to Take Water out of the State

- Keys: Yes, and I have to be ready to go to the next session of the legislature starting in January, to get their *approval*. There's two steps in this thing in Idaho. First, you've got to get the water right changed, then you have to get permission from the legislature to take anything more than 5,000 acre feet or 50 cubic feet per second out of the state. So I have to go to the legislature and get their approval even after we do the water-right change.
- Storey: How many people have to work on this from Reclamation's side?

Staff Working on Salmon Issues for the Region

- Keys: I've got a lot of people working on salmon stuff these days. Probably a third of our people are working on salmon stuff, almost full time.
- Storey: Really.
- Keys: A lot of people.
- Storey: We're not in a position to say, "Hey, this isn't our fault, it's the Corps' fault with those four dams."
- Keys: I guess we could have taken that road, but I think it would have been wrong. I think we have a responsibility to meet the Endangered Species Act, and I think our facilities are part of the problem. They are a small part of the problem, but I think they are part. If we were building these facilities today, we would take care of the salmon issue before we built. I think we should be part of the solution. There are higher powers than me that should decide whether it's the right thing to do or not.
- Storey: Right. The Corps is another component of the problem.
- Keys: Big component.
- Storey: Are they making contributions also?
- Keys: Yes. All three of us, Bureau, Bonneville, and the Corps of Engineers, are doing a lot of work. I criticize the Corps, because I don't think they're going fast enough, I don't think they're putting the resources behind it proportionally that we are, and they hide behind rules and regs, and got to go to Washington for this, and got to go to Washington for that. But they're doing something. I just don't think they're doing enough, and that they're doing enough quick enough.
- Storey: What else should we be talking about with endangered species, for instance?

Competing Endangered Species

- Keys: Well, we've got competing endangered species. In other words, we move this water down the river for salmon, we have to accommodate the four snails and a limpet that have been listed on the Snake River, that this water has to flow past. What happens there is we raise the water up in the channel to get it down the river for salmon. These little snails migrate out in the flats, and we bring it down, they're trapped out there and die when we bring the water down.

So we've had to look at, first off, water-quality standards for the snails to be sure that those areas are being flushed and that the snails aren't dying from low dissolved oxygen. The second is, we ramp it up very slowly and then we ramp it down very slowly. The ramping means we raise the water level slow, and then ramp it slowly to let it down, so that as many as possible can get back

in, and can follow the water down. Of course, they can't all get back, so we end up taking snails. That's the snail.

The bald eagle, we have water in Cascade Reservoir as a minimum pool that is there and part of the recovery plan for the bald eagle. The bald eagle has been down-listed from endangered to threatened, and we feel that we have done a lot to help that at Cascade, in that area.

Kootenai River sturgeon is another that is in conflict with the salmon releases, but that's below Libby and it's a Corps facility.

Grizzly bears we haven't had very much to do with. The potential for listing the bull trout has come up, and that would affect some of our reservoirs, but basically those are the other ones we have to work with around here.

Storey: I've heard somewhere that there's a controversy about by helping the salmon you're endangering the native fish population. Have we run into that also?

Keys: Yes. You don't *endanger* the resident fish, but there is potential for hurting the fishery itself. In other words, if you dry up this reservoir to run all the water down river for salmon, you ruin the fishery there. We're in a delicate balancing act, and there are people that say that we are damaging some of the local, but so far we have not done that. We've been able to stay away from it.

The 300,000 acre feet in Cascade is a good example of something we're doing to help the resident fish there. Now, State Department of Environmental Quality doesn't think that's enough, but we're working with them to change the release schedules and so forth. The Upper Snake people say that we're not leaving enough in Palisades at times, and we're trying to stay away from that. Others feel that some of the high release levels are scouring and maybe hurting some of the instream fish, but so far we've not gotten into a real damage situation.

Storey: Good.

Keys: Big argument there, though. Another case in point is Grand Coulee. If we pull Grand Coulee down low for the salmon, it pulls rainbow trout out of the reservoir. The tribes have concessions on the reservoir. They have these houseboats that they rent. They have net pens that they grow rainbows up to about eight or ten inches, they drop the side of the netbin, they spread out in the reservoir. They sell bait, rent boats, sell licenses, and so forth. If we have Grand Coulee drawn down, it hurts them. That's a delicate balancing act. We've so far done it pretty well, but down the river, down the road sometime, it can come back.

Management Training Program Assignments

Storey: Let's see. I'd like to talk about the secretarial training program a little bit more. We've talked about it at least two different times, but I don't think we've ever gone through the assignments that you designed for yourself. Could we go through those, please?

Keys: Love to. It was a great experience. In 1979, I was selected into the secretary training program. It was to be twelve to eighteen months long, targeted position out of it was assistant regional director, and it was to be all in Washington, D.C.. It was to get somebody from out in the field back into D.C., learn how things were done, so that they could use that in decision-making and running whatever job they were doing.

It was a fairly difficult time for me personally, because my wife at that time had just finished her first year of medical school. So I ended up going back to D.C. by myself, and my wife and three daughters stayed in Denver while I went back there.

I went back. The first two months I was there, I worked for the Water Resources Council, working on water issues throughout the West, and helping them work on policies for water resources in the western United States. I say the West, it was actually the Water Resource Council covered all of the whole United States, but my area of knowledge was in the West, so that's what I worked on.

Storey: This would have been the end of the Carter administration?

Keys: Yes, it was, the last year of the Carter administration. So I worked on flood plain management policies, on water conservation policies and that sort of thing for two months with them.

I then worked in the assistant secretary's office for Dan Beard and Guy Martin for a couple of months, working on the same kind – I'm sorry, I missed an assignment there. First two months were with the Water Resources Council. The third month, I worked in the White House on the domestic policies staff, working for Stu [Stewart] Eisenstadt and Kathy Fletcher, who was the pariah of all Reclamation people in those days. But I worked in the White House working on water issues with them. They were still cleaning up after the hit list. I tried to help them do some damage control in those days, working on contracts and that sort of thing. Good assignment.

Then for two months I worked in the assistant secretary's office. Same thing, following up the work with the White House, and working on water conservation, contracting policies, that sort of thing.

Then I worked in the Bureau for a couple of months, learning budgets and programs, working with congressional affairs people in the operation and maintenance area, learning about what they did back there with repayment contracts and policies involved there.

Then I had a four-month assignment with Congressman Mike McCormack.¹⁸ When I first went on his personal staff – he was from the State of Washington. He was an engineer. He was a nuclear engineer, but he and I spoke the same language, because I was a civil engineer. Right at first, I worked for a lady who was a legislative assistant, Barbara Bush. After I had been there for two weeks, they gave me the Interior liaison work. I did all the liaison with the Department of Interior for him. It was actually supposed to just be a two-month assignment. Then he asked me to extend for a month, and I asked and got permission, and did. Then *he* went to the commissioner and asked for another month extension. I ended up working for him for about four months. *Outstanding* assignment. I learned so much it just – I still use the stuff I learned during that assignment, on bills and how to work with appropriation committees and that sort of thing.

Wife in Medical School

Then, I think, the last month, I was back in Reclamation finishing up. By then I had gotten my assignment into Boise. As I told you yesterday, I applied and was selected for this job, for the assistant regional director's job here. My wife, by then, had finished her *second year* of medical school, and I went back to Colorado. We sold the house, moved the three daughters and myself to Boise, bought a house here. My wife went back to Colorado for two years and finished her medical degree.

Storey: Then came up here and set up practice?

Keys: Well, we were very fortunate. She was in family practice, which is the general practice area, and there is a residency operated through the University of Washington, here in Boise. We were really lucky that she got that residency, one year of internship and then two years of residency. She got that here and was able to complete that requirement here in Boise. And we've been here ever since.

Storey: What is it we need to talk about that I haven't thought to ask you in these, what, eight interviews, I think it is?

Keys: I thought about that at lunch today. I was out for a little walk and I thought about it.

Hobbies and Avocations

I'll tell you a little bit about *me* in all of those assignments. I was born and raised on a farm, and always would hunt, fish, do stuff outside. When my wife and I got to Utah, in the first assignment, we took advantage of Utah. I hunted and I fished. We traveled around to all of the parks in the state, *really* enjoyed living there.

18. Congressman Mike McCormack served in the Congress from January 3, 1961, to January 3, 1971.

When we went to North Dakota, I continued to hunt and fish a lot. Of course, I still do, but that was the outlet there. My wife was a softball player, and played, it wasn't semi-pro, they didn't have it, but she played the top level of softball in North Dakota and Minnesota and Winnipeg in Canada. In the summertime she was all over the states, those three states, playing softball, and I fished and hunted.

We moved to Montana, and she still played softball all over the State of Montana. I hunted, fished.

Started Refereeing Football at Georgia Tech

By the way, when I was at Georgia Tech, my last two years there, started in 1962, I started officiating football. I started the first year in the intermural league at Tech. We were working a game one afternoon, and the high school coach from O'Keefe High School, which is right by Georgia Tech there, came by and me and this one guy were refereeing a game. We had a halftime or after the game or something, he came over and asked us would we work some scrimmages and games for his freshmen team, and he'd *pay us*. Well, in college, that was the magic word. So for two years, I refereed those freshmen games for him *and* the intermural league.

When I got to Utah, I went into the high school association, the National Federation of High School Football Officials, and I worked those four years in Utah and did fairly well. Got into some playoff games, state playoff games, before I left there. When I went to North Dakota, I kept that up.

In 1970, there was a hog cholera epidemic in South Carolina, and a fellow who was an official got pulled off of all of his games and out of his job and sent back to South Carolina to handle that hog cholera epidemic, and I got his college football assignments. In the North Dakota Collegiate Athletic Conference – Minot, State, Jamestown, Dickinson, Valley City State, Wahpeton School of Science, that league. And for two years after that, I refereed in the college and the high school.

I went to Montana, of course I was still fishing and hunting, but I continued to referee high school and college football. There's a Frontier Conference that covers the small schools in Montana. I got into that and booked a good full schedule, and so forth.

Judging Rodeo

When we went to Colorado, still hunted and fished a little bit, but couldn't get out as much because it was way away from everything. Continued to officiate both high school football – back into Montana, before I get to that. One fall, it was 1973, a guy came to our football officials' meeting from the rodeo association, and he said, "We're having trouble getting judges for our rodeos, because traditionally you get a beat-up cowboy, and he's the judge, and

his friends win, and everybody's all ticked off, and so forth. Are there any of you guys interested in learning to judge rodeo?"

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2. JULY 25, 1995.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1, JULY 25, 1995.

Storey: This is [tape 2 of] an interview by Brit Storey with John W. Keys on July 25, 1995.

Keys: Me and another guy said, "Boy, that'll be just fine."

Storey: To go in and judge rodeo.

Keys: Yes. The next spring, they had these schools around where they teach kids to ride bulls and ride broncs and all that kind of stuff. Me and this other guy went to those schools, and the president and the vice president of the Northern Rodeo Association took us there and taught us how to judge rides and the roping events and so forth, how to set them up and so forth.

That summer, I went to the first rodeo. The first rodeo of the season was at Great Falls, and it ended up not having any judges. Finally they got one other guy that had done it before, and me, and this other guy they took up there, and we judged the first rodeo of the season, and everybody's just madder than all hell. They brought in these outsiders, that don't even *ride* in a rodeo, to judge this rodeo. We were just catching hell from everywhere.

So the association, the next rodeo, they took us, me and this other guy, and we worked behind the two regular judges that they had. In other words, every ride we would mark, and then we turned ours in without knowing what the other marks were, and we were right on. From then on, I judged three more rodeos that summer, at Terry, Montana, at Poplar, Opheim, and at Hardin, the real high spots in Montana. But I did it, and just had a really good time doing it.

Then I judged the next year until I was transferred to Denver. During that time, you judge a rodeo on Friday night, and Saturday afternoon, or Saturday night, whichever, and then Sunday afternoon. Lot of down time in between. In that down time, friends, people are really friendly, but they taught me to rope. I had a horse at the end of the season and did some roping, and just really enjoyed myself.

When I moved to Colorado, sold all my stuff, haven't been back on doing any roping since then. It was just a phase of my life that passed by.

But I kept the officiating going. In Colorado, worked high school ball, worked into the North Central Conference and in the Rocky Mountain Conference. My wife was still playing softball down there in Colorado *and* she was refereeing girls' high school basketball and college basketball.

By the way, when we were in Montana, she started back to school so that she could get her medical degree. When she was going to Rocky Mountain College, she was the women's basketball coach in exchange for her tuition. Then in Colorado, she officiated basketball for high school and college.

Then when we moved here, I continued the high school, and then I got into the Big Sky Conference as a referee. Actually, I was a field judge when I went into the conference. In 1987, or '88, I got so busy I had to drop the high school. I am still a Big Sky Conference referee, crew chief, with a full season of games. Still hunt and fish, white water raft. We are white water rafters. My wife and I are both pilots. We both got our pilot's license about three years ago and bought an airplane, so we try to do stuff.

Storey: Keep busy, huh?

Keys: Yes.

Moving into the SES

Storey: I finally realized one of the questions I wanted to ask you, and that's your SES, movement into the SES program.

Keys: Oh, yes. I'd forgotten myself. When I went through that secretariat program, the training officer for Reclamation, when I finished it, he requested OPM to qualify me as having completed the requirements for SES feeder group. They turned it down. Now, I had had this training out the ears during that time and, gosh, I had the different assignments. I had done *more* than the other feeder group people had done, but I had not "gone through" the SES development program, and they would not qualify it. Didn't matter, because it would have run out anyway by the time I was ready for SES. I think that qualification only would last for a couple of years. I was assistant director for six years before I got the SES.

At the time they sent my appointment forward, they tried to use, again, that experience in that training program *and* my tenure as assistant regional director to qualify, so I didn't have to go through the review board process that OPM has for SES appointments. They turned it down, and I had to go through the whole review board process. It took from May 23 to September 16 for my appointment to be approved.

Storey: What's the review process?

SES Review Board

Keys: The Office of Personnel Management has an SES Review Board, and it has to review and approve every executive that is taken into the Senior Executive Service. Now, it could have changed in all of the reorganization that they're going through now, but until just last year or so, they had that review board.

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- Storey: Did you have to go in and talk to them or anything?
- Keys: No, they did background checks, talked to previous supervisors, reviewed my 171, Standard Form 171, and I had to write some stuff for them. But basically they just reserve the right to review and approve every person taken into the Senior Executive Service.
- Storey: Then did you have to go into a training program with the SES?
- Keys: No, it's a one-year trial kind of thing. Your first year in Senior Executive Service is conditioned. It's like the old career-conditional appointment, when you're in the general schedule. But the first year I was in a conditional status.
- Storey: Oh, so you didn't actually have any special SES training courses.
- Keys: No, I didn't.
- Storey: You just had to go through the OPM review?
- Keys: Yes.
- Storey: You mentioned something about when you were appointed to the position, somebody appealed.
- Keys: Oh, yes.
- Storey: Are you willing to talk about that?

Appointment as Regional Director Appealed

- Keys: Oh, sure. You know the fellow that appealed. I applied for the position with Commissioner Duvall, and he selected me, and then we went through that whole process. At the time of the appointment, there was another person who had been through the SES feeder group program, and felt that he should have first shot. When I was selected, he appealed it – Larry Hancock. He had also appealed my selection when I was appointed to be assistant regional director, also, but that's another story.
- Storey: Really?
- Keys: Yes.
- Storey: That's interesting.
- Keys: Yes.
- Storey: Anything else we ought to be talking about?

Keys: I've known a lot of people in Reclamation. We talked yesterday some about family and so forth. Moving as much as we did early, you end up with a lot of friends, but no close friends. I have known, and I have a lot of friends around Reclamation that are our family, because we were so far away from our families. We had no close family anywhere close. If I did not take anything away from Reclamation but the memories of those people, it would be enough. I mean, some *really good* friends, good people. The people in Reclamation make Reclamation. The politicians come and go, but Reclamation people are still here.

Making Friends When You Are a Manager

Storey: That raises an interesting topic, though. As assistant regional director and regional director, does that constrain your making friends within Reclamation?

Keys: Yes, it does. It really does. I get burned by it quite often. I have had close friends that have – I had a friend, he was working in Utah when I started there. Then I moved five or six times, and he moved a couple of times, and we ended up here together. He ended up with a harassment action against him. One of the hardest things I ever did was to tell him to leave. It keeps you from being close to people.

Storey: You mean a sexual harassment charge?

Keys: Yes. He never admitted it, but we asked him to leave. I don't do things socially with most of the people here. I go rafting, white water rafting with a few people, because of the interest. I fly with a few people because of the interest. But I don't do much social stuff anymore. I get burned too often. Every time I've ever tried to do something friendly – and I've got a couple going on right now – it burns you. You tend to be friends with the people at the same level and so forth.

Storey: That way it works better.

Keys: It works better.

Storey: But it's pretty long distance.

Keys: Yes.

Another thing you haven't covered is how long I'm going to stay and what I'm going to do after.

Storey: Do you want to talk about that?

Keys: I don't know, do you?

Storey: I'd be happy to if you're willing to talk about it now.

Plans for Retirement

- Keys: Well, I've got thirty one and a half years, almost thirty one and a half, and I probably will leave sometime after I turn fifty-five, right after that, that year. I don't think a person can last and be effective in this job, these regional director jobs, for much more than that. Fact is, I have my questions of whether I can last that long and still be effective. It's a grind. I catch myself really running down, getting snappy, grouchy, and I don't think I can stay much longer than that.
- Storey: That's going to be about another four years maybe? Three or four years?
- Keys: Try a year and a half.
- Storey: Is it a year and a half?
- Keys: I turn fifty-five in 1997 – March.
- Storey: I always lose track of my age. I was trying to gauge you against me.
- Storey: I turn fifty-five in March of '97. It depends on how they screw around with the retirement system as to what I do. But it'll be right around there somewhere. Of course, I'm not going to quit work. But this pilot thing, I hope to do something with that, be a commercial pilot of some kind, just for the backcountry stuff, or work with an outfitter. Anything besides managing people.

Does Not Want to Work Further in Water Resources

- I'll tell you, I have a real phobia – not a phobia – but a real turn-off, and that's when I go to these water user – the National Water Resources Association or the State Water Resources Associations. I go there and I see these former regional directors and people out hustling business and selling themselves, and I just want to throw up. I won't do that. Now, if somebody asked me to serve on a water board or something like that, I would consider it. I won't be a politician. I'm not going to supervise people or manage programs anymore.
- Storey: I gather you don't enjoy that.
- Keys: Oh, I enjoy it now, but it's a grind. I want to do something just entirely different when I retire. Keep busy, but I want a change.
- Storey: Collect stamps or something.
- Keys: No, I've got to be active, it can't be stamps.
- Storey: Something active.

Keys: I don't keep stamps.

Storey: I can see it now. Guide on the Snake River.

Keys: Well, see, I have helped out doing some of that, and I enjoy it. But we'll do something. Don't want to stay too long. Bob Towles had forty-nine years of service when he retired. That's too much. My wife's dad worked for the Atlanta Gaslight Company until he was sixty-five, died when he was sixty-six. I don't want that to happen to me.

That ought to do it.

Storey: I really appreciate your spending time with me, and I'd like to ask once again whether or not you're willing for the tapes and transcripts to be used for research by people inside and outside Reclamation.

Keys: Yes, that's fine.

Storey: Great. Thank you.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 1. JULY 25, 1995.

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1. NOVEMBER 18, 1997.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing John W. Keys III, regional director in the Pacific Northwest Region, in his offices in Boise, Idaho, at about ten o'clock in the morning on November the 18th, 1997. This is tape one.

Ochoco Dam Safety of Dams Issues

You were mentioning that Ochoco had been an issue.

Keys: Yes. I don't know whether we covered it in the other tape or not. It was significant to this region because we had been monitoring the performance of Ochoco Dam for several years. The piezometers would act up and then they would flatten out, and they would act up and flatten out. And that had been going on since like 1989.

Then in around Christmastime of '93, '94, Christmastime '94, the piezometers gave us an indication that we had a *really* serious problem in Ochoco Dam. The analysis by the Denver office showed that we probably were close to failure. I said Christmastime. It was actually in October, but we had to do this stuff around Christmastime, because basically we had to draw the reservoir down and not have any water supply for the lands of the Ochoco Irrigation District the next summer.

Storey: Okay, now, that part you've talked about. But after the finishing, you didn't talk about. I remember now.

Keys: Right. And we went over and just before Christmas gave me them the news and had a really volatile public meeting. But we got the point across, and we did it.

We did the construction, and then after we did the construction we had a sinkhole. Had to go back in and pull part of it back down again and rebuild it, and I think we ended up with a good structure.

I think that's where we ended up before.

Well, I then had to go back and negotiate the repayment contract with the District, and their wish list got very long. I'm glad we covered it before. And really, the dam has been operating very well.

Storey: I think where we covered it to was, we thought we were going to be able to deliver water on time without interrupting their service very much. But we hadn't talked about the problems with the dam structure.

Keys: Okay. I'm still not sure what all we covered and we didn't.

What happened is, the old dam was rebuilt several times before it became part of the government project, and one of the times they covered up some riprap in that thing. They just shoved dirt over it and covered it up. And what it did is, it left some voids down in there, and water *will* find voids. That is a rule of nature that you just don't argue with. It'll find them. And it did, and that's what ended up being the cause of us having to go back in the second time. And we found them and actually did some exploration to be sure we found them all, rebuilt it, and it's been operating very well since then. Every indication is that we got it and it's fixed and it's operating very well.

One of things that we had to do in that time is, we took out that extension of the outlet works and then just used the tower for taking the water out of the dam, and basically the District lost almost 4,000 acre feet of storage space of that. But we agreed to replace that with Prineville storage in the reallocation of Prineville Reservoir, and that's happening right now.

The District has, I think, been satisfied with the structure. They didn't like the repayment contract, and we made several concessions to them to make it more lucrative. I think they ended up with a pretty good deal out of it. They then were demanding this and demanding that, and we finally just had to put a stop to it and say, "That's enough." God, they wanted *two feet of topsoil* brought back in on top of the construction site as a rehab on that land so that if they ever wanted to grow sugar beets they could. Two feet of topsoil would have cost almost a half a million dollars, and we just told them no. So I think it's over and done with. I have not heard any complaints lately. *But* I haven't run into Hugh Moore lately. The next time I run into him, he may want something else. Hugh is the manager of the Ochoco Irrigation District.

Anyway, it sounds like we've covered it. I just didn't know whether we did or not, and that's why I bring it up.

Storey: What about Como, though? I don't know that we talked about that issue.

Como Dam Issues

Keys: Well, Como is one we thought we had done a really good job on, and then some sinkholes showed up down below on that rascal. Indications are that there are a few sinkholes up *above* the construction area, and now they're saying that we may want to put a blanket on that area where those sinkholes have shown up to keep the water from coming out below. And, yes, it's going to mean going back to the District to extend their repayment contract, and I hate that like the devil himself. I don't know enough about it yet to know what we're going to do, but we're going to have to do something there. It just seems like it's a never ending, when you get in those old structures, it's just a never-ending struggle to find everything. I'm not sure we ever do.

Storey: Is there sort of a life expectancy? This is another earthen dam, right?

Keys: Yes. You know, we preach engineering principles and life expectancies, and then we get to that time when they're supposed to go away and we don't have provisions to replace them. I don't know, maybe that's what the Safety of Dams Program is for anyway.

Storey: Are there other Safety of Dams issues around?

Other Safety of Dams Issues

Keys: Oh, everywhere. Reservoir A,¹⁹ problem there. Prineville [Dam],²⁰ we still don't know how big to make that spillway. We're studying it to find out.

Fish Lake,²¹ we rebuilt down in southern Oregon, and the damn district won't sign the repayment contract, because they think we charged them too much. Basically, what happened there is, one of our original estimates of *one* of the fixes got out. That fix didn't work, it didn't work on paper, and we had to change what we were going to do. The price went up. But they had the original figure in mind, and when the price went up, they think we doubled the price on them. Well, that's not really right, but they don't want to sign the repayment contract, *have not signed* the repayment contract, so that issue's hanging out there.

19. Lewiston Orchards Project, south and east of Lewiston, Idaho.

20. Crooked River Project, north central Oregon near Prineville.

21. Rogue River Basin Project in southwest Oregon.

We're trying to figure out what to do at Conconully [Dam].²² People have built their summer homes around the reservoir and don't want any effect on it.

So Safety of Dams is a problem. Even though the government pays 85 percent of the cost, nobody ever wants to pay for anything anymore.

Storey: What does Reclamation do when we have a district that refuses to sign a repayment contract?

Keys: Well, what we're *supposed* to do is restrict the reservoir from filling. Well, in the goodness of hearts, at times we get into a storm before time and we let them go ahead with construction before we get the repayment contract signed, and then we lose our big stick of restricting the storage in the reservoir.

Unfortunately, I did that at McKay [Dam]²³ just this past summer. We're almost through with construction there, and I only got *one* of the repayment contracts signed, one of two that I need signed. So I don't know. That's not right. We've got them all signed but one, but the one is the largest one. There are a few small ones in there. But they haven't signed the repayment contract, so I'm kind of hanging out again. It just makes a bad situation. We try to be good to folks, and they take advantage of us.

Storey: That's what we're here for, deep pockets, isn't it?

Keys: Yes. So anyway, Safety of Dams is a problem. The commissioner 'Eluid L. Martinez, of course, is very intimately involved in Safety of Dams, which he should be. He's got a new oversight person looking at Safety of Dams. That was recommended by that peer review group, and I guess it's working okay. We've got a meeting with him later this winter.

Storey: Well, Beard's gone, and, of course, Commissioner Beard's reorganization has been in place now, what, we're going on three, four years?

Dan Beard's Reorganization Four Years Later

Keys: Four years.

Storey: What's it meant to Reclamation?

Keys: Well, I still think that what Dan Beard accomplished, we had been trying to do for almost ten years. We started in '86 trying to do the same thing, and we couldn't piecemeal it. We were trying to piecemeal it and just kind of work it around everything else, and that didn't work. Dan came in and just said, "This is what's going to happen," and did it.

22. Okanogan Project, in north central Washington near the town of Okanogan.

23. McKay Dam and Reservoir are on the Umatilla Project near the town of Pendleton, Oregon.

Flattening the Organization

As those kind of things usually go, you overdo it in some areas. The area office concept part of it, I think, has worked very well. I would not want to go back to where we were before. The *flattening* out of the organization, I think, has not gone very well. For this regional director to have to directly supervise and do performance appraisals for sixteen or seventeen people is just not a very effective use of his time. The flattening out cut off advancement ladders for a lot of our people, it, in some areas, put into question who's in charge. It raised false expectations on some folks' part for self-supervised teams or self-managed teams, that fell on its face at Hoover Dam. So that part of it, I don't think has gone very well. We've made some changes around this region to, I think, not go back to the old structure, but to take the hard edges off of the flattening out.

So area office concepts work very well. The flattening out, we've had to make some changes on. The downsizing part of it, I think it put us ahead of the curve, because we're seeing the demands put on Bonneville Power Administration. We're seeing demands put on the Corps of Engineers, on other government agencies that we work with, that we've already done, and I think it puts us way in the hell ahead of the game.

Dealing with a Downsized Budget

The downsizing on our budget, I think we have found ways to make up that money that have been effective. See, the direct funding agreement that we did with Bonneville Power Administration kept between \$40 and \$50 million in our O&M budget for power facilities that is off budget, out of appropriations. It's not off budget. It's off the appropriations list, and we don't have to go to Congress for it and it doesn't show up in our appropriations bill, and that's working very well. That's working very well.

Storey: But I understand there's some tensions about that because the Congress doesn't control it anymore.

Keys: Yes. They put some requirements on us that we have to report after three years how much money, and we report *annually* to them on how much money is involved. We're not trying to hide anything. Actually, we're trying to make their job easier. We have talked to them several times. There were several oversight hearings. We've talked to them, and so far it's working pretty good.

The other tension, yes, we have to live with a little more control from Bonneville Power Administration. So far, it's been acceptable. If it ever gets unacceptable, we'll either make it acceptable or we'll do something different to get our money. I don't think we've given up too much control to get that benefit.

Storey: What kinds of things are going on there?

Keys: Right now, we have two agreements with Bonneville, and the two agreements, one of them covers capital items and the other covers basic O&M. The capital items, if we need to uprate or rewind or overhaul a unit, we go to them and negotiate a subagreement that covers the cost of doing that work. Examples are the rewind and uprate at Palisades, the rewind at Hungry Horse, the replacement of the powerplant at Minidoka, the big-dollar runner replacement, uprate, and rewind at Grand Coulee. Those have been accomplished under that agreement, and so far I think it's been about \$60 million over four years that's gone into that.

The other agreement covers basic O&M – in other words, the salaries, the fish costs. Whatever's associated with power, we have been able to put into this agreement and cover.

Now, before, what we did is, we went to Congress, and we got an appropriation, we did the work, and at the end of the year, Bonneville Power Administration refunded the Treasury of what it took to run the powerplants, not for O&M. Now they just fund us, instead of us having to do this second step of the process there, and *I* think it's working very well. I think the Corps of Engineers has missed a *golden* opportunity by not participating in the same thing. I don't have as good a relationship with this general at the Corps as I have in the past with the others, because I think he feels that we're putting pressure on him to do the same thing.

Storey: This is the Division Office in Portland?

Keys: Right. General Griffin is the new general over there, and at times we don't agree on stuff, because, I tell you, the Corps shows its dinosaur bones too often. We have them ourself. We've got dinosaur bones, but we try not to show them.

Storey: What kinds of things does BPA want in return for this money?

Changing Relationship with BPA

Keys: They want a say in when we do some stuff. Example, in the past, when we were faced with a rewind of a generator, to save downtime, if we were going to rewind, we would uprate at the same time. It costs more, because you're doing two jobs, so you're getting the double cost in there. *But* you've only got one outage to deal with, and we've always uprated when we rewound, *if* that was our plan.

Well, financially that may not be the thing to do. Financially, it may be better to wait on the uprate until you *really* need the power, and you may not have enough money, or you may have a better use for your money, instead of doing it at that time. So they want a say in whether we actually uprate at the time we rewind, and if the financial end of it shows that it shouldn't be done at the same time, we probably won't do it now.

They have campaigned mightily for a cap on the fish costs, and that cap on fish costs, we run into it every once in a while. So it gives them a little say in the timing on what we do.

Now, we have never run into something that's critical to the machine availability or us being able to keep our powerplants running or needed preventive maintenance. We haven't run into anything like that. If we ever do, then it'll probably get binding. But so far, their requirements on us have been reasonable, and we've been able to work with them.

Storey: One of the things I was surprised, I was talking to Steve Clark the week before last, I guess. Coulee apparently generates about as much money as the entire Reclamation budget in revenues each year.

Keys: That's right. The annual income from the power generated there is about \$700 million, and that is about the Bureau's budget.

Revenues from Power Generation

Storey: Now, on the Colorado, for instance, there are special funds that power money goes into and so on. Is there anything like that in this region?

Keys: No.

Storey: It all just goes back to the Treasury?

Keys: No. It goes to run Bonneville Power Administration, it goes to fuel the fish programs, it goes to fuel the conservation programs, it goes to pay the WPPSS [pronounced "whoops," this is the Washington Public Power Supply System] debt, and, yes, there is an annual payment to the Treasury.

We generate about 40 percent, 44 percent to be exact, of the power that Bonneville Power Administration has to market at Grand Coulee Dam. There's only one other powerplant in the world that has the capacity that Grand Coulee does. The capacity at Grand Coulee is almost 7,000 megawatts. That's a lot. The only larger one is at Itaipú in Brazil. They have never had all of their units running, so they've never generated more power than comes out of Grand Coulee.

That money is the backbone of Bonneville Power Administration. The 1939 act, the '33 act, whatever it was, that created Bonneville Power Administration says that they market all of the federally produced power in the Northwest, in the Columbia Basin, and we never see any of the revenue. Bonneville Power Administration's budget, annual budget, is close to \$3 billion. We produce power at Grand Coulee for about 2 and a half mills per kilowatt, and they market it for an average of about 22 mills. Now, our region, as a whole, we generate about 7,500, almost 8,000 megawatts of electricity, and our average for the whole region is about 4 and a half mills. So Coulee's

big. It's economical. It pays for itself very well. Bonneville Power Administration then takes that power that we generate, it takes the power that the Corps generates, and they sell it. And they pay for all these other things that I mentioned, and then they annually make a payment to the Treasury on their debt.

Storey: You mentioned Whoops.

Keys: Right, Washington--

Storey: Oh, the Washington Public Power.

Keys: That's right, Washington Public Power.

Storey: WPPSS, I think.

WPPSS²⁴

Keys: Public Power System, yes. Basically, Bonneville bought into a scheme to build four big nuclear powerplants, and it just damn near took them down with it, a lot of scandal, big debt still out there. Their debt service on the WPPSS debt is somewhere around a billion dollars a year, and some of our power generation goes to pay that.

Now, if you look at their annual budget, it's somewhere between \$2 and \$3 billion. They pay our annual O&M of about \$40 to \$50 million. So we are about 1 to 2 percent of their budget for them to pay to O&M the powerplants. The other 99 percent of their budget is other stuff. Now, in their defense, they have to pay for transmission, they have to pay the marketing costs, and the upkeep on that transmission system is no small piece of change. But still, the Whoops debt is their largest item on their budget. Fish costs are about half a billion dollars a year in direct cost and power foregone and stranded debt and all that kind of crud.

BPA, Reclamation, and Salmon

Storey: So does this mean, you know, Reclamation's been providing X number of hundreds of thousands of acre feet of water a year, and they're paying for that? Or is Reclamation somehow paying for that? For the salmon, I'm talking about.

24. Washington Public Power Supply System (WPPSS). According to HistoryLink.org at http://www.historylink.org/essays/output.cfm?file_id=5482 at 9:45 A.M. on October 17, 2006, "WPPSS was organized in 1957 as a municipal corporation that allowed publicly owned utilities to combine resources and build power generation facilities. The entity was authorized by the Washington State Legislature and had the same status as a city or a county. The system was run by directors who were commissioners from the member utilities."

Keys: Both. We have a number of activities that we do with money that are under the Bonneville cost cap. We have a number of activities that we do for the salmon that are *not* under the cost cap. Under the cost cap, example is the operation and maintenance of the Leavenworth fish hatchery complex, the work with the Upper Columbia tribes on fish projects and stuff. Fish ladders and screens in the Yakima Basin are a good example.

The stuff that we do outside of the fish cap, we do with appropriated money. An example of that is the water that we purchase in the Snake River Basin to meet the Biological Opinion that was put out by the National Marine Fishery Service, and annually that can be \$7 to \$15 million.

Storey: How are we doing on salmon?

Keys: I would like to tell you that it's successful. I think the whole freight train is going to run off the track in 1999, if not before. The Biological Opinion that was put together in 1995 covered our operations and stuff until it runs out, which is never, but all of the agreements from the states and from the other organizations run out in 1999. The legislature in the State of Idaho allowed us to purchase 427,000 acre feet of water to *meet* the Biological Opinion through '99. There are entities in the basin calling for more water out of Idaho. If they don't cut it out, the State of Idaho will end that before 1999, or they won't renew it in 1999 and it'll take away any chance of getting any water out of the State of Idaho.

Personally, I agree with the State of Idaho. I don't think the answer to the salmon problem is to take land out of production in the State of Idaho when the states of Oregon and Washington are sitting down there not doing anything. If anything, it's counterproductive what they're doing. That's very parochial, provincial, or whatever, but I have a strong feeling for that.

Storey: Tell me more about this. Idaho, because it's at the head of the Snake, is that it?

Keys: Yes. Well, that's it, and we've got the reservoir system here that has storage capacity. The Biological Opinion in '95 said that we would provide 427,000 acre feet of water to help meet the flow targets at Lower Granite Dam and at McNary Dam. Well, at McNary we meet water targets with flows out of the Columbia *and* the Snake, but at Lower Granite you meet it with the flows out of the Snake. It takes water released from our facilities, it takes water released from Idaho Power Company facilities, *and* releases from Dworshak Dam, which is a Corps of Engineers facility on the north fork of the Clearwater.

Basically, there is flexibility enough in the storage system and the water rights in the Snake River for us to produce the 427,000 acre feet without hurting anybody. We can do that almost every year. About forty-seven out of fifty, maybe even forty-eight out of fifty years we can meet that. And the BO recognizes that's there's a couple years that you can't do that.

When I mean there's flexibility in the system, there are enough unappropriated flows that are stored in the reservoirs to provide that water without drying up land, especially in the good years, especially in the average years. In the dry years, you run short, the real dry years. The back-to-back years are the ones that kill you.

Attempts to Appropriate Water Developed to Assist Salmon in Migration

Now, in the State of Oregon there is a moratorium on any new withdrawals, but there are a number of people pulling out these dirty damned old water rights that have never been used, trying to exercise them to bring new lands in. We have protested and have *violently* opposed the use of them, and I'll continue to do that till the day I leave this office. We've done the same thing in the State of Washington. The State of Washington's legislature lifted their moratorium this past spring. Reclamation has a moratorium on any new withdrawals for new lands in the Columbia Basin, the Columbia Basin Project. We have *not* lifted that moratorium and continue to oppose any efforts to bring waters out of the Lower Snake or the Columbia in the State of Washington.

I find it unacceptable for me to paying five dollars or ten dollars an acre-foot for rental water or \$150 an acre-foot for storage space, put it in the Snake River, and then somebody down in the State of Oregon suck it out for nothing. I find that unacceptable. The same thing in the State of Washington. And I have been very vocal about that, to my detriment at times, but I have a strong feeling for it. So that's kind of what's going on.

Some Interests Wanted Even More Water out of Idaho for Salmon

That's not quite all that's going on. There are other *interests* in the basin, in the name of trying to save the salmon, that are asking for *more* water out of Idaho, a million more acre feet of water out of Idaho. The only way that you can produce a significant amount of water more than what we're doing now out of the State of Idaho is to dry up land. I don't think that's acceptable, when you're seeing *nothing* being done by the other states. The State of Montana is railing at us continuously for taking water out of Hungry Horse and Libby [Reservoirs]. Libby's a Corps facility; Hungry Horse is ours. We keep water in there through Labor Day and then we pull it out, and they don't like that.

Everybody wants to save the salmon, but nobody wants to help do it, and I don't find that acceptable.

Storey: What about the coastal rivers? Didn't Oregon, was it, get a presidential intervention or something recently?

Keys: Well, Governor John Kitzhaber, to his credit, tried to put together a –

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1. NOVEMBER 18, 1997.

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2. NOVEMBER 18, 1997.

Storey: You were talking about Governor Kitzhaber.

Keys: He put together a plan to try to keep some of the coastal stocks and the steelhead from being listed and tried to marshal the support of agencies to provide water and funding and so forth. We provided some funding and some Watershed Council participation to do what we can. I don't know that it's been successful.

If you look at the coastal streams, most of them don't have dams on them, but the fish are going to hell anyway. So I don't know what to do about them. Is it an irrigation problem? I don't know. Is it a pollution problem? I don't know. I guess we're just going to wait and see.

Storey: Who's studying it?

Keys: Well, National Marine Fisheries, Fish and Wildlife Service, State of Oregon, State of Washington. When we started out in this thing, I don't think any of us understood salmon. We hastened to try to do stuff to save the salmon, and the thought was, if we waited until we study it to know what to do, by that time the fish would be extinct and it would be too late to do anything. So we rushed to try to do stuff, and I don't know whether it's been successful or not. Indications some places are; maybe in other places, no.

There's still the big argument between barging and spilling. If you spill the water to move the fish, you create dissolved gas problems. If you barge them, some people say it makes a weaker stock. I don't know. I can't be a doomsayer, but I'm not convinced that what we're doing is going to save the salmon.

Storey: Well, that was my next question. We're sending, what, 427,000 acre feet a year, you said, down the river. What's it achieving?

Keys: Actually, that's just what we're sending down out of Idaho. Totally, we're sending somewhere between 3 and 7 million acre feet of water down the river as part of that effort out of the Columbia side, out of the Dworshak side, and out of the Snake side. So a lot of water's going. There are some studies that show we may be doing a *little* bit of good; others, I'm not sure. So I don't know. I don't know whether we can save them or not. I hope my oral interview stuff comes out after I retire, because I wouldn't want anybody hear me say that.

Storey: Well, we'll just make sure it does.

Keys: Yes. I'll help you with that.

But it's almost a lost cause, because I know they're talking about, our newspaper here, the *Idaho Statesman*, has come out in favor of taking out those four Lower Snake dams. I don't think you'll ever see them taken out.

Storey: Those are not in Idaho, right?

Keys: They're in the State of Washington.

Storey: Those are the PUD dams that we're talking about, mostly.

Keys: No, they're Corps of Engineer dams.

Storey: Oh, okay.

Keys: PUD dams are on the main stem *above* the confluence. The main dams that are in the migration path, all eight of them, are Corps of Engineers. If you start at the ocean, you get to Bonneville and then you get to John Day. Let's see, it's Bonneville, The Dalles, John Day, and McNary on the main stem. And then up the Snake, you've got Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose, and Lower Granite. Those are the eight dams that are causing all the controversy.

The PUD dams are on the main stem *above* the confluence with the Snake. Actually, the PUDs have been doing a good job of providing good ladders, good operations. The PUD dams are probably doing better than the Feds.

But our paper here has taken on this cause célèbre to take down the dams and causing a lot of stir, but I don't think you'll ever see them taken down. If we ever see one taken down, it would probably be the Elwha Dams. The Elwha Dams were built on the Olympic peninsula back in the early 1900s, and their sole purpose of putting them in was to generate power for the paper mill. The paper mill has changed hands several times. It was James River, and now it's Daishowa.²⁵ There have been efforts to put together agreements to serve them with power from the Bonneville system. If you do that, you don't need them.

Now, Reclamation did some studies on them for the Park Service to see what to do with the sediment, to see how to decommission the powerplants, to see whether you take them out or whether you just breach them, to see what happens to the water supply for Port Angeles. We've done a lot of work for the Park Service, and if they ever decide to take them out, we'll probably be the general contractor to do that, or we'll do the contract administration, the construction management, to take them out. But I don't think you'll ever see that on the Lower Snake.

Storey: I guess salmon's occupying a lot of time and attention.

Issues in Managing the Region

Keys: I don't have a deputy right now, because that is his full-time job is to work the salmon issues.

25. Daishowa America Pulp and Paper Mill in Port Angeles, Washington, on the Olympic Peninsula.

Storey: Ken Pedde.

Keys: Right. I was trying to do a lot of it myself, and I got to the point, with all of the travel for everything else, I just couldn't do everything, and Ken's pretty much full time on salmon right now. Even him doing it full time, he can hardly keep up with it.

Storey: Well, that must make it a problem to manage the rest of the office.

Keys: That's right. I've got a good program coordinator. Cathy Konrath does a great job in trying to coordinate the other stuff.

Storey: But you're not thinking of adding another deputy?

Keys: I'm thinking about it, but that's one of the backwards steps from the reorganization that I haven't decided to take yet.

Actually – I'm going to change subjects on you just a little bit, but in trying to address that, I have talked to the commissioner and with Stephen Magnussen about my leaving and how they should replace me, and one of the proposals is to bring a deputy in that will be the next Director and have that person work with me, or me work for them, whichever way it works best, for the last year or so of my tenure.

Storey: Does this mean that you have decided when you're going to leave?

Keys: I don't know exactly when, but it will be next year sometime. If I could find me a job flying, it would be tomorrow.

Storey: I think we're almost identical in age. All this traveling and stuff is just too tearing, too wearing.

Keys: It's killing me right now. You know, I look at my calendar, and the month of October, I think I was in the office for five or six days. The month of November, I'm in four days. The month of December – God, they just throw useless crud on us right now. December the 2nd, I've got to go back to D.C. for diversity training, *mandatory*. All SES has to be there for *mandatory* diversity training. So we'll see.

Storey: Tell me about some of the other things you have to travel for. I know there's the policy team on the 16th and 17th, I think, of December.

Working with Indian Tribes in the Region

Keys: Well, I'll tell you, indirectly Interior caused it. You know, BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs] did such a crummy job of working with the tribes that they've taken BIA out of working with the tribes. Now, yes, BIA still works with

tribes and they still get some money, but anything to do with water resources and the tribes right now is Reclamation. We used to didn't do that.

Over the past week, I spent a day meeting with the Colville Tribe. I spent a day meeting with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe. I spent a day meeting with the Spokane Tribe. I spent yesterday with the Warm Springs Tribe. Four days out of my last two weeks were working with tribes, and that is a requirement that we didn't used to have to do because BIA did stuff. They would come to us and have us do stuff for them to meet the trust responsibility. Now I have the trust responsibility with the tribes. If there's something that the tribes need done with water resources, it's a Reclamation trust responsibility.

Storey: What kinds of things? This is new since when?

Keys: Oh, it has come about over the past four years. What kinds of things? We have done groundwater studies for the Shoshone-Bannock tribe. We participate in the water rights settlements for the tribes. Shoshone-Bannock is one that we were intimately involved with. We're working with the Nez Perce, with the Shoshone Paiute on water rights settlements.

All of our fish stuff has to be coordinated with *every* tribe. There are sixty-one tribes in this region. Now, there's only about fourteen of them intimately involved in the operation of Columbia and the power system, but we have to coordinate with all those people on the operation of the facilities to meet the salmon flows. In other words, if you pull water out of Grand Coulee, FDR above Grand Coulee, if you pull water out of there for salmon, you affect the Spokane and Colville tribes because you decrease the turnover rate of water. In other words, you turn it over a lot quicker in Grand Coulee, and you hurt their fishery, their trout fishery for tourists. They have a houseboat concession.

Storey: On Roosevelt, we're talking about.

Keys: On [Lake] Roosevelt, yes. They have a houseboat concession. If you pull the reservoir down to send water down the river for salmon, you affect that. You affect the erosion around the reservoir if you have it at too high a level or too low a level. Everything you do at Coulee affects the Spokane and the Colville [Tribes]. And the Yakima [Tribe], the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project, one of the four major points of that is water supply for the tribe, so we coordinate with them.

The Warm Springs²⁶ just signed a settlement – we're part of that – for water conservation and to maintain the flows that they have been accustomed to. The Shoshone²⁷ Paiute, the Shoshone Bannock, the Burns River Paiute, the Burns Paiute, we work with on the system operation review that we're doing on

26. The reservation of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs is located in Oregon.

27. Also spelled Shoshoni.

the Snake, which is an effort to pull together a model so that we can study what's going on in the Snake River. The Nez Perce are involved in our Lewiston Orchards Irrigation District operation and the facilities there. The Coeur d'Alene Tribe is involved in the upper part of the basin.

The Umatilla,²⁸ I can't do anything without talking to the Umatillas. They think they own the world. We talk to them endlessly about funding for what they want to do, and I annually put a couple hundred thousand dollars into the Umatilla tribe. They sent me a request for a million dollars for FY '98. I'm two months into FY '98, and they want a million bucks for stuff. I mean, they want a million dollars to do planning work for phase three on the project that we're just finishing up phase two on. They want money to do planning in the watersheds of the Grand Ronde and Walla Walla Rivers. They want money to do some planning on how to meet their Winter's rights settlement. I can't do enough to satisfy all of them.

So just a lot of work with the tribes. The tribal councils *will* not talk to the local people. They'll put up with me. They *want* to talk to the secretary. If they can't get the secretary, they ask for the commissioner. If they can't get him, they'll put up with me. They won't *talk* to my people under me, the councils. Now, staff, the tribal council says their staff works with our staff, but they'll only talk to me. That's a hell of a burden for a regional director.

Storey: That was my next question. Why you? You have an Indian coordinator, I presume.

Keys: Yes, I do. John Dooley. He does a great job, has an excellent relationship with them, and I couldn't do without him. But he's a coordinator. He's not the decision maker. And they won't make decisions with him. He can handle budgets and he can do this and that and the other, but when it comes down to doing something, I have to go.

Don't get me wrong. I *like* doing it. I have some very close friends on tribal councils that I treasure. I'll tell you in just a second about something I'm trying to do with them. But it just takes a lot of time.

Diversity Issues

The thing I'm trying to do with them, we got the big diversity discussions at the last Bureau managers meeting, and I've got to go back for this other thing. I don't think we will ever, in this region, be able to meet quotas. They say they're not quotas, but they're numbers. I don't think we'll ever be able to meet targets based on national labor statistics in this region, because there are not the numbers of black people or other minorities in this region to meet. Now, the Spanish-Americans, yes. The Native Americans, yes. Maybe the

28. The reservation of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla is located in Oregon.

Asian-Americans, I'm not sure. But I don't think we can ever meet a bunch of those cussed numbers.

The place where we can do the best is work with the tribes, and I came up with an idea to start getting Native American people working for us. My idea was to take four FTEs and establish a co-op student from the tribe into Reclamation at the place where they can stay at home and then have a job for them when they finish. At Grand Coulee, I can go to the Colville tribe. I'd let *them* select the person, the kid, to be in the co-op program. While he's in school, we pay his tuition and books. While he's working, we provide him a job close to home so he can stay at home and save his money. At Coulee, the kid can live at Nespelem at the tribal headquarters or on the reservation, work at Coulee, and I would require that he be an electrical engineer or a natural resources person.

I talked to the tribal council at the Shoshone-Bannock tribe in Fort Hall about doing the same thing at Burley. Bless their heart, they asked me to do two, and they said *they* would pay for one of them, so that you could have two students going to school and having somebody to talk to. I'm probably going to agree to that. They had asked us to have a *botanist* on staff to help deal with their Native American plants and so forth to protect them. Well, we don't have a botanist, and I said maybe the second person has to be the botanist. We'd duty station him in Burley and have him be our regional botanist and doing work around the region. Hey, that might work.

Anyway, looking at the same thing with the Yakima Tribe²⁹ and *maybe* the Umatilla Tribes. I'm not sure there is a job there in the Umatilla basin when they're done. But that helps us to meet our diversity requirements, and it helps us get a new insight into Reclamation work force. So there's some things we can do.

Storey: I gather diversity is becoming . . . is tugging at Reclamation's managers. Dennis Schroeder, when he retired and did an exit interview with me, said that was one of the big reasons it wasn't any fun anymore. He felt he couldn't hire the quality people. He was being forced to overlook good people.

Keys: I haven't seen it be that oppressive yet. Now, there is a big push out of Department. I mean, this required mandatory training I've got to go to is one of the examples. They've put out a policy for us to work under, and it puts a lot of stuff in my performance. As a regional director, they're putting the responsibility directly on me for accomplishing it. So far it hasn't been oppressive, but we'll just have to see.

I *think* we need a diverse work force. One of the old stories that they always tell in these leadership trainings is, if you take a bunch of men, take a bunch of white men out into the desert, strand them in the desert, ten of them,

29. Officially the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakima Nation. Also spelled "Yakama."

and then you take a diverse group of people, half women, half men, and some sort of dispersal as far as ethnic background, that the diverse group will outdo the others *every* time. There may be something to that. The fact is, I think there probably is.

I look at some of the ideas that come out of us having a good diverse work group, and I think we're a better organization for it. I feel that pretty strongly. We've got some *great* people working for us here. We're in an area here that's got a large Mexican representation because of the farm fields, and a lot of them have stayed and have done very well. We've got a number of students going to Boise State that work here, and after they finish, we try to keep them on. We've got a scholarship program that our employees put together for the stay-in-school students. Stay-in-school students are disadvantaged, and we have a scholarship that we award annually to a stay-in-school. Except for one time, it's been a Mexican-American. This year, Gus Olmas is our recipient, a good young man. So I think we're a better organization for it.

Storey: You were talking about having difficulty meeting some of the objectives. Is that because of Boise's location and our area office locations, or what do you think?

Keys: Well, it's both. If you look at the black population in Boise, it's very small. I mean, just minuscule. I had a black Assistant Director here for a while, Felix Cook. I loved having him. Fit into the community very well. His wife, she took a year and taught down here at Boise State from her job at Metro State College in Denver. Fit in very well. But the black community is very small. I don't think we can *ever* match numbers with a work force like Washington, D.C., or the national labor force numbers.

Storey: Yes, but they do regional ones, don't they?

Keys: Sometimes they do and sometimes they don't. I don't know. All they're throwing at us right now are national numbers.

Storey: Oh, really? I guess I sort of understood they did regional ones, and I was wondering if the big cities along the coast were throwing things off.

Keys: But I don't have offices in big cities.

Storey: Yes, that's what I mean.

Keys: I've got a ten person office in Portland. I've got a three person office in Bend, Oregon. That's it.

Storey: Not a very big city, as I recall.

Keys: No. Yakima, now, I've got a 150 person office in Yakima, but there's not blacks in Yakima. Hispanic, large Hispanic community there. Grand Coulee,

I'll tell you, at times it almost does a disservice to the person to send them into situations like a Grand Coulee or a Hungry Horse or a Burley project. Some have been successful, but, boy, they're few.

Storey: Tell me about what else you have to travel for. Indians obviously a major thing.

Travel to Meet with Water Users

Keys: Indians have taken up a lot of the time. I still am involved in salmon at times and have to go to the meetings. The coordination meetings with all of the federal agencies have taken a lot of time. Just doing the Bureau business, being on task forces, being on study groups for the Bureau. I'd have to go get my calendar. Coordination with the irrigation districts. NWRA takes a week. Washington State Water Resources Association takes a half a week. Oregon Water Resources Congress takes a half a week. Idaho Water Resources Association takes a half a week. Montana Water Development Association takes a half a week. And *there*, you're actually maximizing the use of your time, because you're meeting with tons of irrigation districts at one time.

I go to other irrigation district meetings. I work with the legislature. I have to go back to D.C.. I go back there three, four, five times a year to work with the congressional staffs. To me, the heart of my work is working with congressional staffs and members. The state legislature, I do stuff with the Idaho state legislature that requires travel, trying to get our water rights handled by them, trying to get some projects done. I had to go with the state legislature this past year to handle recreation facilities at Cascade and Walcott Park, because under Title 28, I can't spend Bureau money on O&M of some recreation facilities, so I had to cut a deal with the State of Idaho to cover a couple of our big parks.

You Have to Visit Reclamation Offices

Everything seems to take travel. Tomorrow I've got to go – well, and I have to service project offices. I mean, I wouldn't be much of a leader for this region if I didn't show up in those offices a few times a year. I've been to Hungry Horse once. I'll get to Grand Coulee probably once a month, go to Yakima about every other month, get to Portland to work with Bonneville and with our Lower Columbia Area Office. Go to Burley. You can't be a leader if you can't be out there. Just a lot of stuff.

Coordination with Other Federal Bureaus

Storey: Tell me more about coordination with other federal agencies. What kind of things are we talking about here?

Keys: Everything. With Bonneville Power, I have to work with their leadership on fish, on management of this direct funding agreement. Bonneville is under

tremendous pressure from the Power Council, from the Congress for their operations right now under deregulation. See, deregulation is another big issue for us. If they deregulate the federal power system, that could just change how we do business.

The regional review of power called for Bonneville to separate their generation from transmission facilities, have two separate entities so that one's not helping the other one out – in other words, that they would be independent. A bunch of FERC [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission] rulings, what is it, 888 and 889, caused that last year, and while we aren't subject to FERC rules, their change of the power transmission system for the privates affected how we transmit power, and it gave a lot of privates access into the transmission facilities. So we have to coordinate that with Bonneville.

We have to work with the Corps of Engineers. Us and them make up the federal power system, how we generate the Pacific Northwest Coordination Agreement that governs *how* we move power, *how* we generate power, how we accommodate other water users. I work with BLM [Bureau of Land Management] on lands issues, lands that they work for us, lands that we have withdrawn from them. I work with Fish and Wildlife Service because of the National Environmental Policy Act, because of the Endangered Species Act. I work with National Marine Fisheries Service because of the Endangered Species Act and *all* of the salmon work. BIA. I work with the Department of Agriculture on our water conservation programs. Each one doesn't take a lot of time, but you add them up and it's a lot. The Weather Service, the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration]. Crap, you name it. OAS, Office of Aircraft Services.³⁰ You name it, I have to work with them.

Storey: Tell me why we'd be working with FAA and OAS.

Keys: Well, we have an airplane. It's subject to OAS requirements. They want to use our airplane sometimes. I personally am certified by OAS to fly myself, so I talk to them. I'm on accident review panels for them because I'm a pilot and they like to see me there and they like to see pilots be involved in those things.

You could say, "Well, you don't have to do that. That's not required." You're right. Crap, that's some of the fun stuff. FAA, there are several landing strips around our reservoirs that they are trying to get certified, and we work with them on those. There's one on Oahe, Pelican Point. There's two or three around Cascade. There's several around Grand Coulee, one at Seven Bays, one at Electric City. There's another one. I can't remember exactly where it is. They're all over the place, landing strips, so we work with them.

Storey: Has this changed in the last few years, say since the reorganization? Has it become *more* you and less other people?

30. The Office of Aircraft Services (OAS) is responsible for the Department of the Interior's aviation safety program.

Keys: You know, I don't know whether that would be fair to say or not. The area office concept was supposed to make it so that the area managers dealt with a lot of those issues, and I think they do deal with a lot of issues that I used to have to do. But for some reason, there's a tremendous amount more, there's a lot more attention to coordination at the top levels than there used to be. You used to didn't do all that.

You know, I say that, but then I go back and I look at Bill Lloyd, who was my predecessor as regional director, and he told me one of the reasons he retired is because of the travel. So I don't know.

Storey: Everybody thinks we're having so much fun doing all this travel.

Traveling Is the *Pits*

Keys: Traveling is the *pits*. (Storey: Yeah.) Myself, I compound it on myself. It's my own fault. My avocation is refereeing college football. *Every* weekend in the fall I'm gone. This weekend is my eleventh football game on a Saturday. I had *one* Saturday off this fall. So I kind of compound it on myself, and it's maybe not even fair to complain as much as I do.

Storey: So you're still doing that?

Keys: Oh, yes.

Storey: What about when you travel? Are these generally trips by yourself or do you generally have staff with you?

Using Staff During Travel

Keys: Most times by myself. I will meet staff there. Sometimes there's staff with me, but most times there's not. When I go back East, I don't take people with me to meet with congressional people. When I go to the legislature, sometimes I do and sometimes I don't.

Storey: For instance, the irrigation districts, the Indian tribes?

Keys: *Those* I take people with me. Well, you know, that's a good point. There are some meetings that I go to that I don't *dare* go alone because of things that might be said that could be interpreted one way or the other, and I want somebody with me to be sure that what we heard is what we heard or what was said is what was said. When I meet with tribes, I will at least have the area manager that's associated, *plus* one of the Indian coordinators with me. In other words –

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2. NOVEMBER 18, 1997.
BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1. NOVEMBER 18, 1997.

Storey: . . . [This is tape 2 of an interview] by Brit Storey, with John W. Keys III, on November 18, 1997.

Lawrence over at Central Snake?

They Always Send a Bird Dog with Me to Washington Meetings

Keys: Jill Lawrence over at Central Snake is their Indian coordinator. B.J. Howerton in Yakima, Craig Sprankle at Grand Coulee are our Indian coordinators. So we like to take the area manager and the coordinator with us. If there's some special topic, we'll take the person that's in charge of the study that's the special topic. Like I said, some meetings, I won't go by myself. Others, I *need* to be by myself. Some, I need to be by myself, but they won't let me be by myself. Those are the Washington meetings. They always send a bird dog with me to Washington meetings.

Storey: From the Washington office, you mean?

Keys: Yes. And they're good bird dogs, you know, of all the people that we brought in under Schedule C and that are permanent employees back there. Lori Sonken goes with me a lot to those meetings. She's excellent.

Storey: I worked for Lori for three weeks this summer in the Legislative Affairs Office.

Keys: She is one of the best I have ever worked with as far as a congressional liaison. I actually enjoy having her along, because she doesn't say anything and she keeps me on policy at times when I tend to drift off. But sometimes, you know, you can't cut deals like that. You shouldn't be cutting deals, anyway. We don't cut deals.

Storey: Oh, we don't? I see that grin on your face. What about here in the office? Do you get a lot of contact from congressional and –

Keys: Yes.

Storey: Do they come in? Do they call? How does that work?

Keys: Both. We get calls continuously. I know most of the staffers, and they call me directly. I do get a lot of calls. We get a lot of letters from them, and I have visits from them. Just a week ago last Friday, Senator Larry Craig's person came by and we sat down and talked about stuff. In the field, our area managers handle the field stuff, where they have the field offices, but there are times when I work with the field staffs of the congressional offices.

Storey: The area offices – got a lot of responsibility.

Keys: Right.

Splitting Responsibilities among the Regions and Area Offices

Storey: How's all that *splitting* out in terms of *splitting* up the responsibility? For instance, back in June, I think it was, or some time back then, I sent you a letter requesting permission to have the Park Service go ahead and prepare a nomination for national historic landmark status for Grand Coulee, and the response came back from the area office. How have you split it up and how is it working?

Keys: There is no piece of paper that says you're responsible for this in the field, and we're responsible for that here in the region. There's no piece of paper. If there's something that they can do in the field, I expect them to do it. We are trying, ever since we did the reorganization, to get the resources where they're needed the most. For the most part, we're successful at that. There's still a couple of areas that we're not, where we still are doing a lot of the work in here.

But I like the area office concept. I *depend* on those area managers to do as much as possible as they can. Jerry Gregg at Snake River, Eric Glover at Lower Columbia, Walt Fite at Upper Columbia, and Steve Clark at Coulee. My own philosophy is that, the more they can do, the more they should do; and if it can be done out there, they ought to be doing it. We are their first line of resources to back them up, and if they can't afford to have a full-time person out there, we ought to be doing the work for them in here. And that's how we're trying to operate right now.

I think, if I look around the Bureau, I think we're the most successful in the Bureau doing that right now. Roger Patterson never changed what he had before. He's got the same organization in his regional office that he had before the reorganization. He had moved to strengthen his field offices before, and that was a good move. I think the four that we've got are strong. If I ever have to make a change, I will make *more* area offices out of what I have. I would split one and maybe two of them and have more area offices, because I think the responsibility belongs down there, and so far they're doing a good job at it. I like the area office work.

There's still a little grumbling about it. Our folks in here see stuff being done out there, and they don't think it's quite as good as it should be. They think that they ought to be doing more of the stuff in here. We work through it. But I like the area office concept. I think the managers that we have like it themselves, and I think they're doing very well at it.

Storey: It's changed a lot in this region from before the reorganization?

Keys: Yes. We had a lot of oversight in this regional office before and did a lot of the work here for the area offices, project offices in those days. I think the area managers like being able to do stuff themselves. Yes, we still have oversight here, but it's a lot less intense than it was before. In other words, we don't do

every categorical exclusion or environmental assessment that has to be done. They're doing them out there some. Yes, we review them somewhat in here, but not with the fine-tooth comb we used to. They do some contracting out there. We still do all the designs in here, but they do a lot of the design data collections out there. O&M, almost *exclusively* they're in charge of O&M out there. We have *some* help in here for them, but not much anymore.

Storey: What has this reorganization meant in terms of the distribution of staff in the region?

How Staffing Has Shifted Around among the Offices in the Region

Keys: It has meant moving back to the field level for a lot of the numbers of people. We haven't physically moved a lot of people, but in the downsizing, when we were filling behind, we didn't fill some jobs here and let them fill them out in the field. We were at one time at almost 300 people in the regional office. We're close to 200 people now. We have not gone down in overall numbers in the region that much. We're down to about 1,000. But the distribution has been to the field.

Grand Coulee's actually gone down. If you looked at Grand Coulee seventeen years ago when I came into this region, there were 550 people at Grand Coulee. Right now there's about 300. Now, we were finishing up construction and turned over O&M, and we've made humongous changes in the powerplant to go to less people.

At Hungry Horse, we had about fifty people when I came into this region. Now we're down to, I think, twelve, and we'll be to eight one of these days.

So the change in numbers, the people are moving to where they're doing the work, in the area offices. To me, that's good.

Storey: How do we move the people out of the powerplants? You say there are big changes.

Effects of Automation on the Powerplants

Keys: Automation and the SCADA³¹ systems. SCADA is the data systems where they have all the information coming on the computer, and we have a guy sitting there. Where it used to take a guy to each one of the machines, now you don't have to have a guy at each one of the machines. We're automating Hungry Horse. One of these days we'll have some of the other powerplants automated. We've automated Anderson Ranch. It's being operated out of Black Canyon. Hungry Horse will be operated out of Grand Coulee. They'll have a day shift there, and that's it.

31. Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition.

So automation's one way that we've reduced numbers at powerplants. SCADA, having all the data at a central operating location in the powerplant. A lot of the uprates and rewinds made them less labor intensive to operate. So it just takes less people.

Storey: Is this just the natural evolution of the power industry, or is this a purposive evolution on Reclamation's part, or what?

Keys: Both. The industry itself fluctuates. If you jump into the power industry one time, you'll see tons of people around a powerplant. Jump out of it and come back in seven or eight years, you won't see anybody in a powerplant. They go up and down.

We, in this region, started the automation at Hungry Horse and at Palisades before the vogue was to go automated, and I credit that to the good power managers that we have. I don't know whether you'll ever see a swing in it or not, but the power industry itself right now is moving toward more automated facilities, less people.

Storey: What kind of issues come up around unions in this region?

Union Issues in the Region

Keys: There are a lot of union issues that come up. That's another thing I have to spend time with that I used to never do. They come up with this idea of a partnership council, and they wanted a high-level partnership council. Every month or so, I spend time with the union reps, talking about overall issues and that sort of thing. It's a good deal.

Union issues are not the same old wage and time issues that they used to be. Unions, I think, feel very threatened these days that we're trying to put them out of business. Sometimes there are control issues. See, in this region, the old jurisdictional issue was a son-of-a-gun to work with. That's the thing where you're putting up a wall and the carpenter comes and pounds the nails and puts in the 2 x 4s, and the electrician comes and puts the wire in. The carpenter has to come back and bore the little hole through the 2 x 4 to put the pipe through, and you have to have a pipefitter come and put the conduit through to put the wire through. And the electrician has to come back and put the wire through the pipe, and then the pipefitter comes back and hooks the pipes up. The carpenter comes back and drills another hole. That's crud.

We have gone more to a plant mechanic type approach, where you've got people that can put the stud up, and then put the hole through it, and then put the pipe through it, and then put the wire through the pipe. It's not totally successful yet, but that's what we're trying to get done.

Jurisdictional issues are son-of-a-guns to work. I mean, they're really bad issues. They make project managers and area managers pull their hair out.

The partnership issues, they've tried to ease things on negotiations, so that when you get into a negotiating situation it's easier. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. We tried the Quality of Work Life, QWL program, at Grand Coulee. One of my management people said, "It will work till the first wage negotiation." He was right. Everybody was buddy-buddy until we started negotiating wages, and then the Quality of Work Life went to hell. The program, not the real quality of work life.

What was the buzz acronym two years ago? Quality of Work Life is the one we did. There was another management program that had a big buzzword here a couple years ago that we were supposed to do. Neil Stessman made a *big* launch off into it up in Great Plains. Oh, God, there was Quality of Work Life and then there was Quality Circles and then this. I can't even remember it. Whatever. They don't work with unions.

Storey: But are things improving now at Coulee, for instance?

Keys: Oh, yes, they're better. It depends on the people. You know, you get a bad one in there, and it's crud working with them. You get a good one in there, and it's easy to work with them. In this region, right now we've got good ones.

I look at the union reps that I talk to, Neil Tyree [phonetic] is in the Upper Snake, George Prose [phonetic] is over here at Black Canyon, Roger Ebert [phonetic] is up at Grand Coulee, a fellow named Johnson at Yakima. They're good guys, and we can talk about stuff. They don't *dig* themselves in and make things hard. The white-collar union at Grand Coulee has a newer manager up there. God, I can't think of his name right off the top of my hand, and I know him fairly well. But the one we had before couldn't do anything right. Now we can get some stuff done with them up there. Jim's his first name. I'll think of his last name.

At one time in the history of our country, labor unions were an absolute necessity. My family's union. My dad was dyed-in-the-wool union. My brother's IBEW [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers] union now. And I don't even bring it up with them. My dad's dead and gone a long time, but I didn't dare discuss unions with him, because we always got into an argument. So I just didn't discuss them. In their viewpoint, unions should rule the world. I never did agree with that.

Area Managers in the Pacific Northwest Region

Storey: How are the area managers doing nowadays?

Keys: I have one that I consider the absolute best. Steve Clark is probably the best area manager that I have *ever* had a chance to work with. I have one that is, he's just been an area manager for a couple years, who's doing really well, and that's Eric Glover. I have one that we just appointed this past spring, Walt Fite, who's doing *exceptionally* well so far.

Storey: Formerly an assistant regional director, I believe.

Keys: Yes. He was assistant regional director, and we moved him up to Yakima to manage that Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project, and he did good at that. When Jim Cole left, we then made him area manager, and he's doing very well.

Jerry Gregg's a good area manager. Jerry, at times, doesn't delegate as well as he should and tries to keep too many fingers in. It runs him ragged. I will probably split that office one of these days into two area offices.

Storey: Sort of upper and lower?

Keys: Yes. There's more than just geography between Burley and Boise.

Storey: Oh, there is?

Keys: Absolutely.

Storey: And what is that?

Keys: Well, there's the different kinds of projects. The people that they deal with are *different*. The issues are *different*. It takes different people to work in Burley than it takes to work in Boise. Boise's more of an urban-type situation with the districts here. Burley's more rural, dealing with the real *basic* irrigation. Just different kinds of problems, and I think it takes a different kind of manager.

Storey: I understand that office over there may be in danger.

Project Office on Broadway in Boise

Keys: What office?

Storey: The area office over on Broadway, isn't it?

Keys: You know more than I do.

Storey: Because there isn't parking and various other things.

Keys: You know, we've looked at various options for that office building. We even looked at bringing them over here, and, of course, they resisted that mightily. They didn't want to be in the same building with us. I really don't blame them. I think they've got the parking thing worked out, and they got the asbestos out of the basement. Actually, they're in better shape now than they ever have been, because the district, the Board of Control, moved out of there, and they've got the whole office now. I think they've come to an agreement with the Simplot people on parking over there. It'll be there.

Storey: Good. I would have hated to lose that. It's such an early project office.

Keys: It really is. It's a neat old place.

I can't get off of all this stuff without telling you, I don't mean to sound negative, you know. Reclamation's been so good to me. I do still enjoy my job. But it's a different job than I had before, and it's put demands on me that at times I don't feel up to. I have shorted this office in the past couple of months on leadership because I've been traveling so much, and I don't like that, and I don't know what to do about it. I honestly right now – I haven't even had time to sit down and think about what I ought to do about it, which is bad.

Storey: Yes. And delegating is difficult.

Keys: Yes.

Storey: Certain kinds of things, I mean.

Keys: If I didn't have Ken Pedde as the deputy, the salmon issue would be getting the short shrift right now. He's doing really well at that. If I didn't have Steve Clark and Terry Kent, who are our power men, if I didn't have those guys handling power, I'd be giving the short shrift. Those guys, they just do fantastic. Some of the new people that I've put into jobs, Darryl Beckmann is doing a good job as our Resource Manager. Kathy Marshall's doing a good job as our Financial Manager. Cathy Konrath, she's been in her job a couple years, fantastic coordinator for keeping stuff moving and keeping us up on the issues and stuff.

I delegate, I think, pretty well, because I've got great people. There's just not enough of them to go around.

Storey: Well, that was one reason I asked about new assistant or deputies and that kind of thing.

Keys: I probably will talk to Magnussen again next policy team meeting and see what they might have in mind.

Storey: One of the things that I have found, as I've been interviewing people, is that lower-level staff don't understand why higher-level managers travel a lot. They aren't here running the office, you know, and they don't understand that the responsibility changes as you go higher in the organization.

I had a classic case of that with a guy named Larry Morton down in the Central Arizona Project. He was talking about the project office manager. I've forgotten his name now.

Keys: Was it Dick Schunick?

-
- Storey: No, it was before Dick.
- Keys: Was it Ed Hallenbeck? Let's see, before Dick Shunick would have been the old construction guy.
- Storey: Not Andy Dolyniuk. The guy they worked for.
- Keys: Dolyniuk was before Shunick.
- Storey: What's his name? An old character.³² But anyway, he had been in that office forever. And he just casually mentioned to me, he said, "Well, you know, we'd look and see if his car was there, and we'd know whether he was going to be in that day."

And I said, "Well, have your views changed."

He said, "Oh, it changes tremendously as you move up the ladder and you begin to understand what these people are *doing* up at those levels."

Well, I would like to continue, but I know you're pressed for time, and we have talked up to the end of my appointment. So I'd like to ask you whether you're willing for the information on these tapes and the resulting transcripts to be released, say, six months after you retire.

Keys: Sure. Even before, if you need to.

Storey: Thanks.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 1. NOVEMBER 18, 1997. END OF INTERVIEW.
BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1. NOVEMBER 19, 1997.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing John W. Keys III, regional director in the Pacific Northwest Region, in his office in Boise, Idaho, at about eight o'clock in the morning on November the 19th, 1997. This is tape one.

One of the things we hadn't talked about was the way Tonasket-Oroville had evolved. You had told me about trying to get the, was it grit or sediment, out of the pumping and all of that and how it cost a lot of money and how they were discontent, and now we've evolved quite a ways beyond that.

Oroville-Tonasket Project

Keys: In the early days of title transfer, we had some meetings with the Oroville-Tonasket people, trying to settle their large claim against Reclamation for their project. They had a claim in against the Bureau of Reclamation for about \$55

32. Cliff Pugh.

million, saying that the system wasn't constructed adequately, it wasn't performing the way it was supposed to, and that it was costing them more to operate and maintain the project than they could afford and than we had projected in the first place.

Honestly, Oroville-Tonasket was a real paradox to us to work with. The paradox is, they are pretty nice people; but the other part of it is, every time we turned around, they had their hand out for money. They *never* felt that there was any responsibility on the District's part to spend any money to operate and maintain a project. It was, we *owed* them something, and we never followed through on giving them everything they asked for. So they were really a *pain* to work with.

So while we were trying to settle this claim, the title transfer initiative came up, and in the discussions with them we said, "Why in the hell don't you just take this project?"

They said, "Well, that's a possibility."

So we then looked at their claim and evaluated it on present worth of the power contracts, present worth of their construction payment, what part of that claim may have had some validity, and, lo and behold, they were almost the same number, in the tune of \$5 million. In other words, \$5 million of vulnerability in the claim for us. Their requests and everything, if you present-worthed everything they were trying to get and their construction payment, about \$5 million, \$5.4 million. So we said, "Hey, why don't we just give this thing to you?"

Claim Settlement on the Oroville-Tonasket Project

There was a lot of details to work out, like the cultural resources, like the water rights, like the power contract, the mitigation lands, which the tribes and the environmental people did not want the District to hold, that sort of thing. We negotiated an agreement with them that took care of all those issues, and this past year the legislation was passed, and I think I just signed the papers about six weeks ago that ended that whole deal, and it now belongs to the Oroville-Tonasket Irrigation District. We had to keep the mitigation lands to keep everybody happy and assured that we would follow through on the upland game habitat that that was supposed to provide. But actually, it turned out pretty good.

Storey: Did I hear you say we transferred a powerplant?

Keys: No. They had a power contract. Well, in Reclamation, when a project is authorized, it has pumping parts in it – in other words, where we have to pump water any distance or any height. Most of the time, it has a provision in there that provides the district with what we call reserve power or power at reserved rates, and what that means is that they get the power at the cost to produce.

That's pretty cheap power in most cases. And they also have to pay wheeling transportation charges to get it there, but that's still pretty cheap.

In the Oroville-Tonasket area, they were part of the Chief Joseph power pool, and the rates in there are about 7 or 8 mils per kilowatt hour. So we had to find some way to protect that power contract for them, and yet not have some perpetual drain on the federal treasury so that Bonneville Power Administration would agree to that. So what we did is, we negotiated with them and we limited the length of the contract. In other words, if they just stayed a Reclamation project, they got that power contract forever. So we negotiated with them, and we got it down to like forty-four years. So they got a power contract for forty-four years, and we also limited the amount of power that they could take under that contract. Before, you *could* interpret it that there was no limit on how much they could use. So we limited the contract on time and amount of power that they could take. That made it acceptable to Bonneville Power, and they were okay with it. I think their view was, hell, they'll take what they got now and let their future generations deal with the higher contract forty-four years from now.

That part of it was a little contentious with Bonneville. The other is the irrigation assistance payment. I'll tell you what irrigation assistance is. When we study a project, the first thing we do is to see if the project's feasible. In other words, for every dollar that's invested by the government, is there a dollar return? Oroville-Tonasket was right at one-to-one, so, yes, it was feasible. The next thing you do is, you see if the people that are going to receive the water can afford to pay for it, and where we are in the Federal Columbia River Power System [FCRPS], if a district can't afford to pay their share of a feasible project, power revenues pick up the balance. It's called irrigation assistance. And in the Oroville-Tonasket case, we had a total expenditure of almost \$90 million, and about \$77 million was going to be paid from irrigation assistance. So that's a pretty hefty portion of it.

What Bonneville usually does is, it's not interest-bearing, so they just shift it out at the end of the period. They don't have to repay it until – in that case, it was 2040-some-odd. So we had to figure out what to do with that and so forth. But it was an interesting deal, and, yes, we were damn glad to get rid of Oroville-Tonasket.

- Storey: One of the few, I believe, that has actually been transferred out under the title transfer initiative.
- Keys: You know, it is. I think it's only like the second one. I think one of them down in New Mexico or Texas was the first one.
- Storey: The canals down along the Rio Grande, I think.
- Keys: Yes. I'll remember the name of it in a minute. But that one happened like last spring, and this, I think, was the second one. Now, I'll tell you, we did not bill

this as a title transfer. We billed this as a claim settlement, that happened to include title transfers provision, because a lot of people in Reclamation did not want Oroville-Tonasket to set precedent on power contracts and some of the things we had to do to get it done.

Storey: You've already mentioned Bonneville and the Irrigation District as people you had to work with. Who else did you have to work with, and what kinds of issues came up there?

Keys: We had to work closely with the Indian tribes. When we were doing the work at Oroville-Tonasket early on, it seemed like every time the contractor turned around, he was digging up a sacred site. We would have to stop work and send the archeologist in there and remove the – in most cases, it was bones – remove the remains, and then they could go ahead.

It happened several times, and one time was particularly contentious. The damn contractor man, they dug into a grave, and the contractor's man pulled a skull out of it and put it up on the dashboard of a pickup, and it just incensed the tribe. They got *really* upset. And there was still a lot of bitterness about that, even when we were trying to transfer this title. We had to have the District and us negotiate very tightly with the tribe on how to handle any future archeology sites that were encountered. If they ever were going to do any work there, what would they comply with. In other words, the state requirements of the Historic Preservation Act, that sort of thing. It was a tight negotiation. We also had to go to the Yakima tribe, because that area's in their traditional hunting and gathering area.

We had to negotiate with the state. Our agreements on the mitigation lands are made with the state. Originally, the mitigation for doing the work at Oroville-Tonasket was for us to take out Enlow Dam so that the fish could go back, the steelhead and salmon could go back into Canada. Well, we didn't do that because a big argument arose between Canada and the United States on whether the fish traditionally had been there and whether, if they went back up there, would they carry disease into Canada that's not there.

The state Game and Fish and the Canadians did not *want* the fish back in that river above Enlow. The U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service *did* want the fish back in the river in Canada, and it was kind of a *standoff*. We just kind of backed out of it and said, "You guys decide, and then we'll do it."

Well, FERC [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission] then jumped in and gave a license on Enlow Dam, and that kept Enlow from being taken out. We did a study that showed what it would cost to put a ladder on Enlow Dam. A lot of bucks. And we said, "We can't afford to build all of that." They came up with an alternate mitigation plan for us, and we bought 940 acres of Upland game habitat, put in bird waterers and feeders and that kind of stuff, and that was the mitigation for Oroville-Tonasket.

The state did not want that to go over to the District to operate and maintain, so we had to hang onto it. The tribes didn't want it to go over, because they want the land. Now, I would have turned it over to the tribes, except the Colvilles *and* the Yakimas both wanted it, and I would not cut the baby in two. So we just agreed to hold on to it. I have started some talks with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to have them kind of facilitate between the Colvilles and the Yakimas as to who gets it. To me, it's not a question. It's in the Colville territory, and the Yakimas, they're just kinda being horsey about it. So anyway, there was some interesting negotiations.

We also had to negotiate with the National Marine Fisheries Service, and that was just a consultation on what we were doing. Well, Fish and Wildlife Service was involved in that, also. So there was some pretty good negotiations here. Had to negotiate the claim that the contractor – that project was a tar baby from the start. We went through a number of contentious contracts and then claims and then court cases. Copenhagen was one of the contractors that we had a big court fight with. The next one we had a big court fight with, I'm trying to remember his name, but Art Ukavick [phonetic] was their project manager. That was just a pits project from the start.

Storey: It wasn't a big project.

Keys: No. It started out, the original cost estimate on the project was \$32 million in 1979. Fortunately, that was before I came to this region. They went back and got it up to like 50-some-odd. Then we had to go back and raise it to \$88 million, and we were still right at the dam ceiling when we got out of there. I mean, just bumping the ceiling.

Storey: This was supplemental water or a rehab?

Keys: It was a rehab project. Their old project was gravity. They were trying to irrigate orchards with canals and laterals and stuff, and they *needed* to be sprinkler. I'll tell you, we got into that cussed sediment problem there, and it just made a cuss out of it.

Storey: And so we had to do all of this in order to transfer what's really a small-sounding project, \$5 million worth of value.

Keys: Yes, a 10,000 acre project. Now, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to divide 10,000 into \$90 million and see how much we put into that project per acre, \$9,000. Hell, you could buy any acre up there for half of that. So that's a tough deal.

Storey: But it was a single-purpose project, which I believe is one of the requirements. No endangered species.

Keys: That's right.

Storey: So it met all of this criteria that had been laid out for title transfer.

Keys: Right. But it's not a title transfer project. It's a claim settlement that had title transfer as one of the elements in it. [Laughter] Yes, that's kind of funny.

Salmon Issues

Storey: We talked off and on yesterday about salmon issues, but not directly on the issue, I don't think. There's the Yakima thing going on. There's the Snake going on.

Keys: Umatilla is part of the salmon thing.

Storey: How much money are we spending on all this?

Yakima Enhancement Project

Keys: A lot of money, lot of money. You know, the Yakima Enhancement Project is potentially a \$150 million project. The Umatilla [Project], by the time we finish up phase one and two of that thing, is in the neighborhood of \$100 million, the money that we and the Corps of Engineers and Bonneville have spent there. The Snake, I can't tell you how much money we will have spent on that one, but it'll be in excess of \$100 million. The operations that we do every year, our projects were not meant to be operated that way, and it takes *extra* money to do it. We're spending a lot of money on salmon.

I am really in a quandary right now. I made several telephone calls just yesterday to National Marine Fisheries and other folks, trying to just figure out where we are. I see the calls for more water out of Idaho to settle the thing. I see our newspaper here and other folks calling for taking the dams out to settle it. I don't think either one of those are the answer, but I don't know what the answer is. One of the calls that I made was to National Marine Fisheries, saying, "Look, here is what I keep hearing, these two things. What is the answer?" I didn't get an answer from them. I don't think they know.

Storey: We don't really know.

Keys: No. I don't think any of us know. Ken Pedde talked some – we were here until the wee hours last night trying to figure out some stuff. Ken has a theory on harvest, and I can't argue with his theory. His theory is that we're still doing all this stuff, and they're still taking fish down there. You got the fishery in the ocean. You got the Indian fishery in the river. You got a sport fishery that's still going on. As we're working our rears off trying to save the fish, everybody else is still catching them and killing them. So his theory is, hey, let's quit killing them for a few years and see what happens. We've tried everything else, and it hasn't worked. Why not try that? I think he's probably right. At least try it. I wish I knew what the answer was.

Storey: Say that became an issue you wanted to invest in. *Given* the way the system is being managed now, how would you go about proposing that and getting it implemented?

Keys: This thing about no harvest?

Storey: Yeah.

Keys: Well, I'd have to make a horse's butt out of myself to do it. I don't know whether the State of Idaho would agree with it or not. The State of Idaho has everything to lose in this whole thing. If you take more water out of Idaho, I am convinced that, to take more than we're taking now, you got to dry up the land to do it, and there's a direct impact on the economy. If you take the dams down or you operate in a draw-down configuration with those dams, it hurts the economy of the port of Lewiston and all of central Idaho there. They ship most of the grain out on the barges. You've got a plywood industry that's built up around the power source there, and they use that river for all sorts of commerce into Lewiston. Lewiston's an ocean port. The Corps of Engineers maintains the channel up to Lewiston. So either one of those is going to have a tremendous effect on one part of the state or the other.

I think the State of Idaho may support that, but then they also, the State of Idaho, has a tourist industry built up around fishing for steelhead and salmon, sports fishery. And, of course, the tribes maintain – and I don't argue with them – that the salmon fishery that they do is part of their religion. Well, I can't believe that them killing fish and selling them commercially is part of their religion, but the use of the salmon in their ceremonies, I absolutely understand. I think we could give them to them out of the hatchery a hell of a lot cheaper than what we're doing right now. Now, there's, of course, the argument against hatchery fish, and I don't know. Hatchery fish, they say, are weak and so forth and so forth, but I don't know.

It's a tough deal, and I really don't know. For us to make the big push for no harvest, everybody would start pointing to us and, "Ah, you're just siding with the irrigators in not wanting to take water out of Idaho." So it would taint us from the start, but maybe it's what we're going to have to do. I don't know what we're going to do.

Storey: But who would you propose it to?

Keys: We'd probably start with the state and then go to the Power Council, go to the National Marine Fisheries Service. We attend a ton of meetings every week. We'd just have to start at one of those or the other, and I honestly don't think it would get anywhere, because I think the commercial fishers would oppose it, I think the tribes would oppose it. It would really put the environmental people on a hot spot, because I think they agree with it, but they would think that we were trying to cover up the use of water for irrigation in proposing that.

Distrust is a terrible *burden* that we carry. We've built ourselves a pretty good credible reputation in the region, but it's tenuous. If we were to do something like that, the environmental community would probably say, "Ah, we knew all along they were going to do something like this." I don't know. That's kind of cynical. I don't mean to be cynical about it.

Storey: Is there some group that's controlling the salmon recovery program, some agency?

Keys: National Marine Fisheries Service. They are the ones that are responsible for coming up with a recovery plan. I don't think they're doing a very good job right now.

Storey: But we couldn't just go to them and say, "We think this is the solution."

Keys: Oh, sure. That's probably where we would start. Now, it was the National Marine Fisheries Services that I was talking with yesterday, and I did not get very far with them. Maybe it's worth a try.

Actually, I think what's probably going to happen is, they'll probably just stew this thing through the election next year, and then the crud's going to hit the fan, because they're only going to have three options to look at. They're going to have the more water out of Idaho, they're going to have the draw-down scenario, which means take out dams, and they're going to have status quo. None of the three are going to be acceptable.

Storey: To everybody.

Keys: To everybody. The proverbial crud's going to hit the fan, I think.

Storey: Very complex, though.

Keys: Oh, it's probably the most complex one. I know it's the most complex problem I've ever been involved in. See, we've been working with this thing since 1990. I don't think we're any closer to a solution than we were in 1990. We're using the same approach to try and settle the thing as we were in 1990. In 1990, we put together a water package to flush fish to the ocean. They were *barging* at that time. We provided flush water. That's what they're still doing. So I don't know that we're any closer than we were then. It's pervasive. It's into everything that we do. We can't do anything without talking salmon.

Salmon, Idaho Power Company and FERC Relicensing

Storey: Today, as I was coming over, there was a story on NPR [National Public Radio] about Idaho Power, I think it is, and how our dams aren't hurting

anything. Last night, I went to the SR3³³ meeting, and they were talking about the FERC relicensing of these dams. How does Idaho Power play into this, and what's our relationship with them?

Keys: Well, let me start with the second part first. We have a very good relationship with Idaho Power Company. We *have* to maintain a good relationship with Idaho Power Company. The 427,000 acre feet of water that we provide every year for the salmon flush has to be shaped and released at the right time by Idaho Power Company in the Hells Canyon Complex.

See, the Hells Canyon Complex is three dams in Hells Canyon – Brownlee, Oxbow, and Hells Canyon. We release water out of the Upper Snake at 1,500 second-feet. We release water out of the Boise at 200 to 500 second-feet. We release water out of the Payette River at about 1,000 second-feet. And if you add all those up, that's 3,500 second-feet. You're trying to meet a 100,000 second-foot target flow. You can't do that. In other words, 3,500 second-feet, that doesn't come close to 100,000.

So what we do is, we release it ahead of time, and Idaho Power Company stores it and then releases it to meet the target flow. We don't even have enough there then, and we'll back fill. We're back filling water right now to make up for water that they released for us last summer up to the 427,000 acre feet. So we maintain a good relationship with them so that we can keep that going.

They help us out with stuff. At Cascade, we will shape the releases there to try to keep the river people and the reservoir people happy. One year we pulled all of the water out of the reservoir. During the summertime, the reservoir went down to the minimum level that we've set up there, and it got putrid. I mean, they had a fish kill and the whole bit. Well, the next year we made arrangements, so we left all of the water in Cascade till late and then we pulled it out. Well, the damn river dried up for about seven miles down below. So through the Watershed Council it formed over there, we came up with an arrangement so that we – it's not quite an equal split, but we split it between the summer and the fall. In other words, we release water out of the reservoir in the summer and then we release it in the fall, so that we're keeping a good flow down the river, and that works out pretty well. But the key to it is working with Idaho Power Company.

FERC and the Salmon Issue on the Snake

Now, how does Idaho Power Company say that they don't have responsibility? There was some kind of agreement, when FERC³⁴ gave them the license originally, that they say protects them against consultation. I don't know how they did it. I don't understand it. But FERC and Idaho Power

33. Snake River Resources Review (SR3).

34. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Company *both* say that there's some immunity that they have from consultation. They do release a couple hundred thousand acre feet of water for the salmon. And, the Lion's Ferry Hatchery was built as partial mitigation for the Hell's Canyon Complex blocking the Snake River.

There's a lawsuit right now against FERC on their consultation on the salmon. FERC says they don't have to consult, and there's a lawsuit challenging that right now, brought against them by some of the environmental groups, the fishery groups. FERC is an *arrogant* agency. I had a run-in with FERC right after I came into this region. Neither one of us won, but it was kind of a Mexican standoff and I didn't have to do anything.

We have Black Canyon Dam over here on the Payette River, and it's got a small powerplant on it. There's enough water running down the river during the irrigation season to support another generating unit. We had looked at it off and on, and really it's not economical, because it's seasonal, and it's small, and so forth. Well, *another* irrigation district, *not* involved in the project – in other words, not paying for Black Canyon Dam, not paying for so forth, but from outside – filed with FERC for a license to put another unit on that project. And they weren't going to put it in the power house. They were going to require a little drop around the power house, and they were going to run stuff around, run water around and run it through the power house. We had developed a policy that said we didn't mind irrigation districts or people putting powerplants on our facilities where there was not a power authorization, but that we had a priority, and the first priority was those districts that were *paying* for the project had the first right to do that.

Well, FERC gave a license, a study license, study permit, to this other district to come into Black Canyon and do this study, and they wrote to us and I told them no, that they didn't have the authority. Well, they gave them the permit anyway, and the outfit shows up to do their study. We wouldn't let them on the government property to do their study. FERC got all huffy and run around.

We entered into an agreement with Bonneville Power Administration that gave them first right of refusal to any powerplants on our facilities where we have a power authority. FERC challenged this, and we still wouldn't let the study permit people on the government land, and we were successful in keeping them off. Later, damn FERC went to one of our political appointees in Washington and got some kind of agreement, and we have to check this with them and check that with them, but they still can't come on the project without permission.

Storey: Well, FERC was my next question, anyway.

Keys: Oh, they're arrogant. They're arrogant.

Storey: They were arrogant with the agency I used to work with, too.

Keys: You know, and their arrogance even carries past us. We're just a damn stepchild in the power community to them. But their arrogance carries over even to the states. FERC will put a *requirement* on a powerplant that disregards state water rights. There was a big case here a few years ago, and it still hasn't been decided, where FERC required a flow in a river below a powerplant, and the state wouldn't recognize the water right. FERC made them do the release against the state water right. Like I said, that case is still –

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1. NOVEMBER 19, 1997.
BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2. NOVEMBER 19, 1997.

Keys: We were talking about FERC, but, you know, an agency is made up of people, and there are some people in FERC that have been very good to work with over the years. A fellow named Fred Springer has just been a prince to work with at times. But then that superior feeling pervades a lot of the arms of their agency that it's kind of turned people off in working with them. I think they've hidden behind this, their contention that they don't have to consult, for a long time. I don't think they can get away with that much longer. The issue that we're trying to deal with is just too big for one agency to have to bust their rears to meet and another one to have nothing to do with, the salmon issue.

Storey: I notice they had a Washington, D.C., person at the SR3 meeting last night, for instance.

Keys: We tried to work with them. We had a meeting with Idaho Power Company and FERC and said, "Look, we're doing this SR3 thing. We're putting these data bases together. You ought to work with us on doing your environmental impact statement, because we're doing the work to get the data base together. We can collect it. You can buy into it and not have to spend the whole money to put the thing together yourself."

Storey: Wouldn't do that?

Keys: Wouldn't do it.

Storey: Are they taking salmon issues into account as they're re-licensing these Idaho Power facilities?

Keys: In most cases not. See, Hells Canyon [Dam], the bottom one, cuts off the salmon from coming up the river, and they're re-licensing all of them at the same time. I think there's nine or eleven or thirteen. I don't know, there's a bunch of them. So it's just like, "Hey, the dam's there. We don't have a salmon problem." They have to make some releases for cover on the redds³⁵ below at the spring, and they'll crank that in just like turning a faucet on and off. But I

35. Salmon lay their eggs in nests, or "redds," in the gravels of streams and lake shores. The gravel must be free of silt and in cold, clean, well-oxygenated water.

could really be wrong about that. They could be doing a lot of work that I don't know about. But on the surface, they've not done much work on salmon.

Now, Idaho Power Company is good people to work with. I had just an excellent working relationship with them. Joe Marshall's the CEO for Idaho Power. He and I were on the United Way executive board of directors together. We talk about issues. I worked with him on a review panel for the police department here in town. The police department had an incident where one of their off-duty policemen shot and killed a fellow, and he was using a police vehicle to drive his family around then. They did a review of all the agencies and how we used vehicles off-hours and for private use. Of course, in the government we don't use them that way. *Nobody* in this region has the authority to take a vehicle home with them, unless they're *on duty*. Not to take it home so that they're going to be on duty tomorrow, but if they're *on duty* and they need to stop at get something they can do it. And even that's questionable.

But anyway, Joe Marshall and I have worked together on several things, and he's really a nice fellow. Jan Packwood, their Chief Operating Officer, is a good friend. I've known him for a long time. So we get along well with them, but they are a private power company, and they're in business to maximize their generation of profits. Maybe that's not a fair statement, to maximize profits, but that's what private companies do.

Storey: Do we have any other entities that have dams that we have to deal with?

Public Utility Districts in the State of Washington

Keys: Yes. The Public Utility Districts in the State of Washington have several major dams on the Columbia River. They are part of the Pacific Northwest Coordination Agreement, and we work closely with them to operate the system as one utility so that they're not competing with each other for water and sales, and they have been very cooperative. They are very progressive.

In the PNCA, Pacific Northwest Coordination Agreement committee, there are eighteen members. The three government members are Bureau, Bonneville, and the Corps; and there are fifteen private members, and they are the PUDs and the major marketers of power in the Pacific Northwest. The mid-Columbia projects are substantial. They've got several dams on the Columbia River there, between Chief Joseph and McNary.

Storey: And how does that affect what we do? How do their operations affect us?

Keys: Well, their operations don't affect us, really. Their licenses and operations are junior to ours. But our operations are tailored to meet their needs, and they speak up on what they need. But I wouldn't say that their operations affected what we do, other than that they collaborate on the overall operation of the system. They generate power with our water. Now, they have a water right, but they generate power with our water.

Storey: Are they run-of-the-river operations?

Keys: Yes, they are. There's almost no storage involved in their dams. They back up water, but there's really no active storage. Wanapum, and Priest Rapids, and Rocky Reach are –the three main ones up there.

Storey: Are these the four Lower Snake dams?

Keys: No.

Storey: Those are different.

Keys: Those are the Corps of Engineers. There are no PUDs on the Lower Columbia. In other words, on the Columbia River] you start out at Bonneville [Dam], the Dalles [Dam], John Day [Dam], and McNary [Dam] are all on the main stem, between the ocean and the confluence with the Snake. Those four are the only ones there are. Then you go up the Columbia arm, and you've got the PUD dams – Rocky Reach, Wanapum, and Priest Rapids. Then you've got Chief Joseph, which is Corps, and then you've got Coulee, which is the Bureau. Then you get on up and you've got the Canadians on the Columbia.

It's a *complicated* system. There are several thousand federal people dealing with the operation of the system, several thousand. You've got the Corps, you've got us, you've got Bonneville, you've got all of the related fish, you've got all of the related land issues, the related recreation issues, the related *commerce* issues, the *transportation* issues. There are several thousand federal people, and then you throw on top of that all the state people, all the *tribal* people. There's a lot of people involved in what goes on on the Columbia River and its system.

Storey: What else should I be asking you about the Snake and the Columbia operation that maybe I don't know about.

Keys: You said you went to the SR3 meeting last night, and I'm glad you did because SR3 is, I think, something that we need badly. When we started into this thing in 1990, they came to us and they said, "What would happen if we take a half-million acre feet of water out of the State of Idaho? What would happen if you took a million acre feet? What would happen if you took a million and a half, two million, two and a half? What would happen if you take 3 million acre feet of water out of the state?"

We have several different hydrologic models, and we took one of the models and we said, "Well, here's how much storage it would take." We did the study, but it was really hard, and it considered almost nothing. It was really just based on flows. It had no economic considerations, had no environmental considerations, no political subdivision considerations, no tribal considerations, no groundwater considerations. It was just a hydrologic model, bare bones.

Snake River Resources Review (SR3)

We looked around, and there was no modeling system that took that other stuff into account, and we said, "What happens in '99 – and we looked at it over a series of years. In '95, we said, "What happens in '99 if we're asked to take more water out? How do we study it?" So we said, "We need a modeling system that looks at all of those things," and that's how SR3 was born.

Now, at the same time, we had the system operation review going on on the Columbia system. But the Snake was not part of that, and we did that on purpose. There was a lot of people that disagreed with that, but we kept the Snake separate. It was another way that we could look at the Snake and pull together a good data bank for it, the data bank being GIS information, economic data, all of the water right data, the contracts data, lands information. I mean, you name it and it's going to be in there. But we didn't have such a tool, and we said, "We need to do that."

We talked to the states, and they said, "Yeah, you need such a system." We started talking to other people, and lo and behold, there were a bunch of people that didn't want us to do it. The irrigators did *not* want it done, and for the longest time I could not figure it out. The irrigation community did not want people to know what they were doing, and I didn't find that out until last year.

Idaho Irrigators Did Not Want Others to Know What They Were Doing

The National Marine Fisheries Service – well, just a little background before I say that. Part of the salmon operation, we said, "Look, we're taking water out of Idaho to help meet the salmon. It doesn't make sense for other people on the lower river to be sucking that water out for new lands. It doesn't make sense for Oregon or Washington to divert the water. We need to protect the water to the ocean." So the State of Idaho declared a moratorium on new irrigation development in the Snake River to help us protect our water. The State of Oregon, the State of Washington did the same thing.

Well, there were a couple of big developments around Hermiston, Oregon, that were trying to get going at that time, and one of them found an old land grant that had been done for the Boeing Corporation. It was 20,000 acres. This Inland Land Corporation subleased that land from Boeing, and lo and behold, there was a pre-moratorium water right associated with it. They had applied for extensions on the water right, and we *opposed* the extensions every time.

We came out against the development. The State of Oregon got upset, and they granted the extensions. The State of Oregon was ready to grant the water right, and I wrote letters to the governor and openly opposed. The State of Idaho wrote letters to the governor opposing, also. The National Marine

Fisheries Service said at that time, "What are the depletions in the Snake River and the Lower Snake River from irrigation?"

They were going to go to the college professor at Washington State University and have him do the study. We said, "Don't do that. The first thing he's going to do is come to us for the data, and then he'll go to the State of Idaho for their water rights information. We already have that. We'll do the study for you."

Well, the irrigation community came off of the wall. I mean, they got *terribly* upset. All we did is take the stream flow records and the water rights information and put it in a compendium, just showing what's there. They got really upset. They didn't want people to know what they were doing.

There is a meeting *tomorrow*. To satisfy the states of what we did, we had to agree to a peer review of our study. We gave them *everything* we did and had to agree to a peer review of the study and to agree that we wouldn't finalize it until after that peer review so that they are convinced that we didn't do anything wrong. We didn't do anything wrong. They just don't want people to know what they're diverting up there. They're not violating their water rights. They're not doing *anything* that the other states aren't doing. They just don't want people to know it. That's my opinion, anyway.

They oppose SR3 because they didn't want people to really know, or other people to be able to study. In other words, they didn't want anybody else to be able to use the model. You're going to develop this model. Who can use it? What if Wendy Wilson comes and asks to use the model? Wendy Wilson's the Executive Director of Idaho Rivers United. Well, I don't know what happens if Wendy comes and asks. We'd probably do the study for her. But there are a lot of issues involved.

- Storey: There was a guy, Lynn Tominaga, there last night raising this exact issue, who's going to be able to use this?
- Keys: Who's going to use it, yes.
- Storey: We don't want them to have information.
- Keys: Yeah, keep them stupid. Let them make *stupid* decisions. I'm being facetious, of course. But anyway, the SR3 is really kind of taking the brunt of that, and Eileen Salenik, bless her heart, she goes to those meetings and takes all the crud from them, keeps on smiling and keeps on working. Does a great job.
- Storey: And the project's going to last a total of about four years, three to four years?
- Keys: Three to five is what we estimated, and they're finishing their second year now. It's a good project.

- Storey: It's a lot of data to get your arms around.
- Keys: You know, I'll tell you, it is. If it wasn't for computers, it wouldn't be done. I was down at NWRA, National Water Resources Association, the week before last, and a couple of the people from Idaho came to me and they said, "OH, we hear that they want another million acre feet of water out of Idaho. How do we defend against that?"
- I said, "You get in there and help them finish up SR3."
- They said, "What are you talking about?"
- I said, "Look, I'm convinced that the water we're taking is not hurting the state. I'm also convinced that if you take another million acre feet out, you *devastate* a portion of the economy because you're taking lands out of service. To show that, you finish up SR3, and then you throw into that model the drain of another million acre feet out, and you use the economic results of that to fight against the extra million acre feet."
- I don't know whether they agree with that or not, but that's what we're telling them. I think it's the truth. I firmly believe that.
- Storey: Lynn was obviously saying, "You'll give them information they can use against us," but he's ignoring the fact that we're creating information that *they* can use, also.
- Keys: That's right.
- Storey: It's an interesting project.
- Keys: Oh, it is.
- Storey: And it's a complex one. I bet this looks to us now as difficult as back in the sixties when we started doing water modeling for the river systems.
- Keys: Oh, I'm sure that's right.
- Storey: We thought, "Oh, we'll never get our arms around this," and then, with experience and everything, we did.
- Keys: You know, I look back in the early sixties when we were doing, we called them operation studies. Crud, there'd be a sheet of paper as long as all the way across this table, column after column after column, and you'd work that thing through on a monthly basis.
- Storey: Seven or eight feet long.

Keys: Oh, yes. I was in the Central Utah Project. I can remember having to use the *conference* room table because we had this thing spread out so far, because it had to take into account *all* of the different aspects of the project on a monthly basis. You'd work it a month at a time. You'd work it all the way across. And sometimes you were having to make a guess, and you'd see how it came out. If your guess was off, you'd have to go back and guess again and come all the way across of that thing. Oh, I can remember spending days and weeks and months on those operation studies for the Central Utah Project.

Storey: Pre-automation.

Keys: Pre-automation. I was in charge of computer programming down there for a year, and we put on the computer one of those operation studies for the first time on that project. That was in 1966 when we did that.

Storey: Last time when I was here, Dan Beard was still commissioner, and, of course, he had reorganized the agency, and then he left. Then we had an interregnum period when Steve Magnussen was acting, and then Eluid Martinez came in. Could you talk for me about the two men as commissioner and the differences in the way they look at things and approach things and their philosophy, that sort of thing.

Dan Beard and Eluid Martinez as Commissioner

Keys: You know, Dan Beard came in with a mission, and his mission was not to do away with Reclamation. Some people thought he came to do away with Reclamation. I don't think he did. I think he really came in to change the organization—to deal with current issues. I think he saw value there that we had been trying to make the change for a long time, couldn't get it done, because we just couldn't bite the bullet and do it all at once. And Dan saw that and came in and just said, "Hey, the way to do this thing is to just do it," and he did.

I think he saw the need for water resources management and a void that we could fill there. You know, in this region we hadn't been doing big construction for a long time, and I think he really thought Reclamation was all bulldozers and transits and levels and that kind of stuff. But we hadn't done big construction since we finished the third powerhouse in 1980 in this region. Now, we have construction going. We've rebuilt some dams under Safety of Dams. We've built fish ladders and screens in Yakima. We've built facilities in the Umatilla [River Basin]. But they're not the big stuff. They're not the CAPS and CUPs and the CVPs and that kind of thing.

But his vision of us being water resources, I think, was extremely valuable for this organization, and I think we wouldn't be where we are had it not been for Dan Beard. I think we'd be gone if Dan hadn't come in and helped us reorganize. Now, that's probably heresy to some folks to hear me say that, but I'm convinced that we would not be the agency we are today if he hadn't been here.

Now, with that said, he left, and Dan probably left at the right time. I think he told me the same thing he told you, and that is that he was an innovator, but not an implementer. He got everything done, and it was just settling down and it was time to leave. I think when Mr. Martinez came in, people looked to him, I think, at first to say – they didn't ask him the question, but they were looking at him, wondering, "Are you going to carry it on, or are you going to turn it around to what it used to be?"

He was very good at saying, "I didn't come in here to turn this thing around. I came in here to make it work."

Eluid Martinez knows water. He knows water rights and what water means to a state and what water means to a people better than any commissioner we've ever had. During his first year, I think he was overwhelmed by the system, by the organization, and by his superiors, and at times he took a back seat to them. I think in the *last* year, you've seen him step up and take control of this organization, and I think we're the better for it. I have seen that more in the last four, five, six months than first I ever expected, and I'm telling you, it's good for the organization. I think he's a good commissioner. I think he's good.

He has an understanding of water that few people have. Gil Stamm knew water. Keith Higginson knew water. But I don't think they had a feel for water the way Martinez does. I don't know whether you know what I'm saying. That's kind of hard to say. But he just has a *feel* for water, and I think he's a good commissioner. I *like* working for him.

Now, at first I think he was kind of subordinating himself too much to the assistant secretary. There were some people in that office that I think wanted to run Reclamation. Still do, but I think he doesn't let them do it now. I think Martinez is a good, bright spot for Reclamation.

Storey: Whatever term you want to use for them, our customers, our stakeholders, how have our relations changed between the two?

Relationships with Customers

Keys: They've changed. I think a person that would tell you they have not changed is just not paying attention. In the pre-1987 times – 1987 was when we first started trying to change our mission and so forth. In that time, you could say that we only had one constituent, and that was the irrigators. If the irrigators wanted something, in *most* cases, we did it. Now, we were doing some fish and wildlife stuff, we were doing some municipal water, and we would have to get special authorizations to do it. But in most cases, we would do that work so that it fit in. There *could not* be a confrontation between the two. Now, there were some confrontations that we dealt with, but our primary constituents were the water users, the irrigation water users.

Dan Beard Expected Reclamation to Work with All Water Users, Not Just Irrigators

That started to change, and it changed big time with Dan Beard. There are some people that *hated* the man because they felt that he took us away from them. I never saw it that way. I told my people *many* times that what Dan Beard was saying is that we were going to be a water steward for *all* of the water users instead of *one* particular constituent, and it did not mean that we were going to turn our backs on the irrigators, but it meant that we were going to work with the irrigators, *as well* as the fish and wildlife people, the municipal users, the environmentalists, all of them, and I firmly believe that.

Nowadays, when I give talks about what we do – take the salmon, for example. I will say that our objective in the whole thing is to save the fish and to protect our ability to deliver water under the federal contracts, and that neither one of them are number one or number two. I say that many times, and I mean it. We have dealt, *I think*, very well with other water users, instream users, municipalities, the fish people, the watershed people. I think we're doing a pretty good job at that.

But, there are a number of irrigators that think we turned our back on them, because we didn't do everything that they said. There are still times when they ask me to do some quaky damn thing that we should never do, just because they're an irrigator. And, I won't do it, and I'll get that look, like, "Yeah, we knew it."

There are a number of good, reasonable people to work with. Sherl Chapman, Lynn Tominaga works for Sherl Chapman. Sherl is the Executive Director of the Idaho Water Users Association. Lynn Tominaga is his deputy. Sherl is probably one of the bright rays of sunshine that we have to deal with, because he understands. Now, he *works* for the irrigators, the water users, but he understands that they can't have everything that they ask for and that we have to deal with a wide range of interests in delivering federal water.

Storey: If I'm hearing you correctly, you would say that's evolved rather substantially from the early eighties.

Keys: Yes. I would say from the early eighties. I think it *started* in the seventies, but, boy, I think the real change started in the early eighties.

Storey: One of the interesting things that I've found as I've talked to people like Ellis Armstrong and so on, from the seventies on, is, they wanted to make change. They recognized that changed needed to be made. But when it came right down to *making* the change –

Keys: Couldn't do it.

Storey: There was all of this sort of *image* of what Reclamation was that prevented them from biting the bullet and doing it.

Keys: Ellis Armstrong wanted to make change. Keith Higginson wanted to make change, for the wrong reason. Higginson's reasons were *technical*. He thought we were too big for our britches, and he was probably right. Dale Duvall wanted to make change and couldn't get it done. Jim Zigler, when Duvall was commissioner, tried to make change, but he tried to do it in an egotistical way that was doomed to failure. And then Dennis Underwood tried to make change without doing it openly, without making a big pronouncement. He just tried to make it from within, you know, with his Strategic Plan. Remember his Strategic Plan? That was an effort by Dennis Underwood to change us, and it did a little bit.

I think all of those efforts set Dan Beard up for success. You could look at it that way. All of those efforts set Dan Beard up for success.

Storey: But it sure took a long time for it take hold.

Keys: Oh, it really did.

Storey: It's fascinating to watch people talk about it and speculate on it.

One of the things I was hoping to talk about was Yakima and the issues there, and you've mentioned fish ladders and fish screens and so on. Could you sort of summarize that for me?

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2. NOVEMBER 19, 1997.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1. NOVEMBER 19, 1997.

Storey: [This is tape 2 of an interview by] Brit Storey, with John W. Keys, on November 19, 1997.

Yakima Basin Fish Issues

Keys: When I first came into the region, there was a big push in the Yakima Basin to build more storage space. In the drought years, there was not enough water in the Yakima Basin, and, God, they would go on storage control and there was a big argument between one set of water users and between the other set. One of them had proratable water rights and the other had non-proratable water rights. Non-proratable water right meant they had first shot at it. Proratable meant that, when it went down to a certain level, they had to share water, and some got and some didn't.

So they were trying to build new storage, and they were trying to raise Bumping Lake,³⁶ enlarge the capacity of Bumping Lake. It got right down to the last days of Congress in 1980, the first year I came into the region, to do that, and it failed. An alliance between the tribe and the environmental people and the irrigators to do it – fell apart at the last minute. The next couple of years, there were several efforts made to revive Bumping Lake and to enlarge it, and they never worked.

In the early eighties, we entered into an agreement with the Washington Department of Ecology, which is their Department of Water Resources, really, to do a joint study. It was the first efforts at the Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project. There again, the irrigators wanted more storage, and the environmental people kept saying, "No new storage," and it was just banging heads. And there was a couple of runs made at enlarging Bumping Lake, and they still didn't go for it.

We entered into a cost-share agreement with the state, 50/50. They put up money and we put up money to start this study. We said, "Look, there really are three elements in this study. There is, got to do something to save the fish, so fish passage and protective facilities. Got to do water conservation. And then we'll see if we need new storage." So the four aspects of the Enhancement Project, one was water for the tribe to help them develop lands and do stuff on the reservation; the second one was water in the river for fish, had to have some extra water for fish; the third one was supplemental water for the irrigation community; and the fourth one was some plan to pull it all together.

Well, we could see that it was going to take a long time, and the fish were in dire straits at that time. So we pulled together different authorizations and went ahead and built the ladders and screens. We got Bonneville money involved, we had *our* money involved, and the state put up some money, and we built the ladder and screen system in the basin.

Then we started trying to get the Enhancement Project authorized so we could go ahead with it. Phase 1 is really the ladders and screens. There was an element that didn't want to do that. They said, "If you get the ladders and screens built, then you've satisfied the environmental people and they won't support the water conservation parts or more storage."

We said, "Well, that's the chance you're going to have to take."

So far, it's worked out well. They have not gone away, to oppose what we're trying to do.

36. Bumping Lake is on the Bumping River north and west of Yakima, Washington, on the Yakima Project.

Well, we kept trying to get the project authorized so we could spend money on it. Finally, Jay Inslee,³⁷ a one-term Congressman, they were trying to help him get re-elected and they passed the damn thing, just barely, and then he was defeated. But we got it passed, and that was, what, three years ago.

We are into a \$150 million water conservation project in the basin, and its purpose is to try to provide as much water as we can to see if we do need more storage, provide water in the river for fish, help them change water around, implement water conservation, and so forth, and that's well under way. Walt Fite was our deputy director. We sent him up there in charge of that, and he did a good job getting it started. He's now the area manager. Do we need more storage in the basin? Probably at some time. But we'll go through the numbers and see.

Working with the tribe is really hard. The tribe felt that they were instrumental in getting the legislation passed, and we're funneling a *bunch* of money to them that they don't know how in the hell to use, and it's really hard. They want money, and then they get it and they don't know how to use it. They don't know what contracts mean. They don't know what agreements mean as far as producing products. We're trying to lead them along, but it's a hard deal. A lot of stuff going on in Yakima.

Storey: Am I confusing this, but aren't there a bunch of lawsuits and threats about "you can't take my water"?

Keys: Well, thrown on top of all of that was a general adjudication of the basin and the adjudication of the water rights in the basin, and that's really the lawsuits involved, in the adjudication of the water rights. That was going on at the same time, and that's been very contentious. We have supported some of the water right claims; we have *opposed* some of the water right claims because they're too much. That's been going on since 1984, '85, '83, somewhere in there. But there's been a lot of lawsuits on the adjudication of water rights. That's where the lawsuits are involved.

Storey: And the Indians want?

Keys: The Indians want more water, and they want water left in the river for the salmon. We agree with them on more water in the river for salmon. We also agree that they need some more water out on the Wapato [Project] and in some of their other areas for development. I think the fish is the main issue for the tribe.

37. Jay Inslee was educated as a lawyer. From 1993-1995 he served in the U.S. House of Representatives representing the Yakima area; 1995-1996 he practiced law in Seattle and Tacoma; 1997-1998 he served as regional director of the Department of Health and Human Services in Seattle; 1999-member of the U.S. House of Representatives representing a district in the Seattle area.

You know, some tribal councils have been good to work with, and others have not been as easy. They've had a fellow, that we have actually paid his salary for a lot of the time, that we work with. Bob Tuck is his name, good fellow. I've known him a long time and have worked with him very closely. They cuss him sometimes, and they like him other times, both sides.

Storey: I sort of understand why we would need fish ladders to get fish past dams. What do we need fish screens for?

Fish Screens and Ladders

Keys: Ladders are for the adult fish going back up the river, so they can get past the diversion dams. I have personally stood at the powerplant, the Roza Powerplant, right there by the office, and watched the fish jump up against the parapet wall, fall back in the river, trying to get up the river, because the water coming out of the powerplant was attractive to them. I've personally seen that. So the ladders are there to help the fish get above the diversion dams.

The screens are there to protect the juvenile fish going *down* the river. If you've got a diversion dam there and the juveniles are coming down, it diverts them out onto the damn field, and you've got free fertilizer, rather than having the fish going down the river. The screens are designed so that the fish don't get pinned up against them, and it actually shunts them around and puts them in the river below the diversion. And they clean themselves. We right now have screens on all the diversions on the Yakima River. It does a great job. It was estimated before in some of the diversion dams that the percentage of flow of the river diverted by the diversion dam, that's the percentage of fish that you lost. In other words, if the diversion dam took 50 percent of the water, you were losing 50 percent of the little fish coming down. *Every* diversion dam was taking a percentage of the fish, and they just couldn't get down the river.

Storey: These guys are little when they're going down the river.

Keys: Well, they're all the way from fingerling to smolt size. Fingerling's about three inches; smolt's up to six inches. Yeah, that's how big they are.

Storey: So these screens must be fairly fine.

Keys: Oh, they are. They're in the eighth- to a quarter-inch mesh size. They rotate. They clean themselves. We have cleaning facilities. They're a very technical facility. Big. Sixteen feet in diameter in some cases. That's a big screen, rotating drum screens.

Storey: So this isn't something you just stick in the river that's sort of like a sieve.

Keys: No. I'll tell you, California gets all the newspaper on fish screens, but we developed the technology in the Yakima [River Basin]. You look at Red Bluff out in California. God, every time I pick up a newspaper out there, they're

talking about Red Bluff fish screen or ladder or whatever. But the technology was developed in the Yakima.

Storey: By Reclamation folks?

Keys: By Reclamation. We had a technical team working on it made up of Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries, and State Game and Fish, and our own people, and the Denver people, working with them, developed a lot of that technology.

Let me give you a good example. Roza Diversion Dam is up in the Yakima River Canyon above Yakima, between Ellensburg and Yakima, and the volume of water that was being diverted by that canal required a length of fish screens too long to put in the canyon. In other words, you just couldn't get it in the canyon because that's the length of screen that it required for that volume of water to be diverted. One of the young engineers down in Denver, they tell me that he was at *home* at night and he came up with the idea to do it like a sawtooth – in other words, here, here, here, here, here. It worked, and there's a sawtooth set of fish screens in the Yakima River Canyon for the Roza Diversion Dam. It works great. It's really a nice facility.

Storey: Now, do we have similar sorts of problems on Umatilla?

Keys: Yeah. Umatilla's a lot the same. We used a lot of the technology developed in the Yakima on the Umatilla.

Umatilla Project

Umatilla's a different situation. In the Umatilla River, the United States Government actually sold the water, or made the water of the Umatilla River available twice. We were in there in the twenties, thirties developing the Umatilla Project for the irrigation people, and it took basically all of the flow of the Umatilla River. In the sixties and the seventies, you had the court cases involved in Indian claims for water, and the courts decided that, when the reservation was established, along with that establishment went water for maintenance, irrigation, fish flows *on* the reservation. So basically, the United States had given the water twice, once to the tribe and once to the irrigators.

So we looked at what we could do to try to satisfy the tribe's demands for water. The plan was, that we have since built, was to go to the Columbia River and bring water in to the irrigators so that you could leave the Umatilla River water in the Umatilla River for the fish. In other words, that would attract the fish into the river, and this Columbia River water would be used out on the lands and wouldn't contaminate, smell-wise for the fish, the Umatilla River water. And that's what we built, a pumping plant on the Columbia River. We also put ladders and screens on the diversions in the river. And so far, it's worked very well.

Now, the Umatilla tribe has been extremely cooperative to work with. Their approach to settling water right claims was *not* to go to the courts, but to do it collaboratively. They've been *really good* to work with, and I credit two or three of their tribal chairmen for that. Antone Minthorn is as good a person to work with as I've ever worked with in my life, and if there is a person over there responsible for that project, I think it's Antone. Woodrow Patawa is one of the other tribal chairmen we worked with, just excellent person to work with. And all of their councils have been good to work with.

I'm kind of proud of that project. We got it authorized in 1988, and we're finishing it up right now. We had ten years to finish it. Basically, it's in operation. We're doing the finishing work on it right now, and it's doing a really good job. The fish are back. Now, they want us to do more. They want a phase three on the project to provide *more* water into the river. They also still need for us to work with them on settlement of their *Winter's* rights. The Umatilla Basin Project only addresses their right to a fishery in the river. It doesn't address their right to *Winter's* rights water. So we still have other work to do with them, and we're trying to work with them to get the thing done.

Storey: This is an interesting situation in the sense that we developed a project and gave the water to irrigators. Yet, now we're providing a wholly new source of water, as I understand what you're saying.

Keys: That's right.

Storey: Who's paying for the new project, and what kind of repayment obligation does this put on the irrigators?

Keys: The United States is paying. There's no new obligation on the irrigators to pay.

Storey: Because this was an error we made in the way we developed our project.

Keys: That's right. It is part of the settlement with the tribe. It is settlement of the fishery portion of their right on the river. So it's an Indian settlement.

Storey: Now, what about the fish screens, the fish ladders, and so on on Yakima and Umatilla? Those are basically environmental issues. Are they parts of repayment normally?

Keys: No. The ladders and screens in the Yakima Basin were with federal dollars, cost-shared with Bonneville Power Administration, which is *not* federal dollars. It's rate-payer dollars. There was some state money in there. There was some tribal money, some BIA money. It was cost-shared. But there was not a repayment requirement put on the irrigators. In some cases, we've gotten the districts to take over operation and maintenance. In some cases, we have to pay them to do operation and maintenance. In some cases, we do operation and maintenance ourself. But there was not a new requirement on the districts for those facilities.

Storey: One of the things that you mentioned earlier was Dan Beard's attempts to redirect Reclamation, I think from a construction agency to a water resources management agency. One of the things that I watched in Denver was people going around saying, "What's water resources management? I don't understand what this stuff is." Did you have that kind of thing going on around here?

Dan Beard's Attempt to Make Reclamation a Water Resources Management Bureau

Keys: No, I didn't, because, as I said, we haven't done big construction since 1980 in this region. I think the concentration of technical capability in Denver kind of set them up for that kind of reaction. I mean, all they did is design and construct out of Denver. There were a *few* environmental people, there were a *few* operation and maintenance people, but basically they were a D&C organization.

Storey: Design and construction.

Keys: Yes. They didn't know what water resources management meant. Crud, we've been doing it all the time in the regions and in the field.

Just pick a project office. Burley, Idaho, for example. If you went to Burley in 1993 or '2 or whatever it was when Dan was doing that and you asked them what they did, they'd say, "We provide this water for this district, and we get it on their land at the right time. We have to have this instream flow at this level, and we have to have it there during this time of the year."

We say, "Well, what is that?"

They say, "Operation and maintenance."

We say, "Well, what is that?" It's water resources management. We say, "How do you do that?"

"Well, you know, we have to go and meet with this group. We have this little thing up in Jackson every year where we plan the release of water out of Jackson to accommodate the floaters and the fisherman and the flat water people *and* to get the water down for irrigation *and* for power generation."

We say, "What is that?"

And they say, "O&M."

We say, "What is that?"

It's water resources management, and we've been doing it all the time. It just took it to a different level. In other words, it recognized what we were doing, and it said, "Hey, you're doing this. Now do it in a manner that you

recognize all of the users and that you make yourself available to all of the users to talk to. And if you can accommodate the other uses without jeopardizing the authorized purposes of the project, do it. And that's what we do. That's water resources management.

Denver never did that. They had *no* connection with the public *whatsoever*. Their only connection was through us, and their only connection was to do design and construction. Now, they had oversight. In the old days, they had oversight and they reviewed every report we ever put together and every agreement we ever did and every contract we ever did. But that's not water resources management. So in their defense, they never *had* to do it, and they didn't know.

But in the field, that's what we've been doing all the time, especially in this region. I think the lack of the big construction projects moved this region into that arena probably almost ten years ahead of the rest of the Bureau. I really firmly believe that. This region's people were doing the Yakima Basin kind of work before we even knew what cost-shared projects meant, before we even knew what fish projects were. So, luck of the circumstance.

Storey: Recognizing that we're not up for big construction, is there anything that *ought* to be done in this region that's a big construction project? Maybe a fourth powerhouse?

Keys: Boy, that's a hell of a question, and if I answer it and told you something, I'd probably tell myself that I ought to be doing that. You know, I don't know that we're ready for a fourth powerhouse. There's only so much water in the Columbia River, and the power facilities at Grand Coulee make good use of that. Now, there is some extra water going over, but I don't know whether it's economic to put it into a generator or not. It may be at some time, but it's not now. So, yeah, there may be a fourth powerhouse down the road somewhere.

Are there more lands to be irrigated? We still have an authorized project for a million acres in the Columbia Basin. We've only developed 600,000. There are people that still want to develop more land in the Columbia Basin. I don't think the time's right for that, either. We've got a hold on any further development in the Columbia Basin. At some time, forty, fifty years, they may need more land put under irrigation in the Columbia Basin. Not yet.

Do we need another storage dam for salmon? *If* they are going to require more water out of Idaho, that may be one way to do it. Do we need another dam in this state for flood control? They could use one. Whether they would accept it and need it, I don't know.

Teton Dam was a flood-control structure. Now, it had irrigation as its main authorization, but it had a big flood-control component on the Teton River. After it failed, there's still no flood-control space on the Teton River. We paid the dues last spring for that. That was part of the reason for the big

flood this past spring over there. But big project? I don't know of one in this region, I really don't.

Recent Flooding in the Region

I reminded myself of something that we ought to talk about for just a second, and that's the flood operation this last spring. This past spring, we had followed the snow pack very closely, and we had projected what was going to come off and we knew it was going to be big in the Upper Snake *and* in the Boise system and the Payette system.

We had, on New Year's Eve day, a storm come in here and it started raining and snowing, and it just wreaked havoc in the Boise and the Payette River system. On the Payette River system, it caused big landslides that actually blocked the south fork of the Payette River for a little while. It flooded parts of the towns of Payette. The Weiser River flooded part of Weiser. Part of Emmett had water on it, and so forth.

When that storm first started, our people over at Snake River shut down Cascade and Deadwood, and they reduced the flow at Emmett, at Black Canyon Dam, from 45,000 second-feet down to 33,000 second-feet. There were still people that thought we dumped water on them out of Black Canyon, but there's no storage capacity in Black Canyon. There were some hard feelings, but we did not do anything wrong.

Well, in the Boise system, we had the third-highest peak of record since the dam was built, and nobody knew it because we drank the whole thing. We kept the flow of the river at 3,500 second-foot. Flood stage is 7,000. Kept the flow of the river at 3,500 and drank the whole flood.

Then we started releasing water out of storage. In the Upper Snake, we were looking at 200 to 250 percent of normal snow pack. We drained Palisades from 1.2 million acre feet to 30,000 acre feet. In other words, we *dumped* over 1.1 million acre feet of water out of Palisades. We emptied Jackson Lake to less than half of its capacity. We're not authorized to do that, but we did it. And in the Boise system, we drew it down even below flood control curve.

Then the runoff came, and then we got big rains on the runoff, rains *on* the snow pack during the runoff. In the Boise system, we drank two more peaks, and we kept the river at flood stage. We had the river up to flood stage and held it. In the Payette River, it came up several times, and we were able to keep it below flood stage. In the Upper Snake, it made a run at us, and we went higher than we had ever had to release water before. We went up to 36,000 second-feet, and we surcharged Palisades. In other words, it filled, went from 30,000 acre feet to 1.2 million acre feet in two weeks.

The criticism was, we should have dumped more water. Well, you can't dump anymore out of Palisades because it was empty. And we were controlling the Snake River to flood stage at Shelley, and if we'd released more water out of Jackson, we would have prematurely flooded Shelley. So we were pretty limited. We still caught holy hell because we didn't prevent that flood. Well, we took the biggest share of it and stored it, and then what we couldn't store, we had to bypass.

After it made the first run at us, we dropped off in releases. And then it made the second run at us, and we had to go up to 40,000 second-foot release. There was a lot of people that got wet, but I still think that our flood control people did an outstanding job. I gave awards to all those people because of the good job they did. So it was a great flood operation this past spring.

Storey: But I can imagine that some irrigator went by Palisades, and you heard about it from the irrigators.

Keys: Oh, jeez. "How do you know that's going to fill? That's our water you're fooling around with. That's our water you're wasting down the river." Damn right we did. But my boys were right.

Storey: You filled the reservoirs back up, plus.

Keys: We filled every one of them back up.

Storey: Plus.

Keys: You know, there was a lot of unsung heroes in that thing. Take American Falls. We were having to release big water out of American Falls. There's a pipe that takes the city of Twin Falls' water across the river, and we were lapping the bottom of that pipe with water, and we had to go up. We couldn't hold more water.

So we went to the irrigation districts. Twin Falls Canal Company is the main one, and Milner Irrigation District in Northside. And we said, "Boys, open up your works and take as much out into the system as you can, and then dump it back off the canyon wall down below in the wasteways, below where this pipe goes across the river." And they did and did not lose the pipe, and it lapped the bottom.

Storey: Any other things like that go on?

Keys: That one was this year. You know, we've had several flood fights before. In 1983, we had a hellish one. We ended up with the reservoir system almost full, and then we got horrendous rains in June. The thing that saved us that year is, we had a restriction on Jackson Lake because of the Safety of Dams. Well, of course, we just stored in the restricted area and saved our bacon. If we hadn't had that space, we would have just had hell to pay down the canyon.

There's a lot of good old stories that came out of that one. Max VanDenBerg was our O&M Chief, and I think Don Tracy was the project manager, project superintendent down there then. God, we put plywood on the gates to surcharge Palisades Reservoir a foot, foot and a half, just so we could store some more water and keep it off of the people down below. It worked. Wouldn't do it again. We issued orders that we would never put plywood on the spillway, on the gates again, and even this year we wouldn't let them put anything on the gates. We surcharged Palisades by a foot, but *not* with plywood, just with the sheer volume of water.

Storey: Tell me more about why you made this policy decision.

Keys: Because we ran the design through Denver, and it's not safe for the gates.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 1. DECEMBER 19, 1997.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2. DECEMBER 19, 1997.

Keys: Denver was good partners. We would ask them to analyze something, and, boy, they got on it pretty quick. We got permission this year to surcharge, but we did it with just, like I said, the sheer volume of water.

You know, going back to the Yakima days, 1980, everything happens on Friday afternoons. In 1980, in the fall, I had only been in the region for three months. Friday afternoon, I was supposed to fly to Denver. My wife was in medical school in Denver, and I had arranged for somebody to stay with the kids and I was going down to see Dell for a weekend. I was going to referee a ball game at Northern Colorado, part of the North Central Conference, on Saturday, come back on Sunday.

Protecting Salmon Redds on the Cle Elum River

Well, I was supposed to leave like at noon to fly to Denver. At nine o'clock in the morning, a call came that there were some redds below Cle Elum Dam on the Cle Elum River, which is a little tributary of the Yakima River, that they were going to cut the water off at Cle Elum because it was time to start storing water, and if they cut it off, it was going to destroy these redds. Redds are salmon nests, where they lay their eggs in the river.

Storey: Oh, R-E-D-Ds.

Keys: That's right, R-E-D-D-S. And if we cut the water off, it would dry them up and kill the eggs, and the tribes took us to court, asking us to keep water on those redds.

Bill Lloyd, the regional director, was gone. I was the assistant regional director. He was gone, and it was up to me to figure out what the hell to do with it. So we ran around, and the project superintendent was telling me, "You've got to close those gates, because we've got to store water." The tribes

were saying, "If you close those gates, you'll kill the redds and we'll lose the fishery."

I didn't know what the hell to do. The dam superintendent started down with the gates before he asked. We called him up and told him to get his butt out there and get the gates back open. So we agreed to leave the gates open and went to court the next week, and I had to catch a later flight. The fact is, there is a Keys decision out of the Comptroller General because of that incident, and I'll tell you about that in a minute. But anyway, we left the water on the redds, went to court. We came up with an alternative operation, called a flip-flop, in the Yakima River that kept water on the redds and still stored as much as possible. So that was a hell of an incident.

The Comptroller General's decision that's got Keys' name on it is, when I did that, I had made a reservation on the airplane way ahead, and I lost my ticket because it was a nonrefundable, nontransferable job. Well, to get to Denver, I had to pay for another ticket to get down there later Friday night. So I put in a claim for my other ticket, and they turned it down, saying that they weren't liable. In other words, we should have planned ahead to do all this stuff. Well, you can't do that.

They have since used that for, like if you had tickets to the concert in Denver tonight and you and I got to talking and you didn't get out of here till late and you missed your airplane, you didn't get to go to the concert, you can't claim your concert tickets. It was your fault. It was my fault that they found the redds up there. Anyway, that was another one of the incidents that happened on Friday. Everything happens on a Friday.

Storey: Well, I'd like to continue. Unfortunately, it's ten, and I know you have a schedule to keep.

Keys: Got to catch an airplane.

Storey: So let me ask you whether you're willing for the information on these tapes and the resulting transcripts to be used by researchers.

Keys: Yes, I am.

Storey: Good. Thank you.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 2. NOVEMBER 19, 1997. END OF INTERVIEW
BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1. APRIL 22, 1998.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing John W. Keys III, regional director of the Pacific Northwest Region of the Bureau of Reclamation, in his offices in Boise, Idaho, on April the 22nd, 1998, at about nine o'clock in the morning. This is tape one.

You were telling me that Secretary Bruce Babbitt got involved in your retirement announcement.

Announcing His Retirement

Keys: Yes. Well, let me back up a little bit and tell you about the decision to retire. Until a couple of years ago, I never really thought about retirement. Honestly, the travel part and the big weighty issues that we're dealing with have a way of just grinding a guy down. And I started thinking about it over the last couple of years.

Planning for Retirement

My wife and I had a conversation. My wife moved with me six or seven times, whatever it was, and she put her career on hold while our kids were young so that there was somebody home raising the kids 'til they got into school. Then she went back to school and got her bachelor's degree, got herself into medical school, got her medical degree, did her residency work. I have nothing but greatest admiration for her, for doing that. But she sacrificed every time we moved.

Now, all of our moves were good. They were all family decisions that we *all* agreed on, and we loved everywhere we ever lived. There were some places we wouldn't go back to, but we still loved every place that we lived.

We sat down about two years ago and said, "What do we want to do when we retire and when do we want to do that?" And at that time we were looking at about two years. It was two years ago looking at now. I told her that the last move was hers, and that my job had decided the others. Her practice is really busy. I mean, she's built a great practice here and it's too much. Rather than try to bring somebody in or try to cut back here, she wants to move to a smaller place that already has a group of doctors there doing stuff, so that she can just concentrate on delivering babes and working with new mothers and newborns.

Two years ago, she started looking, and she looked at small towns, actually small cities, around the West. She went to Cody, Wyoming; West Yellowstone, Montana; Ennis, Montana; Dubois, Wyoming; Salmon, Idaho; Cascade, Idaho; a couple of small Colorado towns down in Montrose and Delta in Colorado; and she went to Moab. Of all of those places, I think every time she went to a place we would get a little cranked up about that might be the place, and something always came up that was not quite right, either the practice or the acceptability of a new doctor coming into a town, and that sort of thing. Of all the places she looked at, the people at Moab were the nicest to her and indicated the need for her to come.

In the meantime, we had been in and out of Moab doing some stuff. We ran Cataract Canyon on the Colorado River last summer and met the people at the hospital and met some local people. Last fall we got to decision time, and

she decided Moab was the place. So at that time we started looking at when we would retire, and we settled on early June, because we wanted to do some stuff here in Idaho and finish up and maybe go down there this fall, and that's what we're going to do.

I'm not retiring, by the way; I'm just changing jobs. I am a commercial pilot. I completed this winter the multi-engine rating for being a commercial pilot, and I've taken the written tests and stuff to even be an instructor, and I've talked to people down there about flying for them, and there's some possibilities. So we're going to go to Moab, and I hope that this time next year I'm flying about half time for one of the outfits down there and she's got her practice established. This summer we'll finish some stuff up here and move down there this fall.

Now, with that said, that's kind of how the decision was made in the family. Well, I talked to our people in D.C. about how to fill my job, and it kind of rocked along, but I was back in D.C. for the appropriations hearing in March of this year. I had a little sit-down with the commissioner and talked to him about my retirement. I tried to keep it kind of secret, because I think lame ducks are one of the worst things in this world. But I had to talk to the commissioner and to the assistant secretary Patricia (Patty) Beneke. Well, I think the assistant secretary told the secretary that I was leaving, and lo and behold, in the appropriations hearing, Mr. Babbitt announced that this was Keys' last appropriations hearing, he was going to retire in June.

Well, as luck would have it, National Water Resources Association was in town in D.C. at that time having their annual Washington meeting, and it was all over the irrigation community and the water-user community before I had a chance to announce it to my folks here. I hurriedly sent a little short message out to our people, letting them know what was going on. I had promised the commissioner I would send him some kind of letter around the first of April, telling him what my plans were. So when I sent that letter to him, I distributed it so our people could see it, and told them some of my feelings about retirement, and that June the third was the time.

So it was kind of funny. The secretary's really a nice guy. I don't think he's getting what he deserves in D.C. right now with all of this Indian casino crud. He's really a nice fellow, and I think he meant very well in doing that. It was just kind of funny for me to have the Secretary of Interior announce my retirement.

Storey: Let me ask. You've been very active officiating.

Keys: Yes.

Storey: How is the move to Moab going to affect that?

Keys: Won't affect it. I have talked to my supervisor. There are several people that I officiate with that have retired from their jobs and have continued. I talked to the League about me continuing, and I still have four or five good years left, and if I wanted to be an old hanger-on, I could have ten years, but I won't do that. But I've got four or five really good years left, and I plan to finish it out.

Moab is right in between two of the schools in our conference – Weber State and Northern Arizona. With my airplane, last year I didn't drive to a single football game in the conference; I flew to all of them. A couple of them were commercial flights, but I flew my own airplane to six or seven of them. So flying out of Moab is no different than flying out of Boise, Idaho, and getting to the ball games. Being retired, I can take an extra day or two, if the weather is not that good, and get there. It's just not a problem, and I plan to do that.

Storey: Okay. Good. All of the places that your wife looked at seem sort of isolated to me. Is there a reason for that?

Keys: Isolated maybe is not the right word, because we never looked at them that way. You know, with us both being pilots, every one of those places we've flown in and out of a number of times. We didn't look at them as being isolated. Yes, smaller is the way we looked at it.

I was born and raised in a small town, actually twelve miles outside of a small town. I actually look forward to it. Boise is just getting too big here. Boise, I think is probably about 150,000 now. When we moved here, it was about 80,000. My goodness, the traffic and the other stuff that goes along with it, it's just getting hard to handle. We looked for a smaller place that we could fly in and out of. Moab actually fits that better than any. It seems to be a good weather belt across southern Utah there that while it catches some weather every once in a while, day in and day out it's probably better flying weather. I don't know, it would be hard to beat Boise here for flying, but that's probably as good down there as it is here.

A smaller town. I think she's looking forward to just having a very simple practice that's not so complicated by the Medicare problems, by the social problems that towns like this seem to have, by the *politics* between two or three hospitals that get involved in a larger area. There you've got just a small hospital, small staff. I think she's actually looking forward to doing that. I know I am. I *really* am.

Storey: She's sort of planning to do half time or something?

Keys: About half time. She's looking to just have a walk-in practice so there's not a lot of scheduling and that sort of thing. So we'll see how it works. You know, we're not rich. I mean, I've saved a little money along with the IRAs and stuff like that, and I've got a pretty good retirement coming from the Bureau. She's

put some money into 401(k)'s and crud like that. So we're not rich, but then we're not poor either.

If it didn't work – in other words, if we end up in Moab and don't like it, in other words, if the tourist season gets oppressive or something that doesn't agree, hell, we'll move again. It's not like we haven't moved before. There's a freedom there that a lot of people don't have. So half-time practice for her.

Hey, if I find somebody to just pay me fuel and maintenance on my airplane for me to fly for them, crud, I'd died and went to heaven. (laughter) I mean, you couldn't ask for anything better than that. I don't need a salary.

Storey: That's something of an expense.

Keys: Sure. So if somebody just pays my fuel and maintenance, God, I've made it. And I have talked to an outfit that might do that. So anyway.

Salmon Issues

Storey: When we were at the policy team meeting in Las Vegas, you mentioned that there were some new complications with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers over the salmon issues that were coming up. I think you were talking about some general that had gone off to command school, for instance. But what's going on in the whole salmon issue?

Keys: Well, the salmon issue is *really* getting difficult now. When I had talked to you before, we were working under four different listings: a couple of chinook listings, a sockeye listing. I thought we had a pretty good handle on it, even though the Corps was not quite on the same page. But since then we've had thirteen new listings in this basin: steelhead and different strains of salmon. And it is just complicated as all hell.

At the time we talked before, the Corps was putting out a biological assessment [BA] for steelhead, and the general just wouldn't listen to advice from either me or Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) or anybody. He just went his headlong way and issued a biological assessment that upset the National Marine Fisheries Service around Christmastime. They put this thing out just after Christmas, and National Marine Fisheries Service didn't want them to put it out, because what it did is it called for maximizing barging of the fish, transportation of the fish, rather than spilling the projects to let the fish move down the river themselves, or to do some other management strategy. National Marine Fisheries asked them to change the B-A, and they wouldn't do it.

Storey: A B-A is –

Keys: Biological assessment. National Marine Fisheries were trying to get at the Corps through us, and they went back to D.C. and got their assistant secretary

to call *our* assistant secretary, to have us put pressure on the Corps to change the biological assessment. Boy, I don't tell the Corps what to do and they don't tell me what to do, so what we agreed to do is make some changes in the supporting letters and in the B-O, the biological opinion, that's based on the biological assessment, to try to accommodate what National Marine Fisheries Service wanted to do. That didn't make National Marine Fisheries Service very happy.

So Corps went ahead and put out their biological assessment. We are just right now dealing with the biological opinion, and it does *not* maximize transportation. It "spreads the risk." They're going to spill some water to move fish; they're going to barge some of them. They have said no more trucking because that tends to cause problems for some of the small fish. Trying to bring more water out of Canada, more water from our Upper Columbia projects.

I think it will probably be okay, but the Corps is still really hard to work with. There's a funny story there. We have a quarterly-type meeting between the Bureau and Bonneville and the Corps, to just talk about stuff, and we had one in March. We sat down and were talking about the fish and everything, and then we got to the point where we were talking about *other* stuff. The general and the colonel were there, and the general just happened to mention that Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, FERC, had issued a study permit in Dworshak Powerplant for an outside entity to come in and put the fourth unit in.

I was just incredulous. I couldn't believe it. I said, "You let FERC in your powerplant?" And he acted like it was no big deal, and it *is* a big deal, because FERC doesn't have a say over our powerplants. Our powerplants are authorized for *government* development, and FERC governs and runs private power.

The general said, "Well, how do you know this?"

And I said, "Because they tried to do it with us, and they issued a study permit in one of our powerplants, and we wouldn't give the person that they gave the permit to permission to come on government property to do the study." And I said, "It led to an agreement that they don't get into our business. Now, we let them know what we're doing, but they have *no* authority in our powerplants." And I said, "You made a mistake by allowing FERC to issue a permit in your powerplant."

I don't think he still understands the *gravity* of what he did. That's the thing that bothers me the most about dealing with generals. You know, a general, when he comes to Portland, he *knows* he's only going to be there for two years. At times that's really a problem, because they don't have the sensitivity to the job or to the people or to the region.

Now, different generals handle it differently. General Pat Stevens that was there 1990 to 1991 was the *best* I ever worked with in my life. Pat Stevens would have been a good executive for Bonneville or for the Bureau. He was for the Corps. He would have been good at anything he did, but he just happened to be the general at the Corps at the time and was outstanding to work with. Now, they knew that and they jerked him out and sent him to Operation Desert Storm, and he was General Norman Schwartzkopf's mouthpiece for about a year and a half over there, or the whole time that they were over in Saudi and Iraq.

But since then, the parade of them has not been to that level. General Harold was a black general, and I enjoyed working with him. They left him there for three years, and he had a sensitivity to tribes that served us all well, worked pretty good with him. But still, he never jumped into the salmon issue.

When he left, they brought in General Furman. He was only there for a year, and he's back in D.C.. He's actually the boss of the general that's in Portland now. The Corps watered him down. The general in Portland is now also the same general for Omaha, where those used to be separate –

Storey: Separate divisions, yes.

Keys: – divisions. Now it's all the same. And he's just watered down, and it just means he can't pay attention. They've got a colonel, a new colonel over there also, Colonel Rick Mogrin [phonetic], really a nice guy. I thoroughly enjoy working with him, but they just don't know yet. Mogrin is funnier than all hell. We go to a meeting – no, we were on a conference call with *all* of the fish people and the dam-operating people and the muckey-mucks and everything. Mogrin comes on and says, "This is Colonel Mogrin from Portland with So-and-so and So-and-so and So-and-so here."

And whoever put the conference call together said, "Well, glad to have the Corps here. Is the Bureau there?"

And I said, "Yeah, this is John Keys." I said, "Rick Mogrin, you giving away any powerplants today?" (laughter) So we kind of kid him about it.

But it just – hey, I've been in my job too long. I've been doing the same thing in this region for eighteen years. When I was the assistant regional director, the Director and I did stuff together, and he never overturned a decision I made. We had a great relationship. So really I was doing the same kind of work for the six years that I was Assistant Director, and now I've been director, next month it will be twelve years. Same stuff. And that's too long. It's *way* too long. Hell, I've got people out there that can do an imitation of me better than I can do it. Dead serious. So that's too long. But two years for the generals is too short. They just can't have a sensitivity.

I'll tell you, me being in this job for quite a while has given me a credibility with the irrigation districts that not a lot of people have been able to develop, because of time. I really have a good relationship with them, and I treasure that. They're good people to work with.

Storey: But how has it changed? We've gone through Dan Beard and we've gone through Dale Duvall and so on. What kinds of changes happened over the years?

Keys: A lot of changes. You might compare it to a roller coaster. When I first came here, in 1980 when I came here, Keith Higginson was the commissioner, and things were pretty good with the districts. We had a pretty good relationship with them. Duvall came in and had to administer RRA [Reclamation Reform Act], and things really were not good with districts, because they had never had to deal with the Bureau of Reclamation in a regulatory-type relationship. It was really pretty tense.

Of course, then when Dennis Underwood came, it went back up, because Dennis was a people person, and we worked with the districts very well, and it was pretty good. Then Dan Beard came, and, hell, they thought he had horns and a tail. That *actually* helped me, because, for the most part, when Dan was there we in this region were the *buffer* between Dan Beard and the irrigation districts. Others, I don't think, viewed their job that way, but we were a buffer between Dan and the irrigation districts. But it still worked very well. It worked well for Dan, it worked well for us, and it probably worked well for the districts, although they didn't agree with that at the time.

Then when Dan left and Mr. Martinez came in. Eluid Martinez knows water. He knows water as well or better than any commissioner we've ever had, and he came in with an objective to rebuild the relationship with NWRA [National Water Resources Association] and the districts, and it's worked very well. So we're on a high right now, working with districts and NWRA. We've benefitted from that.

We do stuff with the districts that others don't. We help the districts sponsor an organization called the Northwest Irrigation Operators Association, and they have an annual meeting and every other year they do a tour into an irrigated area. Let's see. Last year I think they went into Canada. Next year they're going down into Salt River Project, to look at facilities and talk to managers on how they do stuff and so forth.

We jumped into the fray on aerial herbicide applications. There was an incident up in the Columbia Basin where a hunter, who just happened to be John Howe [phonetic], who just happened to be a former deputy kind of person to Cecil Andrus, got – he said he got sprayed. I don't even think the stuff drifted on him, but he smelled it and he thought he got sprayed, made a *big*

stink out of it up there, and I got called to go back to D.C. to talk to Senator Patty Murray.³⁸

When I went back there, I thought Senator Murray was going to try to make us stop making aerial applications. Second, I thought she was going to go after 2-4-D, which was one of the herbicides that we used. When I got back and talked to her, those were not her issues. She wanted some public notice system so that folks knew that we were going to be spraying and could stay away. I absolutely agreed with her. We have put such a policy together in this region, Senator Murray likes it, I like it, and we've implemented it. I did that working with the irrigators. While it's more expense, and it takes a little more time, it protected our ability to control weeds with aerial applications. I think, working with them, we did really good on that.

So, yes, it's different with different commissioners, working with the districts, but it's worked out well for us. I have some *great* friends out there in the districts. Some of the best friends I've got are out in the districts.

Storey: I don't think I've ever asked you, how do you balance Reclamation's responsibility as a Federal agency with the fact that the water users are clients, with the fact that you have this whole complex of Federal laws that is affecting the way we can manage our projects? What's the art of balancing all of this stuff so that you get a good mix?

Keys: I've got a good answer for that, but it sounds maybe too philosophical, but I've got a good answer.

Storey: Good.

Keys: The answer is, you consider the resource. Consider the resource first, and then figure out what you've got to do to do the best for the resource. Is the resource the water? Is the resource the fish? Is the resource the *irrigation* of the crops that you're growing? Is it the municipal supply? It's all of those.

I've tried to stress to our people, and I've given talks to the new leadership groups that are going through Reclamation, consider the resource and then see what's the best thing to do. Now, that sounds kind of high and mighty, and I don't mean it to be that way, but there's a lot to be said, you know, to just look yourself in the eye and say, "What's the best thing to do here?"

You'll get to a point on some of these damned issues that you don't know, you don't know what's the best thing. Let me give you a good example of that

38. Patty Murray in 1988 was elected to the Washington State Senate. In 1992, Murray ran for the United States Senate as a voice for Washington families who were not being heard in the Senate. Dramatically outspent, Murray ran a grassroots campaign of family, friends, supporters, and public interest groups to beat a 10-year veteran of the U.S. House of Representatives and become the first woman to represent Washington state in the U.S. Senate. In 1998 and 2004, she was re-elected. Source: <http://murray.senate.gov/about/> at 5:40 P.M. on October 5, 2006.

– the salmon. We don't know what's the best thing to do for the salmon yet, but we look at each one of the things that we're asked to do and said, "How does this affect the resource?" Brit, that really sounds high and mighty, but there's something to be said for that.

Storey: For instance, how does it work out in practice? Say the salmon. You've got the salmon. We think maybe putting more water down the river is a good idea. Of course, the irrigators don't want to lose water down the river, and so on. When it comes to the practice of doing this, how does it work?

Keys: Salmon is a good example. We looked at our system and we said, "What's our part in this thing? What's Reclamation's part in this thing?" Reclamation has two things to get done, and neither one of them has priority over the other. The two things to get done: one is to protect or restore or keep from going extinct the fish, and the other one is to meet the Federal contracts, in other words, the delivery of water to the irrigators, to the municipalities that have contracts, to whatever. So, two objectives. And how can we do that?

If we don't meet the objectives for the fish, it affects our ability to meet the requirements of the contracts. So we've said, "Okay. What can we do that will do both of those?" We looked at the system and we said, "We can supply some water for flow augmentation." Now the question is, how much and how do we get it? We said, "We're not going to take water from anybody." That's controversial. We're not going to take water from anybody, because in California, Congress took 850,000 acre feet of water *from* the irrigators for the fish. In California, the irrigation districts have to pay for a lot of the stuff that they're doing to save the fish.

We didn't take that approach. We said, "Our projects are not in the migration route, but we have a responsibility." And we have, with help from Congress, gotten appropriated monies to purchase water from willing sellers. We have never taken an acre foot of water for the salmon solution; we have purchased it from willing sellers. And we've used the system. There's water banks in operation and we are a big part of those water banks. We've got storage that was never contracted. We dedicated a lot of that storage. We have looked at natural flows. We've purchased water from the water banks, all to meet salmon requirements.

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1. APRIL 22, 1998.

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2. APRIL 22, 1998.

Storey: ... that our projects are operated under, and anytime we move water, we will have the proper water rights. We won't take water; we'll be willing buyer, willing seller.

Keys: Mr. Andrus agreed with that. We took it further and went back to Mr. Babbitt, and Mr. Babbitt's history of state water, when he was Governor and so forth, he

agreed to that. Live within the water rights of the states *and* only buy it from willing sellers; don't take it. Buy it from willing sellers.

Well, Mr. Philip Batt, our current Governor, was running, and he gets up and makes this pronouncement, "Not one acre-foot of water for the salmon." And I thought, "Oh, crud, what are we going to do?"

So we arranged a meeting with him and went and sat down with him and said, "Look. We have to do this, because if we don't, it will be taken over and it will have to produce more water than we can provide out of the flexibility of the system. What we think you ought to say is, 'Not *one more* acre foot of water.' In other words, we're there and we're meeting the biological opinion, and that's our protection, is to meet the biological opinion. And if you say 'Not one more acre foot,' done deal. If you say, 'Not one acre foot,' then all hell's going to break loose." He agreed to it.

So we developed a formula. There are people in the fish community who call it the Keys Formula. The formula says – 427,000 acre feet is what we provide now. The formula says 427 plus 1 equals zero. (laughter) And it works! I mean, right now we have got support from the state, we've got support from the fish people, from the irrigators, because they know that that's the limit of what we're going to take, and it's even in the legislation that we agreed to seek, and we worked with the legislature and got it done. That legislation runs out after 1999, which is about the time the biological opinion has to be redone. But it works.

To be honest with you, I'm kind of proud of what we have done to provide that water and how we've done it. Now, there are people outside that just think it's an *atrocitiy* that I allow five or six million bucks a year to be spent on water for salmon, but it's doing good, and it has bought time for the scientists to try to decide what to do for the salmon. They still don't know, but it's bought them some time. *And* it has not harmed the economy, nor the social base of this part of the country, so I like what we've done on that.

Storey: But then we get the water in the river and then we have problems downstream, I believe.

Keys: Yes. What the deal was is when we were doing all this, the State of Idaho said, "Hey, we agreed to do this, but how are we going to protect it to the ocean? In other words, we can protect it down to Lewiston, where the Snake River runs out of the state, but what about through Oregon?"

Protecting Water Reclamation Paid for for Salmon Runs

Well, we went to the two states and got them to agree to a moratorium on withdrawals of water, and so you had Idaho, Oregon, and Washington with moratoriums on *new* withdrawals. Well, there were some people trying to develop some water down there, that tried to scroogie the system around so that

they could use some old water rights and still go ahead and make a development down there. There was one in Smith Canyon over in the State of Washington that was going to develop about 20,000 acres, which would have taken about 50,000 acre feet of water out of the river, and we said, "No, you can't do that," and we objected.

What it boiled down to was they actually had a valid water permit grandfathered from before. We went to the Corps and said, "Corps, don't give them the permit under 404, a 404 permit, to take the water."

And they said, "How can we do that?"

And I said, "You don't let them come across your land to get to the water." And that worked there. Actually, it worked. The Corps people got just a lot of political pressure on them to grant them that, and some colonel up in Walla Walla granted one of the permits. I just stormed all over him and got it turned around, and they still aren't granting permits – to protect our water.

There was another development over in Oregon called the Boeing Tract. There's a ninety-nine-year lease to the Boeing Corporation for a big piece of land out there, and there is a water right associated with service to that land. The State of Oregon annually has to extend the water right, extend the permit, because it hasn't been developed, and we object to it every time. We object to them extending the permit because we don't think it should be developed, because it will take our water. I had had to write letters to Oregon, and there are people, I think, in Oregon that think we are against irrigation development. We're not against irrigation development; we're against them pulling water out of the river that we've paid dearly for up here to save the salmon down there. So far we've been able to hold that up. We've been able to hold it up.

Martha Pagel is the Director of Water Resources in the State of Oregon, *really* a great person, just a true princess to work with. She understands. But she's had to give them that extension every year. If it ever comes down to an actual application of the water right, we would actually take them to court to keep them from doing it.

The same thing over in the State of Washington. Now, the Washington legislature, in '97, passed a law that did away with the moratorium in the State of Washington, and we actually tried to get the bill vetoed, but the Governor went ahead and signed it, with an agreement that if there were *ever* any water right to be exercised, they would use quite a lengthy process to be sure that it didn't impact the water that we were moving down the river. What that means is, say if you needed five second-feet of water out of the river, you would have to find an old water right that you could buy and replace it with that showed zero impact on the river. National Marine Fisheries Service has backed us up with that with biological opinions that do the same thing.

So, so far we've been able to protect the water. I would hope that we can do that with all of the water that we buy.

Storey: And we're doing all of this and we don't really know whether we're improving things, is that right?

Keys: You know, that may be right. I see some stuff put out by the fish people that show a little bit of improvement. I see stuff put out by other outfits that show the fish are still just on the slippery slope to extinction. And I don't know which one's right.

The Problems with Salmon Issues

I don't want to make a splash with any kind of statement before I leave, but it really bothers me to see the Endangered Species Act being used the way it is on salmon. What I mean by that is we are spending big dollars and running water out of this state that could be put to a lot better use for salmon. Bonneville Power Administration is spending hundreds of millions of dollars a year on power and loss of power and that sort of thing to help bring the salmon back. The Corps is spending a lot of money. *Everybody* is spending a lot of money, and we are still killing hundreds of thousands of salmon a year in harvest. Salmon aren't endangered. What's endangered is the harvest.

Gosh, you know, the tribes say, "Well, we need harvests for subsistence and for ceremonial purposes." That's fine. That's not many fish at all. But the commercials – the tribes have still got commercial fisheries going in the river. There's not a *fish* that reaches the Dworshak Hatchery out there that's not marked by a gill net. Not a single fish gets to that hatchery that's not marked by a gill net.

So we're not doing this to keep the salmon from becoming extinct; we're doing it to protect the damn harvest. And I don't understand that. I don't understand that. I don't think we're going to come to a real solution until somebody recognizes that we're really not trying to save the fish; we're trying to save the harvest.

There's a lot of people on this "take the dams out" bandwagon these days. I don't think we'll ever see it done. I *hope* we don't see it done. Now, the dams do cost some fish. There's just no two ways about it. The fish try to get through the slackwaters. They're subject to predation. A few of them, the sickly ones, get disoriented and we lose them, that may have gotten to the ocean anyway. So there *are* some problems. And getting through the dams themselves. God, if they go through the turbines, the blades don't kill fish, it's the pressure differences when they drop through and they come out addled and that kind of thing, and the birds and so forth. The squawfish eat them. The dams do cost some fish.

But I just can't see doing all that we are doing to maintain a harvest. That's just personal. Like I said, I'm not going to make a splash with that. I refuse to do it. Anyway, just personal opinion.

I've got another thing on retirement I want to tell you, too.

Storey: Good.

Plans for Retirement

Keys: I may have told you this before. I may work when I retire. Fact is, I want a job flying. I may work with an outfitter, because I love to run the rivers and stuff, and I may work with somebody doing some of that kind of stuff, or I may find something else I want to do. But I don't want to be a consultant for irrigation districts. I don't want to do anything political. I just won't let myself get sucked into that. Two reasons. One of them sounds high and mighty again, but it's not. I don't want *anybody* to look at any of the decisions we made on salmon, on recreation, on in-stream flows, for any irrigation district. I don't want anybody to look at those decisions and say that there was any hint that that decision was made to prepare for a future opportunity. Just don't want that to happen.

And the other reason is just *absolutely purely* personal, but I have been to NWRA and all of the state water resource meetings for years, and I see the old regional directors and the old Bureau people hanging around, and they're trying to extend their careers and do this and that and the other, and I just want to say, "Get out of here!" So I won't let myself do that.

When I'm gone, I'm gone. Now, that doesn't mean I don't want to see friends. Hell, the Bureau friends are the best I've ever had. Never really had any *close* friends that weren't Bureau. Maybe that's bad; I don't know. But I do want to see friends. But to work on stuff, I won't let it happen. That's just purely personal. I didn't mean to change the subject.

Storey: No, no, that's fine. Harold Arthur once said in one of his interviews, he said, "I made a lot more money after I retired than before I retired, doing consulting, and worked a third of the time."

Keys: Yes, there's a lot of people that want to do that. I have two thoughts for it. First, it's just not for me. And the second is, I don't know how they can do that. The problems and the travel schedule and the pressures that we've dealt with for the last ten years in this region, I don't know why a person would want to extend that.

Storey: Tell me about that. My impression – I started doing this about '93, '94, doing oral history interviews. My impression is that back then people were in the office more, there was less stress, there were more people to do the things.

What do you think about that? Has there been an increase because of the reorganization?

How the Issues and Related Travel Have Changed over the Years

Keys: Well, I think it started before the reorganization. I look at myself. When I was an assistant regional director here, Bill Lloyd traveled a lot. It was fortunate for me that he liked to travel, and I could stay home and keep the shop going, because I had kids in high school and it was good for me to be here. My youngest daughter finished high school the same year I was appointed to be Director. At that time there was a lot of travel, but there were not the numerous heavy issues that we've got now.

Everything is a heavy issue these days, where before you may have had one heavy issue going. If you look back, say, at the late seventies in this region, the heavy issue in this region was building third powerplant at Grand Coulee, and the other stuff, it was no big deal. We built other smaller projects and we dealt with stuff. We wrote impact statements. They weren't *big deals*. This seems like everything's a big deal now. I don't think you can tag it on the reorganization, because it started before then. The reorganization may have concentrated some of those *big deals* onto the front office a little more, but I think it started before then. We're a product of the age we live in, and we live in an information age that just is unquenchable, almost, and they make big deals out of stuff that fifteen, twenty years ago were not a big deal.

The salmon issue, for us, is a big deal. We got into that safety of dams issue on Ochoco that we talked about. God, the newspapers got involved, the international dam community got involved. Everybody made it a *big deal*. We're into *recreation* policies. A little simple thing like a powwow up at Black Canyon, up at Montour, on Black Canyon Reservoir, got into an argument over the concession policy, on whether we could charge a fee for them having concessionaires on the thing. *Big damn deal*. Went to congressional people, went to the newspapers, and we had to make pronouncements and everything. Big deal.

They made a *big deal* out of us working with tribes. I have an active relationship with fourteen different tribes now. We used to work with tribes more casually, I think, than we do now. They have given us a trust responsibility that we never had before. See, before Mr. Babbitt came in, maybe it started a little bit before him, but before, Reclamation didn't have a trust responsibility to the tribes. The *secretary* had a trust responsibility to the tribes. He could call on Reclamation to do some work that helped him meet that trust responsibility. BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs] had a *big* role with the tribes. But that's not true anymore. The secretary has said, "You agencies have a trust responsibility."

Now, we had to try to decide what that is, and where we came out of it is that when you're dealing with water resources, Reclamation has a trust

responsibility to the tribes, and that responsibility goes as far as having a government-to-government relationship with those tribes. We take it very seriously. But there again, it's another *big* deal, because the tribes, in most cases, they won't meet with our area managers. They want to meet with the secretary first. Then they want to meet with the commissioner. They *will* put up with the regional director. They won't do a government-to-government with the area manager. So there's another *big* deal that didn't used to be a big deal.

I don't know. The age that we're in, the news bites at five o'clock on the TV and so forth, have made things just so much more sensitive that they're a grind. It's just different than it was before.

Storey: You mentioned recreation a couple of times today. I don't think we've ever really talked about recreation much.

Recreation Issues

Keys: Recreation's a good subject to talk about for a while. You know, in the Western United States, we built reservoirs, and for however many tens of years, or decades, nobody paid much attention to them. But then folks started to really like water-based recreation, and whether we had facilities there for them or not, they started using them. Some places we had good facilities and other places we didn't.

In this region, we took a law that said you have to provide minimum basic facilities for health and safety, and we were building recreation facilities under that law. The way we did it is we said, "If you don't build a boat ramp on Lake Walcott at Minidoka Dam, if you don't build a boat ramp there, they're going to back the trailer over the grass and they will drop the wheels over the little bank there, and they'll erode it. They'll ruin the grass. They'll drip oil all over everything. And they'll get stuck, and they'll hurt somebody, and that kind of thing. So let's just put a boat ramp in." Minimum basic facilities for health and safety.

We did that with boat ramps, we did it with toilets, we did it even with some picnic tables and stuff like that. Then we got caught. GAO [General Accounting Office] or the IG [Inspector General], one or the other – I think it was GAO, did an audit, and we had a facility planned up at Cascade, and we were directed to, "Don't do that anymore."

Now we use Title 28 of 102-575, Public Law 102-575, as an authority and we have to find cost-share partners and that sort of thing to get it done. Now, we're still kind of scrooging the system to do that, and what we do is like at Walcott and at Cascade, we've entered into an agreement with the Sate of Idaho, and the Sate of Idaho can collect fees and keep them and put them back in the park if we, Reclamation, collect fees they into the black hole of Treasury and never see the light of day again.

So we've got agreements, and we actually had to go to the legislature, because it meant more FTEs³⁹ for the state. We have a five-year agreement with them, and the first year they hired people to start working our facilities. They collect fees and apply them to the park, and the first year, if they're short at the end of the year, the first year we paid all of how much they were short. Second year, we pay 75 percent how much they were short. Third year, 50 percent. Fourth year, 25 percent. Fifth year, they're on their own. So far it's working really well. Fact is, the amount of monies we're having to pay is very small. I think by the fifth year we will be to the point where they're not losing any money. They have the people, they're in charge of them, and they're administering the recreation on those two facilities.

Recreation is still a hard one to handle. This call from Chuck Wassenger [phonetic] that we were just talking about here, we're trying to work with BLM [Bureau of Land Management] at Prineville Reservoir. I have some problems with working with BLM, because in most cases they want us to give up the withdrawn lands around the reservoir before they *will* or even have authority to do the recreation. And we're trying to work a special way to do this around Prineville as a pilot.

Issues with BLM, Withdrawn Lands, and Recreation

The reason I don't like doing the thing with BLM is if we give up our withdrawal, we *change* organic acts that we operate under. If we, Reclamation, have a withdrawal on a facility and some outfit comes in that wants to develop something, a mineral lease, a gold claim, or a gravel pit, or drill an oil well or something, under Reclamation law they have to prove to us that it doesn't damage the resource, and the resource in this case is the reservoir, the sediment into the reservoir, the water quality of the reservoir, the public accessibility, and that sort of thing. They have to prove to us that it doesn't harm the resource.

Under the 1872 mining law that BLM operates under, if somebody comes in with an application to do one of those things, BLM has to prove that that activity doesn't harm the resource. Big difference. The agency on their side has to prove that it doesn't harm, and if they don't prove that it doesn't harm, they have to give it. *Have* to give it. In our case, this outfit comes in and wants something, has to prove to us that it doesn't harm, before we *may* give them a permit. Big difference.

So that's kind of what we're working through with BLM, and we're trying to do a pilot at Pineville right now to do it under a separate authorization, to get what we need out of it and we're not subject to 1872 mining law.

39. Full time equivalents. A system used in government to figure the total number of employees in an organization. This is sometimes very complicated because of seasonal and part-time workers, retirements, and vacancies. Different government organizations use different systems for the calculations.

So, recreation – we've got a great resource out there. I mean, if you look at the reservoirs that we have, if you look at the opportunities for us to work with the states on in-stream flows *below* the reservoirs, for fishing, for boating, they're *big*. Dennis Underwood encouraged us to take advantage of that, and we did some stuff. Dan's approach is, "We don't have the money or the people to do recreation, so go get somebody to help you do it." We're kind of using a combination of those.

Catch a Special Thrill (CAST)

Under recreation, we've got some good programs going on. We've got a little program that we work with BASS – Bass Angler Sporting Society, I think it is – called CAST, and it stands for Catch a Special Thrill. What it is, is in every one of our area offices, once a year we work with the locals, with the BASS people, and Shriners or another group, to take a group of handicapped kids fishing. The BASS people bring the boats, these 3000-hp bass boats that they go charging around at 150 miles an hour on the water with, and so forth. They're not really 3000-hp, 150 miles an hour.

Storey: They go tearing around.

Keys: They go tearing around. But the kids love it, and they catch fish, and we have a good time doing that. And that's a good deal.

Accessibility Data Management System (ADMS)

It also led us to a thing that our region started for all of government, and it's called ADMS, Accessibility Data Management System. About ten years ago, we started working with an outfit called PAW, stood for Physically-challenged Access to the Woods. What we were trying to do is put together a database so that people anywhere in the country could call in for that database and say, "I want to go to Arches National Park," for example. "Is it accessible? What accessible features or facilities are there?" And so forth. "I live in New York City and I'm going to Arches. What's accessible between New York City and Arches that I can see on the way?"

Well, PAW always struggled for money, and we worked with them for a while and finally had to go our own way. The idea that our people came up with is, "Let's develop this system with the money that we can save meeting the accessibility laws. Let's develop it with *our* money and other Federal agency monies."

So we went to the Bureau people, we then went to Department, and almost all of the government agencies are working with it now. It does two things. The first thing is it gives them checklists and all of the specs necessary, everything so that you can go and evaluate one of your facilities to see if it's accessible, checklists as to what has to be done to make it accessible, and all that. And *all* of the specs, all of the laws and everything is in this databank.

And *that's* how we sell it to our own people – to save money. In other words, you don't have to take your engineers out there. You can have a person go out and do this thing, because they've got everything right there. We developed checklists for them. It just gives everything they need to do.

The second thing it does is it makes it accessible to the public, either telephone number or the main thing is coming through the computer these days, through the internet. And it does just what I said. You can–

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2. APRIL 22, 1998.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1. APRIL 22, 1998.

Storey: [This is tape 2 of an] interview with John W. Keys III on April 22, 1998.

Keys: You can plug into any government facility and see whether it's accessible or not, what the accessible features and facilities are, and between. In other words, you ask it and it will tell you. And that's something I'm really proud of. We are trying to be sure that it doesn't go away when Keys goes away. We have gotten Denver involved, and people are actually working under Denver's supervision right now, keeping the development going. It's supposed to be finished at the end of this year. On our policy team meeting agenda next month is sponsorships and how we can keep it going after Keys leaves.

Storey: Good.

Keys: So that's just a little bit about recreation.

Storey: You mentioned NWRA. Tell me about your perception of what NWRA is and what it means to Reclamation. That's the National Water Resources Association, I think.

National Water Resources Association (NWRA)

Keys: Yes, it is. Well, we have to go back and look at the roots of NWRA. NWRA used to be the Reclamation Association – NRA, National Reclamation Association. It was formed to help do lobbying for Reclamation, to get Reclamation projects built, to get them through Congress and that sort of thing. Of course, then the Corps came along and everybody else needed to be involved, and the municipalities wanted to be involved, and that's when it went to National Water Resources Association. That conversion was made in the sixties, I think.

Reclamation Reform Act (RRA) Was Really Written for California

NWRA has worked with us very closely over the years, and it goes back to Pat – the Director before Tom Donnelly. Pat O'Mara [phonetic]. They helped us get stuff through Congress, after Floyd Dominy left, that we had a hard time getting through. But then you came up with different interests in the NWRA,

and there were different things pulling, and laws that they *didn't* like. The '82 Reclamation Reform Act is one that was just abhorrent to them. And really what happened is that you had a law written for California – in other words, the big stuff in the Central Valley – that got spread to the rest of Reclamation, and it didn't work very well. Seemed like the more we fiddled with it, the worst it got. And NWRA took a strong stand, in part in trying to make that thing workable, and sometimes it was good and sometimes it wasn't good.

I personally have had a good working relationship with NWRA all of the time that I've been in Reclamation. I see them as a lobbying arm and as a representative of irrigation districts and municipalities, that get them together and give them a single voice at times, and it helps. I've been on the wrong side of some of their opposition to some of our stuff. Hell, my *wife* and I don't always agree on everything, so for us not to agree with NWRA is no big deal, as long as we don't let something like that keep us apart forever, and we have not. I've had a good working relationship with NWRA.

State Associations of NWRA

Idaho Water Users Association

Even stronger than NWRA is its member state associations, and in this region we've got three good strong ones, especially the Idaho one. Idaho Water Users Association is the local Idaho NWRA association. They've got an outstanding Executive Director, his name is Sherl Chapman. They've got a good staff. They have good progressive programs. They put on law seminars a couple of times a year. They are working on water-quality stuff now to help with the new Clean Water Act T M deal [unclear] so forth. They do a lot of good stuff.

State of Oregon has a really good one. Jan Lee [phonetic] is the Executive Director of that one.⁴⁰ Great work. Just really good to work with. We have a contract with them now. They're developing a handbook for their irrigation districts to use in meeting requirements of the Clean Water Act, and we've got some money into it. Roger Patterson's got a little money into it. EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] has got some money into it. Works really well.

The State of Washington, they were kind of slow for a while, but they've got a new Executive Director, Tom Myron [phonetic], who's doing a lot to bring them into the real twenty-first century, and they're doing better all the time. So we've had good working relationship with them. I see them being able to get some stuff done that we can't do. I do go back and work with congressional people, but I'm limited on what I can do. I can't lobby; they can. I can't raise money to put into an effort of something, where they can.

40. Oregon Water Resources Congress.

If you look at commissioners, again, to NWRA, Dan Beard had horns and a tail, and again we were kind of a *buffer* between Dan and NWRA. That's not quite right. We were a buffer between Dan and the *state* associations. I think Dan truly enjoyed sparring with Tom Donnelly.

Storey: With the national organization.

Keys: Yes.

Storey: Is it basically a Western organization?

Keys: You know, it is. There have been efforts to bring other states into it, but, yes, it's basically a Western organization. I know we had a meeting in New Orleans here a few years ago, because they were trying to encourage Louisiana to come in. Didn't work. Had a meeting in Hawaii a couple of years ago, because they were trying to make Hawaii active and so forth. I don't know, I think Hawaii is still a member, but they don't do very much.

Storey: They have huge irrigation works over there. I mean water capture and transportation works.

Keys: But they just never have been that attractive to them, for some reason. But it's a Western organization, yes.

Storey: You mentioned Reclamation Reform Act a moment ago. I wanted to ask what's going on with acreage limitation? Anything new up here?

Reclamation Reform Act

Keys: Oh, no, and that's good. There's nothing new, and that's good. You know, Reclamation Reform Act, or RRA, which everybody knows it as. It cast Reclamation into a different role that none of us were ever comfortable with. It was the role of an enforcer. We had worked with these districts for years and years, doing RO&Ms, review of operation and maintenance, helping them do stuff, and they never saw us in a regulatory role like they did EPA, or the labor service or whatever. But here we were with this new law that affected every one of them, except the paid-out districts, which were not very many then, and we didn't handle it very well. We don't have the psyche of an enforcement agency. And in some cases we were too lenient, other cases we were too strong, other cases we just didn't pay attention.

The regional director in this region before myself didn't pay attention to RRA. He did some stuff, but still didn't pay a lot of attention to it. When the commissioner at that time, Dale Duvall, talked to me about me getting this job, he said, "If you get this job, *you will* enforce RRA." He said, "If you're not going to do that, you need to tell me now and I won't put you in the job." So I had a direct order to enforce RRA, and at times we did it too strong. We've spent a lot of time fixing up some of those old messes.

I think RRA is in pretty good shape right now. We got away from that old full-cost assessment when somebody did something wrong. There's a little schedule of penalties that we can use now. The 960 acre limitation is being used effectively. I think there's still some yo-yoing with the California people on trusts, but for the most part, I think RRA has been taken care of.

Was it necessary? Probably. You get into the big tentacle farm kind of thing in California, and the government subsidy wasn't meant for the big corporations; it was meant for family farms. In this region, sure, there's a few big ones, but for the most part our region is made up of family farms, and there's some big ones.

If RRA had a knock against it, it was formed and passed to deal with the big tentacles in Central Valley [of California]; it wasn't meant for the Burley Irrigation Districts or the North Side Canal Companies in south central Idaho. That was the real problem with RRA.

Storey: It was interesting to watch Dan Beard, the evolution of Dan's thinking about what the issues were, because he changed a lot during his commissionership.

Keys: Absolutely. Before Dan came in, "By God, why aren't you guys enforcing this? You ought to do this and that." Yes, he changed.

Storey: Waterspreading is somewhat related.

Waterspreading—Unauthorized Use

Keys: Yes. The only region that has a problem with water-spreading is my region, and I say that with tongue absolutely in cheek. I have told the other regional directors to don't admit that they've got waterspreading, because if they do, they've got to do something about it. Now, waterspreading is present on *every* irrigation district, *every* project that the Bureau has ever built. And what waterspreading is, is the application of water either outside of the project or irrigation district boundaries, *or* application of water in excess of the authorized number of acres in the project. It's pure and simple. In other words, putting more water on more land than was authorized by the legislation.

It came to a head in this region on the Umatilla Project. In 1988, the legislation was passed authorizing the Umatilla Basin Project, and on the Umatilla Basin Project there is a delivery of water to a place called Teal Irrigation District, about six thousand acres. It is outside of boundary and it is in excess of what was authorized. And there's a *history* to it. When the original Umatilla Project was built in the twenties and thirties, it was one of those *dirt-poor* areas that couldn't support a project. With the monies that they had, they kept reducing its size, and they reduced its size 'til it was just too cussed small. And then they reduced the repayment obligation, reduced the repayment obligation. Ended up with almost *no* repayment obligation.

The management at that time, the project manager, the regional director, trying to work with them to make something work, said, "Look. What you need to do is serve more acres. If you serve more acres, you've got a bigger base to draw assessments from, and you can use the water that you have there. If you don't have enough water, *do* a water conservation project. Save some water, bring more acres in to serve so that you've got a bigger base to draw assessments from." And they did. And this Teal ID thing worked out like a top for them, but they didn't follow-up and make the contracts right. They just did it.

Waterspreading is really a contract issue, pure and simple. The Bureau didn't take care of the contracts when the new acres were brought in. We've got ways to handle it, called inclusions and exclusions, but we just didn't do it, didn't think we had to. Then over at Umatilla, we got the project started, and when it was authorized, the districts put a provision in there that the boundaries be expanded to include those outside of project areas. And that brought attention to the thing.

Jim Cook, who was 400 O&M Chief in Washington at that time, made an issue out of it, about how all over the West we were delivering water to lands that were unauthorized. "Unauthorized use" is its official title. And Jim brought enough attention to it that we couldn't just take care of it quietly and let it go away; we had to do something public. And Umatilla brought it down on this region, and we ended up having to do a survey of all of our districts, and we've got several districts that have got a lot of acres being irrigated outside.

Will water ever be taken off of land? No. Will we take care of the issue? Yes, we are taking care of the issue. We are expanding some boundaries. We are getting mitigation for some of those deliveries. They are being added to the assessment roles. So we're taking care of them one at a time, and we're trying to *keep* it out of the newspapers. For right now we are keeping it out of the newspapers.

So, we are taking care of waterspreading. It's still a problem. My advice to the other regions is still the same: *don't* admit that you've got it, because if you do, you've got to do something about it. And I still get questions from some of the environmental organizations about waterspreading, from some of the tribes. I had to answer waterspreading questions *yesterday* to the Umatilla Tribe that I met with over in Pendleton.

Storey: Of course, on the Newlands Project, for instance, water-spreading is an issue where they're saying, "We want that water," the tribes are.

Keys: That's right.

Relationships among the Offices in Reorganization

Storey: Let's spend a few minutes on office relationships. This is something we've talked about before, I know, because I constantly go back to it. We've reorganized. The area offices have been given more power, more responsibility. We have the regions. We have the commissioner's office and then his staff in Denver under Margaret Sibley. Then we have the Denver Service Center. How are those things working nowadays?

Area Offices Were Very Successful in the Reorganization

Keys: I think they're working pretty good. There, of course, I think, could be some improvements. If you look at the reorganization, I think one of the real success stories out of the reorganization was the area office concept. I think it's been that successful in this region because we were doing a lot of that already, but we expanded it. We have an Oregon area office⁴¹ now. I think the concept there of having people that do the work closer to where they're doing the work for is good, and that part of it has worked very well for us. So the relationship between area offices, while right after the reorganization there was some rough spots because we had people in the region that *belonged* in the area office, and who was going to do what work, and who had what authority, I think we're past that. That's working pretty well.

We went through some rough spots in how we work with Denver after the reorganization, and there were really two issues there. The one issue is, where do you keep the expertise? Who does the work? Do you do the work in the region or at the area office, or in Denver, or whatever? I think we've got that one settled pretty well.

Basically, we always use cattle guards as a good example. If we got a damn cattle guard to design, area office can do it. If we've got a water system to design, a small one, hell, we can do it here. If we've got a dam, a major canal or something, a big powerplant or something, we need them, and we use them. In this region our philosophy is, if the area office can do it, they do it. If they can't do it and they need help, we in the region help them if we can handle it. If we can't, our next stop is Denver, Technical Service Center. Just absolute, the next stop is there in Denver.

Relations with the Technical Service Center in Denver

We look at cost and we look at expertise, and if they can do it with a reasonable cost, we do it. If the cost is not reasonable, then I go talk to Felix Cook, and if we agree that we can't do it within a cost, we may look for a consultant, but we won't do it without talking to them down there.

The one issue is who does what. I think in that progression right now, we're in pretty good shape. The place where we're still hurting is cost. It still costs a lot for us to use Denver, and we've even talked to them about us putting

41. This is known officially as the Lower Columbia Area Office and is officed in Portland, Oregon.

aside a special fund of some kind to allow them to keep an expertise that we can't fund in the region, that we may need at some time, and that they shouldn't have to build their overhead up so high to cover it. So there are still some special talks about how to do that.

But I think us and Technical Service Center – right now I feel good about it. Now, you have to remember, when I say that, that this region has a *special* relationship with Felix Cook. Felix and I have been friends for a long time, and Felix actually worked in this region for about a year. That helps us. It really helps. I think Mid-Pacific's using Denver a lot, that they used to do. Mid-Pacific was notorious for having all sorts of consultants working for them. I think they're using the Technical Services Center much more than they did before, and that's good.

Washington office is still an enigma for me. I fight with the Washington office sometimes, still, and there are still some folks there that I don't quite trust because of their agendas. I'm still not sure that we're using them as effectively as they should, that we've got the right people doing the right stuff there. That one's still a question mark. I don't mean to cast anything against Mr. Martinez, because I really think he's a good commissioner. I really do. There are some good things going on back there, but still there are some issues that I'm uncomfortable with how they're handled.

Storey: How about the reorganization with Steve Magnussen between the regional directors and the commissioner? Do you think that's a good structure?

Keys: Let me–

Storey: I'm not talking personalities; I'm talking the structure here.

Keys: I understand. I don't mind it, is a good way for me to put it. And I don't mind it because Steve is there when Mr. Martinez is not. If Dennis Underwood were the commissioner, it would get in the way. It would get in the way to have somebody in Magnussen's position if Dennis were the commissioner. With Mr. Martinez being the commissioner, it doesn't get in the way. I truly enjoy working with Magnussen. I call him about once a week to talk about stuff, whether I need to or not. With Dennis Underwood, I did that with him. With Dan, it would have been good to have a Magnussen there.

I *could* not work with Ed [Edward] Osann. I thought he was a snake. I thought it then. I still think it. I think he never quit working for the Wildlife Federation. Didn't trust him, still don't trust him. I *tried* to make that relationship work and I just never could do it. So if Ed Osann had been in Magnussen's position, I'd have an entirely different view of it. But with Magnussen there, Steve and I have known each other for a long time, and that works, yes. So I don't mind it.

I'll tell you the same thing about that relationship that I tell people in this office. The guy that gets the mail in the morning, I think Bob Nichols is a GS-4, maybe a -5. Bob Nichols works for John Keys. Ken [Kenneth] Pedde, the deputy, works for John Keys. Now, there may be a level or two between me and Bob Nichols, but Bob Nichols works for me. Likewise, I work for the commissioner. Yes, Magnussen's there as maybe a level, but that level doesn't get in our way. The level doesn't get in the way of Bob Nichols handling my mail. I don't see a conflict or a problem of having somebody in that position. Fact is, I think it helps.

Storey: Does Bob Nichols work for the commissioner also?

Keys: Damn right he does.

Storey: Okay. (laughter) I just wanted to make sure I understood what's going on here.

Keys: He sure does. I'll tell you two things. Dr. Lakey, the famous heart surgeon in Houston, told a story, and it's kind of a high and mighty story, but still it has a point. Some newspaper guy was down there to interview Lakey about some famous person he was going to operate on, and the guy, he got there late or something, and the janitor was mopping the floor, and he had to knock on the door for the janitor to let him in. The guy let him in. The guy says, "What do you want?"

He says, "Well, I'm here to interview Dr. Lakey."

And the guy showed him how to get there. The guy was mopping the floor. The reporter asked this janitor, says, "What do you do here?"

And the janitor told him that he helped Dr. Lakey save lives. His job was mopping the floor, but he had a part in it. Now, I don't know whether that story's true or whatever, but it makes a hell of a point.

I've seen that kind of story another time. I just read a book on mentoring, and it's *The Manager as a Mentor*. I read it to get ready to give a talk to the leadership group for Reclamation. It's talking about how mentoring works and so forth. The author had come up through the chain and was an executive in some big firm. One of his mentors was the guy that supervised the custodial work in his building, one of his mentors. And the reason that he went to that guy to mentor him is this guy was in charge of the janitorial service, and these guys, on a daily basis, had to sweep the floors and empty the garbage cans and the ashtrays in the CEO's office and in the big meeting rooms and stuff. And how could he keep those guys making ten or twelve bucks an hour *motivated* to do a *good* job so that that place was presentable and made that CEO look good when he was dealing with all the outside outfits? I thought about that, and this guy had nothing but praise for that supervisor. Makes a hell of a point on what parts everybody has to play.

Tomorrow, in this office, is Bring Your Daughter to Work – Bring Your Child to Work Day. I'm going to be gone, and I'm sorry I'm going to be gone. (Damn, he's got that teeshirt on. Today is Earth Day, and I forgot it.) But one of the points I made last year, we go and speak to the kids, and Ken Pedde will do it for me tomorrow, but the point is, is that *everybody* has a place in this thing, and without what they do, we wouldn't be successful. We wouldn't be successful. If Bob Nichols didn't separate that mail and get it up here, I would be at a loss. If Ed Mordhorst, who is our draftsman, if he didn't do a good job on putting the plans and stuff together, first off, we'd have a *mess* out in the field, and, second off, I couldn't get my job done. And I can look at everybody in this organization and say the same thing about them. Hell of a message.

Storey: It's important.

Keys: It really is.

Storey: Quickly, are there any particular congressional people that should be talked about? When I go to Washington, D.C., I see these little bumper stickers that say "Can Helen, not salmon," and things like that.

Jim McClure, Mark Hatfield, "Scoop" Jackson

Keys: Yes. There were several of them that have been just outstanding to work for. Jim McClure, good example of one. Jim McClure knew water. He was a water attorney in Idaho before he went back. Outstanding to work with. Mark Hatfield, outstanding to work with, and they did a lot for this region. I knew "Scoop" Jackson. That's not right. I knew who he was; he didn't know me from Adam. But he did a lot for this region, but he was gone before I was in these jobs here. But Hatfield and McClure did a lot for these, and I worked with their staff most of the time, but on occasions they would come into my meetings with their staff, and that really meant a lot.

Bob Smith, Peter DeFazio

Bob Smith, Congressman from Oregon, he's actually a friend. I work with his staff a lot, but he'll come into the meetings and talk. And there have been several like that, that I really feel pretty close to. There are some that started out to be hard to work with and ended up easy to work with. Peter A. DeFazio from Oregon is a good example. Started out, we were just a damn government agency, but we've got a good working relationship now.

Helen Chenoweth

Helen Chenoweth is really a different one, and we have not had eye-to-eye agreement on water issues.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 1. APRIL 22, 1998.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2. APRIL 22, 1998.

Regional Hydrologist in Billings

Keys: I was GS-13, regional hydrologist. About 80 percent of the job was technical, had some good field work. About 20 percent was administrative, because I had, what, seven or eight people working for me. I got to go out in the field and still do some stream gauging. Got to go out in the field and collect data. Had a *really* good group of guys working for me, and a good boss.

My boss was Phil Gibbs. Phil Gibbs had been the regional hydrologist in that region for twenty-six years. I was the project hydrologist in Bismarck, North Dakota, and applied for the job and he gave it to me. The day I took the job, he said, "I won't get in your way." And he was my boss. He had been moved up to be the Planning Officer. He said, "I won't get in your way," and he never did. Now, there were numerous times when he could have jumped in and said, "You ought to do this," or, "You ought to do it this way," or, "Don't do that." He never did that. That was the best job I ever had.

It was a great place to work. The Upper Missouri River Basin in those days *wasn't* the trendy place to be like it is now, you know. You didn't have all of the big absentee landowners on the Boulder River and around Bozeman and so forth. God, we got to go into the beautiful places, the Judith River, into the Upper Yellowstone.

Storey: Judith River is a wonderful place.

Keys: It is almost paradise. And we got to go into Paradise Valley in the Upper Yellowstone and do work. We did work out in the plains on the Tongue River and on Garrison. We were still trying to build the Garrison. I got to go into South Dakota and work. And the people, the Bureau people in that region in those days were just second to none. I think the people in this region now are second to none.

But in those days, I was still the young charger in those days, you know. When I went into that job, I went into it in '71, so I was not quite thirty years old. There was a group of people about my age that were in leadership positions. I'd say in the thirty to forty range. Damn, we were doing good work. We were doing good work, good technical work in those days. A lot of *stuff* coming along in those days. You know, NEPA [National Environmental Protection Act] was coming along, E-S-A. was coming along, a lot of development in other places was coming along. But the time and the job and the people and my family and myself, it was just a great time.

It Was Cold in Bismarck

And Billings was a great place to live. You said, the second part of the question, where's the best place to live? Billings may have been it, but you've got to remember that we came to Billings from three years in Bismarck, which was just the coldest damn place I ever spent in my life. One of the good old

stories, about January the nineteenth in '69, my wife and I lived up by the cemetery in Bismarck, and I had a '65 Ford pickup. Went out on a Sunday morning, it was 41 below zero, and the Monday morning it was 39 below. I think the high on Sunday had been about 24 or something like that. So I went out on Monday morning. I lived two miles from work. I started up my pickup. I had a headbolt heater on it. Started it up. The oil light stayed on, but the engine was running. I thought, well, it will warm up. So I started to work and I got about halfway to work, and the engine quit. I got the truck off to the side, and I walked the other mile on into work. Didn't have a hat. Had a big coat and scarf, didn't have a hat.

I got to work and had frostbitten the tip of my left ear. I went into the office and I had frost all over my hair and my coat, and I ran into Ken Christianson, who was in charge of the computer stuff in those days there. I said, "Christianson, write this down. If I'm still in this office a year from today, you can kick me in the butt." Well, the next year I was still there, and I waited 'til the next day, and I reminded him that he missed his chance.

But we moved that next summer of '71 to Billings. Bismarck was a hard place to get to know folks. I mean, it took us three years before we had a good circle of friends *outside* of Reclamation. The Reclamation people were just fantastic. We were family in those days. But outside, Bismarck was a hard place to get to know folks, because most of the people lived there had come in from the farm, and they didn't socialize a lot. We joined the Elks Club and that kind of thing to develop friends, and I was officiating in those days, had a little circle of friends. But it was a hard place to get to know them.

Life in Billings

Billings was not that. When you walked into the town, they knew you. Billings, the town in those days was just like they opened up their arms and said, "Welcome." I mean, it was just almost instant friends. The office was good, the Bureau people were just super as always, and we did stuff. We had dances, we had picnics, and the town was friendly. The weather was a little bit better. We still had cold snaps in Billings, but the weather was a little better. Gosh, the town was so friendly, it was just a great place to raise kids in those days. My wife got involved in a lot of stuff. Before we left there, she went back to school. My youngest started first grade, so she went back to school. She actually was a basketball coach for the school, for Rocky Mountain College, for three years while she was going to school. They gave her tuition and a little bit of money for being a basketball coach. But we loved Billings, Montana.

We like Boise. Boise is a great place to live. It's just bigger now than we're comfortable with. But there's so much to do around here, and in Billings, the same way. If you wanted to do it around Billings, you could find it. There was great hunting and fishing and skiing and boating and rock hounding. Boy, it was just a great place to live. So Billings is a great place to live. Boise is a

great place to live. I don't mean to put Boise in a second seat, because it's been a great place to live, but at the *time* and so forth, Billings was just a great place.

Storey: The corollary question is, the worst job you had with Reclamation, the worst place to live while you were with Reclamation.

Did Not like Living in Denver

Keys: Let me answer the second part first. The worst I ever had to live was in Denver. We moved into there in '75, and we bought a place to live out in Arvada, which at that time was right on the edge, and we thought we could be away from a lot of the downtown. It passed us like a freight train passing a hobo. We hadn't lived there a year before there were developments all the way out. Couldn't even see the farmland anymore. It seemed like in Denver, anytime you decided to do something, 53,000 people had decided to do the same thing at the same time in the same place. It was a big city, and I never did like living there. My family, I think, suffered a little bit from it. I had good friends there, really good Reclamation friends, but Denver was a hard place to live.

Didn't like Being Chief Hydrologist for Reclamation

The worst job. Probably the worst job was the one that should have been the best job. For a year I was Chief Hydrologist for Reclamation, and that was probably the hardest job I ever had to do. It was good work, good technical work, but I wasn't quite ready for all the administration parts of it. I wasn't ready for a boss that wouldn't give stuff up. I wasn't ready for all of the rules and regs kind of stuff, of doing stuff, of having a technical solution that was not acceptable politically, that kind of stuff. I wasn't ready for the internal politics that got involved. I wasn't ready for the ivory tower that Reclamation had kind of built itself around in Denver in those days.

I was only in that job for a year, and I was selected to be the Chief of the Colorado River Water Quality Office, and I took that job after I'd been in the other one for a year. That was a little better, but it was still in Denver, and it was still a lot of the same problems, but it was a little better.

Storey: Have any general thoughts on Reclamation – your career at Reclamation?

Career Planning

Keys: Yes, Of course I do. Reclamation's been good to me. When I came with Reclamation, I took the job in Utah and I thought, "I want to work in the projects for a while. Then I want to work in a regional office. Then I want to go to Denver," where I thought in those days that was the Holy Grail of engineering – the Chief's office. You know, then if the opportunity came to go overseas or something, I'd take it. Did all of that, and found out where I fit the best in that, and Reclamation let me do that. Regional office, project and

regional office was where a person like Keys belonged, and the regional office was the best tradeoff for progression and being able to do stuff. I've been able to do what I wanted to do, work in water.

I'll tell you, commissioner Martinez said, down at Albuquerque when we dedicated SIPI, which is the Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute, he said somebody had asked him where he got where he was, and he said there was three things involved. One was the education, the opportunity to have the education that he needed. The second was the opportunity to work in the field that he wanted to, and the third was the opportunity to have a mentor to show him how to do it. If Keys had had enough sense to say that, he should have done it, because the education at Georgia Tech prepared me to do what I needed to do. Yes, I got a master's degree from B.Y.U. while I was there, but the Georgia Tech one's the one that did it. The opportunity to work in the field – the work in Utah and North Dakota and Montana and so forth was just died and gone to heaven, because that was the kind of work I wanted to do, with the kind of people I wanted to work with, and it was just a great opportunity.

Reclamation was good to me in helping me move up the ladder. A couple of times I took in-grade transfers to be ready for something else, but Reclamation never got in my way. Reclamation's been good to me. What other job could I have gone into and been able to say, "I got that done," or, "I know 'Cec' Andrus," or, "I know Jim McClure," or, "I got to shake the Vice President's hand"? What other job could you do that in? Not very many.

Storey: How did you get interested in water at a place like Georgia Tech?

How Became Interested in Water Projects

Keys: Before I went to Tech. I came out a T.V.A. fan. See, my dad was a Seabee in the war, and he was actually working on Bull Shoals Dam in Arkansas when the war broke out, and they kept him there. He went in the Seabees when he went overseas. When he came home, he knocked around from job to job, then he went *back* into the service, but when he came out, he went to work for T.V.A., and he worked up and down the river there close to home for twenty years while I was growing up. T.V.A. is water, and we lived on one of the T.V.A. lakes for the last five or six years that I was home. Always around it.

1956, I was a sophomore, freshman in high school, whatever, and my family took a two-week tour of the West. We saw the *West* in two weeks. We drove from Sheffield, Alabama, to Yellowstone Park, and then to San Francisco, and then to El Paso, and, I'm telling you, all the points in between. It seemed like everywhere we went, we saw Reclamation projects. We saw Buffalo Bill Dam; we saw Hoover Dam; smaller ones that I can't even remember what we saw, but we saw them.

When I went into Tech, I knew I wanted to be an engineer, and the third year I was there, I had a professor Willard Snyder. Jim Barton was the

professor at B.Y.U. I worked with. Willard Snyder. He got me interested in working on water resources projects, and it just took off from there. When I interviewed, I interviewed at Tech with a bunch. In those days, they wanted engineers to do everything, and I had thirteen job offers when I finished. My wife and I decided we wanted to go West, so I took the one with Reclamation.

Storey: We've talked about that before, but I don't think we've ever talked about the tour before. Good.

Keys: But, you know, I was born and raised around powerplants, the dams. In those days it was barge transportation. I didn't know irrigation. I didn't learn irrigation until I came West. But the water resources part, I was around it, and then the guy at Tech helped me develop that interest and encouraged me to take the job with the Bureau.

Storey: Well, I guess my last question, is there anything else you want to talk about that I haven't raised over these interviews?

Keys: Well, you know, the last few questions, Reclamation has just been so good to me. I can't say enough for the people I've been able to work with, for the opportunities I've had. I mean, you look back, and I got to go overseas. I spent a month in Russia, just at the time that it was changing from the Communist society to what it is now. I got to go to Canada, working on projects. I've been able to go into Mexico a couple of times. I've got to work with some of the best people in this world. And I think some of the work that we've done has made a difference. Working for Reclamation's just been an opportunity that, first, I never expected, and, second, it's been just really good.

Storey: Good.

Keys: Hard decision to retire. We talked about the grind that we'd been in, and that part of it made it easier to retire, but two reasons. You look back and you say, "Gees, do I really want to leave this?" And, yes, it's time to go. Second is, you think, "Gee, if I stayed just a little bit longer, I could finish this up," or, "I could finish that up," or whatever. There will always be something there, and there will always be some good person behind to come through and finish it. So it's time to go. But I sure leave behind a lot of good memories and a lot of good friends.

Storey: I appreciate the time you've spent with me over the years. I know sometimes it was a strain to fit in two hours at a time, but I appreciate it.

Keys: Yes, but how else would I have gotten to know where the Cosmos Club is in Washington? (laughter)

Storey: (laughter) Well, I'm not sure that's important information. Let me ask you again whether or not you're willing for the information on these tapes and the resulting transcripts to be used by researchers.

Keys: Yes, I am.

Storey: Good. Thank you.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 2. APRIL 22, 1998. END OF INTERVIEW.
BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1. SEPTEMBER 11, 2002.

Storey: This is Brit Storey, senior historian at the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing Commissioner John W. Keys III, September 11, 2002, in his office in the Main Interior Building, in Washington, D.C.. This is tape one.

Commissioner, I'd like to ask you about what you did while you were retired.

Activities in Retirement

Keys: Well, you know, I retired in early June of 1998, and there were several things that kind of led up to that, but it was just the *right* time to leave. My wife and I had talked about where we wanted to live, in retirement, and I had agreed with her that she could pick the last place, or the move after we retired. She had been looking around, but still had not decided, so we were staying there in Boise at the time.

I had talked to a friend about flying for him. He ran the Stanley Air Taxi out of Stanley, Idaho, and it was flying into the backcountry. I had talked about flying some with him, and actually was flying back and forth for a couple of months, flying for him and staying there in Stanley, in a little place he had close to the airfield, and was flying back and forth and doing other flying.

At that time I was flying for Angel Flight and I was flying for LightHawk, two volunteer flying outfits, and that worked until August the seventh, and I was asked to fly an airplane that I was not familiar with, and I had an accident in the damn thing. That kind of ended the flying for him for a while, but I continued to fly for other folks. The accident didn't hurt anybody, it just bent some metal, but that kind of ended that little deal.

Pretty soon after that, my wife and I got serious about selling the house and I was doing a bunch of stuff to get it ready. The house sold, and she had decided that she wanted to go to Moab, Utah. She had been looking at a lot of smaller towns around Idaho, Wyoming, Montana, Utah, Colorado, to see where she wanted to move her medical practice to. She was really tired of the large practice that she had there in Boise, and she picked Moab, because she had done some work in that area while she was doing a fellowship a few years before, in the Four Corners area, liked it, had gone down and talked with them, and they wanted her there.

So, September, I started loading up U-Haul trailers and hauling stuff to a house that we had purchased down there. We purchased a house that the

College of Eastern Utah had built, under one of their programs where they had kids working with the builders, building a house for the college and then putting it on the market. We bought it from them, and it's on the west side of Moab, just off of Kane Creek Road, that goes out to the Colorado River.

So, I hauled about three U-Haul loads down there. All this time, I was still officiating football, but we moved, actually took possession of the house like the twenty-first of September, had sold our other house, and moved in. And that fall – this is 1998 – I was still officiating football in the Big Sky Conference, and I was flying for Air Lifeline and LightHawk at the time, as a volunteer pilot.

The football season was a good one. I actually ended up that year working a playoff game in Louisiana, in the first round, and then my crew and I were selected to go to the national championships for 1AANC2A football in Chattanooga. And December sixteenth, I think it was, we worked the championship game in Chattanooga, between University of Massachusetts and Georgia Southern. Massachusetts won the game, but it was a great ball game and a great way to end the season.

For the next couple of years, I was building hours, flying. I added Angel Flight and Search and Rescue to the volunteer groups I flew for, and I was doing a lot of flying. For a couple of years there, I was averaging about 350 and even up to 400 hours a year, flying.

Flying up into Canada

In 1999, when I moved into Moab, an old pilot there, who had lost his license because of medical reasons, came to me and asked me to take him to Canada. He wanted to go back up and see some of his old haunts, where he had done a bunch of flying and bush-flying up there, in his earlier years. In 2000, we finally agreed to fly him up there, and another fellow, who had an airplane in Green River, Utah, and I, in my airplane, took off at the end of June.

The fellow's name was Jim Hurst. He was an old uranium field FBO⁴² bush pilot out of Canada. I had him in my airplane, and Bud Barton and a fellow from Texas, a friend of his, were in another Cessna 182. I was flying my old reliable Cessna 182. There were two 182s.

We took off at the end of June, and we flew up through Kalispell, Montana, and then into Canada. First night out, the old guy that I was flying had a mini stroke, and we had to get him to the hospital. We sat there in Kamloops, British Columbia, for a day, trying to figure out what to do and how he was going to make it. Well, it turned out he pulled out of it and was okay, but the doctors insisted that we send him home.

42. Fixed base operator.

So we sent the old guy home, Jim Hurst, we sent him home, but he *insisted* that we go ahead on this flight, because we had it all planned out, knew where we were going and everything. So we went ahead, and we went from Kamloops to Williams Lake, to Smithers, to Whitehorse, to Dawson, and to Inuvik, which is on the McKenzie River in the Northwest Territory.

We stayed in Inuvik a couple of days and the first day there, we flew from Inuvik up to the Arctic Ocean, the Beaufort Sea, to a little outpost called Tuktoyaktuk, and landed there. Our goal, of course, was to get above the Arctic Circle, which we already were. It's at 66 degrees and 67 minutes. When we were at Tuktoyaktuk, we were at 69 degrees and 55 minutes, and our goal was to get to 70 degrees. Well, we didn't quite make it. We got to 69 degrees and 59 minutes but turned back because we didn't want to go out over the ocean any further.

But it was a great trip. We took about ten days, flew 5,700 miles, and then we flew back. Got back to Moab like the seventh or eighth of July, and *immediately* after we got back, we lost an airplane at Moab. A couple of kids took off in small airplane and didn't come back, and for five days – I was flying for search and rescue out of Grand County then – and we flew all over eastern Utah, southern Utah, looking for that airplane, and on the fifth day, a Highway Patrol helicopter found it about five miles off the end of our runway, but you couldn't even tell that it was an airplane when they found it.

That was kind of a defining moment for that year. We did some *really* good work for them, but it's pretty frustrating when that happens. I had done several other search and rescue flights for the county there, and we had actually found one biker that, bless his heart, he was really glad to see us, and that one worked out real well.

The rest of that year, I worked football again in the year 2000, had a good season and was at all of the schools in the Big Sky Conference. The next spring—oh, I'm sorry, 2000. The election. That's a big defining moment.

Being Considered for the Job of Commissioner

Let me back up. In the summer of 2000, I had had a telephone call from a friend who was an irrigation district manager up in Idaho, and he said, "Rumors are that if Mr. George W. Bush is elected, you would be the commissioner."

And I said, "Well, Ted, that's the first time I've ever heard that."

And he said, "Well, be that as it may, you ought to think about it, and if you're interested in that, be ready to give an answer if somebody asks you."

And I thought about it, and I actually flew up and had lunch – the guy was Ted Diehl, who was the irrigation district manager of North Side Canal

Company at Jerome, Idaho. I flew up and had lunch with him one day and we talked about it. I thought some more, and I talked to my wife a lot about it, and I came to the decision that if somebody were to ask, I'd tell them, yes, that I'd do that.

After I made that decision, I really didn't think much about it after that. And then, of course, with the Bush election being dragged out, with the decision, what all was going on in Florida, I started thinking about it again and I thought, "Doggone, what if they call?" My wife and I talked about it again, and again we said, "If they call, we'll tell them yes."

Well, December the fifteenth, I got a telephone call from Nils Johnson, a guy on the transition team, asking me would I consider being Commissioner of Reclamation. He called on a Friday night and he said, "If you decide the answer is yes, before Monday morning, fill out this form that I'm going to fax to you, and get it back to me, fax it back to me." It was just a form with some standard questions about background, and was there anything embarrassing in there and that kind of thing.

My wife and I talked about it again, and Sunday night, the seventeenth, I faxed it back to him and told him yes. Talked to him the next week and he told me that I was on the *first* list that they had put together, and that there were numerous names on it, and that the next step is that they would carve that down to a list of five and submit it to the White House. They told me that if I wanted to make some phone calls to some folks that might have some influence on that appointment, that I should feel free to do so.

Talked to Various People about Support for a Nomination

Over the next four to five weeks, I made probably fifty phone calls to different congressional people that I had worked with, organizations that I had worked with, people that I knew would have an opinion and may be asked, and that sort of thing, and talked to them about support. I tell you, it was a life-defining event, or exercise, because everybody that I talked to thought it was a good idea.

I tell you, I'm not even sure that, before that happened, I thought it was a good idea. I mean, crud, I was a regional director and I ran a pretty good region, but I never thought about being commissioner or that I could handle a job like this. By the way, I'm not sure that I'm still handling this job. But still, it was defining, because there were people that thought I could do the job.

Got a phone call not long after that. Well, that's not right. My wife and I had planned all along to go to Hawaii for two weeks the first of February, and here this thing is pending. They're supposed to have submitted to list of five people to the White House, and here I am, thinking about going on vacation.

I called up Julie LaPier [phonetic], who was the lady at the White House handling the thing. I said, “Julie, I got this vacation planned. All of this is pending. What do you think?”

She said, “Go on your vacation. Just give me your phone number where I can reach you, and you go ahead, and check in with me every other day or so.”

Well, what I found out later is my name had already been submitted as one of those five, but she couldn’t tell me that. So we went to Hawaii and had a nice time, and I checked in every once in a while and I even did some calling from there.

Came back and I got a telephone call the week before Easter, and it was the Secretary of the Interior, Gail Norton, and she said that my name had been submitted to her to be the commissioner, and she wanted to interview me, and could I come back there on the Monday after Easter and do an interview.

I told her, yes, I’d be there, and we set it up for like 9:30 in the morning. I called Julie LaPier and told her, and she said I should try to set up the White House interview on the same day, and she was going to try to get it done. She got it done, so I had my interview at Interior at 9:30 in the morning on April, like, seventeenth. I think it was the seventeenth. And then at one o’clock with the White House.

Interviews at the White House and Department of the Interior

My wife and I, on Sunday morning, Easter Sunday morning, went out to Arches National Park for the sunrise service with our church. My wife took me straight from there to the airport, and I got on an airplane and flew back to Washington, D.C.. Bright and early Monday morning, I showed up here at the department – came to see some friends here at the Bureau first – for that interview.

I went into the interview, and it was the secretary; Brian Wademan, her chief of staff; Sue Ellen Wooldridge; and, doggone, it seems like there was somebody else there. But it was one of the better interviews, I think, that I’d ever had, because the secretary asked almost every question. Boy, she was right on target—what would I do with this issue? How would I run the Bureau? Did I see any big changes that needed to be made? How did I work with environmental groups? And that sort of stuff. *Excellent* interview.

I think Brian Wademan asked a couple of questions about my football officiating. Sue Ellen didn’t ask any questions. And that was it, and I walked out of there feeling like I’d had a good interview and that I had a good chance of getting the job.

Just to let you know, the word *politics* was never mentioned in that interview. It was all Bureau, resources, and so forth. I never will forget, I was

trying to be cute, I guess, but I told her, we were talking about her “four Cs,” and I had read some stuff beforehand. The four Cs are communication, consultation, and cooperation, all in the name of conservation. I told her, at the end of that interview, that I thought, with the water community, I could add a fifth “C” for Reclamation, and it was credibility, because I had worked closely with the water groups and other folks. And I still feel that. But, like I said, I told her that, and she seemed to appreciate it.

I left there, after the interview with her, I went over to the White House for the interview, and Julie LaPier was there and it was a fellow out of Texas, and what was his name? Jody. Jody Arrington. Jody Arrington was his name. And we talked about qualifications, and whether there was anything in my background that would cause a problem, what I had done since I retired, what I did while I was working, people that I knew, how I had worked with different water user organizations, and that stuff.

And just before the end of the interview, he asked the question that I *knew* he was going to ask, and I knew what I was going to tell him. He asked me, in these words, he says, “What’s your politics?”

I knew he was going to ask that question, and I had thought a lot about it. All I could do is tell him the truth, and that is, if he asked me if I was a flaming Republican, I would tell him no. If he asked me, did I vote for George Bush, I’d tell him yes, and the reason is because I believed in what he was trying to get done, and that I had worked all of my career, working *both* sides of the aisle to get my job done, and I had not left any enemies on either side of that aisle. And that was the last time politics was mentioned, and I felt pretty good about my answer and their reaction to it. They told me that we should hear something within three weeks at that time.

Let me back up just a little bit. In all of this process, since I had gotten that first telephone call, close friend, Roger Patterson, who had been regional director out in Sacramento while I was regional director up in Boise, and I had been talking to each other, because he had been contacted by the committee also, and every time something would happen with one of us, we would call each other and tell him.

All along, we kept emphasizing to each other that for the best of the Bureau, we thought it ought to be one of us to be commissioner. I mean, that was just something he and I talked about and it was just between us. The secretary called him for his interview and he couldn’t come on that Monday, and his interview was that Friday of the same week, Friday afternoon, in fact. And they had his interview like at two o’clock, and then he went over to the White House at like 4:30, after his.

Roger Patterson’s Interviews Did Not Go Well

I talked to Roger afterwards, and he told me it was not a good interview, that the secretary was tired, that the people that were with her asked most of the questions, and it was almost like she wasn't engaged. And I told him my experience. I guess we learned something from that, you know. If you're trying to shoehorn stuff in, be sure that you pick the right time, because on that Monday morning, she was fresh, she was engaged, she knew the stuff, and on that Friday afternoon with Roger, it was just the opposite. His interview at the White House was almost exactly the same.

At the end of my interview over there – getting back to my interview at the White House, at the end of the interview, Arrington asked me, he said, “Do you know any of the other people that are being considered for this job?”

And I said, yes, I knew another person.

And he said, “Who is it?”

I told him, “Roger Patterson.”

He said, “What do you think of him?”

I said, “Well, Roger Patterson is a good friend. If you don't take *me* for this job, take *him*.”

When I talked to Roger, I didn't tell him that. He called me after his interview and he said, “You know what they asked me at the end?”

And I said, “Yeah, I know.”

He said, “Do you?”

I said, “Sure I do, because they asked me the question, too.”

He said, “What did they ask you?” and I told him. He said, “What did you tell them?”

And I told him that I told them if they didn't take me to take him. He said, “John, I told them the same thing.”

You know what? That made me feel really good about the whole thing, and Roger and I were convinced that it was going to be one of us.

Roger had a really bad situation that I think kept him from really putting his heart into it, and it was money. He had two kids in college. He's pulling down two salaries. He gets his retirement from the Bureau, because he had retired from being regional director out there and was drawing that pension, at the same time being paid full salary by the State of Nebraska to be the director of natural resources. It would have been a hard salary cut for him to have come

into that job, so I'm not sure Roger's full heart was into it. But I understand that he and I are the only two that were interviewed for the job, and that the choice was between me and him, and so forth.

Offered Job by Secretary of the Interior

Well, I went home and started worrying about it. They told me we'd probably hear something within a week. Well, it rocked on for two weeks, and then the secretary calls on a Friday afternoon, and said she wanted me to be the commissioner of Reclamation. I, of course, accepted on the spot, and she said, "Well, they'll be in touch with you."

This is like the middle, twentieth of April, somewhere right – I'm sorry. Right at the end of April, right at the first of May, and I got a phone call from a guy at the White House with all of the forms and everything. So we started filling the stuff out, and they told me when I started, that the *average* clearance time, with all of the FBI interviews and everything, was fifty-two days, and this is like the first of May, maybe the twenty-ninth of April, somewhere in there.

I got it all filled out, sent them back, they started working on them. Funniest thing in this world, around Moab, Utah, is the FBI comes to town to clear one of their citizens. And, god, the rumors were flying around town about FBI being in town, checking up on me and so forth, and then everybody found out what was going on.

The funniest part of that whole interview, that whole process around Moab, I mean, the FBI guy came and interviewed me and my neighbors and so forth. My next-door neighbor on the north side of my house is the chief of police in town. Next door neighbor on the south side is the county administrator, who I had worked with while I was retired.

Let me stop. There are a couple of other things that I did during retirement. Grand County, Utah, is run by volunteer boards and committees, and for all three years that I was retired, I went on it right after I got there in the fall, I got on the airport board for the county. We were working, trying to improve the airport, get air service in there, and build a crosswind runway.

After I'd been there for about a year, a guy called, and there was a thing in the paper about them needing a member of one of the water boards, the Grand Water and Sewer Service Agency, which was a conglomeration of about five districts. I applied to that and I sat on that board for about a year and a half.

I tell you, I felt I was doing my part in trying to keep the county going, in working as a volunteer on those two boards, and they were very rewarding. I mean, I was able to meet people and do stuff that I knew things about, like aviation and water, and I really enjoyed it, and it was a good deal.

Anyway, the county administrator I had known working through these two boards with her. But the funny thing happened. The FBI guy came and interviewed me and he went and interviewed everybody else. I was over talking to my neighbor, the chief of police, and he said, "FBI came and talked to me."

And I said, "Oh yeah."

And he said, "Do you know what he asked me?" He said, "He asked me did I think you would discriminate." The chief of police said, "I said, 'Discriminate, hell. He even had an African-American staying with him for a week, three weeks ago.'"

It turned out it was Felix Cook. Felix Cook used to be our chief of the Tech Service Center, or Engineering Services, there in Denver, and Felix and his wife, Margie, had come to visit, and hiked the park and stuff, and we had them at the house there for almost a week. Of course, everybody in Moab knew that Felix Cook was black, and Felix Cook and his wife were staying with us for a week. And the chief of police damn sure knew it, and he made dang sure that the FBI guy knew that. So, it was really a good funny story, and I've actually told Felix this story, because it's really one of the good funny things that happened out of that process.

Well, they went through the whole process, and on June 15 I was at a LightHawk annual meeting in St. George, Utah, and I got a phone call from the department, saying that I had cleared, and they were going to put a newspaper announcement out. I got that phone call in St. George and I saw it in the Salt Lake newspaper that I got at the hotel in St. George, the first time on that Sunday morning. That was about June the fifteenth, so it had taken almost the full fifty days that they had said to do the clearance.

That was on a Sunday. They asked me could I be back there the next week to prepare for a hearing. I told them yes. I went on home and got things ready, and got on the plane like on Monday morning, got back here on Tuesday, and we started preparing. Had my hearing on the twenty-seventh of June, and they said, "We don't know when it'll pass."

The timing of things is, that was on a Thursday. I'm sorry, it was on a Wednesday. The *next* Wednesday was the Fourth of July, so we knew that the committee would not sit at that time. And then we thought that in two weeks, the opportunity was there for the committee to vote –

END TAPE I, SIDE 1. SEPTEMBER 11, 2002.

BEGIN TAPE I, SIDE 2. SEPTEMBER 11, 2002.

Keys: They met that two weeks later, passed it on to the Senate that very day, that Wednesday. And that Thursday, which was like the twelfth, the committee passed it out on July the eleventh. They passed it out on that afternoon, the

eleventh, it went to the floor of the House on the twelfth, and late that night, on July the twelfth, the Senate, by unanimous consent, passed my nomination.

When I was preparing for hearing, they had me and Fran Manella, the lady who had been nominated to be the director of the Park Service, preparing at the same time. And my hearing, Fran and I were on the same panel, along with a lady from EPA [Environmental Protection Agency], and I can't remember her name. We had our hearing.

Hearing in the Senate

Mr. Robert F. Bennett, Senator Bennett, from Utah, and Senator Larry E. Craig, from Idaho, introduced me, and gave a statement on my behalf. I gave a statement, and then I turned in my written testimony. I was asked a few questions. Questions by Mr. Craig, had to do with Klamath Falls Project in Oregon.

Storey: I wonder why.

Keys: Yes, it was a real hot topic at that time. Mr. Ben Nighthorse Campbell from Colorado asked me about Black Canyon of the Gunnison, the water rights for the park there, and that was it. Well, Mr. Daniel K. Akaka or Mr. Daniel K. Inouye – I think it was Akaka – asked me if I would continue the drought work with State of Hawaii. I told him of course, and I'd like to go over there and see his drought.

But it was a very good hearing. I did not feel any animosity or anything, nothing but support. My nomination passed out with no opposition from the committee, and then, like I said, it was by unanimous consent in the Senate. That's a pretty good feeling. I mean, that's a fantastic feeling, to know that you went through that process.

Coached by Spofford Canfield Throughout the Nomination Process

Spofford Canfield was the guy that was working with us, preparing us for the hearing, and what a gentleman he is. I will tell you that it was a true pleasure working with Spofford, and he kept telling me that mine was going to be easy. And it was, even though I sweated it a lot and I spent a lot of time writing my stuff, both my written and my oral statements, it went very well.

I got back here on June sixteenth, on that Monday, and the lady down in personnel, Sandy Streeter, swore me in first thing in the morning. I was sworn in, and then we did the ceremonial one up on the roof on July seventeenth, on a Tuesday. The ceremonial one, they had myself and Fran Manella and Bennett Raley and Steve Griles, the deputy secretary, and Neil McCaleb, the assistant secretary of Indian Affairs. They swore all five of us in at the same time. Gertel Harris-Brace held the Bible for my swearing in. Fact is, there's a signed picture up on the wall of us, as we were sworn in.

That was a big day, and it was hot as a blaze up on that roof up there. They did it on the roof of the south penthouse. But it was a nice day, and that's how I got to be commissioner.

Storey: Well, as usual, I have a few questions. Tell me more about Angel Flight and LightHawk and Air Lifeline.

Keys: Well, Angel Flight and Air Lifeline are two organizations that are almost the same, and what they do is they provide flights for patients, people that are going for treatment, or for families that need to *be there* with patients who are having treatment, or we're flying people back home from treatment.

It is not emergency-type flying. It's they've got to be treated and we get them there. It's for people that either live in a remote place that don't have access and would have to drive for hours to get somewhere, or for people that can't afford it and need some help making these flights.

I got into it for several reasons. One, as a pilot, you look for things to fly to do, mainly to get flying hours and then just to be able to go flying. I started with Air Lifeline because I talked to a guy and he said, "It beats the hell out of a hundred-dollar hamburger." And what that means is that you can fly, do somebody some good, and feel really good about it, where the alternative is just to fly somewhere and eat lunch and come back home.

I got into Air Lifeline and started doing the flights for them, and, I will tell you, I got more out of it than I ever gave, because every patient that I ever flew, or every parent that I ever flew made me feel just on top of the world.

I started flying for them while I was still working in Idaho. Angel Flight, I signed up for it the year that I retired. I took my check ride with them in Logan, Utah, while I was working, on one weekend, I was working a ball game, and started flying immediately for them in '98. And Angel Flight, actually, at the end, I was flying a bunch more for, because they're much more organized. Over the computer, they would ask us to do flights and we'd sign up for them. They just really were organized and had us doing a lot of good flights. You know, sometimes we had to cancel because of weather, but every flight I ever made with those folks was just out of this world for me, as far as doing something for somebody.

One good story. I flew into Albuquerque that last spring. It was right around, oh, just around the time I was back here doing the interviews. I went to Albuquerque, and I picked up a little old Spanish gentleman who was eighty-six or eighty-eight years old, could hardly walk, had to have oxygen to breathe with. He had been in Albuquerque, visiting, and had gotten sick. They finally got him well enough to go back to Price, Utah. For him to have been sitting in a car, to have driven back to Price, Utah, would have taken twelve to twenty hours, and I flew him up there in about three hours. His daughter, bless

her heart, flew along with us to take care of him, keep the oxygen changed and that sort of thing.

As we were loading him up in the airplane, we got him in the back and got the oxygen situated and his bag situated so he had something to lean on, and his whole family, I mean, kids and grandkids and sisters and brothers and wife and everything – no, his wife was in Price, but this whole extended family comes out to the airplane and puts him on, and then they blessed the airplane. It's almost like they say a rosary right over the airplane there.

We get him in, get his daughter situated, we get to Price to take him off of the airplane, and the same thing happened. This whole extended family shows up, about twenty of them, and they do the same thing. They bless the airplane and they thank me profusely. It just makes you feel good. And that's what Angel Flight and Air Lifeline is about.

LightHawk, I started flying for them in '98. I did the check ride the weekend after I retired from Reclamation. LightHawk is different. It's called the Environmental Air Force, and what they do is they take assignments from environmental groups to fly missions over an environmental project or an environmental-sensitive area, and they take news media, to show it to folks. The local groups will take congressional folks and show them something. They will take local government people. They'll take other government folks and show them something that they want to bring their attention to, *like* clear-cut areas, or proposed mines, or proposed land exchanges, or new designations of national monuments that they want to see protected, and that sort of thing.

I went to the lady that was the chief of volunteer pilots and I said, "Look, here's what I used to do, and I *will not* do any mission for any outfit that's doing anything against the Bureau. I just won't do." I said, "There's those outfits out there that are talking about taking down some of our dams. Don't even ask, because I won't do it, and if there's something associated with it, I just can't go there."

She told me that that was just fine, and that if I ever saw another one that I did not agree with or something, they would honor that. And we got along very well. They even gave me an award for one of the years when I flew a bunch of hours for them, and I did a lot of flying for them. The good deal about LightHawk is they would pay me – they would give me, not pay, but they would reimburse us for our fuel and oil that we had to spend. They're really nice people.

I flew a bunch of missions. Mostly I flew clear-cuts, I flew some of the gold mines in Montana that people had walked off and left, leach-heap mines laying out there to ruin everything. *After* I moved to Moab, I was their primary Canyonlands pilot, because we were flying mission after mission over the new Escalante Staircase National Monument. They had wilderness issues in Utah, over the west desert, west of Salt Lake City, down around St. George, around

Moab. For them I was doing a lot of flying, and for the Colorado Environmental Coalition, that was doing a lot of wilderness work at that time north of Grand Junction, down in the Dolores area, over in the Delta-Grand Junction area.

So I did a lot of flying for them and I enjoyed every minute of it. They were *very* nice people to me. They never tested me, as far as trying to give me an assignment that I was not comfortable with.

I also flew search and rescue for Grand County. I was on the rolls for Montrose County in Colorado, but they always were able to get somebody local and I never flew a mission for them. But I'm still on their rolls as a volunteer pilot.

For Grand County, most of the time, except for that big hunt when we were looking for that airplane, I was flying sheriff's deputies as the observers, and we were looking for people that were lost. I averaged probably three missions a year with them. They gave me a plaque when I left, because I never charged them for anything. I donated my time and my fuel and my airplane. I still have many good friends there. Through all this, of course, I'm looking forward to going back to Moab and going back home.

So that's what I did while I was retired, and you got me up to being commissioner.

Storey: Wasn't there also some other volunteer work?

Keys: Well, there was the airport board and the water board for the county. Oh, yes, I know what I forgot. There was LightHawk, there was Angel Flight, Air Lifeline, and the county search and rescue. My wife and I also, we love to hike, and while I was retired, every day that we were *there* and something else didn't take precedent, we went hiking. We hiked trails that people just can't *believe*, around Moab. It is one of the most fantastic places in this world to go hiking, amongst the red rocks and out on the desert, to see the petroglyphs and pictographs and stuff. I mean, it's just a great place in this world.

The Park Service has a Volunteer in the Parks Program there at Arches National Park, and it's called the Fiery Furnace Corps. It's a group of people that ranges anywhere from fifteen to twenty, up to thirty or more, every year. The Park Service took us in and trained us, and we helped them administer a hiking program in one of their set aside areas, called Fiery Furnace. It's restricted, in that they only allow people to go in there with guided tours, *or* if you've been in several times before, they'll give you a private permit to go in. And this Fiery Furnace Corps helps keep the place up, and to administer those permits, to be sure folks stay where they should be, checking permits, hiking, to be sure there's not trash around somewhere, and that sort of thing. For about two years.

My wife and I are still on the program. Fact is, I was home over Labor Day weekend, and my wife and I went out there for a half a day and put some time in. We did that for two years and *loved* it. We were doing about a day a week out there. The Park Service people are just super to work with, and, of course, all of the people that are there, they're there because they *want* to be there and they take a pride in that Fiery Furnace. It's a great place and a great group of people to work with. So that was the other volunteer thing that you're talking about.

Storey: Well, you mentioned that you were doing 350, 400 hours a year. You know that I'm not a pilot or anything. That doesn't sound like a lot of time to me.

Keys: That's a lot of flying.

Storey: Is it?

Keys: That's a lot of flying. Take the Bureau of Reclamation airplane in Boise. It's a King Air and they fly it every day. That airplane averages about 850 to 900 hours a year. It has *two* pilots, so each one of those pilots averages about 400 to 450 hours a year. So I was averaging, in those two years, as much as those full-time Bureau pilots was averaging. Not quite as much, but pretty close.

Now, realize, I was doing all this volunteer flying. I also forgot another thing in there. I was doing all that volunteer flying. I was flying myself to and from football games every weekend, in the fall, and my wife and I were flying, *doing* stuff. I mean, we would fly back up to Idaho and see some people. We'd fly up into the backcountry of Idaho to hike and see some folks and do that sort of thing.

The one other thing that I forgot. I told you about having the accident, and that kind of put me out of the commercial end of it for a little while. I mean, there was no restrictions or anything, it's just that it kind of killed my enthusiasm for it for a little while. But the more I was flying around locally there, Redtail Aviation, well, it was actually Aero West, out of Price, bought the FBO there at Moab, and Redtail Aviation. I got to know the owner and his pilots very well, and they saw me flying all the time and I was doing this and that and the other, and they approached me about being a part-time pilot for them.

So in December of 2000, I did the training, the ground training, to be a Part 135. FAA regulations, Part 135, is charter pilot coverage, in their regulations. I did the ground training for Part 135 pilot, and then in the early spring I took the check ride in a Turbo 207, a Cessna 207. And basically, the job there is doing *scenic* flights, in other words, to show folks Canyonlands, the Colorado River, the Needle section of Canyonlands, and even down into Lake Powell.

And flying rafters, people that were rafting the Green River, into Sand Wash where they put in, or out of the Colorado River, at Hite, after they had run Cataract Canyon. I was getting hours doing that, so I was getting both my volunteer hours, my private hours, *and* a few commercial hours, flying just part time. That spring, they were really busy and I was flying a lot for them.

I was sworn in on the sixteenth and seventeenth. The Saturday before I left there, which was like the fourteenth, was my last flight date for Redtail, and it was memorable one. Damn, it was 113 degrees at Hite, and I flew out of that short, downhill, dog-leg strip, in that 207, with six Kentucky-frieds and all of their luggage in there. And if that ain't a thrill, nothing is.

Storey: It's hard to get off the runway when it's hot, isn't it?

Keys: You've got to hold it on there and then jerk it off and listen to the stall horn telling you it's going to fall out of the air. [Laughter] I tell you, the pucker factor is *way* up there, but it's safe because of the equipment. A Turbo 207 is a hell of an airplane. It's just when that density altitude gets up with the heat, you really have to know what you're doing. And at that time – I couldn't do it now – at that time, I thought I was as good a pilot as I ever was because of the hours that I was putting in, the *difficult* flying that I was doing, and the people that I was working with. I was as good a pilot then as I ever was.

You're getting a lot of answer for your questions.

Storey: No, this is what I want. Let's talk a little more about your flight to Canada. You went ahead and did that.

Flight up into Canada

Keys: Oh, that was a great trip.

Storey: What were you doing up there, besides flying, I mean?

Keys: We were flying, and our purpose was to get above the Arctic Circle. You know, when Jim Hurst came to me the first time, I thought, "Now, what's in this for me, besides just flying an old guy around the country?" And I thought, "Well, doggone it, I've never been above the Arctic Circle. I think that would be my goal in this thing."

Jim had a bunch of side trips and we cut them out. I tell you, it was a good trip, because we were at Kamloops and we were working with the FBO there, trying to get Jim taken care of down at the hospital and stuff, but we got to know the guys there. The next night we spent at *Smithers*, and we were actually going up to Fort Francis or something like that, but we couldn't get there because of weather, so we cut over to Smithers.

We talked to the FBO people there and we stayed in the town, and they were having some kind of celebration. It was kind of an alpine town, and they had these big old horns and the lederhosen and all that kind of stuff. And then the next night we stayed at Whitehorse. By that time, people had picked up what we were doing, the two airplanes of us.

When we took out of Whitehorse, we landed at Dawson for fuel. We were going up the one highway there, and we got caught in a storm, a little rainstorm. I actually had to climb up through the dang thing and got up on top, and the guy that was with me, Bud, he got between some layers up in there and leveled off when he had to climb out, and he didn't know where he was. We called the station at Inuvik and they told him which way to come. They said the clouds were broken up there and he could get down through. I'm instrument-rated, but Bud was not. And I was current and so forth, but Bud couldn't fly in the clouds.

We got there and they knew we were coming. Boy, they were really nice people. We even went out to dinner with this group of people from the flight service station that night. They were that nice of people. We stayed at Inuvik for two days. When you go into Inuvik, they give you a certificate, see, and you're above the Arctic circle. I still have that at home somewhere.

And when I went up there, I had this thing that I wanted to take a piece of Canadian art, Native American or Native art back home with me, like a carving or something. We got there on a Sunday afternoon and I walked down the street and everything was closed, but I saw all of these nice carvings in the windows of a co-op, and it looked like all of the locals sold their stuff through this co-op.

Walked across the street and there was this little grocery store over there, and I got talking to the owner. Bought a Pepsi and was talking to the owner, and I told him that I'd looked at that stuff, but it really looked expensive, and I wanted to take something home.

He said, "That stuff is. It's good, but it's very expensive." He said, "You ought to talk to one of the locals that carves that stuff."

And I said, "Yeah, I could, but I don't know anybody. I'm just a tourist myself."

He said, "I'll have somebody call you."

I went back to the hotel, and I had no more gotten into the room than the phone rang and this guy called, and I agreed to meet him the next morning at his house, at nine o'clock. I walked down there the next morning, and Inuvik's a small place. It's an old town that had been down by the river and got flooded every year, and the government physically moved it and a couple of other

villages up, put them together, and made a town, and that's Inuvik. It's I-N-U-V-I-K, is how you spell it.

That was Inuvik. It had been formed in 1957, and this is like 2000. No, this is 1999. Yes, 1999. No, I'm sorry, it's 2000. Anyway, the town is there, and I'm talking to the guy. But he said, "Come over and I'll show you what I got. I got a piece that I'm working on right now."

And I go over there, and he's got this little house away from his house. Dogs are walking in and out and the kids are crying in the house and that kind of thing. And he's got this piece that he's working on and it's a moose horn, laid like a cup turned upside down that cut off, and it looks like waves. In other words, there's about five tines of it that looks like waves, and on this one wave is a kayak with an Eskimo with a *spear* up in the air, and on the other wave is a white whale carved out of alabaster.

And I thought, "My goodness." I said, "Can you have that done day after tomorrow?" when we were going to leave.

He said, "I'll work on it and have it done for you."

And the cost. I thought, "Oh, god, what am I going to have to pay for this thing?" Ended up, I had to pay him \$300 Canadian, which was about \$200 American. I couldn't have touched that thing for a thousand bucks back in the United States. And he signed it on the bottom. He and his wife were just *profusely thankful* that I'd bought it from them. And I thought, "My goodness."

The first morning I was there, I said, "You know, I also was looking to take back some little carved bears for my daughters."

He said, "I don't have time to do them for you, but I got a friend." He said, "I'll have him here Wednesday when you come back for your deal."

So when I went to pick mine up, it was ready and they boxed it up for me and everything. This friend of his was there and he had two bears and a beaver that he had carved sometime in the past, and they were just perfect, exactly what I wanted. He wanted like eighty bucks apiece for them, which is less than fifty bucks in American. I just couldn't have beat it with a stick.

I met the artists. They were just exactly what I wanted, and, boy, my family was just overjoyed with them. When I got back to the border crossing, didn't even have to pay to get them across, because they were within the limit.

Coming back, we left there, we flew back down, stayed a night in Fort Simpson, which is the headquarters of the Dineh Indian Tribe, which is, if you recognized Dineh, it's kin to the Navajo Tribe, but the Canadian contingent. Talked to some of the tribal folks while we were there that night.

The next night we stayed in Fort McMurray, which is the location of the largest tar sands deposit in North America. They actually mine and get oil out of the tar sands there. Their museum was across the road from the hotel where we stayed. And then the next day we flew back into the United States. It was about ten days, and a *hell* of an adventure, 5,700 miles. It was a nice deal.

Storey: You said you made maybe fifty calls.

Keys: Yes.

Storey: Before I forget, what's an FBO?

Keys: Fixed base operator. They're the people that run the fuel facilities and take care of tie-downs and that stuff at airports. Almost every airport has one. Fixed-base operator.

Storey: Could you talk about the people you were calling and why you were choosing which people and all that kind of thing?

Choosing Who to Call While Waiting out the Nomination Process

Keys: Well, you know, when I was thinking about who to call, I thought back to who I had worked effectively with when I was regional director, and who in the Republican Party may have some say or would make a recommendation to the Secretary of the Interior for me to take the job. The first two people that I thought about, the first two people that I thought about, I had worked very closely with, had been very successful – we had not always agreed, but I had been successful in working with them – was Senator Larry Craig, from Idaho, and Senator Mike Crapo from Idaho.

Now, I had also known Mr. Bennett, from Utah. I had worked and known Bob Smith, from Oregon. I had known Governor Cecil Dale Andrus, who was a Democrat, of course. I knew Mr. Dirk Kempthorne, who was the governor at the time. I knew irrigation district managers.

So I called Mr. Craig and Crapo, and talked with them about it. Mike Simpson was the U.S. representative from that area, and Helen Chenoweth was the other representative. I damn sure didn't call Helen. But I called those two senators first.

And then I started calling irrigation district people that I knew had some influence. I talked to organizations. The one organization that I was most disappointed on—

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2. SEPTEMBER 11, 2002.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1. SEPTEMBER 11, 2002.

Storey: This is Brit Storey, senior historian at the Bureau of Reclamation. This is tape two of an interview with John W. Keys III, on September the 11th, 2002.

Keys: The one organization that I had worked the most with disappointed me the most, and it was National Water Resources Association. I found out later that there may have been something involved, but I called them and asked for their support, and the first thing was, "Well, they'll never appoint a Bureau guy to that job."

And I said, "Well, that may be true, but I'm going to give it a run."

"Well, you're wasting your time" kind of thing.

And I said, "Well, Tom Donnelly, I'm going to do it anyway." I said, "You know, if they *ask*, I would appreciate a good recommendation."

And, basically, again, he said, "Well, there are others of our members that are being considered, and we have to support all of you."

Well, I guess I understand that, but I would certainly have liked to have had a little more encouragement out of an organization that I had put heart and soul into, that I had received a Distinguished Service Award from, and that I was a lifetime member of. But be that as it may, I was just a little disappointed. It was not *negative*, but it sure was not support.

I talked to other irrigation districts that I had worked with. I talked to environmental groups that I had worked with, like the Nature Conservancy, like Idaho Rivers United, a person that I knew on American Rivers. I talked to LightHawk, of course, who I was flying for. I talked to other state officials that I had worked with, attorney general from Idaho. I talked to river basin people. I talked to about fifty of them that I could think of.

All I would tell them is that – I would not try to put them on the spot. I said, "Look, they are considering me for this job, and I would appreciate y'all's support if they call." And that's really the approach that I took. I never asked anybody to call for me. Now, several times it was volunteered that they do that, especially from Mr. Craig's people. I think they volunteered on several different occasions to call and put in a word for me, as did Mr. Crapo's people.

I tell you, there are no two finer people in my life than Larry Craig and Mike Crapo. They are really fine people.

Storey: So this isn't a matter of gathering a list of references or anything like that, then.

Keys: You know, I should go back and pull out the list of references. Fact is, for your interview, I'll give you a copy of both my written testimony, my oral testimony, and that includes the stuff that I sent in. I think the list of references that I had to turn in was like only ten long. I think that's all the space.

But these were folks that, I think most of them, I have seen some of the letters. Most of them sent me a copy. Most of them that I talked to after I talked with them sent letters of recommendation into the White House, because when I talked to them, they said, "Well, if we send a letter, who can we send it to?" And I had been given an address.

I'll tell you two other people that I talked with that were very supportive and I think helped a lot: Dennis Underwood, who was one of the previous commissioners, and John Sayre, who was one of the previous assistant secretaries. I talked to both of those people, and they were very supportive and gave me a lot of good pointers on, first, how to get it done, and then what to do after I got here.

Dennis Underwood is a friend like no other friend. I have maintained a friendship with him, even while I'm here. We're working on stuff together. He was very supportive.

Storey: He was actually one of the names we heard for commissioner.

Keys: Again?

Storey: Yes, this time.

Keys: I'll be darned. You know, I never did hear his name. You know, Roger Patterson, I knew that each of us was being considered. We heard Jeff Fassett's [phonetic] from State of Wyoming. Mark Limbaugh, who's working for me now, his name was one of the early ones mentioned. Don Christiansen [phonetic] from Utah, his name. But I don't remember Dennis' name being mentioned, but it very well could, because they told me that they had to pare the list down to five. I never even saw who was on the list of five, because, like I said, Roger and I were the only two that I knew that got the final consideration.

Storey: You mentioned that you prepared for the hearing. How's that done?

Preparing for the Senate Hearing

Keys: The department hires a consultant to come in and help take care of the details for folks as they are getting ready for a hearing, and they hired Spofford Canfield, and Spofford's been doing it for years. He actually did it for Dennis Underwood when he was being confirmed. I think the Republicans have somebody that they hire and the Democrats have somebody that they hire, and the Republican person happens to be Spofford Canfield.

They set up interviews with key congressional folks ahead of the hearing, and you pay courtesy visits to them. They give you pointers on what to put into your written testimony and give you pointers on what to say in your opening remarks. They help you answer the written questions after you're

done. They just do all of the scut work for you. In other words, I would not have known who to get a hold of, which were the key people to talk with, or who to talk to, because I'd been out of it for about three years and didn't know the people anymore.

They set up all of those interviews. They helped us answer news stuff. There was stuff happening in the news at that time, and a couple of the folks had gotten some bad press, and he was trying to help, like Steve Griles, Steve's appointment was a hard one for him. I mean, he was like six months in the process, and it was a hard one. He was helping him answer press articles and that sort of thing.

Like I said, he told me mine was easy, because we didn't have any of that to contend with. But he helped set up the interviews, helped be sure I was at the right place at the right time. He bargained with the committees to get my hearing scheduled early. In other words, I think he had a lot to do with it being held early.

Then after it was held, he was there being sure that my nomination was on *their* schedule, the first meeting, and then after it got done, it getting over. That's fairly automatic, but he worked very closely with the committee to get that part of the work done. It was a service that I don't think many people appreciate till they have to go through it. I gave him a nice gift after it was done, because he did such a good job.

Storey: And he did this personally?

Keys: Oh, yes. Him, himself. Now, he was hired by the department to do this. He was on as a consultant with the department, and he was doing me and Fran Manella at the same time, but that's what he does. I don't know whether you know Spofford, but he's an ex-marine guy and he's a lobbyist here in town. I see him every once in a while around, but, boy, he just did a tremendous job at that.

Like I said, Dennis Underwood told me that Spofford was the person that did it for him when he was here under Bush "One" [George H. Bush], and that's pretty good. But it worked out really well.

Storey: Did they sit you down and run you through the questions?

Did a Mock Hearing

Keys: Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot to say. Yes, we did. We talked about what questions could be raised, but then the day before my hearing, we actually had a mock hearing. They had the names of the senators that were going to be there, and I gave my oral presentation, and then they were asking me questions that I could be asked during that thing. I mean, they all had a bunch of questions, like the

guys from Idaho had Idaho questions, the Nevadans had Nevada questions, and that sort of thing.

So, yes, the day before, we actually had a mock hearing and did that. I know Fran had one, I had one, and Bennett Raley, he told me that when he went through, he had one, so we all had had them.

Storey: How long did that last?

Keys: The mock hearing?

Storey: Yes.

Keys: The mock hearing was about four hours long.

Storey: How long did the real hearing last?

Keys: My real hearing was about two hours long.

Storey: But split up between you and two other people.

Keys: That's right.

Storey: Is it Christie Whitman?

Keys: No, it was not Christie Whitman. This was one of the assistant secretaries for EPA. I'll give you a copy of the transcript, and her name's in there. I don't remember her. It's the only time I ever met her.

Storey: What kind of things did they ask you?

Keys: In the hearing, or in the mock hearing?

Storey: In the actual hearing.

Questions During the Senate Hearing

Keys: Senator Craig asked me about Klamath. He said, "What do you know about Klamath?" And I told him, only what I'd been able to read since I'd been considered for the job.

He said, "What are you going to do about it?" and I told him that I didn't know, but that I would do everything in my power to keep it from ever happening again. And that was it. That was, I think, what he wanted to hear. Since then, I don't think there has been a single day that I've been in office that Klamath Falls has not come up, and I've been here for fourteen months now. We're doing everything we can. We got water to them this year, and we'll do everything we can to not let that happen again.

Senator Campbell was asking us about the water rights for the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. Big controversy in the State of Colorado, because it's supposedly a Federal reserve water right, and the people in the states abhor Federal reserve water rights. They don't think there is such a thing.

Fact is, I'm still working on the issue. We've got a meeting at three this afternoon on Federal reserve water rights for Black Canyon that we're still working on with the Park Service.

Mr. Akaka was asking me about the drought. We've done some work under a special authority for the State of Hawaii, in drought. Fact is, I was just over there last month for a week, working with them on drought program and on a new contract with the State of Hawaii on looking at rehabilitating some irrigation canals over there.

He asked me would I work with him, and I told him yes. He asked me would I visit and review some facilities, and I said of course I would.

Mr. Conrad Burns from Montana, he just made a short statement in my support, and that was it. Mr. Bennett doesn't sit on the committee, but he came and gave an introductory speech for me. I think that was the only questions that I had. There's not very many.

Storey: So let's talk about what the issues were when you came into office, then.

Immediate Issues When Became Commissioner

Keys: Okay. I had hardly been on the job, just several days, and, of course, Klamath Falls was just eating us alive, because, I mean, I was put in on June seventeenth. First of July was one of the checkpoints for water in the Klamath basin, and right toward the middle of July they came back and said, "There is some water in that lake above what's necessary for the fish. What should we do with it? Should we provide it to the refuge? Should we just leave it there, or should we provide it to the farmers, to show them that we are at least trying to do something about the problem?"

Klamath Falls

My answer, of course, was, "Let's get it to the farmers, to show them that we're trying to do something. There's plenty there for the fish. We *will* provide the water for the refuge. Let's give about 75,000 acre feet to the farmers, to show them that we're working with them."

We had to sit down on a Saturday, no less, with Deputy Secretary Griles, to convince him it was the right thing to do. He said, "You're sticking your neck out, aren't you?"

And I said, “Yes, but I think we can do it.”

And he says, “Well, I need more than ‘I think.’”

And I said, “We *will* do it.”

He said, “Well, that’s good enough for me,” and we did it. That was one of the first big issues.

CALFED

CALFED was boiling at that time. CALFED’s the big program in California, to follow up on the Bay Delta Accord that was done several years ago, and it’s an eight-*billion*-dollar investment in environmental works and water supply in the state of California. *That* came up.

4.4 Plan for Southern California

The 4.4 Plan for southern California came up; 4.4 is the plan that the states put together to bring California back within its original allocation of 4.4 million acre feet of water a year out of the Colorado.

And, of course, in that first few days, I was trying to work trips to all of the regional offices, in other words, the introductory trips to meet folks and let them know who their new commissioner was. We got that done. I was sworn in on July seventeenth. The stuff was hitting with Klamath that next week. I think it was like the first week of August we hit all the regional offices. We hit three of them, and then two the next week.

Those were good trips. That made me sure that I had done the right thing, to come back, because I got to see all of the people that I had known for a long time.

Storey: Tell me more about CALFED.

Keys: I don’t know a lot about CALFED. The secretary has designated the assistant secretary, Bennett Raley, to be the main contact in Interior, on CALFED, and he’s pretty much the shepherd of that stuff. Now, our people do all of the work from Interior’s side. Kirk Rogers, our regional director, in Sacramento.

I don’t mean that I don’t know anything about it. I know a *lot* about it. But, mainly, the assistant secretary’s in the lead on it. But, basically, it’s following up on those agreements that were made by Betsy Rieke when she was assistant secretary and got that Bay Delta Accord on how to deal with the environmental issues associated with the Sacramento Delta and San Francisco Bay.

It's a lot of water purchases, it's building facilities to accommodate endangered species, it's building some storage facilities to provide water supplies to folks that don't have it now. Like I said, it's about eight billion dollars' worth of work, trying to firm up, in some cases, the deliveries of water to municipalities, to the environmental needs, and to firm up some irrigation supplies. That's really, in a nutshell, what it's about.

Storey: Yes, but it's affecting our budget, I would presume.

Keys: You know, up to now, the three years that I've been associated with the budgets here, there's been about thirty million dollars in our budget each year. That's '02 that we have been working with since I got here. Well, we were under '01, and there was fifteen million that year. There's thirty million in '02, thirty million in '03, and we'll see what comes out in '04, but that's there for CALFED.

It does and it doesn't. If it gets passed, one of the efforts that we're working on – and I've been involved in this one – is trying to get the other agencies to shoulder the burden, besides just it being all put on Reclamation. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has a big stake in it, EPA has a big stake in it, Fish and Wildlife Service has a big stake in it. We're trying to get those agencies to pick up their fair share of that funding load.

So, yes, it has the potential to have a large effect. Calling it an eight-billion-dollar project is kind of a misnomer, in that half of that has to come from the state, so it's really a four-billion-dollar project for us. There's not even any time limits on it. It'll take a *long* time to get it done, so we think it's manageable. But a lot of pressure on our regional director in Sacramento. That, and a lot of the hot issues that he's got going, makes his job a tough one.

Storey: When you came in, you had a lot of appointments to make, I think.

Job Appointments That Had to Be Made

Keys: I did. When I came in, the regional director's job in Salt Lake City, the regional director's job in mid-Pacific at Sacramento, both of those were open. There was no chief of staff. There was an acting person in the chief of staff's job, but that job was open. The congressional job was open, the public affairs job was open. There was no director of external affairs.

Larry Todd was in the chief of operations. Mike Gabaldon was his deputy. There was no person coordinating the rest of the stuff. So, yes, we had some staff work to put together.

Storey: Let's see. Most of those are SESers [Senior Executive Service].

Keys: They're all SES jobs, yes. All except chief of staff, and it will be sometime. You know, I will tell you – I'd better not. I think when I came back,

Reclamation had suffered from a period of time of management that had not paid a lot of attention to some of the personnel actions, and there were some things that we had to take care of that had been let go for a long time. I will be very diplomatic and leave it there.

Storey: Tell me about, if you feel comfortable with it – we get career folks, and then we get the folks who come in from the outside. I believe they're called political appointees.

Keys: Yes, they are. Either political appointees or Schedule Cs, and, for the most part, they're about the same.

Storey: Do you feel comfortable talking about how all that happens?

Keys: Sure.

Storey: How the political appointments come in.

Keys: Yes. When I came in, they talked to me about the political appointees that I would like to have work for me. At that time, they said, "Well, there's three of them in your office. There's chief of staff, the congressional job, and the public affairs job."

And I said, "Well, you know, I really think that the chief of staff's job should be a career person in Reclamation, because there has to be some continuity between commissioners as that person changes, and that chief of staff is where it should be."

It has not been run that way over the last administration, and we paid for that in some of the games that were played. So, my feeling is that we needed a *good* Bureau person as chief of staff. And I said, "What I would like to do is organize the Bureau front office here with a traditional organization, that you have the political side of the house, you have the line, and you have the staff."

And what I mean by that is that on the political side I would have myself as the commissioner, and then we would have a director of external affairs. And under that, I would have a congressional affairs person, public affairs person, and whatever else we needed to have there.

Under line operations. We'd have the operations chief, the regional directors, and a couple of other small ones. And under staff, we would have the traditional staffs, the management services, the financial – no, not the financial, because I wanted the financial to report directly to me. I always had it that way and I always think it works best, so I pulled that one out.

But the IT stuff, the information technology, the management stuff, the Denver Tech Center, all of that would report in to the staff side. I took that forward and I said, "Here's how I'd like to do it."

And they said, "Okay. So, the director of external affairs would be a political appointee."

And I said, "Yes," and I started looking, and they started sending me names, and they just sent me hack after hack, and I kept telling them no. To their credit, they did not *force* me to take someone.

Then I talked to Mark Limbaugh, who had been considered for my job here at one time, and he had told me that he might be interested in coming back here. And I talked with him, and he was interested in coming. And I said, "Okay, I'd like you to take this job, and here's what I'd like you to do. In other words, I need you to develop those relationships *back*, with all of those organizations, and be a spokesman for Reclamation and help get our good name back to where it ought to be."

That was his orders when he started. Now, we, of course, changed a lot, and he does more than that now, but I needed to get us back up there to our name being considered in a positive viewpoint than otherwise, which I didn't think it was when I came back here. And I think he's done a good job of that. He's a good man. Limbaugh came from being an irrigation district manager in Idaho. He was also president of the Family Farm Alliance, which is one of the large water-user organizations, and has just done a great job.

I agreed to fill the congressional affairs job with a political, and, again, they were sending me hack after hack. Several people on the Hill, like Senator Burns, were calling me, telling me to take their person that they were trying to promote, and I wouldn't take them. I heard that Matt Eames might be interested and I asked him if he was interested. He was in a job change from Idaho Power Company, being their political lobbyist, and I had known him before, so he came on.

I was looking for a public affairs person even before I hired Mark and Matt. And they said, "You know, there's a good one, a career person, over at U-S-G-S,⁴³ that's looking for a change." And I interviewed Trudy Harlow. I interviewed a couple of other folks and I just went back to Trudy and asked her to come on. I went back to the department. I said, "Look, I promised you that I'd take a political in this job. If I could take Trudy, who's a career government person, I will take another political appointee to fill in another job." And they agreed to that. I got Dana Michaud on a political. She's working for Trudy, and that has worked out very well.

So they worked with me very well, and they did not make me take anybody. Now, I've had to consider some folks at times, and I've even agreed to take some folks that haven't come, for good or for bad, but I ended up very well on that political process.

43. Referring to the USGS-U.S. Geological Survey.

Storey: And then the other – let’s see, you called it the staff and the line.

Keys: Yes.

Storey: Who’s running those?

Keys: Well, to start with, Larry Todd was chief of operations, and he was here when I got here. He had been put into the job by Patty Benecke, who was the assistant secretary before, over Eluid Martinez’s objections, by the way. There was some arguing between Patty and Eluid, and Larry got put in the job and Mike Gabaldon was made his deputy, and there was just not the greatest of feelings about what was going on.

To be very candid, the way Keys kind of runs the job is he works closely with the regional directors anyway, and Larry kind of drifted off to the side with 9/11, doing the security stuff, and we basically were not operating with a director of operations.

As it clocked on, we had Larry doing all of the security and law enforcement stuff, and at one time we decided we really needed a chief of operations, and now we’ve appointed Bill Rinne into that job.

On the other side, with the disagreements that were there between Larry and Mike over who was supposed to be director of operations and who was going to be the deputy, and I finally just said, “I’m not going to go there.” And I said, “Larry is the director of operations,” and I set Mike up with his – I talked to him first, of course, but to put him to be the director of the staff stuff.

That’s pretty good, because it gives them a division of labor and they don’t have to – one thinks that he has to report to the other and that sort of thing. I’m not still completely sure that it makes the best use of Mike Gabaldon’s best qualities, but he’s doing a *great* job and he’s a great member of the team.

I tell you, now I look at the team that’s there and I’m *almost* there. There are still a couple of things that I’ve got to get done, but I’ve got Bill Rinne coming in as chief of operations.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 1. SEPTEMBER 11, 2002.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2. SEPTEMBER 11, 2002.

Storey: And he’s coming in as chief of operations.

Keys: Yes. Now I’m almost there. I’ve got Bill coming in as chief of operations. He’s worked in the field all of his career, and the regional directors know him, respect him, and so forth. I’ve got Larry, who’s over now, handling law enforcement, security, safety of dams, and safety, and while he doesn’t have

that background, he jumped into it full square and he's the person that knows the most about it in Reclamation right now.

Mike's there doing the PMTS [Program Management and Technical Services] stuff, and I've got Mark Limbaugh with external affairs, and we've got him fully staffed. They're still adding a couple of lower-level positions, just regular changes, but I think it's in pretty good shape right now.

And, by the way, when I came in, we had to advertise and then select and then go through the procedure. It took me darn near a year to get Kirk Rogers and Rick Gold appointed and approved as regional directors. But I *had* to get that done, and those are both really good people.

Rick was an easy sell. He's been doing that job for a long time with the directors that are there, and doing stuff on his own. Kirk was a little bit of a harder sell, because he had had a time of acting, after Roger Patterson left, between Roger Patterson and Lester Snow. He got just kind of dumped on, and there was some question there as to whether he could do the job. But after Lester left, and to that time, Kirk had done very well and we were able to convince them that Kirk was the right man for the job.

I think if I had to evaluate all the jobs in Reclamation, I think there's one that's tougher than being commissioner, and I think that's being regional director in Sacramento. We'll give Kirk some help sometime if he needs it. But I think right now there are still a couple of changes to be made, but I think we've got a pretty good team together.

Storey: So you're comfortable with it all now?

Keys: *Absolutely not.* If you're ever comfortable, you're dead. There's things that change all the time, with personalities and things that happen. I'm trying to deal with a problem right now, with one of those folks that I depend on mightily. That's why they have somebody here. If they didn't have problems, they wouldn't need me in this job.

Storey: Well, I think you said earlier you've been here fourteen months.

Keys: Next week I'll have been here fourteen months.

Storey: Let's talk sort of more philosophically now, if we could, for a little while. We only have maybe fifteen minutes or so left, twenty minutes. How has the nature of issues that Reclamation has to deal with changed? And let's pick out some periods, your early years with Reclamation, when you were regional director in Boise, and now. Do you see changes in the kinds of issues we're having to deal with?

Recap of Positions Held During Reclamation Career

Keys: Changes in the types of issues for me, personally, absolutely. As to whether they're changes as to whether the Bureau had to deal with them before, I don't know. For me, personally, you know, you come into an organization, and I can remember just like yesterday the first day I walked into the Bureau office in Provo, and the issues that I had to deal with then were technical issues. I didn't have to worry about budgets, I didn't have to worry about policy, didn't have to worry about selections or anything. It was technical. And, crud, Brit, those were the best days of our lives, when all we had to worry about was that.

And I think back about the field work I was doing in those days, the technical studies, and what we were deciding. I can look at facilities out in the field and say, "I did the sizing study, the last sizing study on that thing, and my work helped them decide what the final capacity of that thing ought to be." I mean, as a hydrologist, that's a big deal.

You know, you look on up through the jobs, and you look up into the Garrison years. Same thing. And you look at some of the work in Billings. Crud, some of the studies that we did were the basis of the enlargement of Buffalo Bill, and the dismantling of the Oahe Unit on the Missouri River. But they were technical.

I try to think, what's the best job I ever had? The best job I ever had was probably being regional hydrologist up in Billings, about 80 percent technical, about 20 percent administrative, and it was dealing with people and maybe working with some policies every once in a while. Yes, a little budget to keep the place going, but for mostly it was technical, and, crud, that was a perfect job almost.

So, has the job changed for me? Absolutely. From being regional director to here, to me, I think I had an idea of the types of problems we'd be dealing with. I had no idea that there would be as many as there are, and I had no idea of what the weight of each one of them would be. In other words, you make one little decision on the Middle Loup Project⁴⁴ in Nebraska, and then you say, "Well, jeez, look at the ripples coming out." Hell, they're not ripples. They're tsunamis sometimes, when it ripples out to the rest of the United States.

The meeting I just came from now is on water rights for the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. The decision that we make right there on that one little old piece of water, and it's a small piece of water, will ripple to every National Park in the United States, on water rights and how to handle a federal reserve right for a Park.

I never expected it. I didn't expect there to be so many decisions and for each one of them to be so heavy. That's the big difference to me.

44. Referring to the North Loup Division of the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program on the North Loup River, generally between Burwell and Fullerton, Nebraska.

“I thought I knew politics before”

Politics. I thought I knew politics before. Didn't know crap, and, at times, my assistant secretary reminds me that I don't know crap about politics. I mean, that's his opinion, but still, he may be right in some cases, because my old approach to doing jobs is just, lay it out on the table and say, “This is what it is. What's the right thing to do?”

Politics, you don't do that very often. I mean, I hope that in the end we do what's right, but you have to consider, first off, all these ripples that we were talking about; second off, you have to consider what the effects are on other *interests* around the department, what the other interests are over at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, what the other interests are up at Capitol Hill.

So, it's just a lot heavier than I ever anticipated. If there's any one thing that has made me feel insecure about that job, it's that, and maybe not having the experience, the political experience or whatever, to handle some of this stuff.

Now, I'll turn it on the other side and say that I think I add a dimension to the secretary's quiver of arrows that gives her an insight into some the things that the pure political person coming in here wouldn't understand. I firmly believe that. But is it a good balance? I don't know the answer to that.

Is the assistant secretary and me a good balance? I don't know the answer to that, either. I think, ideally, it would be a good balance, but he and I have had some big differences that have kept that from being an ideal relationship so far.

Storey: And he was not involved in your selection process, is that right?

Keys: Well, almost. It's almost right. I asked him at one time, and he told me that the secretary called him up and told him that she was considering myself and Roger Patterson for the job, and did he have a preference, and he told her that he was okay with either one of us. And that was his involvement in my selection in the job. That's what he told me. Whether it's more than that, I don't know, but that's what he told me.

Storey: Am I remembering that you said he was sworn in at the same time you were?

Keys: He was. We actually passed the Senate. He had had his hearing about a month before I came back for my hearing, but the Senate had passed no appointments, because of Steve Griles. They were working deals. I had my hearing, the deals got cut. Didn't have anything to do with me. The deals got cut on Steve Griles. When they sent my name to the Senate, my name and Fran Manella, and Bennett Raley, and Steve Griles, and Lynn Scarlett, and Neal McCaleb, and maybe even – no, I think that was it. All of us were approved by the

Senate at the same time, and we were all sworn in essentially at the same time. Bennett Raley and I were sworn in on the same day.

Storey: So, she was consulting with him, presuming that he was going to be confirmed.

Keys: Presuming, yes.

Storey: Interesting.

Keys: I'll tell you, at times it's still hard. I don't know how to put this. At times, I still have to stop, ask myself, first off, am I doing what's right, but second, what am I doing here? And I don't mean that, literally. What I mean is that you have to just stop and say, "I'm the Commissioner of Reclamation. I never had any idea of being here, and Lord help me do a good job at this thing."

That's overpowering to me at times. I hope that when I walk out that door the last day that I can say that I did a good job. Well, you know, I guess I need to go back and talk to some of the previous commissioners, and ask them what was their measure of success.

Dan Beard would probably say his measure of success was changing the Bureau. What was Eluid Martinez's measure of success? What was Dennis Underwood's measure of success? Was Dennis Underwood's measure putting together a strategic plan? Hell, I'm writing a strategic plan myself, but it's one that works in with everything they're doing down there.

Storey: Down where?

Keys: In the secretary's office. It's part of the overall strategic plan for Interior, but I put together our part of that thing. So, is that a measure? I don't know. What was Dale Duvall's measure of success? Was it implementing the Reclamation Reform Act? Was it taking care of Kesterson? See, he got Kesterson thrown on top of him like I got Klamath thrown on top of me. Him taking care of Kesterson and then getting RRA up and running, was that his measure of success? I don't know the answer to that.

I would ask Keith Higginson. Was his measure of success castigating the Bureau about Teton and getting the Safety of Dams Act up and going? I don't know the answer to that, and I don't know what my measure will be. I don't like the thoughts of *legacy*. I don't need to see myself, see my name on the cornerstone of a dam somewhere.

I guess I would rather somebody think of it as footprints or a trail or something that they could follow, that says, "This is Reclamation's job and this is how we can do it, and this is how it fits in with the welfare of the western United States."

To me, that's what I'm thinking of, but I don't know whether that's a measure of success or not. Is my measure going to be dealing with 9/11, getting a proper security program up and going? God, I hope not. I don't know. You're watching a guy squirm, who doesn't know what his measure is.

Storey: Well, I think that will show up to you later, but let me ask you a different question. In the past, I've asked you about the commissioners you've worked with, and your thoughts about them. Do you think that your fourteen months of experience has changed your view of any of those commissioners?

Keys: Has my experience changed my view of anyone I've known?

Storey: Yes.

What Was Learned from Various Commissioners

Keys: In my speech that I gave to the Senate Confirmation Committee, our committee, the one doing confirmation, I told them that I had worked for ten different commissioners, and I had learned something from every one of them. Maybe you've read this, but I learned from Floyd Dominy to work with the Congress. I learned from Keith Higginson to work with the states and to believe in state water rights. I learned from Dennis Underwood how to work hard, because I never saw a working fool like Dennis Underwood in my life.

I learned from Dan Beard two things. One, that you've got to be open to change, and the other, you've got to respect the resource. And I truly believe in that. From Eluid Martinez, you know, I learned humility and service from Eluid, because he believed not in himself, but in what we do. I don't think he was very good at telling us what he was trying to do, but he believed in what he was doing with the state and what he was trying to do here.

Admiration for Former Commissioners Has Risen

Has my view changed of them? I would say the only way that any of them have changed has been to go *up* in valuation, because I see what they've had to deal with, in trying to, first, just keep the business going, and, second, fight every year that fight for money, for – the money first, but to keep things going, rather than to have somebody come in and put you in a different direction than you want to go.

My admiration of those guys has gone up a great deal. Hey, I'm telling you, this is a humbling job. One of these days, maybe you and I will sit down and talk about this job and its relationship to the assistant secretary, because I will tell you, it is more and worse than I ever anticipated. If we ever do that, I'll be very careful in how I do it, because I don't want to hurt any feelings. But it's not easy. It is not easy to run a Bureau and work for people that don't understand the Bureau and what we're trying to do, and have their own ideas of where it ought to go, which is not always compatible. People that, actually, in

their private life before, worked against the Bureau, and, in a great deal of situations don't trust the Bureau. That's tough, and that's, to me, one of my biggest challenges right now.

Let me add something else to this before we leave that thought. I think if the Secretary of the Interior were to walk into this room and say, "I need you to go right over there to that window and open it and jump out," I would think that she had a reason for that and would know what the result would be and would think that it would be good for the Bureau, and I'd do it.

I think she believes in us, I think she understands a lot of what we're trying to do. She will listen. She's listened every time we've had something to say about something to do, and I think she has the best interest of this department at heart. She has the best interest of the country first, and then the department, and I think she believes in the Bureau. I believed that when I came here and I still believe that.

I believe, to a great extent, our president knows that. I got to go up and talk to him before our centennial. You know, we gave him the jacket and they made the picture that we used down there, because he couldn't come. But he asked me stuff about Reclamation that told me somebody had told him, and he remembered. I think that was our secretary, so I believe in her and what she's trying to do, and I believe she has our interest at her heart, and that means a lot right now to me.

Storey: Reclamation has changed a lot since '92, '94. Our staff's gone down, our budget's gone down.

Keys: Different people.

Storey: We have a lot of different priorities that are pressing for attention. What do you think our biggest challenges are going to be for the next four, five, ten years?

Biggest Challenges in the next Few Years

Keys: For four or five or ten years, I think before we're able to really launch off into something new, we're going to have to find a way to deal with water supplies, and the challenge to us is trying to find ways to provide water, and not for just our traditional water users.

Endangered Species Act Will Be Changed Because it Is on a Collision Course with Water

The Endangered Species Act, I think it will be changed. I don't think it'll happen before I leave here, but it'll be changed in mine and your lifetime, because it's on a collision course with water for the rest of society right now. The Endangered Species Act is being used for reasons that it was not created to

be used for, and it's causing our projects to bear the brunt at times when that wasn't the purpose of it.

I'm not expressing that very well, and I apologize for that, but it's a deep frustration that we are *emasculating* projects that were built for a specific purpose, and now we're changing them to such a great extent and not using them for that purpose.

Our big challenge is water and how we do that. We know that. The challenge for us is how to do it. I think we've got to convince Congress that we have a *mechanism* to do that, rather than them get in there and piecemeal us like they're doing now.

Issues Related to Congress Assigning Projects to Reclamation Without Feasibility Studies

In other words, they come in and they authorize and fund the Mni Wiconi Rural Water Project. They authorize and fund Mid-Dakota. They authorize and fund Rocky Boy. They authorize and fund Fort Peck. All of these rural water supply systems, without *any* Reclamation feasibility study analysis, without any Reclamation plan for development, without *any* scheme of how you fit them all together. And it's just here, there, over here, over there, and that process we've got to get a handle on. That's probably our biggest challenge.

Storey: Scattered around.

Keys: That's right, and each one of them. There's a 200-million-dollar project here, there's a 600-million-dollar project there, there's a 400 down here. And when you put all those together, *potentially* they're devastating to our budget, and the big challenge to us is to get a handle on them, and that's what we're trying to do.

Storey: But I understood the Congress was *not* funding those. They were assigning them responsibility, but not so much the funding.

Keys: They've got Mni Wiconi, Mid-Dakota, Fort Peck. They've funded all of those. Rocky Boy is standing in line, wanting money, and they'll probably give it to them. Crud, the Mni Wiconi folks were here this morning. They'd just been up on the Hill. Up on the Hill, they wrote in 39 million bucks into their program. Comes *straight* out of our budget, goes *straight* to them, with no Reclamation benefit whatsoever.

Storey: So we're not really running these projects.

Keys: It's a good project, but it has almost no Reclamation involvement whatsoever.

Storey: I see you shaking your head no. But it comes out of our budget.

Keys: Yes, it does. And, you see, I think that potential is there for almost *everything*. I went over to Hawaii to work with the government over there to work on the rehabilitation of irrigation systems on four of the islands, and we could use small Reclamation act project loan over there just like a charm, but we can't pull it out. It would take money away from our traditional Reclamation stuff.

What we're going to see is that Congress will whack money in there to do that. Whether we can carve out a feasibility, an engineering part of that, I don't know, but it's up to us to try to do it. If we don't, they're just going to pass the money through us. I see that happening with a lot of stuff.

The prototype for this thing was the Central Utah Project. Remember Central Utah Project? We worked on that sucker for years, and then they *pulled it out* and said, "We're going to do it a different way." And they funded it entirely separate. It's our money, but they give it to them for *them* to do the construction, for *them* to do the management, and so forth.

Now, we're trying to work a way to get it back right now, so that we're working with them, but that was their prototype. And then after that happened, they started hitting each one of these rural water supply systems, and there's probably eight or ten of them.

Title XVI, out of the 1986 Water Supply Act, was for wastewater reuse and recycling. Same thing. Now, there we've got a feasibility authorization, but they come in and authorize these darn projects and pass money through to them. If we can hold on to some of them, we do. Some of them we can't hold on to and they just fund them with our money. That's the challenge to us and that's why we're trying to work with the Hill so closely, to get a handle on them.

So, you ask about challenges. Crap, we're in one of the worst droughts *of record* right now in about six states out there. Of course, droughts come and go, but I think we'll see a big push to do some stuff *after* we get through this drought, whether it's more storage. I doubt that it'll be more storage, but they'll be looking for us to do something to help out.

We're trying to work with them on drought plans right now, but I think, water supply wise, the demand for municipal water for other purposes is going to be big. So, there's different kinds of challenges. There's the water challenge, there's the congressional challenge, there's the budget challenge. We're still being told to keep our budget flat, and that's what's going in – every time. Now, they add some more up there, but the budget's flat.

So, do we concentrate on our infrastructure? Yes. Do we concentrate on safety of dams? Yes. Is there some new stuff that we can do? We're trying. That's all.

Storey: But in that circumstance it's difficult.

Keys: Yes. And see, that's one of the frustrations to Keys. You know, he does not want to be known as a commissioner that didn't do anything new. But, boy, when you're fighting those kind, it's almost, well, jeez, how do you do that? That's the challenge to me right now.

Storey: Well, I think our time's almost up.

Keys: Next time we need to talk centennial, because I had a great time at Hoover Dam, and we need to talk about that sometime.

Storey: Yes. Well, we have an appointment scheduled for November the eighth.

Keys: Excellent.

Storey: Let me ask whether or not the information in this interview can be used by researchers one year after you leave office as commissioner.

Keys: Yes.

Storey: Okay, great. Thank you.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 2. SEPTEMBER 11, 2002. END OF INTERVIEW.
BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1. JUNE 19, 2003.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian with the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing John W. Keys III, commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation on June 19, 2003, at about 9:30 in the morning, in his offices in the Main Interior Building in Washington, D.C.. This is tape one.

Commissioner, I think last time you mentioned that we need to talk about the September 11, 2001, catastrophe, attack, and its effect on Reclamation?

September 11, 2001, Attack on the World Trade Center

Keys: Well, you know, I think the first thing I'd talk about is where I was and what I was doing, and then go to that. You know, September 10, I was in San Diego meeting with the Colorado River Basin states, and I had finished up there and flown into Boise, Idaho, to meet with Bill McDonald, the regional director in Boise. Bill McDonald, the regional director, and I had breakfast together early that morning, and we were talking about what we were going to do. We had a meeting set up that day with the State of Idaho, to talk about conjunctive-use pumping, using Reclamation water, and so forth, to pump into ground water recharge to help the state out of a tough situation on their ground water system. And we met, and we talked, and rode up to the regional office together the morning of September 11. As we got out of his car, at the office, Wanda Shearer, a friend who handled the RRA Program for us was standing outside the door, and she said, "Have you heard the news?" And Bill and I both said, "No, what Wanda?" And she said, "An airplane has crashed into one of the

World Trade Center Towers in New York City.” And we went upstairs and turned the television on, and we stood there and watched the second plane hit the building, and then as things progressed we saw both of the towers fall. And, of course, even at that time the news reporters, I think they had it on ABC, and Peter Jennings was talking about how he didn’t know what was going on. And, I think it dawned on us, as we saw that, and then got the news about the Pentagon being hit, and about the plane going down in Pennsylvania, what was really going on. I got in touch, tried to get in touch with some of our folks here, and the phone systems were all just absolutely jammed. And, we had a terrifically hard time getting back in touch. They started pulling satellite telephones out that had not been used in a while, and hadn’t been charged up, and we finally were able to get a hold of Washington, D.C., and find that they were going to an alert system that sent everybody home. And, after a while, we got to that in all of the regional offices. And first off, we were trying to account for all of our people, to be sure that we didn’t have anybody on one of those airplanes. About, I think it was about noon, we finally accounted for all of our people. We had some people on travel in Mexico. We had people on travel around that were *inconvenienced* mightily, but we finally accounted for everybody, and started trying to make arrangements to get everybody home. About mid-way during the afternoon I talked with the secretary, Secretary Norton, and told her where I was, and that I was actually operating the Bureau from Boise. She asked me to stay in Boise for the time being, to be her coordinator, eyes and ears in the Northwest, because we, you have the National Interagency Fire Center there. There are other Interior Offices, Fish and Wildlife Service, Park Service, BLM [Bureau of Land Management], and so forth, there, and Reclamation, of course, in Boise. So, I ended up actually staying in Boise for over a week, talking with those other agencies and running the Bureau from Idaho. Our folks here got back to work the next day. At first, there was concern about bringing folks back, and *then* the President wanted to be sure that we didn’t capitulate. In other words, “By god we are an organization that could function under adverse conditions.” And we got all of our folks back to work the next day, and went from there. On, of course, a high alert. First off, I think that afternoon I cut a tape message to all of our employees encouraging them to do everything that they could to get back to normal, and that we thought that the threat was not there anymore. And, I thought it turned out fairly well. We then set up regular phone calls with *all* of the regions, and offices, and for that whole week we did them, I think we were doing them twice a day, at first, and by the end of the week we got down to once a day. And, it worked out very well. I worked with the folks at the other agencies, and it turned out very well. I got back to – after visiting a local Penney’s store to get some clean underwear and some other shirts and stuff, (Storey: Um-hmm.) because I was on the road unexpectedly, it actually worked out very well to be in Boise working out of that office. *But*, like visiting relatives and fish, visiting commissioners get stale and start to smell after a week in somebody else’s office. So, I was able to get back to Washington on the next Tuesday, the 18th of September. (Storey: Hmm.) I think Tuesday was the 18th.

Storey: Yeah. Yeah.

Keys: Yes. And I started working out of here. The next, other than doing the regular, the business and so forth, the Secretary's Office set up a rotation of agency heads to go to off-site facilities and actually be at the off-site facility during the high level of alert that we were on. Fran Mainella, the Director of the Park Service, and I did a National Public Lands Day event out at Shenandoah National Park on Saturday, the 28th of September. And then she and I drove to Shepherdstown, West Virginia, which was our off-site operations center. And, we were there for a week. Actually, being the secretary's operation center, and I was working with our folks all around Reclamation from there, for the next week. And, that was a good experience, to work with the other folks. I know Fran Manella was there, the Director of the Park Service, and myself as the lead people. We had Hugo Teufel, from the Solicitor's Office, was with us. Dave Anderson, from PMB, Policy Management and Budget, was there. John Wright from the Public Affairs Office was there, and all of them became very close friends because we were twelve-hour basis, twenty-four hour basis really, working together, doing all this stuff. We went through exercises with the security folks. Jerry Land was the main security person that we worked with. And, it was a good experience. I learned a lot. And it actually put us close to, you might say, the crisis. I mean these folks were briefing us on *al Qaeda* stuff, and that kind of thing. That made us feel like we were part of the action. (Storey: Um-hmm.) So we, so it was a good experience.

You know, if you look around Reclamation, the fallout, or the results from September 11 have been agency-changing. It changed the basic approach that we had to operating *every* facility, because before September 11 our approach was to figure ways to get as many people into our facilities, in the visitor facilities, down in our tours as we could. Hoover Dam is a great example. We had three different levels of tours before, at Hoover. You know you could go into the visitor's center and see all of the displays and stuff. The second level tour got you down to the generator deck and saw some stuff, and then they had the hard-hat tour that you actually, when you paid your money, you got a hard hat to keep forever. But, you wore that thing and it took you down into the bowels of the dam and the powerplant. 9-11 did away with that forever. We came up with a tour that we can still show people what's going on, and get them down to the generator deck, but we had to put fences in. We had to put armed security people in strategic places. They have to go through magnetometers to get into the place, have to search every bag. You can't take backpacks in anymore, or daypacks, or whatever. It, forever, changed the way we did that kind of business.

Developing a Security and Law Enforcement Program

The other thing that it did is it made us re-review and come up with security and law enforcement plans for every facility in Reclamation. We came up with the top fifty-five first. Actually we came up with the top three, and then the top five, then the top fifty-five, and then the full 348 dams, the

fifty-eight powerplants, that we had to review the security for, be sure that we had an adequate plan. That stuff has been through constant reviews with security people. We had to do RAM-D, Risk Assessment Management for Dams, for every facility; [RAM-T] Risk Assessment Management–Transmission, to look at all of our powerplants and the transmission lines; [RAM-M] Risk Assessment Management–Management. In other words, look at our management styles, and so forth, to be sure that it was consistent. So, it, all of us learned acronyms that we had never even heard of before, *and* it cost tons of money.

In the first round, for 2002, we got \$30 million to start the assessments, get people on the security beats, and so forth. There were a couple of things that we found out. One, we knew that we didn't have law enforcement authority, and we had to get it. And, that passed very early for us. The – gosh I just had a brain slip there, and can't remember what the second one was. Oh, I know what it was. But, we found out we had to do that. The second is the secretary did not want to *add* another police force to the Interior operation, and it was decided that all of our law enforcement, *except* for the existing police force at Hoover, would be provided by other federal agencies or by contract with states or local entities, or by contract with private outfits. And, that's been a challenge for us. We do have some of our security folks out there, that we still use, but they're not armed right now. We are making a pitch to the secretary to arm our own security people. So, its changed the way we do business. Every facility, now, have, at least the top fifty-five, and most of the other facilities, have locks and gates where folks used to come and go freely. We have had to review all of our SCADA [Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition Systems, those systems that operate our facilities. It's just a different way of doing business. And, the first year we had \$30 million, '03 we had \$28 million, and then had to get another \$25 million supplemental. In our '04 budget we're asking for, we asked for \$28 million we don't know yet how we're going to get the extra money. When we did our '03 and '04 budgets, OMB [Office of Management and Budget] asked us not to guess at what it would take to harden the facilities and to add all of that stuff. So, '03 we had \$28 million into what we *knew* we needed. They added \$25 million in for hardening and finishing up. '04 we had asked for \$28 million also, now we'll see how we get the other \$25 or \$30 million that it takes. '05, we're asking for \$43 million. That's big dollars. I mean, you look at \$30 million in '02, \$53 million in '03. It'll probably take another \$50 or \$60 million in '04; asking for \$43 million in '05. Those are big dollars, and it's just, right now, the cost of doing business.

One of the issues that we've had to deal with, in those monies, is Reclamation traditionally, and by law, has been an outfit that we have to *pay* back monies that we get. We made the decision early to make that non-reimbursable, so that we didn't have to put the burden of September 11, 2001 back on our water users. I think we can get away with that while we're doing extraordinary stuff, like hardening facilities, adding law enforcement people. And so, at some time, we'll probably have to get back to actually having to

make that reimbursable. I'd say we probably got a couple of three years before we have to do that.

So, September 11 changed us forever. I think everybody in the United States could say that right now, because of what we have to go through at the airports, and at the train stations, and at the bus stations, and even to get in this building where we work. (Storey: Um-hmm.) So, that's just kind of a capsulization of what went on with September 11.

Storey: How are those budget increases for security and law enforcement affecting the rest of Reclamation? Are they?

Keys: Yes they are, because if you look at our budgets, we've been flat-lined. Every since I've been here, and have come back, and we have been held to pretty much the same levels that we've had over the past few years, and I don't see that changing for a couple of years. The \$28 million for '03 and '04, that we had budgeted came out of, we had to cut back in some areas to make up for it. We did get a supplemental in '03 that we didn't have, that was on top of that, which was very fortunate, and we're hoping that something like that happens for '04. The '05, there, we actually, within our target, took care of about \$28 million worth of it, and the other we put in as over-target. But, it comes from other over-target stuff that we would have asked for in our budget stuff. So, it's, of course, taken away from what we're trying to do in other places.

Storey: Hmm.

Keys: Yes.

Storey: This is sort of a hard question to ask, but I think I ought to ask it (Keys: Sure.) anyway. Do you think – I have the impression from what you've been saying that you don't feel that Reclamation is *overreacting* to the situation. Could you talk about that?

Keys: Sure. I don't think Reclamation is overreacting. Of course, I can't tell you some of the briefings that I get.

Storey: Sure.

Keys: There's a real threat out there, and what I would say is that I think the reason that we took the September 11 event so seriously, it was placed right back on *al Queda*, and Osama Bin Laden. Osama Bin Laden is a civil engineer. Osama Bin Laden is a contractor. He *built* dams, very similar to the ones that we have built in Reclamation. He knows the insides. He *knows* the sweet spots, where he could do the most damage, and there's no doubt in our mind that he has passed that information along to those folks that he worked with. We can never make them completely airtight, or completely secure. It just can't be done. There's not enough money in the Gross National Product to do that. I think the reaction that we have done is proper, and everything that we have

done would give us time to react, if one of our facilities were targeted. So, no, I don't think we have overreacted. I don't think we have underreacted. I know, at times, we have to push some of our people to really take it completely serious, and give us that time that's necessary to react. But, I don't, no I don't think we've overreacted. Now, in Reclamation, we've got about forty people that we carved out and that are in our security, law enforcement function, and we put safety of dams, and our safety functions in there. We took Larry Todd, who was our Chief of Operations, and made him head of that organization, and he is still building that organization, *giving* us a capability and security. We still depend on other agencies for our law enforcement. But, I don't think we overreacted. You know, at some time, maybe we'll get back to some level of security that we were close to before. I'm not sure that's going to happen. I see events still going on, in Palestine, and in Israel. I see the events that have taken place with Iraq. I see what we did in Afghanistan. I think that those kinds of things are going to continue in the foreseeable future. I don't think we've overreacted. Good question, but I don't think we've overreacted.

Storey: Well, you talked earlier about, "We had a list of three, then five," and so on, so on.

Keys: Yes.

Storey: Could you talk about that, and what the factors were, and how you were involved in that kind of thing?

Keys: Well, you know, there are several principle factors that we look at when you say that there's a threat out there. There is an icon status with some of our facilities, like Hoover, and Grand Coulee, and Shasta. You also take it the next step and say, "Okay. What are the threats to life below there? *And*, what's the threat to the economy? Or the economic conditions of our country if one of those facilities is lost?" And they're tremendous. I mean, take Folsom. Folsom's not even our, I mean Corps of Engineers built Folsom, but it's one that we operate and maintain, and so forth. There's 900,000 people that live below Folsom Dam that would be affected. The casualties would be tremendous if something happened to Folsom. Grand Coulee. I think Grand Coulee could pass most any flood that came down, but there's a threat there. And, it's just not something that we can take lightly. So, like I said, you look at the icon status. It would be a feather in one of em's cap if they could do something to one of those facilities. And, you know, you're talking Grand Coulee, Hoover, Shasta, Folsom, and Glen Canyon. Those are the five. I hope I haven't told you anything that's secret here, but, you look at what could happen if something happened to one of them. And, the impact would be tremendous on the psyche of the United States. On the economy it would be tremendous, and the loss of life below some of them is just phenomenal.

Storey: Um-hmm.

Keys: Yeah.

- Storey: One of the questions that came up last night, when I was out with some friends, was, “How, has Reclamation looked at how it would have to interact with the Office of Homeland Security, if something did happen, and what we’re doing to try and make sure that interaction is smooth?”
- Keys: Well, it’s not, “How would we act if something happened?”. It’s, “How are we acting?” I started meeting with Homeland Security that first week I got back here. We had meetings over in the old Executive Office Building, (Storey: Um-hmm.) among all the agencies. This was even before Homeland Security was formed. And that was even before it was formed as an office, rather than a department. We were meeting with the Corps, and TVA, and Bonneville Power, and Western Area Power, and we were lock-step in what we were trying to get done, and being sure that we were reacting the right way. Then, Homeland Security was created as an office, and we actually were part of the briefings to get them up to speed. I had briefings with their acting, not Tom Ridge, but his person that was in charge of infrastructure. We had briefings in this office, and over there many times. And, as their department came up, we are on their teams for infrastructure. We coordinate mightily with them on exchange of information now, on security information. We just had a briefing yesterday with CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] people, on what’s going on. So, we work very closely with Homeland [Security]. Larry Todd, our Director of Security and Law Enforcement, is doing an exercise today, and tomorrow, with Homeland Security. We work very closely with them. They have made suggestions to us. They have provided different methodologies and people, for us, after they got up and going. Some of our best allies are our sister agencies, brother agencies. I guess sister agencies are inside Interior, and brother agencies are outside. But, I know General Flowers, the head of the Corps, very well. He and General Griffin are good friends, and we share security stuff regularly, both methodology, and evaluating our facilities, how we’re dealing with law enforcement and security, and where we’re going in the future, and trying to get monies for it. Glen McCullough, the head of TVA, and I have talked several times, many times, on what we’re trying to get done. (Storey: Um-hmm.) I work with Bonneville Power, and with Western Area Power. I’ll be very candid. I think Western, and Bonneville, have taken kind of a different approach than the other infrastructure agencies. Now, in their defense, they got thousands of miles of transmission line, and you can’t put fences around thousand of miles of transmission line, so their approach is different than ours. But, we correspond and talk to those people regularly.
- Storey: One of the things that’s becoming really obvious in America is we’ve got an economic downturn, the local and state governments are hurting. Are we running into any issues in the coordination, and everything, as we go along, because of that?

Closure of the Road over Folsom Dam

- Keys: Oh absolutely. Some of the actions that we’ve had to take have caused problems out there. A good example is the closure of the road across Folsom

Dam. The road across Folsom Dam was never meant to be a traffic road. It was a maintenance road across the dam for people to do work on it. And, as the years went by, people started using it, and then it became a major thoroughfare. The road itself, across the dam, has never been improved, but the city, bless their heart, and the county, bless their heart, have gone in and improved the approaches, and actually funneled traffic to the darn thing, and it became *their* road, and we had to close it. And, there is an impact on some of the local economy right there. There's traffic impacts. The city and county have had to put on extra, they say, extra police, to take care of it. And now, there's a move in Congress to have us fund and build a bridge down below to take the traffic off. That's one of the kinds of impacts that's been out there. At Las Vegas, for instance, I don't think we realized how important those tours at Hoover Dam were to some of the tourism economy. (Storey: Um-hmm.) And, boy, we learned really quick that they wanted us back in business. And, we learned what keeping the long-haul truckers off of Hoover Dam did to that industry. And, actually, we also learned what the local trucking impacts were. And we actually had to come up with a system to permit local trucks there. So, yes, now the overall effect on the economy, if you look at the effect on the airlines and so forth. I don't think we've experienced any of that overall effect, but boy we found places where we've had a hard part of it.

Storey: I'm aware, for instance, at Hoover that we have the roadblocks, or the checkpoints?

Keys: Right.

Storey: And so on. Is that, is the expense of those checkpoints included in the money you've already talked about, or is that a regional expense that's above and beyond?

Keys: It's in the monies that we pulled together, that's part of it.

Storey: Oh. Okay.

Keys: Hoover is one that we're actually using as a model to show how we can allow some traffic, and actually search some vehicles, and implement a permit system for some of the trucks, and also not have the long-haul truckers on the bridge, or on the dam. Now, one thing I forgot to bring in there is that we've been looking at getting the truck traffic, and a lot of the traffic off of Hoover Dam for a long time. And, we already had, in the works, a new bridge. And, Arizona and Nevada had agreed to cost-share that new bridge. This just spurred it along, and we actually got Department of Transportation to . . .

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1. JUNE 19, 2003.

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2. JUNE 19, 2003.

Storey: The Department of Transportation.

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- Keys: Got DOT to put up the money along with Arizona and Nevada putting up some to construct a new bridge. And, the construction's under way. They're actually working on the abutments right now. But the whole Hoover security operation thing is being used as a model of how to handle traffic across some of our dams. At Folsom, we just had to cut it off, and it's cut off still at Grand Coulee, because there's no major road across there. It's cut off at Shasta, for the same reason. Glen Canyon is not a major road either. So, we are still working with the darn things to see how we work with them.
- Storey: Um-hmm. Is there anything else about 9-11, and security, and law enforcement we ought to be talking about?
- Keys: Well, no. I have to say, to wrap it up, that I think we reacted right. The secretary's decision for us not to have a police force—it's an experiment in progress to see whether we can get the right service from states, counties, local police outfits, and private organizations to provide law enforcement around our facilities. I think we'll probably see some of our security people armed, but still not have a police force. So, I think we're handling it. It'll be interesting to see, looking back ten years from now, how it looks at that time, (Storey: Um-hmm.) and whether what we did is right. So, that's September 11.
- Storey: Well, I think another big topic, of many I might add, that we ought to talk about is the centennial.

Reclamation's Centennial

- Keys: That's a great topic.
- Storey: And your reaction to that?
- Keys: The centennial celebration for Reclamation meant a lot to me, to be able to come back and be the commissioner during the centennial year, and to be able to participate, and to represent the Bureau at a lot of those events just meant a tremendous amount to me. I actually was involved as regional director when we set up the group that was going to *consider* doing a centennial ten years ago, or so. And some of the original thought, it wasn't my thoughts, but we arranged for people to start thinking about it about that time. Of which, you were one of the people at that time. So, it was maybe not quite ten years ago, but pretty close to it, we started thinking about it. When I came back I sat down with you and the teams, and so forth, to see what was going on, and I liked what I saw. At that time, I made a commitment to participate in as many of the events as I could, and I think they turned out really well. I have never been to an event that I felt represented as much, or had an impact on as many people, and on myself included, as our centennial event at Hoover Dam did. It was one I was nervous about it because I had to do a talk there, but I looked forward to it, and I thoroughly enjoyed myself. Almost as an afterthought, we added that little reunion at the Elk's Club in Boulder City, Nevada, and that turned out to be a highlight for the thing. Were you able to be there?

Storey: Oh yeah.

Keys: We got out invitations to as many current and retired Bureau, and previous Bureau, people as we could to come, and we ended up with over 300 people coming through the Elk's Club that afternoon. When we got started we gave a little talk, and then I, just on the spur of the minute, I mean just one of those flashes, decided to pass the microphone around to *everybody*, (Storey: Um-hmm.) and let them tell what they did for the Bureau and what they're doing now, and after we'd gone through about a hundred people I thought, "Oh crud. What did I get us into here?" But it was a defining minute, for *everybody* there, and I had, even though it took us a while to get around to everybody, everybody that came to that thing told me how much they enjoyed that. I think the only person that was disappointed, he didn't get to give a talk, was Floyd Dominy. (laugh) (Storey: Yeah.) Floyd got to tell what he was doing, but I think he wanted to talk some more. But, and I don't mean that negatively, because Mr. Dominy was a real part of that thing.

I got to digress for a minute. There is a funny damn story that came out of that whole thing with Mr. Dominy. We sent the invitations out to come to the event, and about a month ahead of time Gertel Harris came in and said, "We have not heard back from Floyd Dominy, that he's coming to the centennial. Would you call him and ask him?" So, I called up Mr. Dominy, and I said, "Mr. Dominy we haven't heard back from you. We wanted to be sure that you were going to come to the centennial celebration, because it would mean a lot to our folks if you could be there." And he said, "Are you going to fly me out there?" And I said, "Mr. Dominy, we will certainly provide you a ticket, and get you out there, and even provide you lodging if you need." He said, "That's not what I mean." He said, "I want you to fly me out there in the *Bureau* airplane." And I said, "Well, Mr. Dominy, we don't have a Bureau airplane. There's a couple out in the field, but we don't have a Bureau airplane." And over the telephone he said, "You don't have a Bureau airplane? What kind of damn commissioner are you anyway?" (laugh). Well, end result is we actually flew him out there. We had somebody pick him up, and he and I stayed at the same place, at the old Boulder Dam House.

Storey: Yeah. The Boulder Dam Hotel.

Keys: Boulder Dam Hotel. Yes. And I had breakfast with him that first morning, and it was a great time. I thoroughly enjoyed it. And it was a good addition having him there. That afternoon thing went really well. Some of us even stayed and helped clean up the Elk's Club after we were done. But the next day it was hotter than a blaze down there on the transformer deck below the dam. I think it was 113 dang degrees at Las Vegas that day. And, we knew it was going to be hot on the deck, and we had planned the dinner inside, amongst the generators, on the generator deck. And, there were problems with the catering.

Some of it, some of the people didn't get their dinners, and that kind of thing.⁴⁵ But, still, it was just a fantastic event. There were some things I didn't even get to see, and I had to get a videotape afterwards to see the flute player, and the bagpiper, and some of that stuff. The fireworks were as good as any I've ever seen. I think those of us that were there, that saw the fireworks over the canyon, felt that it was just a defining moment for us.

Wanted to Attend All the Local Centennial Events

I'll tell you, as good an event as that was, I think a lot of Reclamation people will define the centennial with their own local events. And, I got to go to a number of them. I did not get to go to all of them. I *wanted* to go to all of them, and there were some that I just didn't get to go to, but I made events in Ephrata, or in Moses Lake, Washington, which was also the anniversary of the fiftieth year of first water into the Columbia Basin [Project]. I went to Yuma, Arizona, where they had over 600 people there at the old, at the old Reclamation Headquarters Building, which is now a state park. Went to Denver, with all the Denver people. Went to Pathfinder Dam, and of course that was a great day at Pathfinder. We had the centennial event in the morning, and we dedicated a low-flow facility, at the same time, that put water back into a stretch of river that hadn't had water in fifty years, which was a good deal. That afternoon we went fishing on the North Platte River, and that night we went to see the Casper Rockies play baseball, so that was a great day.

But, we made a number of the events. There were some that I didn't get to that I wished I could. I didn't get to go to the one at Derby [Diversion Dam], Derby Dam, on the Newlands, or Truckee-Carson Project. Truckee-Carson Irrigation District put it on. But, I didn't get to go to all of them, but I got to go to a number of them, and I thoroughly enjoyed them. I'll tell you, around Reclamation, they adopted a blue denim shirt as the official shirt of the centennial, and last Christmas, Christmas 2002, my wife gave me a denim shirt for Christmas. She said she gave it to me because she didn't think I had a denim shirt. And I said, "Dell, I've got *ten* of them in my closet in Washington, D.C.," (laugh) "because everywhere I go to a centennial event they give me a denim shirt to wear." And I love them. I wear them all the time. So I ended up with eleven denim shirts out of the deal. But, our people really took to it. One thing that I did, I had a commemorative coin stamped that I gave to every employee, and I still give them away to retired people and to Bureau irrigation district people, and people that we work with. Because I want them to remember. And, I thought it was good. I have got centennial memorabilia all over the place, and I love that stuff. But, it was just a fantastic coincidence that I got to be the commissioner during the centennial. (Storey: Um-hmm.) And I love every one of them.

45. The editor chaired Reclamation's centennial committee. The educational foundation of the National Water Resources Association (NWRA) hosted this event at Hoover, and the foundation representatives took catering arrangements for the event away from the centennial committee and changed the caterer a few weeks before the event.

Storey: Let's see. Why don't we talk – last time I was here, I believe, was November, and you didn't tell me at the time *why* we had to cancel the appointment, but since it was about four or five days before it was announced that the 4.4 Deal in California had fallen through, I'm presuming that's what it was. So, why don't we see if we can start talking about that issue, unless there's some other issue you think we ought to talk about first?

4.4 Plan for Southern California

Keys: No. That's a good one. There's a lot of stuff going on right now, but that's one that's coming to a head even as we speak. I think, if there is a defining river for Reclamation it's the Colorado River. As the law of the Colorado River has grown and been put together, Reclamation has grown. Some of our defining facilities are in the Colorado River Basin. I mean, there're Hoover [Dam], and the Glen Canyon [Dam], and the Flaming Gorge [Dam], the Central Arizona Project, and the All-American Canal and Imperial [Dam] that takes water into California. At times, they have been the epitome of what Reclamation stands for. The key in that whole thing, to making it work, has been the Compact among the seven basin states in the Colorado River. And, if you go back to the Compact, it took the scarce water of the Colorado River Basin and divided it up proportionally among the states. The Compact was then sealed by the Supreme Court of the United States. There's been legislation that has enacted everything to make it work, but the *key* to that thing has been that apportionment of water, under the Compact. And, when that was done the state of California was allotted 4.4 million acre feet a year, out of the Colorado River. The mean annual flow of the Colorado River is about fifteen million acre feet. That fifteen million was allotted among the states. California got 4.4, in the Lower Basin. Nevada got 300,000, and the state of Arizona got 2.8 million acre feet. And, that was how much water each one of the states was legally entitled to.

Quantification Settlement Agreement

Almost immediately the State of California started using more than that. And, over the years, had built up to using about 5.3 million acre feet of water. And, all of the other basin states knew that, and had, not tacitly, but even on paper, agreed that that was okay *until* the other Basin states approached their need and use of their allotments of water, Upper and Lower Basin states. In the past administration it was recognized that we were fast approaching that full use of water, in the Basin. And a plan was put together to bring California back to its allotment, it's use of 4.4 million acre feet. They were supposed to have a plan together, called a Quantification Settlement Agreement, by December 31, 2001. It came and went, didn't get done. Then the drop-dead date was set at December 31, 2002, where the settlement agreement would give California a certain number of years, under interim surplus guidelines for the river to operate the river, to give them a few years to cut back on a gradual basis and get back to 4.4 million acre feet a year. It was negotiated, and it was negotiated, and it was negotiated, and it didn't happen. And, as you and I

were talking, one of the deadlines came and went, and they didn't meet it. So we had to start putting together plans to implement 4.4, and bring them back in. And, that's what we were doing. January 1, 2003, *we* moved them back to 4.4 with no conversion time. It's just—door slams and that's all they get. There's another piece of that thing that's even more onerous, and that is, that when you enforce 4.4 you have to go back to the individual water users and show beneficial use of the water, under Part 417 of the Compact. That means that Imperial [Irrigation District] can't just use the full 4.4 because they've got first right on the river. That's what we're into right now, and I'm telling you it's dicey. Bob Johnson, our regional director in Boulder City, is under *tremendous pressure* right now, to show that beneficial use figure, and to enforce 4.4. There are *lawsuits* out there. Imperial has filed a lawsuit against us, with several interveners. And his job, which he is putting reports together, like I said, as we speak, to show what the beneficial use requirement for Imperial and Coachella, and Palo Verde, and Yuma Mesa, are. And, it's a tough time for us, but we're going to do it, because it's the law of the river.

Storey: Um-hmm. And then complicated by the fact that Metropolitan Water District⁴⁶ *bought* some water?

Keys: Yes. Metropolitan was the benefactor of most of that extra use of water above 4.4. And, part of the Quantification Settlement Agreement is they had actually put together agreements to fallow some land, and still get their water, and it'd be cut back either in Coachella, or at Imperial. When this thing fell through, it left Metropolitan without several hundred thousand acre feet of water supply. So, Met went into northern California and purchased water, on an annual basis, from a number of water users up there. At the same time, they built Diamond Valley Reservoir, a new storage facility, on their own so that they could manage long-term water supply. And, where they bought water, have a place to store it. They bought this northern California water, about 200,000 acre feet of it, with the intent of moving it south through *our* facilities and the state facilities. Well, a couple weeks ago, the state made a proclamation that they couldn't use state facilities to move the water down, and that's just complicated hell out of things. We don't have capacity, or even a way to do it in some places, and we're having to work with them, and with the state again, trying to see how we can get that water south, or how they can get it south. It's their problem, not ours. I'm not going to take that on as a responsibility. We are working very closely with them to get it done, but it's not our responsibility. So, the state has indicated there may be some slack there, but boy they've been playing hardball so far.

Storey: Hmm. One thing I didn't understand about this was, as I understood it from the newspaper articles, Imperial's water order for 2003 was reduced, and it *looked* like the water was moved over to the Metropolitan Water District. (Keys: Um-hmm.) What was going on there?

46. Metropolitan Water District of Southern California which is also known as MWD or Met.

Keys: Well, let me – I’m trying to figure a way to explain it . . . and I just lost my train of thought again.

The Issues of Beneficial Use and California’s Allocation of Colorado River Water

The first answer to your question is there, under the beneficial use requirements, in the compact, we have to be sure that Imperial is making beneficial use of the water, and then that part of 4.4 that they’re not making beneficial use can be used by Coachella, and Met, and of course, Palo Verde and Yuma Mesa have first call also. Imperial put in water orders over the past few years, and then took more water than their water orders. In other words, they overused water. And, the last time they did it, they promised to pay it back, and then they didn’t do that. And it was almost just in-your-face kind of not paying it back, in ‘02. And, just being very candid, it just *infuriated* our assistant secretary. Now, you have to remember in this whole thing on 4.4, our assistant secretary wanted and took the lead. I mean, it was something that he had a personal interest in, and you might just say took it over. And, he was managing it. Myself and Bob Johnson were working on it, doing the work and so forth, but he was in charge. Imperial just infuriated him with their attitude on paying back the over-usage. And, at times we would have an agreement on how to operate under 4.4, or for the Quantification Settlement Agreement, and they’d do something and tick him off, and it would just dump our negotiations in the trash right there. Several times I felt that we were close to an agreement, and the personality clashes, the personal exchanges made that not happen. Our regional director and myself were, at times, just beside ourselves, because we wanted to get the thing done, and then settle the side issues, rather than trying to settle the side issues as part of the whole overall program, problem. And that didn’t happen. And I think that was one of the reasons that we didn’t get a Quantification Settlement Agreement in the end. Now, I can’t fault the assistant secretary for holding onto his principles, and feeling like Imperial was trying to take advantage of us, because they were. They were trying to take advantage—they still are. I mean, even as we are following the 417 process, right now, that’s called for by the compact, they’re over at the White House lobbying against what we’re doing, trying to get pressure on us to do something different. At the same time, they got a lawsuit against us too. This is water politics *at its ultimate*. (Storey: Um-hmm.) I mean, if you just break through all the chaff, it is *big-time* water politics, and the assistant secretary just won’t back down from them. I don’t think *we* should back down from them. I think there’s some things we can do to be cooperative and work with them, but there’s no backing down from the thing right now. So that’s just kind of what’s going on with the overages, and supplying Met, and so forth. Met’s big. Met is *big* politics, and *big* dollars. Water is their future. (Storey: Um-hmm.) You just can’t say it in any other words. Metropolitan has to have water to grow, and to function, and if they don’t get it, they don’t grow and function.

Storey: So, is Metropolitan also doing all this stuff?

Keys: Metropolitan had the most to lose, therefore they were probably the most cooperative. But, they had their own games going. In other words, they backed themselves up several times. They went north and bought water. They were trying to cut some side deals on providing themselves with some water, and I think if I'd have been in their shoes I'd have done the same thing, because you can't put all your eggs in the QSA [Quantification Settlement Agreement] basket. I think at some time, Bob Johnson and myself may have put ourself in a corner by doing that, because we were so sure that we could get a Quantification Settlement Agreement that when we started having to plan for failure we were not very good at it at first, and it caused some consternation, but we got good at it pretty quick when we started having to put the stuff together to enforce (Storey: Um-hmm.) 4.4.

Storey: Good. And now the Governor is mixing in?

Keys: Yes, we don't know why he made that pronouncement that he made.

Storey: This is Governor Gray Davis?

Keys: Governor Gray Davis, from California. (Storey: Yeah.) We don't know why he did it. Governor Davis has done a couple of strange things lately. Tom Hannigan, the Director of Water Resources, retired the first of June, and Governor Davis, on an interim basis, appointed Mike Spears to lead the Department of Water Resources. That's stranger than all hell. Mike Spears is a biologist. He was the regional director for the Fish and Wildlife Service in Portland, Oregon, before he went to Sacramento as their regional director for the Fish and Wildlife Service. He caused the Klamath debacle, in 2001, by just being intractable, and talking to people about what their fish requirements were. He had been a thorn in everybody's side when he was the regional director in Sacramento. He retired and went to work for Mary Nichols the Secretary of Natural Resources for California; had caused all sorts of problems, and now he is head of the Water Resources Department. Makes no sense. Then, the Governor did this thing with not letting Met move its water through the state water system. So, *I think* he probably did that to try to bring some pressure on Met to settle with Imperial, and Coachella—I think, but I wouldn't swear to it. Kind of plays into some other folks' hands, like Imperial, but I think he did that to put some pressure on Met.

Klamath Issues

Storey: Hmm. Let's talk about the Klamath situation. That started before you came, as I recall.

Keys: The Klamath Falls situation was there when we walked in the door. I had heard about it, read about it, been briefed on it before I was sworn in, but it just fell on us foursquare when we walked in the door. That first summer, the summer of 2001, we were struggling with all of the demonstrations that were going on, because nobody in the Klamath Basin, on the government project,

was getting water. We were trying to figure out why it happened, and then try to figure out what to do with it. I think the “Why?” had several different reasons. One of them is people quit talking to each other. I talked about Mike Spears. It was just like, by God, it was that way and no other way. And, some of our people may have been the same way, I don’t know. The second thing that was causing the problem is the state water right system. The way it turned out is *all* of the focus of the Endangered Species Act was directed on our project, 240,000 acres of irrigated land in a basin that irrigates almost 500,000 acres of land. The other *half* of the basin received full water supply in 2001. The government project, except for a little water at the end, didn’t get any, which is not fair, but that’s the way it works, because they could file one action and take care of 1400 farmers. To take care of the others, they’d have to have filed 1400 actions, because they’re all individual water right holders. So, what we tried to start getting going that year is first some work on the water rights. Went to the State of Oregon and asked them to get the adjudication done, and we actually figured a way to give them some money to get it done with. They were pleading poverty, that they couldn’t get it done. And, under the McCarran Amendment, we couldn’t give them money to do adjudications with. So, we funded another program that they had going, and they took the money off of that program and put it into the adjudication. Paul Cleary is the State Engineer up there, and we have had very good cooperation working with him. Toward the end of the summer, we, looking at the BO [Biological Opinion] we found a way to actually start some releases of water . . .

END TAPE 1, SIDE 2. JUNE 19, 2003.

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1. JUNE 19, 2003.

Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey with John W. Keys III, on June 19, 2003.

Keys: Got about 75,000 acre feet of water out onto the lands, but it was too little too late, in most cases. But it showed we were trying to work on the problem. Then we got to work on a new biological assessment for the project, worked with Fish and Wildlife, National Marine Fishery Service, got a new biological opinion. And, the guts of what we were trying to do was based around a water bank. If you get down to it, basically, there’s too many acres irrigated in the basin. The water in the Klamath River Basin is over-allocated. So, what we did is try to take water off of some land, not buy the land, but buy the water off of some land, create a water bank in the basin *for* the endangered species, and then leave the other water to be operated for irrigation, or whatever. The negotiations with Fish and Wildlife, and with National Marine Fishery Service, called for us putting together about a 50,000 acre foot water bank. Actually, the first year, in 2002, it was 30,000 acre feet; in 2003 it’s 50,000 acre feet. And we did that. We bought the water off project land in the basin and made it available for the endangered species. The two purposes of the water, first is to keep the level of Klamath Lake up for the suckers, and then to release that water *later* for the Coho Salmon down the river. 2002 it worked very well. We kept the lake up, we were making the water releases, and then we had a fish kill

in September, killed over 30,000 fish, both Coho, Chinook, and whatever else. And, I don't think you could say that the project was *entirely* responsible, but we were part of it. You'll find that it was part of the overall reason that the temperature was up, and so forth. I don't think if we had released anymore water it would have done any good, because the water's *hot*, at that time of the year, and salmon die when they get in hot water. For 2003 we put together a 50,000 acre foot water bank, and so far so good. It's functioning. We've worked very closely with Fish and Wildlife Service, and with National Marine Fisheries, and the rest of the water in the basin's being managed for irrigation. The winter was not good, but we had a *great* spring up there. (laugh) That filled everything up, but it's dropping off fast. And, we've already had a little fish kill already, associated with hot water down below. Our water's hot. If we release it I think we complicate things. So, we're still working with the biologists trying to figure out what's going on.

I forgot one of the key things that got involved in this thing. In 2001, when we put together our biological assessment, and got a biological opinion together, we asked the National Academy of Science to review the old 2001 biological opinion, and what we were trying to do for 2002. National Academy came out in early 2002 with a finding that they felt the science was not supportable by data, for what 2001 had asked for, which was large releases of water, and higher levels in the lake. And that put us into operating with a new biological opinion. That's been challenged in court, and we're waiting for the final report to come out, and we're waiting on final court ruling also. *But*, that ruling let us operate Lower Klamath Lake at a lower level than had been called for in 2001, and it also let us manage the releases to a higher level, or a better level. Some of the environmental folks think that's atrocious. The *tribes* have just ripped us apart. They think that we're not following our trust responsibility to release water to them. Every time we release hot water we kill fish, but they still want water released. So, I don't know what we're going to do. We have *not* done a good job in trying to work with the trust responsibility ends of that thing. I don't know where the trust responsibilities starts and ends, and that's a tough one. The tribes are just really upset right now.

The water users, at times, have been very cooperative. At times, they've just acted like complete *crackers*. It's very disturbing to me for us to be *busting* our hump to be buying water, and not get cooperation from them at times. At other times we've had great cooperation from them. So, it's been a mixed bag. (Storey: Um-hmm.) But, I think we've got something that's working. We're right now waiting for a court decision that I hope let's us keep going with what we've got.

Storey: Good. What about the Middle Rio Grande situation?

Middle Rio Grande Issues and the Silvery Minnow

Keys: The second day I was on the job, they came in and gave me a court-issued paper that changed Minnow vs. Martinez to Minnow vs. Keys, and it got my

attention. (laugh) Basically it's almost the same situation in the Middle Rio Grande, in New Mexico as we have in Oregon. An over-allocated river, and us having a government project there that's bearing the brunt of meeting the Endangered Species Act for the Silvery Minnow. That first year in '01 we actually purchased some water, made some releases, and got by. Last year, in 2002, we purchased some water—wasn't enough. We had to reconsult two different times. The river went dry on us two different times. We finally got through the year under a new BO, right at the end of the year, and that's the one we're operating under now. This year, we have been purchasing water for the fish. We're not going to make it. As far as the deliveries for irrigation, we'll cut off about August the 10th. I *think* we've got enough to get us through for the minnow, and the prime and paramount rights for the Pueblos. The complicating thing is that last year Judge Parker ruled that the government had discretion to release other people's storage for the minnow. In other words, the San Juan-Chama water that we bring across from the San Juan River into the Chama River, and hold in Heron Reservoir could be used for ESA purposes on the Rio Grande River. He ruled we had discretion to release that water. We had always said, "No. That's somebody else's water. Can't release it." He said we should. He said we had discretion to. We appealed it, and got a stay on his ruling, and just last week we got the Tenth Circuit Appeals Court decision that said he was right. Three to two. Very controversial. And, we're probably, I hope, going to appeal that one back to the Court of Appeals, or to the Supreme Court. But, our goal right now is to try to put together enough water to keep the minnow alive for this year and deliver the prime and paramount water to the Pueblos. The irrigators will be cut off in early August. Trying to do all of that without using that discretion that the court says we have, so that we don't set a precedent is a challenge. (Storey: Um-hmm.) One of the big problems is, that kind of ruling has precedent all over the Western United States. It will *kill* us everywhere we've got a storage project where there's an endangered species, because it'll say, "You can't release water if there's a need there for the fish. And you have to release it for the fish." And we haven't done that before.

Storey: I think I remember when you were regional director, that we were buying water for the salmon in the Columbia system?

Keys: That's right.

Storey: And, of course, that was your office buying it, putting it in the river (Keys: Right.) and then people were diverting the fish water downstream, or claiming that they could divert it. I'm not sure which.

Keys: We never let it happen, but they said they were, and we kept them from doing that.

Storey: Are we having similar problems on Klamath and the Middle Rio Grande?

Keys: No. We've got by in the Columbia River Basin because our water's protected right now. What we were doing up there, we were not *releasing* project water for fish. What we were doing is *buying* water and releasing it for power generation, and it was benefitting the fish. There's a great distinction there. (Storey: Yeah.) Because we weren't releasing water for the fish. We were releasing water for power generation, and it was benefitting the fish. And, it was not *somebody's* water. It was willing-buyer, willing-seller, and we were able to pull that off. Now, what you were talking about is, down below in State of Washington and the State of Oregon, when we first started that, we were buying this water and putting it down for the salmon, and there were irrigators down there. They weren't diverting it, but they were *applying* for rights to *divert* it, and we opposed those rights. We actually got a moratorium on new water rights in all three of those states. Some of those moratoriums are still in effect. But, we were able to get the states to agree to protect our water for the salmon.

Storey: So we aren't having similar problems on the Middle Rio Grande or the Klamath?

Keys: No, not yet. Now, I say, "Not yet," because we have actually had meetings already with our law enforcement, security people, and with the state on protecting that minnow water this year, so somebody doesn't divert it. (Storey: Um-hmm.) And, there have been attempts made to divert it by some of the *acequias*, and some of the other folks. But so far we've been okay.

Storey: Hmm. Well, we only have a few moments.

Keys: Yes.

Storey: Can you briefly talk about how the water situation is over the West right now?

Drought in the West

Keys: It's June 19, 2003, and if you look at a drought map for the Western United States, there's still a big *bull's-eye* right over the inter-mountain West. There's some critically dry, critical drought areas centered over parts of the Colorado River Basin and the Great Basin. And, it's still critical in a lot of our basins. I'm looking at a hot-spots map that we put together, showing our hot spots in the year 2025.⁴⁷ The drought is exacerbating that tremendously right now. So, we have projects that will run out of water early. Some of the Nebraska, Colorado outfits are running out early. Middle Rio Grande's running out August the 10th. Some of the Utah areas are really short. Some of them are in flood stage right now. Crumb, we got some flood stage operations going on up in the Northwest, and in Colorado, but for the most part we're still really trying. This is the fifth year of drought in some of the areas. They did some tree-ring studies up on the divide between the Colorado and Missouri Basin, in

47. Referring to a Reclamation program called "Water 2025: Preventing Crises and Conflict in the West."

Colorado, that says this is the worst drought period in the last 300 years, (Storey: Um-hmm.) in that area. So, we're still in an extreme drought in some places.

Storey: Why don't we talk briefly about the 2025 Initiative?

Water 2025: Preventing Crises and Conflict in the West

Keys: Well, that first summer, right after we got through and got some water to some folks in the Klamath Basin, Secretary Norton called assistant secretary Bennett Raley and myself in, and she said, "You know, we're doing what we can here. Where are there other places, situations, that we could get into a Klamath-type operation, or threat to the water supply?" And, over the next year or so we started looking at different factors that could cause that kind of situation. And what we found is that there are places in the West with exploding populations, that will run out of water quickly. There are places where an Endangered Species Act result could impair delivery, the ability to deliver water, where there are other Fish and Wildlife requirements that would take water away, or make it *difficult* to meet all of the needs. Recreation needs, other political type divisions, like the California situation. We put that on a map and we came up with a thing called our Hot-Spots Map, and we have done some work to try to define it a little better. But then, we said "Okay, how can we do something about it." And, we started with a western water initiative approach, and it has evolved into Water 2025, which is an effort to, not solve everybody's problems throwing money at things, but to try to collaboratively bring together parties that have to deal with water: states, tribes, water organizations, irrigation districts, NWRA [National Water Resources Association], Family Farm [Alliance], Farm Bureau, all of those people who deal with water and say, "Okay. How can we get ourself to the year 2025 and have enough water?" And, we chose to do it not by new storage projects, because if we had done that, the enviros would have just been berserk. "All you're doing's trying to build new, more dams." So what we said is that, "We got a number of tools that we can look at. We can look at water conservation, lining canals and laterals, putting in better control facilities on big systems, little systems, putting in better monitoring equipment so we know where the water's going, and how to take care of it. Look at new technology. Look at taking away some of the rules and regs that keep us from doing things, like using the extra capacity in a reservoir to store somebody's water, or using the excess capacity of a canal, or a lateral, or a pipeline to move somebody's water, like we're trying to do on the Front Range of Colorado. Can we do some of that stuff, and make a difference? And if we *can't* then maybe we do have to go to storage projects. But, what can we do to be ready for 2025?" We had a big meeting on June the 6th, in Denver. Almost 300 people came in. The politician types all the way down to the irrigation water-user types. Great meeting and good consensus that we need to try to do something. We've got a series of eight regional meetings set up that we're going to be doing in July and August, trying to see what we can come up with, and we'll put together a report, and what we hope

is a framework for carrying that forward. And I'm kind of head over heels in that right now.

Storey: Good. Well, it's almost (Keys: Yes.) eleven-thirty, exactly. Let me ask if you're willing for the information on these tapes and the resulting transcripts to be used by researchers one year after you leave office?

Keys: Yes.

Storey: (laugh) Thank you.

END TAPE 2, SIDE 1. JUNE 19, 2003. END OF INTERVIEW.
BEGIN TAPE1, SIDE 1. FEBRUARY 5, 2004.

Storey: This is tape one of an interview by Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, with John W. Keys III, commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, on February 5th, 2004, at about twelve-thirty in the afternoon. This is tape one.

Commissioner, why don't we talk about the centennial for a little bit, (Keys: Okay.) and the activities you were involved in, and so on.

Bureau of Reclamation's Centennial

Keys: The centennial was such a special time for Reclamation that I think all of us looked forward to it, and we just busted our hump to be sure that everything came off. I know that when we sent the invitations out that I got personally involved in that, and I signed *most* of the invitations to that thing. And there's a couple of good funny stories that came out of that.

One of them, we were going through the list of people who had accepted their invitations to the centennial celebration down at Hoover, and one of the people said, "You know, we've not heard back from Mr. Dominy, and we really think Floyd Dominy should be at the centennial." And I said, "Yes. I agree." And they said, "Well, would you call him?" So I called up Mr. Dominy and I said, "Sir, we sent you an invitation and we hadn't heard back and we want to be sure you're going to come to the centennial celebration." He says, "Well, are you going to fly me out there?" And, I said, "Sir, we'd be more than happy to give you a ticket, and furnish you a room, and have somebody pick up you out there to take care of you." And he said, "No. That's not what I mean." He says, "I want you to fly me out there." And I said, "Well, sir, I'd be more than happy to furnish your ticket." He says, "No." He says, "I want you to fly me out there in the *Bureau* airplane." And I said, "Well, sir, I hate to tell you but we don't *have* a Bureau airplane these days. We have a couple out in the regions but we don't have a Bureau airplane." And he, over the telephone says, "No Bureau airplane?" He says, "What kind of damn commissioner are you?" (Laughter) That's a true story. (Storey: Uh huh.) And, you know, afterwards I met him. My wife and I stayed at the Hoover Dam Hotel in

Boulder City, and he stayed there. I had breakfast with him a couple of mornings and he was a delight to talk to, just as crusty as he ever was, and still trying to *hit* on the waitresses, but that was okay. (Laugh)

Storey: I heard he set up in the lobby, and once people found out he was there they were all coming in to see him.

Keys: He was just like sitting on a throne with all of the subjects coming to the throne to talk to him. (Storey: Uh huh.) That is absolutely the truth. It really was.

Even before we got into that level of it, we worked very closely with Bob Johnson. At first we were going to have the celebration not down in the powerplant or on the generator deck, but it was going to be in one of the parking lots up there, and it was going to be somewhere else. And, I think we made the greatest decision ever was to have the dinner on the generator deck, and then have everybody out on the afterbay for the celebration. The lead up was just great, it just built to a climax. And I know for all of us that got to be there, it was just so special. The program was good. The secretary was there and participating. I'm going to take a side track here.

We, early on, had tried to figure how to fund the darn thing. And, we had seen where other outfits had gotten in trouble for using federal money to fund their celebrations. So, we went to all of the water users and they set up the Water for the West Foundation, to *fund* the celebration but also to leave a legacy in trying to educate people in the Western United States about Reclamation and the need for water. And, that worked out really well. They helped make money available, and now in 2004, they're still using that money trying to educate folks. I think they're more, right now, arguing about how to do that, but they'll get there.

But, the celebration itself was just something else. I didn't get to see some of the first part of it because we were with the secretary getting ready to go out and do a talk and that kind of thing, and so I had to look at some of it on a tape later to see what I had missed. (Storey: Um-hmm.) But, I thought it came off really well. The fireworks were second to none. I may have seen fireworks displays that had more, or higher, or something, explosions and stuff but to see those things above the dam and in the Black Canyon, they were just something else. (Storey: Hmm.) So, the centennial celebration was a great deal.

Storey: What about other activities you participated in?

Keys: Well, you know I worked with you on the History Symposium, which I thought was fantastic. Toni put out the *Dams and Dynamos* book that I still, to this day, sign and give those books to people. Just *Monday*, on February 2, 2004, a young fella from Congressman Doolittle's office came to our rollout for the 2004 budget appropriations request, and he brought his *Dams and Dynamo* book down for me to sign for him. (Storey: Um-hmm.) I still send those things out to people. It's a good book.

We had asked all of our area offices and our regional offices to wait til after June 17, 2002, to have *their* celebrations. And, I tried to get to as many of those as I could. I went to a ton of them, and I just had a great time at every one of them. There are several that stick out in my mind. The one at Yuma, where we had all of the school kids. I think they were trying to outdo everybody in numbers, and they had almost 700 people there, a lot of school kids, and that was a great one. I went to one at Vallecito Dam, down in southwest Colorado, and we just had a great time down there. I sunburned my head on that one. (Laugh) But, all over, gosh, in Sacramento; in Salt Lake City; in Boise, Idaho; in Huntley Project, Montana; in Helena, Montana; in the Dakotas. We had one up at Bismarck, over at old Fort Lincoln where Custer left on his way to the Little Big Horn. We just had *great* celebrations all over the place. And, you know, I think the celebration did two things. One, I *do* think that it brought good attention to western water and what Reclamation's place is in western water. The second thing, and we, we were trying to make the most of it on this one, but I think I have never seen the morale of the people in Reclamation higher than it was during that centennial year. I think that most of the people got involved, first off in the one at Hoover. I saw people at the Hoover celebration that had taken annual leave from their offices to go to the celebration. I saw retirees that had traveled several thousand miles to get there. I forgot one other thing down there.

The celebration itself was a great highlight. There was another event there that I just had more fun at than anything I've done in a long time. The day before we tried to set up a reunion of retirees and current employees, and we had it at the Elk's Club. And, we thought we might have a couple of hundred people come. We had 390-some-odd people show up at that thing, and I'm telling you we just had a great time. I thought that I'd made a mistake, because I took a microphone and we started around the room letting everybody tell who they were, what they had done, and what they're doing now. We got through all 390-some-odd of them in a couple of hours. Everybody came up to me later telling me how much they enjoyed that. And, for about four to five hours that Sunday afternoon we just had a great time. And, I never will forget that. So, the centennial was a great time for all of us. (Storey: Um-hmm.) And, like I said, the morale that those people showed during that thing and then probably with putting on their individual ones was just second to none. I was proud to be commissioner during the centennial celebration.

Storey: Well, it was nice to have you as commissioner during the centennial celebration.

Keys: Sometimes I think I'm too damn full of old stories about Reclamation and things we've done, and so forth. But, it means a lot to me.

Storey: Let's talk about 4.4 then.

California and the 4.4 Initiative

- Keys: Oh, okay.
- Storey: For about the last year, nine months whatever it was, we had a surprise every time we turned around. We heard about Las Vegas writing *great big* checks, and San Diego, and Imperial, and Metropolitan Water District, and all the ins and outs of that. Why don't you give me your perspective on it.
- Keys: Well, you know, the 4.4⁴⁸ finalization that we came to in October of 2003 really started in 1920, when the compact allocated the water among the states, and California was allotted 4.4 million acre feet a year out of the Colorado. Of course, they *immediately* took more than that, and all the other states said, "Well, that's okay, until we *need* our water." Well, at the end of the 20th century and as we got into the 21st century that need was there for the other states. And, they got together and they negotiated an agreement with California that said, "Thirteen years, they would get themselves back into the 4.4 use, and not be using any more than that." There was a number of things that had to be negotiated and agreed on to make that happen, and the first deadline was December 31, 2001. That one came and went. And then *the* final deadline was December 31, 2002. What had to happen by that time is the State of California had to show a *plan* for getting themselves into the 4.4 use in thirteen years. It included water conservation measures. It included fallowing some land. It included trying to take care of the Salton Sea, and like you said, *every* time we turned a corner, for about eighteen months there, somebody had withdrawn from an agreement that they had made, either on the *fallowing* or the providing of water, or the putting up money, and, the Upper Basin states were pushing the Lower Basin states, and it was just a mess. And, Bob Johnson, our regional director in Boulder City, was trying to be a *peacemaker* in that thing, and he wanted to just be the nice guy and say, "Yeah, we'll take care of the over use, and so forth," and our Bennett Raley would not let him do that and took a hard line on forcing the states to pay back the water that they had taken over the 4.4 the year before, and solidify the agreements not to take any more the next year. It just seemed like we went into a ditch every time we turned around. *Finally* in October of 2003 we got them all together, and it was signed.⁴⁹ There was give and take in there. The Imperial Irrigation District board of directors was split 3-2, and I think there's still a lot of animosity there, but it's done. It settles about seventy years of disagreement on who gets how much water and how it's provided. It does give California that soft landing that they wanted. In other words they don't have to be limited the very first year. It gives Metropolitan Water District in Los Angeles, and Coachella Valley ways to get the water that they need for their citizens and for their future. It's a

48. This refers to the requirement by the Secretary of the Interior that the State of California develop a program to live within the allocation of 4,400,000 acre feet of water provided to it by the Colorado River Compact. The Compact was signed in 1922 and ratified by the Congress in 1928 through the Boulder Canyon Project Act.

49. This agreement included the "Quantification Settlement Agreement" [QSA] which specified the amount of water owed each of the four primary California appropriators on the Colorado River—the Palo Verde Irrigation District, the Imperial Irrigation District, the Coachella Irrigation District, and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California.

good agreement. Our secretary did a great job in giving the states the time to bring that together. There's still some animosity out there.

Storey: Tell me . . .

Keys: Our assistant secretary for Water and Science, Bennett Raley, called all of the shots on the thing. In Reclamation we did the studies that he wanted, we backed him up, we cajoled the irrigation districts, we did a lot of the behind-the-scenes work to try to smooth a way to get it done. Bob Johnson just performed like a champ in that thing. He and his folks just did fantastically. But it got done.

Storey: Tell me about how Las Vegas got into all of this.

Las Vegas and the 4.4 Initiative

Keys: When water was allocated among the states in 1922 by the Compact, the State of Nevada only got 300,000 acre feet of water, and for the longest time that was just fine. Between the year 1990 and 2000 the State of Nevada grew by sixty-six percent. The number of people in the State of Nevada grew by sixty-six percent. And, almost all of that was in the Las Vegas and Reno area, and the greater share of that was in the Las Vegas area. And, Las Vegas, the Southern Nevada Water Authority could see themselves running out of water quickly. The fact is, they're out of water already. They had negotiated water-bank agreements with the State of Arizona. They had purchased water from all over *their* valley, and they were still struggling. And, they were pushing to give California that soft landing so that they could negotiate with the other states for more water. And, I know Pat Mulroy, the Director of Southern Nevada Water Authority was key in bringing all the parties together. She worked very closely with Bennett Raley, to facilitate getting folks together, and then finally finalizing the agreement. So, there's a *lot* at stake for Nevada. They're still growing. It'll be interesting to see, if they do a census in 2005, a sub-census or something, to see how much Nevada is still growing, because it is still just growing by leaps and bounds.

Storey: Um-hmm. I heard they put up money.

Keys: They did. Actually, at different times in negotiations Las Vegas put up money, Coachella Valley put up money, and Metropolitan Water District put up money. In the end, I think all three of them put up some money to make it happen. I'd like to tell you the figures, but I can't remember what they are. (Storey: Yeah.) But, all three of them put up money to make it happen.

Storey: Well, explain to me why, it would be Southern Nevada Water Authority, I think, would put money into this deal which is just basically, you know, they've already got their water out of the Colorado and it's basically limiting California.

Keys: Well, Southern Nevada's out of water from the Colorado. They, like you said, they've used up all of their water. They've got to find water or they're gonna quit growing. I know Pat Mulroy has tried to put limitations on the *fountains*. She's tried to put limitations on the *lawns* in the valley. The Southern Nevada Water Authority, right now, is paying a \$1.00 square foot to people to take grass off their lawns and put in a xeriscape-type cover. So, they're out of water, and they are *desperately* trying to find water for their future growth. Several of the possibilities involve working with some of the other states of the basin to use some of their allocation. Now, there are complications to doing that, but that's what's in it for them is trying to be able to work, like with the State of Arizona. (Storey: Uh huh.) See, Nevada has an agreement with Arizona *already* that they're paying Arizona to put some of Arizona's *surplus* water into a water bank for Nevada to purchase. And, their future supply of water depends on making this all happen. (Storey: Hmm.) I didn't explain that very well, but there's a lot at stake for Las Vegas, and I wasn't really there with Pat when she was negotiating with Bennett Raley most of the time.

Storey: Uh huh. What about San Diego's role in all of this?

Keys: Well, San Diego has, the four, well, three or four main players in the thing, actually Nevada was not a main player in it. The Metropolitan Water District, Coachella Valley, and San Diego were the three entities that were, that get water. On the other hand you had, that need water, on the other end the ones that had the water are Imperial and . . .

Storey: Palo Verde?

Keys: Palo Verde. Palo Verde Irrigation. And, Yuma Mesa has a share in there also. Those are the "haves." And, like I said Metropolitan Water District, San Diego, and Coachella are the "have-nots," and all three of them were pretty much in the same position. See, what you've got in California, that 4.4 million acre feet has an allocation within that allocation and Imperial Irrigation District has an *unquantified* right to water. That means that they get all that they can use. Next in line is Coachella Valley, and they get their requirement. Last in line, and San Diego is just on a periphery, last in line is Metropolitan Water District. So if Imperial uses more water than they have a right to, or than they have in the past, Met suffers, San Diego suffers, because they all need more water. So, San Diego's in the same boat as Met and Coachella Valley were.

Klamath Project Issues

Storey: Hmm. What's going on new at Klamath? Anything?

Keys: Klamath is getting along. Last year we finished the construction of the A-canal headworks and fish screen so that we can keep the endangered sucker from being sucked into the canal. That's helped some. We created a water bank there and we purchased water into the water bank for the endangered species last year. Last year it was, in 2003, it was like 50,000 acre feet. In 2004 it's

75,000 acre feet, and it seems to be working. Our budget proposal for 2005 is \$25 million to spend in that basin on water bank, on water conservation measures, on some new storage, a place called Agency Ranch, the Barnes property, trying to convert an old farm that was *created* by building a dyke, and convert it back to storage. That's some of the things we're trying to do. But, on top of all that we're doing, Department of Agriculture is chucking a *ton* of money into the basin, working with on-farm, on-farm measures like other water conservation measures, creating different crop patterns, and that sort of thing. Total expenditure in 2005 is over \$100 million. Makes you wonder sometime whether you ought to put that kind of money into there, but I think it's working because it appears that the fish are doing well and we are meeting all of the requirements of the Biological Opinion. So, it's still there. It's still a problem. It still takes a lot of money. Have a lot of our *good* people working on it, but our good people are doing a good job.

Storey: Um-hmm. That sort of led me to think of Idaho. I've noticed a lot of stories lately about the Idahoans being upset about water being sent down the river for salmon and that kind of thing, and I know we've talked about that in the past too. What's going on now?

Water Right Settlement with the Nez Perce Tribe

Keys: Well, the Indian Water Right Settlement with the Nez Perce Tribe has concentrated on trying to set aside that salmon water, meet the needs of the tribe, and assure the people of Idaho that that's all it'll take. Unfortunately, it appears that's going to take more water. That settlement has not been completed. The State of Idaho is saying, "Why us?" In other words they, currently, release water out of storage, about 427,000 acre feet a year, for the salmon, and they're in a drought just like the rest of the Western United States. And, they're saying, "Why do they have to bear the brunt of it?" Well, the environmental people are saying, "You're not doing anything yet, because you have not consulted on operation of all of the projects in the Upper Snake. The fish still aren't thriving like they should be." So, there's still a lot of consternation on what needs to be done, and how much water it'll take. I have personally worked with the Governor and some of the folks there trying to get this Nez Perce settlement done. I don't know that it's going to get done this year. So, it's mainly the State of Idaho saying, "Why do we have to spend our water on a *Federal* requirement for protecting a species that's down the river, that is still being harvested." We talk about having lesser numbers. The fish have been coming back in record numbers this year. The fish people and the environmental people say, "Well it's because of ocean conditions." Well, was it ocean conditions that caused them to go down in the first place? I don't know the answer to that. That doesn't seem to be a very popular answer with the fish people.

Storey: The Nez Perce, is their water rights settlement for fish?

- Keys: No. It's an Indian Water Rights Settlement. The Nez Perce Tribe homeland is on the Lower Snake River, and they have laid claim to more water than flows in the river. That claim for water is for "usual and accustomed fishing places," and "usual and accustomed *hunting* places." When you interpret those "usual and accustomed fishing places" it means you've got to have water in the river and the fish have to be there. It's a heck of a settlement. One of the last price tags I saw was well over \$200 million, and it's still not settled. We had a similar claim by the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe, in the upper part of the Basin. Them being in the upper part of the basin was easier to handle because you didn't have water coming from the whole basin like you do for the Nez Perce settlement. They're getting harder all the time—Indian water rights settlements.
- Storey: Huh. Well, that's interesting because you hear the traditional settlements are more for irrigation projects, I think.
- Keys: A lot of the Indian settlements, or the Indian claims for water, have been interpreted to equal what they call "practicably irrigable acres," PIA. What that means is that on a reservation they have the right to enough water to irrigate those lands that could *practicably* be put to irrigation. That's one kind of claim. Another claim is "usual and accustomed fishing and hunting places." (Storey: Um-hmm.) There are also other claims for just "in-stream flow," so that you can "see water running in the river past the reservation." *Those* have been turned down mostly by the court, the in-stream flow ones. There are very few that the court have honored. "Usual and accustomed fishing places" have been honored many times. That's what's got Nez Perce kind of wrapped up.
- Storey: That's interesting.
- Keys: The Shoshone-Bannock Tribe's claim was settled with PIA, practicably irrigable acreage. (Storey: Um-hmm.) We ended up giving them some storage water out of Palisades Reservoir to meet what they had requested.
- Storey: But, the salmon this year is better than it has been recently?
- Keys: In 2002 and 2003 they've had record returns. That's been true all up and down the West Coast, both, even as far up in as Canada and Alaska. We in Reclamation don't know yet why that is. I know the fish people are studying it mightily to try to see why, but we haven't heard an answer yet. (Storey: Hmm.) Some say it's ocean conditions. They also claim that a lot of the fish that are returning are the hatchery fish that we've been supporting for years and years. And, I don't see anything wrong with that. (Storey: Um-hmm.) A chinook salmon's a chinook salmon to me. But, there's people who say there's a genetic difference in them.
- Storey: Uh huh. Well, another one of those endangered species issues is silvery minnow?

Silvery Minnow Issues

Keys: Oh boy.

Storey: And the Middle Rio Grande?

Keys: Yes. The thing that is *just* killing us in the silvery minnow is that drought that is just ravaging Northern New Mexico, Northern Arizona, Southern Utah, Southern Colorado. Up until last year, through 2002, we were able to purchase enough water to meet the minimum flows required for the silvery minnow in the Middle Rio Grande. In 2003 we purchased enough to meet the minimal requirements. We had enough stored to meet the prior and paramount rights of the Pueblos, but we ran out of water for the irrigators. The State of New Mexico and us, negotiated an agreement with Texas to let us use and store some other waters in the upper Rio Grande Basin to meet . . .

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1. FEBRUARY 5, 2004.

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2,. FEBRUARY 5, 2004.

Storey: As it [inaudible]?

Keys: To meet the 2003 requirements. Had we not done that, the water for the irrigators would have run out in June. With the water from that agreement the irrigators had water through August the 10th. The Middle Rio Grande Water Conservancy District purchased, or made an exchange, with the City of Albuquerque for some of their San Juan Chama water that got them *almost* through August, and then they were out of water. So, we ran out of water for the irrigators before the first of September this past year. We're not getting the precip[itation] in that basin down there now, and basically we can't *store* water in the basin because of the compact with Texas, until Elephant Butte Reservoir gets above 400,000 acre feet of storage. So, even if we get a good runoff, until Elephant Butte comes back some, we can't store the water in the Upper Basin. What that does is put a lot of pressure on that little bit of water we bring across from the San Juan River, through the San Juan-Chama Project facilities into the Rio Grande Basin. We use that water for those people that have contracted for it, and for prior and paramount water for the Pueblos. It does a pretty good job for the Pueblos. Most of the contractors get their water. The big loser in the whole thing with the drought is the irrigation people. So, it's still a tough deal.

The court rulings have really been *amazing* on the Rio Grande. Under Silvery Minnow, the first ruling, Judge Parker ruled that Reclamation "had the authority to," "discretion" is the word, "had the discretion to release San Juan Chama water for the silvery minnow in the Rio Grande Basin." We disagreed with that, because that's not native water to the Rio Grande Basin, and the endangered species is in the Rio Grande. And, we appealed that case to the Tenth Circuit. Tenth Circuit ruled against us, two to one. There's a three judge panel, two to one. We appealed that back to the Appeals Court, to the Tenth Circuit, and asked for an *en banc* opinion. In other words, all of the

judges in the Tenth Circuit had to rule on it. Before that could happen, Senator Domenici⁵⁰ put language in a bill in Congress that says, “No, you can’t use the water from the San Juan-Chama, or anything else, to meet the flows of the silvery minnow.” The Tenth Circuit made another ruling that vacated all of those decisions. So, now we’re back to the premise that we *don’t* have to release project water for the silvery minnow. So, the litigation results are astounding at times, and they’re still underway. (Storey: Um-hmm.) Still underway. Silvery minnow’s something else. *Minnow vs. Keys* is the name of the court case. (Laugh) It’s taken a lot of time and effort. Our spending in the basin was about \$35 million last year. It’ll be that again this year. Senator Domenici’s head over heels into solutions and trying to find ways to do business. It’s a challenge. (Storey: Uh huh.) We had an area manager there we had to change because there was some conflict that we didn’t foresee. We have some of our *best* people working on it right now, but it’s still a challenge. And, it will be until we get out of this drought cycle.

Storey: Hmm. Any other ESA [Endangered Species Act] things going on around Reclamation?

Endangered Species Issues on the Platte River

Keys: Oh, we’re into a big one in the Platte River over in Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming. There there’s four endangered species there. The whooping crane, the piping plover, the pallid sturgeon, and the least tern. There we’ve got a Governance Committee set up between the states and the federal government trying to put a solution together. And, the Fish and Wildlife Service came up with the science behind it that’s been challenged by a lot of folks, and we actually have underway right now a National Academy of Science review of the science behind the Platte River. We are, there again, suffering from severe drought conditions. A lot of our reservoirs are being depleted by pumping, pumpers pumping ground water below the bottom of our reservoirs. So, they’re really pumping project water at times, and we’re trying to get a handle on that.

The court case, *Nebraska vs. Kansas*, which is on the *Republican* River, was settled this last year. And, one of the results from that is that Nebraska and Kansas are going to have to cut off a bunch of wells because they *are* depleting surface water. That old argument about them not being connected has caught up with them big time.

So, but back to the Platte River, there’s a *lot* of money being spent. Dr. Tom Osborne, the U.S. Representative from Nebraska, has become *personally* involved in some of that stuff and we’re just waiting to see what the science says. We’re putting out a draft environmental impact statement on the solution, *this* month. The solution that’s being considered right now is

50. Senator Pete Vichi Domenici was born Albuquerque in 1932 and has served in the U.S. Senate representing New Mexico since 1972.

purchasing about 100,000 acre feet of, 150,000 acre feet of water out of McConaughy, and some of the other reservoirs there, to release at the right time for the fish, and for the birds on the islands. *And*, purchase some land. *And*, by the way both of these purchases are willing-buyer, willing-seller, purchase some land to be used as refuge area. So, holding all of those parties together has been a real challenge. Colorado thinks they're getting screwed by Nebraska. Wyoming thinks they're getting screwed by both Colorado and Nebraska. Nebraska thinks that everybody, the whole world's against them. So, it's a tough one. (Storey: Um-hmm.)

Endangered Species Issues on the Colorado River

Other endangered species, you know, we're still struggling on the Colorado River below Glen Canyon with the four fish species there. We've been doing experimental flows for the last two years. They're trying to find out what's best. The tribes and some of the fish agencies want us killing trout because the trout eat the little fish, and the steady flow regime that we had established below there was favorable to trout but not favorable to the little, the endangered fish. So, we're still working mightily on that one. Got an AMWG, Adaptive Management Work Group, that we work with there trying to find a solution to the water needs, the temperature needs, the sediment needs of the fish below Glen Canyon. Almost every project that we've got has got an Endangered Species Act challenge to it. They're just all over the place. (Storey: Um-hmm.) Just saw in the paper this morning where Congress may try to take on some modifications to the Endangered Species Act. That will be very interesting.

Storey: Be interesting to see if they can carry it.

Keys: Well, I don't think they can get it done in an election year, but maybe so. I don't know.

Storey: Hmm. You know about anything, about the *Ciénega de Santa Clara* by chance?

Ciénega de Santa Clara

Keys: *Ciénega de Santa Clara*, I sure do. In the settlement with Mexico, or in the settlement of the Colorado River flows with Mexico, this was by the Brownell Commission back in the '40s, I think it was. Mexico was given 1.5 million acre feet of water out of the Colorado River, and we *religiously* deliver 1.5 million acre feet of water to the International Boundary to Mexico. In those years before the flows of the Colorado were fully utilized, more water went down, and also in the flood years a lot of water went down, and it built a marsh at the mouth of the Colorado River, and that's what they call the *Ciénega*. Several endangered species have taken up home there. It is a beautiful wetland, and so forth. At the same time people have been developing water in the United States, people in Mexico have been developing that million and a

half acre feet. End result is now there's not enough water to keep the *Ciénega* completely alive, and the environmental groups are all yelling that they need more water for the delta. And, I think if you look to the seven basin states it's not going to happen, from out of water that the United States has to have. You go to Mexico and they don't want to let any of their water go either. We offered to Mexico technical help to do water conservation projects, to line some of their canals along the river, to do some other stuff to stretch their water supply. Got no take on it. In the meantime the environmental groups, the NGOs have filed lawsuits several times but nothing's come of them. Big question is whether an endangered species listing in one country could pull water from another country to meet it. They've got some, there's a couple of fresh water dolphin species down there that are critical, a couple of bird species. And the big question is, *can* more water be released to maintain the delta? And, everything we see from the United States' side says, "No." Now, fortunately Reclamation is not the person that makes this decision. It's the seven basin states that govern the compact between the United States and Mexico, and they've all said, "We'll give them their million and a half but they're not going to get anymore." There, I haven't seen any crumbling on that yet, but there's a lot of pressure being put on for more water down there.

Storey: I understood that we were bypassing Wellton-Mohawk flows that were going down there too? Is that true?

Colorado River Water Quality Act, 1975

Keys: That's right. The Colorado River Water Quality Act was passed in 1975, and it required the construction of the Yuma Desalting Plant to *treat* drainage water from Wellton-Mohawk, and put it back in the river to maintain a certain water quality. Well, that plant was built, and it's terribly expensive to operate. Annual expense is in the area of \$30 million a year, and we just have not run it. And, in the years when we have not been short of water we've annually *bypassed* about 100,000 acre feet of water to Mexico. State of Arizona, State of Nevada, California are putting big-time pressure on us to fire up and run the Yuma Desalting Plant to *keep* that 100,000 acre feet of water from going across the border. We have said "There are more economic ways to provide that 100,000 acre feet of water *than* to fire up the desalter. We can go up on the river and lease some land from an irrigation district. There are some that want to lease it to us, use that water to exchange." Arizona will not take that as an answer. Right now we're on a dual track. We're looking at buying some water to get us past while we're studying how we can modernize the desalting plant and run it cheaper than the \$30 million a year. Quite a quandary for us. We got that thing sitting there and we can't afford to run it, the desalting plant. (Storey: Um-hmm.) That's a pretty good quandary. Pretty *bad* quandary.

Storey: An issue for Reclamation (Keys: Yes.) that's for sure.

Keys: Yes.

Storey: How are we doing on budget?

Reclamation's Budget

Keys: We're doing pretty good on budget. If you look at our budget for the last three or four years we have been fairly flat. Our budget proposal that's going from the President this time, for Fiscal Year 2005, is \$957 million. That's \$13 million more than we got last year. And, \$13 million out of almost a billion dollars is not very much, but it's a heck of a lot better than going down. Its got good stuff in it. Its got money for our security needs, that's fully there. Its got some extra money for Water 2025, to keep that program going. Its got money for Klamath, for Middle Rio Grande, for Platte River – those places that we need to work on. Really, if you look back, what I tell people is when I came into office the President asked all of us to tell what our strategic plan for our bureaus is or was at that time. Reclamation's is pretty simple. First one is we deliver water. The second one is we generate power. The third one is we do the stuff that it takes to make both of those happen; we manage our lands, we provide for the recreation, we take care of Endangered Species Act, we do NEPA, all of the stuff that it takes to make that work we do. And, the fourth one is we look to the future. What do we need to meet the needs, in our project areas? We picked twenty-five years into the future. This budget, I think it's fiscally conservative but it's adequate for us to meet those requirements; keep our projects operated and maintained so that they'll last, keep the dams safe, provide the security, both security and safety of dams money. I think it's a fair budget. We'll see how we do in Congress, because *it is* lean times budget-wise in Congress right now. There's a lot of complaining about the deficit. There's a lot of needs for money for the military, but so far so good for us.

Storey: Well, you peripherally mentioned one of the other things I wanted to raise with you, Water 2025. (Keys: Yeah.) Where did that come from, and what's our role in it? (Keys: Okay.) All, the whole thing.

Water 2025: Preventing Crises and Conflict in the West

Keys: Yes.

Storey: And, you have three minutes until your next appointment.

Keys: When we came into office our strategic plan was to deliver water, generate power, do the stuff that it takes, and look twenty-five years in the future. We started saying, "Okay. How do we do that?" And we started saying, "Okay. Twenty-five years from now where are the real needs for water?" Okay, to get there we had to start now, so we put together a thing we call the hot-spots map, and it's a map that shows where we had exploding populations. Nevada's sixty-six percent; Arizona forty-one percent; Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, almost thirty percent between 1990 and 2000. I mean, these are exploding populations that are just outstripping water supplies all over the place like that. Other requirements like for endangered species, for recreation, for

municipalities, for industrial needs, in other words new industry that needs new water and stuff. Those kind of things we were able to put on a map and we had orange. We had red for the real hot spots, orange for not quite so hot but coming, and then yellow for potential problem areas. It said, "Here are the hot spots where we need to show some attention to." And that was our start. The guts of the thing is that we don't have enough money to meet everybody's water needs requirements, and only by working with the states, with the counties, with the cities, with the irrigation districts, can we take a look, see what's necessary, see how we can stretch our existing supplies, and then at some time later maybe we got to go to new storage. If you put that in just one sentence, it's reducing the conflict that's there right now between water needs. Now, how can we do that? We're looking at a number of different water conservation measures. We're looking at new technology, like desalination, like new and better control systems, remote control systems for our facilities, better measuring equipment. So, new technology can help. We're looking at trying to remove some of the old institutional barriers that we run into, like – example, having to have a Warren Act Contract anytime you put non-bureau water in a Bureau facility, trying to find ways to make that easier, find better ways to make the conversion of agricultural water to municipal use and at the same time protect the economy that's built up around the ag use. It's a real challenge. Using water banks to get there, using market techniques to get there, looking at how the states can help. The State of Colorado is a good example. Most states, if you go out and buy a water right off of a piece of land, you got it. Period. From now and forever more. Colorado this past year passed a deal that says a municipality can go out and lease water off of land with an option, and in the drought years you take it, and in the good years they keep farming with it. And, we think it's a heck of a good deal. So, that's one of the innovations. Water 2025 is just trying to keep that crisis and conflict down while we're trying to meet the requirements. At *some* time we'll need new storage in some places. We don't have the money for it right now. The challenge is to try to stretch out our existing supplies while we see how much it takes and where we can come up with the money. (Storey: Um-hmm.) So, I tell our people that Water 2025 is the future of Bureau of Reclamation. We're a water-management agency. *Yes*, we still do some construction to make that happen. *Yes*, we still operate and maintain projects to make that happen. We're a water-management agency and trying to get a handle on what the needs are in the next twenty-five years is a *big* part of that. It *could* define the type of agency we are and what we do for the next century.

Storey: Good. Well, I want to keep you on schedule, so let me ask if you're willing for researchers to use these tapes and the resulting transcripts *one* year after you leave your office as Commissioner of Reclamation?

Keys: Yes.

Storey: Great. Thank you.

END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1. FEBRUARY 5, 2004.

BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 1. AUGUST 15, 2006.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing former Commissioner John W. Keys III at his home in Moab, Utah, on August 15, 2006. This is tape one.

Issues Related to the Animas-La Plata Project

As we were talking you were mentioning that we hadn't talked much about Animas-La Plata and this would be as good a time as any I think.

Keys: Well, you know, probably the second most defining incident or project that we had working during my stint as commissioner, second to Klamath Falls, in how we handled it, would have been Animas-La Plata. When we came in in 2001 the Animas-La Plata Project Act had just been passed in late 2000, that said, "Go ahead and build this thing." In late 2001, I signed the papers that said, "Start construction." We had a little bit of money to get started with, and we got started. On several occasions, during that time, regional director Rick Gold⁵¹ had told me that we needed to take a look at the cost estimate for Animas-La Plata.

New Cost Estimate for Animas-La Plata Project

When we signed the papers and everything to get started, the cost estimate for the project was about \$350 million. In February of 2002, Rick and his people worked with Denver to get a new cost estimate done for the Animas-La Plata Project. Now, let me stop and back up here. The cost estimate that the project was authorized under, was *not* a Reclamation cost estimate. It was done by an engineering consortium headed by Harza engineers. And what they had done was taken the old "large project" cost estimate, downsized it, and had not done any groundwork or any work in the field to ground-truth it. And in some cases they had used bad geology data. I mean, we went back into the field and found rock at two feet below the surface instead of twenty-five feet below the surface, especially at the Durango pumping plant site. And, it just set us up for disaster. Anyway, in February or so they started to relook at it. In June, I got a call from Rick Gold, who said "John, you need to come to Salt Lake City and let us go through the cost estimate for Animas-La Plata."

". . . they said, 'The new cost estimate for Animas-La Plata is \$500 million.'"

And, I went in there, Bill Rinne and myself *both* went, and we had all of the Animas people there: Rick Ehat, the people from Denver, Rick Gold, and all of his Upper Colorado region people. And they said, "The new cost estimate for Animas-La Plata is \$500 million." The estimate used to justify the project was \$333 million. The new estimate is \$500 million. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that's a fifty percent increase in a big project.

51. Rick Gold has been interviewed by Reclamation's oral history program.

"Don't you guys tell anybody this. Go back and redo it and be sure that you're right. . . ."

So, my first reaction is, "Don't you guys tell anybody this. *Go back and redo* it and *be sure* that you're right. In other words, I don't want to make a public pronouncement and then you guys come back and say either we're short, or we're long, or whatever." So, we sent them back and said, "Redo this thing and be sure that we're right." And, this is in June 2002. In July we got back together again and they said, "John, we've redone it and we were right. It's about \$500 million."

Dealing with Interior and the Congress as the Animas-la Plata Estimates Were Checked

Well, I have never been one to keep things under a bushel so we went to our assistant secretary—I had warned our assistant secretary and Tom Weimer, the deputy assistant secretary, that we had a real problem and I gave them an outline of what we were doing and I told them that I had told the estimators to go back and they agreed with that. Well, in July we got the final word back, and it was right, so we went public with the thing. Let me be sure you understand the problem with the cost estimate. While it had been done by a consortium and it had used old figures from previous USBR work with no ground-truthing, when it became law it became a USBR estimate. The mistake that was made was in not going back and reviewing the cost estimate at that time. And in not reviewing the cost estimate, USBR criteria were not used on the project. We had a lot of ground to cover. After getting all of our information together, first, we went to the secretary. Then, we went to the Congress: to Senator Domenici, to Senator Campbell, to Senator Wayne Allard, and to all of the people who were closely involved with the project. We, the secretary, assistant secretary, and I sat down in the secretary's office and got on the phone with Ben Nighthorse Campbell and talked to him. Bennett Raley and I both were there when she talked to Senator Campbell and said, "Here's the deal." We explained the situation to him. And she said, "I have asked my people to do a report and get it to me on the second day of September, and we'll see what it means and how we take care of it." He agreed, and, that's what we did. I put Bill Rinne, who was my deputy commissioner, in charge of it so that it had a high level of visibility and responsibility. He was working with Rick Gold as the regional director and then with the Denver folks and with Rick Ehat, the project construction engineer in Denver. And we put that report together, and it showed several things. Well, there was, there was a sideline to this thing. I had been asked to go to Australia over the Labor Day weekend, actually for a week, to do a paper and then do some stuff with the Australian government. And, when this thing hit I thought, "Oh crap." Well sure enough, the secretary wanted the report at the time I was supposed to be in Australia. So, I ended up backing out of the Australian trip and sending Mark Limbaugh in my place. Mark was my other deputy at the time – actually, I don't think he had been *named* deputy. He was my Director of External Affairs. But anyway, I sent Mark in my place to

Australia and then stayed there so that I could present the report to the secretary. We gave her the report on the second of September saying, "Here's what it is. We've done all this stuff." And she said, "Okay, by the first of December I want an action plan of how we take care of this stuff," and we started working on that.

Animas-La Plata Was Authorized on a Bad Cost Estimate

In that whole process we found out first that we had had a bad cost estimate, that the project had been authorized on a bad cost estimate, and our people just kind of swept it aside. But, it was our fault because we didn't go back and verify the cost estimate at the time. And we bore a lot of responsibility for that. The second thing we found is that in some cases the folks that were doing the cost estimates and doing the work on Animas-LaPlata didn't have any guidelines.

Effects of Abolition of Reclamation Instructions by Dan Beard

Now, it shook down that when back in the '90s when Dan Beard had done away with all of Reclamation's instructions, and all that sort of thing, we functioned pretty well for a while—and a while was up to ten years—because all of the old hands like myself remembered how we did it before, and they didn't need the dang stuff written down. But, the new people coming in, the people coming in from outside to work with other new people that were on the districts and with consultants and so forth, didn't have written guidelines to fall back on, to implement with when they were doing stuff. It left us really vulnerable. And we had some folks that just, I think, went off on a wrong direction. But, the project got authorized on a bad cost estimate, and we put together a way to take the new cost estimate and work with the local water districts. There were eight project sponsors. Every *change* had to be presented to those folks before we did the work. It was doing construction in a fish bowl and our guys at first were really dubious about whether it would work, but then they made it work. And, I credit a great deal of it to Rick Ehat, the project construction engineer.

". . . we told him, 'Hey, you better finish this project, by god, within the cost estimate that we got now. Yes, it can be indexed, but *your* cost estimate is \$500 million, and *that's* what we're going to finish this project as.'"

We told him, "Hey, you better finish this project, by God, within the cost estimate that we have got now. Yes, it can be indexed, but *your* cost estimate is \$500 million, and *that's* what we're going to finish this project as." Every time he had to make a change, he had to go before a project construction group made up of the project sponsors. He had to work with the tribal people. By the

way, here's another aside. When the project was authorized, the legislation said we had to do it with 638 contracting with the tribe.⁵²

Issues Relating to Construction of Animas-La Plata by the Weeminuche Construction Authority of the Southern Ute Mountain Tribe

The Ute Mountain and Southern Ute Mountain Tribes actually formed a construction arm called Weeminuche Construction Authority to do the work. And we were having to train those folks at the same time they were doing the work. To make it happen, we had to negotiate contracts with them because they didn't, at times, know how to handle it. When they would come back with a bid or cost estimate on a portion of the project, it could be *way* off and we had to back and forth, back and forth. Rick Ehat just did a masterful job in working with both the tribe, and the tribal construction arm, then working with the tribal government, then working with the eight project sponsors. We got the implementation report out in December and showed how we could do that, with these project construction groups, and involve them in all the decisions. The original project authorization said that we would go to Congress and get the money in five years. In other words, get the money in five installments from Congress, and we would finish the construction in seven years. Well, for a \$330 million project that may have been possible but for a \$500 million project, *impossible*. So, we had to look at changing the legislation to allow more years of funding and a longer construction period.

Keys: But, we actually came up with a way to get it done, and Rick and his people did a good job. That was in early '03 and going into the construction season for '03, and when I left the boys were still on schedule. They were still within budget. Our new time frame was not seven years. It was more like nine to ten years. They were on schedule. They were under budget, barely, but under budget, and we were building a dam. I was out at the construction site a number of times. Bill Rinne met with the project sponsors a number of times. The last thing that I did at the Animas LaPlata Project before I left as commissioner, in '05, I went to a ceremony for the first placement of the Zone 1 material, in the dam. And, the tribe actually had a ceremony to *bless* the core of the dam. I went and it was a great ceremony with the tribe and the project sponsors. We got to know the project sponsors very well.

Storey: But, you didn't leave in 2005?

Keys: Oh, absolutely not.

Storey: But the ceremony was in 2005?

Keys: Yes, that's when placement of the Zone 1 material started.

52. Referring to P.L. 93-638, as amended, the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act, approved January 4, 1975. Title 1 deals with contracting issues among the tribes.

Storey: Yeah, the way you said it, it sounded like you had left, you know. (Keys: Oh. Oh.) You did the ceremony (Keys: Oh no.) and then you left in 2005?

Keys: Oh no.

Storey: I just wanted to get that in the record. (Laugh)

Barring Anything Unforeseen, Animas-la Plata Should Finish On-time and Within the New Budget

Keys: Oh, thank you. No, construction was an ongoing thing. That was just the last ceremony we had. I was actually back there one more time. But, I think everything is on schedule. Unless there is something unforeseen, they can finish it on the new schedule and within the new cost estimate. In the process things came up that none of us anticipated. The archaeological activities cost more. The zone two and three and the other materials were more expensive. We had to actually engineer a new processing machine to give us the right gradation of fill materials. We had to get involved with a local who was holding us hostage on the fill material, the borrow material. We actually got into a political thing there, because Senator Campbell kept telling us to "Just take care of those folks." It just seemed like there was one obstacle after the other. It's on schedule and the guys are doing a good job.

Animas-La Plata Issues Caused Assistant Secretary Bennett Raley to Distrust the Denver Office

One other thing that it did was to trigger in our assistant secretary a distrust of the Denver Office. And I think, I think Mr. [Bennett] Raley came in with a bias against the Denver Office when he was appointed. But, I think this kind of thing solidified it for him.

"To him it meant that the guys didn't know how to do good cost estimates. And, you know, we struggled with cost estimates the whole time I was there. . ."

To him it meant that the guys didn't know how to do good cost estimates. And, you know, we struggled with cost estimates the whole time I was there. It seemed like every cost estimate that we ever got was wrong, and they all went up. I could just sit here and name a litany of projects that we did and the cost estimate was wrong on them, the big stuff. I'd go to Denver and I'd bark and bark at them and tell them that they were killing us, and they'd pull out this long list of the things that they did right. But then you get the public ones, the cost estimates, and they're all wrong. I mean, they told me how good they did on the safety of dams work for Horsetooth Dam so many times that I could throw up. But, then I would look at the cost estimates for Animas LaPlata, the cost estimates for – oh crum. I'm trying to think of some of them that were so far off, that just hit me over the head. And, I'll think of some of them later. But every cost estimate was wrong, the *big ones* that came out. And, we kept

saying, “Denver, you’ve got a problem.” “Oh, this is just engineering.” “God dammit Denver, you’ve got a problem.” “Well, the privates are having the same problem. The Corps of Engineers is having the same problem.” “God dammit Denver, you’ve got a problem here. Get the message.” And, they’re still working on it. I don’t mean to be crude in explaining that, (Laugh) but that’s the reaction that we got. (Storey: Um-hmm.) So, anyway that’s the Animas thing. It brought out the best and the worst in us. It brought out the best in us—in that we had field people out there who made it work. Rick Ehat was out there and he had built himself a great construction group there. Barry Longwell is his deputy, and he—I can’t remember all of the names right off the top of my head, but they performed like champs and it brought back that old faith in Reclamation in the field. But then, we got into that Denver thing and it was, “Oh my goodness, what if this, and what if that, and we’ve got to do this, and we’ve got to do that. And, we don’t have guidelines for this and we don’t have that.” And, it just brought out the best and the worst in us. And, I think it led to the Managing for Excellence Program⁵³ that’s going on right now. So, that’s Animas-La Plata.

Storey: Now, earlier you said, “Horse,” they used “Horse Thief” (Keys: Horsetooth.) as an example? It was Horsetooth, right?

Keys: Well, Horsetooth [Dam] was a Safety of Dams project up on the Colorado Big Thompson [Project]. And, it’s the main reservoir that supplies water for City of Fort Collins and part of the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District. Early on the fix there was to do a ton of work, big cutoff trench and everything. They got about halfway through it and saw how expensive that was going to be, and they did some reengineering and came up with a blanket, a filter blanket, and some other work there that cut the cost by about \$50 million. Good deal. I mean, they did a great job on it and it was one time when we actually cut a big chunk of money off of a cost estimate for rebuilding one of our dams under the Safety of Dams Program. They did a good job, and it turned out very well. And every time I’d get a bad cost estimate they’d say, “Oh, well look how good we did on Horsetooth.” “Okay. Good.” So, like I said, they’d hit me over the head with it every once in a while.

Managing for Excellence Studies

Storey: Um-hmm. Well, let’s talk about Managing for Excellence.

Keys: Managing for Excellence, like I said I believe that it came out of the Animas-LaPlata Project estimate debacle. During that review we actually took an internal look at ourself to see what was wrong and what we needed to do to take care of it. And, we set up several different internal and external reviews of cost estimates at the time. From the Animas-LaPlata report, we set up a review function in Denver that would look at every cost estimate over \$10 million that

53. Referring to a National Academy of Science study commissioned by Commissioner Keys at the behest of Assistant Secretary Bennett Raley.

came out of Denver to be sure it was right and have an independent review of that. There is actually a position there in Denver now to accomplish these reviews. I don't know whether it's filled yet. It was being advertised when I left. We wanted an independent review, just like John Smart used to do with the Safety of Dams Program, independent. He's not part of ACER.⁵⁴ Well, we don't have ACER anymore. He's not part of the Technical Service Center. He's not part of the Planning Group or the Policy Group. He is an independent person that looks at those cost estimates. And, we set up an independent review of every cost estimate that's underway that costs over \$10 million to be sure that the cost estimates are right. So, we did that. And, we were looking at what we needed to replace the old Reclamation instructions. Anyway, there was a lot of stuff that we were doing. Well, the assistant secretary, did a lot of work on this before he actually came to us. He wanted a *fully* independent review of *all* of the work that we were doing, out of Denver, and all technical work that Reclamation was doing. He went to the National Academy of Sciences and gave them a proposal for a review. Then we got involved in helping frame the proposal and getting the material together. The Academy review began in October of '04. Basically the report came out in late '05, the results of it. And, it made a lot of recommendations. You know, I can't think of a single place that the report said, "This is wrong or this is right." They would say, "You ought to look at this and you ought to look at that." The review panel had some Corps of Engineer folks on there that, I think, had a little bias, but it was a good report. And, in some cases it said we were doing some things right and other places it said, "You ought to take a hard look at some stuff." Mr. Raley actually went to Senator Pete Domenici of New Mexico about the review and Senator Domenici actually got it in legislation that we were supposed to do this review and report the results. When we got the academy report in December 2005, we distributed it widely. We went to the secretary and she said, "I want a plan of action for implementing the National Academy report and I want it by February 1st. And we did. Rather than us just sit down and put together the plan of action we went to NWRA [National Water Resources Association], the Family Farm Alliance, CREDA [Colorado River Energy Distributors Association], the Congressional folks, and other water user organizations. We involved a lot of people outside of Reclamation in putting the plan of action together. And of course the plan of action had a *number* of things that ought to be done. There are forty-some odd different actions. And, every one of them involves outside people. In other words, we don't want this to just be an inside job. We wanted people from the irrigation districts and from the water user organizations, involved in implementing that plan of action. And, it had things that would be done immediately. It had things that would be finished in the summer of '06, and I think the final action would be done in December of '07, because some of the final actions depended on some of the first actions to be done. So, it's underway. We wanted to give it good visibility and show that we were serious about it. So we brought Larry Todd in as a deputy commissioner and said, "You're in charge of this thing." Now, Larry has to be reined back in every

54. Assistant Commissioner - Engineering and Research.

once in a while because reality has to set in on a few things, but I think he's doing a good job so far.

Storey: Good.

Keys: So, it's underway. *I personally believe* that it'll come up in Bob Johnson's confirmation hearing because Senator Domenici is the committee chairman. He actually had in his legislation that we would do this thing in the first place. And, I think the former assistant secretary is keeping in contact with Mr. Domenici. So that's Managing for Excellence. It's a good program. It's a good deal. I think, you know, it addresses the need for some guidelines for design criterion. It covers the need for review of cost estimates. It goes through the title transfer issues, and it talks about working with outside agencies. It takes a hard look at the Denver office. "Are we right-sized in Denver? Are we keeping people to do things that the private sector could do for Reclamation? Are there others that we should keep?" So, there's a lot of, I think, emphasis on Denver in parts of the action plan. That's the long term and that one's not due until next year in '07. (Storey: Um-hmm.)

Storey: Well, you've mentioned assistant secretary Bennett Raley and that brings the issue of your deputy, your second Deputy Mark Limbaugh. He was a political appointee? (Keys: Um-hmm.) Why don't we talk about Mark in Reclamation and moving on to be assistant secretary and so on.

Keys: Okay. And, we can talk about Mr. Raley too if you'd like.

Storey: Okay.

Mark Limbaugh

Keys: Let's talk about Mark first because Mark Limbaugh is a great young man. And, I say "young". I think he's in his early '50s. When I found out that I was being considered to be commissioner in 2001, Mark Limbaugh's name was in there also to be considered as commissioner, because at the time he was president of Family Farm Alliance. He was a Watermaster for District 65 in Idaho, and he was an irrigation district manager, and a former farmer in western Idaho. A *good* young man that I had known when I was working as regional director in Idaho. I knew he was a good young man, knew he was a good forward thinker, and had a lot of respect for him. When I was going through the confirmation process he and I talked a couple of times and talked about what was going on in Reclamation. After I was confirmed as commissioner, I was asked to take several political appointees into Reclamation. The *good deal* is that they weren't going to push somebody on me. And they said, "How about your External Affairs Director?" And I said, "Sure. That's a good political appointee job." And they said, "Okay. Look at some folks," and I looked at a bunch. I couldn't find the right person. Because *I* needed somebody in there that knew Reclamation, that would help us sell Reclamation outside of the federal family. So, I called Mark up and I said,

"Mark, are you interested in this job?" I said, "I know you're interested in being commissioner but here is the help that I need." I needed somebody to come in who could manage my public affairs, Congressional affairs, and the Bureau *contacts* with all the districts and with the outside organizations. And I said, "You're president of Family Farm Alliance. That's an immediate contact. Work with NWRA. Work with CREDA and all these others. What do you think?" He said, "I'm interested." So, we started the process, and his selection and appointment was easy. He agreed to come in late fall, and we had him there the first of the year in '02.

". . . I couldn't have done my job without Mark Limbaugh. . . ."

And I will tell you, as I've told folks many times before, as commissioner I couldn't have done my job without Mark Limbaugh. He worked very closely with all of the water user organizations. He got credibility back in some areas where we had lost it. In other words, our word being our bond out there with districts, saying we'd do something and then following through. He worked very closely with the Western Governor's Association, with the Western States Water Council. Mark Limbaugh was good for Reclamation. He worked as that director for a couple of years and then we made him a deputy commissioner, and he and Bill Rinne were the two deputies, but we brought Bill in to be head of the operations side of the house, and Mark was handling the political . . .

END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1. AUGUST 15, 2006.

BEGINNING OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1. AUGUST 15, 2006

Keys: As I said, I couldn't have done my job without Mark, and there was even more to it than that. Well, Mark worked very closely with Reclamation because he *knew* the West, he *knew* water, and he got along with our people really well. Mark and I split up duty so that he was out doing a lot of the outreach work. I mean the travel in that office was a killer. I was gone sixty-, sixty-five-, sometimes even seventy percent of the time, and Mark took some of that. I'd have been gone *more* if it hadn't been for Mark. And, he did *really* well at it. And, you know, it was not without personal sacrifice that Mark went to Washington, D.C.. When he first came back in early '02, his plan was to let Cindy, his wife, stay in Idaho for their son to finish high school, but that didn't work very well. The son needed the guidance of a father at that time. So, after that school year, they sold their place in Idaho and Cindy and the son moved back there, and it was not without great personal sacrifice that he did that.

Mark Limbaugh becomes Assistant Secretary for Water and Science

Bennett Raley, assistant secretary, resigned in December of '04 right after the election. Mark had put his name in to be considered for the assistant secretary. So, for the spring of '05 we were working with him. He was still our deputy commissioner but he was being considered to be assistant secretary. He was confirmed, I think, in the summer of '05 and then sworn in, I think, in September. Even then, after he was assistant secretary I *loved* working with

Mark Limbaugh. He's a good *thinker*. He had been our point person on Water 2025, in Reclamation. He got our folks behind that. He was still its champion when he was assistant secretary. And, again, I couldn't have done my job without Mark Limbaugh. And, there's another piece of it also. When I was regional director in Boise I could *see* the relationship between the commissioner and the assistant secretary and I think there was only one of them that worked very well and that was when Dennis Underwood and John Sayre were in there. And, it worked because John was never closely involved in what Dennis was doing. Dennis told me at times that he would go and fill John in once a week whether he needed it or not, and other than that he just did his own work. It just seemed that there was always contention between the commissioner and assistant secretary. I remember Dale Duvall and Jim Ziglar. I remembered Eluid Martinez and Patty Beneke. It worked pretty well between Cec Andrus, or Keith Higginson and Guy Martin but I was not that heavily involved in that one. It was almost always contentious.

When Became Commissioner Thought He Could Work with Anyone

I thought, when I went into that job, as commissioner,, "Crud. I can work with anybody." I've never had a bad boss in Reclamation. Maybe I was *lucky*, but I never had a bad boss and I can work with anybody." Well, I found out that that's easier said than done, because Bennett and I, after a honeymoon kind of period, did not get along very well. And, at times it was more than "just didn't get along very well." We had different philosophies about how to get things done. We had a different *belief* about Reclamation. I *think*, in his prior life, Bennett had made his reputation and his family fortune, if there's such, representing districts against Reclamation. A lot of the work that he did in New Mexico and in Colorado was trying to do something different than what Reclamation thought was best. At first, there was kind of a honeymoon period when we were trying to find a solution to the Klamath Project situation. We jumped in and did that. But, then it started *immediately* to go south when we were to put the Biological Assessment together for the Klamath [Project]. We had our folks giving us the technical data, and Bennett wanting to go a different direction. Of course, he was the boss. He was assistant secretary. But, we did not get along very well. The solution that we came up with is, and it didn't always work, but the solution was that Mark Limbaugh would be the primary contact with Bennett Raley, and I would work with Tom Weimer, who was the deputy assistant secretary, and in most cases that worked very well, and that's what we did most of the time. Now, Bennett and I got into some roaring disagreements, and the one thing I never did was go to the secretary with it. I would talk with her Chief of Staff, Brian Waidman, and Brian's way of handling it was to have the deputy secretary work with Bennett and I, and that was Steve Griles. We met with Steve several times, him as a arbitrator or a referee, or whatever you want to call it, (Storey: Uh huh.) but we did that several times, and we made it work. And, for the most part we kept it out of the public eye. There was a few times when some people in the public eye saw the tremendous difference there. But, you know, I went into the job knowing Reclamation, knowing the people, knowing the programs, loving the

organization. The only reason I was *there* was because of the organization. I was not a political looking for a job. The *only* reason I was there was Reclamation. And, I think at times that was a threat to Bennett Raley, and I kept trying to emphasize to Bennett, “Bennett, use me to use the organization to the better,” and it never quite worked. We just didn’t get along. And, I think that’s a flaw in my character that I couldn’t make that work better. But it was hard to deal with. We were sworn in on July of ‘01. In July of ‘04 he actually moved him and his family to Denver, and the last five months before he resigned in December of ‘04, he worked out of Denver and we hardly ever saw him.

Tom Weimer

But, Tom Weimer was a saint. I have the greatest admiration for Tom Weimer who is now the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget. But, he was the deputy all of that time for Water and Science. I have the greatest admiration for that fellow of anybody in the world. Now, I kind of digressed, but Mark Limbaugh was good to work with. I think Mark takes to the assistant secretary’s job a willingness to work with people that might not have been there before. That’s a different way of working with people, (Storey: Um-hmm.) a collaborative way of working with people rather than being confrontational. Bennett liked the confrontation. He was a lawyer. He seemed to *like* confrontation. But, Mark will do good in that job. So far, he’s done really well. He’s been in it for almost a year and I think Mark’s doing very well.

Storey: Well, let’s talk about – you brought up Bennett. Let’s continue along that line and talk about his involvement with the Colorado River. I think basically he took that over from Reclamation?

Bennett Raley's Involvement with the Colorado River

Keys: He wanted to be the leader in the Colorado River, and he was. (Storey: Um-hmm.) And we got a lot done. It’s just that that confrontational approach to it, at times, *we thought*, stretched it out and didn’t get it done as quickly as we could have done. Bennett would meet with the states and districts and come to what we thought was an agreement. We’d go back and put it together and then something wasn’t quite right for him and it would throw the states and the districts all into an uproar and they’d say, “Get out of here. Get out of here.” We’d then put something together and get them back together. We’d come to an agreement.

Quantification Settlement Agreement

We walked away from the Quantification Settlement Agreement many times. And, our first schedule was to get it done by December 31, ‘01; then December 31st, ‘02; and it was up to ‘03, mid-year, before we actually got it done. It turned out very well. I can’t stand here and tell you that Bennett

wasn't effective in getting a *good* agreement because it was. It turned out really well. It gave California a soft landing. It took care of our problems with payback of water. It brought California in at 4.4 million acre feet (maf). It did what it said, Quantification Settlement Agreement. It told each one the states how much water they had and how they could use it. To Upper Basin, it said, "Upper Basin, here's what's entitled in the Lower Basin." It did what it said, and the end result was good. I couldn't sit here and tell you that we would have ended up with that good of an agreement had we gone the other way. Bennett's methods may have been the right way to do it. I don't know. It's just that with Bennett it was *always* a brush fire (Storey: Um-hmm.) that would jump up and bite, and so forth. But it ended up very well. There were other actions on the Colorado [River.] Bob Johnson and his Lower Colorado regional people have been working for almost ten years on the multi-species conservation program. The *sticking point* of that program was the cost share of money to support the project. We had come up with several proposals that went all the way from the states having to fund everything down to the federal government having to fund everything. We thought, early on, that we would be lucky to get the states in a position to fund thirty or forty percent of it. Bennett Raley came in and said, "No. They got to fund half of it." I think the first time that he threw that hand grenade on the table they just went ballistic, saying "You're throwing in the ditch all this stuff we've been working for ten years on." But, he held on, and we ended up with a fifty percent cost share on the [MSCP,] and it worked out very well. But, he came in late, had that impact, and got it done. I think the Lower Colorado River Basin states had had the experience of the Quantification Settlement (Laugh) Agreement behind them, and they didn't want the MSCP [Multi Species Conservation Program to go south on them. His insistence on that, I think, brought them into the fold, and we ended up with a fifty/fifty cost share agreement on MSCP. They're working on the shortage criteria now, and I think Bob Johnson and his people are doing a great job. That's not right. Bob Johnson and Rick Gold and their people are doing a good job in trying to accommodate all of the needs there, but yet come up with a shortage criterion for the basin. That one is due in December of '07 also.

Storey: I think I'm a little confused. I thought the quantification had to do with California's allocation of water?

Keys: It did, but when you confirm the 4.4 maf for California you also confirm Arizona's share, you confirm Nevada's share, and you say, "Okay, you got it." *And*, it keeps California from taking excess water from the Upper Basin. The reason that California could use more than its 4.4 maf was that the Colorado River Compact said, "You can use it until the other states develop their share of the water." Well, the Upper Basin states are getting really close so when you limit California to 4.4 maf it gives that confirmation to everybody else, that they still have their water.

Storey: Well, does the agreement also include the water allocations to Palo Verde, and Imperial, and Coachella.

Keys: Yes. It does that. It also says that they have to make good beneficial use of the water. And we actually, under 417, 714, whatever the clause out of the Compact was, we actually went back into the Imperial Irrigation District and the other districts and did studies to be sure that they were making good beneficial use of the water. So yes, that was in there. It included . . .

Storey: Yeah. That caused a furor for a while?

Keys: Yeah, it did. And there's still a lawsuit. There's still some Imperial Irrigation District folks that don't like that. Met, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California or MWD or MWDSC actually went into Palo Verde and fallowed some land so that they could take some water in addition to what they were getting before, and that's working. It cost a lot of money, but they're doing that. San Diego, it helped firm up what they get out of the agreement. Let's see, I think Yuma Mesa and Palo Verde districts are number one. Met is the big number one. Those are small amounts of water. Imperial is the big one and then after that you've got San Diego, and Met, and somebody else.

Storey: Coachella?

Keys: Yes, Coachella. Those are the ones after that. But, it helped confirm what water they could get. Met ended up seeing that they couldn't fallow enough land to get the water that they need, and that's when they went north, in California, buying water. And, I think the last time we talked about the agreement to move water down from north California to Southern California, (Storey: Um-hmm.) and how the . . .

Storey: And the State Water Project won't let them?

Keys: The State Water Project and the governor got involved, and so forth. Right now it's all working pretty well. Now, the drought that we have in some parts of the West still going on, has not hit California. Even in the bad drought years, California still had a lot of water. It'll be interesting to see, if California gets into a drought situation, what it does to move that water south.

Storey: Um-hmm. Well, speaking of California water, when Dennis Underwood retired as commissioner, for a period of time there before he went to Met, he was doing consulting, and one of the things they were working on were ways to catch runoff in the extra wet years. And, you know, economically in the past it had been considered infeasible but now they were looking at it. Did Reclamation get involved in any of this?

Met [MWD] Built Diamond Valley to Store Water

Keys: You know, for the most part, no. Dennis did such a good job for Met that they didn't come to us needing help. Dennis developed their plans for the Colorado River water. He looked and worked—I think they already had some of the plans on the board but Met spent over a billion dollars building Diamond Valley

Dam and Reservoir. Diamond Valley stores water during the high years so that they have it during the dry years. And, it's also a place where they can bring Northern California water in and store it in the south. (Storey: Um-hmm.) It gives them a *great* flexibility, but Dennis had a great hand in that. They did *all* of that on their own. Now, I think our folks, Bob Johnson's folks, knew what they were doing, kept up with them, but they didn't come to us for help. They did it all on their own. They did it with their *own* money. I don't know that we could have gotten money at that time for them to work on it, but Met did all of that with their own money, their own engineers. I never did get to Diamond Valley. I had a couple of trips planned and they got canned at the last minute, but they tell me that that's a great facility there. I know Met's very proud of it.

Storey: Hmm. What about Dennis? The last time I talked to him was in '98. Can you talk briefly about your relationships with him after that?

Dennis Underwood and MWD

Keys: Sure. I know in previous interviews I talked about Dennis' management style, and how his management style did not fit with the big organization very well, because he wanted his hands on *everything* that came out. He reviewed *everything* that came out, rewrote *everything* that came out, but that was Dennis' way of doing business. When the parties changed in '92, Dennis wanted to stay on as commissioner, and they actually had him stay on an extra sixty days or ninety days as commissioner, as a transition. That was to his detriment because previously commissioners, *young* fellows that had been in the job, used that as a springboard into another job. Dennis was paying so much attention to what was going on in Reclamation, he didn't have time to look for a job when he left. And, for the longest time, I mean a year to two years, Dennis couldn't find a job when he left. And, he had a little consulting job here, a little consulting job there, and it was not for a couple of years until he actually got back into the fold there in California. When I was regional director I would talk to Dennis every once in a while just to keep up with him because he was a good friend. Well, when I came back in as commissioner, Dennis had become almost the *soul* of California water for Met. He was the assistant general manager, in charge of the Colorado River water for them. And he was into everything in the Colorado River, and doing a great job. He represented Met *and* California very well in all of those hard negotiations, because he knew the river, he knew the people, he knew the problems. He *knew* that they had to do something to get themselves back to 4.4 maf. He was very perceptive. There was nobody that knew the river any better than Dennis Underwood did in those days.

Storey: So, he would have been one of the people on the table opposite Bennett?

Keys: He was the person that *everybody* looked to to stand up to Bennett Raley at times, and he was the person that other folks looked to to bring money to the table, because Met could bring money when the State of California couldn't bring money, or the other districts couldn't, or Arizona would get up on their

high horse and say, “We’re *not* going to.” But, Dennis was the person that they went to, and he did a masterful job at that. He was the assistant general manager for the Colorado River issues and did a great job at it. As commissioner I probably talked to Dennis if not once a week, once every two weeks the whole time while he was still alive. Because he had great ideas of how to do things, and he came as close to having Reclamation’s good at heart in the water sector out there as anybody did, and he wanted us to be successful working with them. I firmly believe that. (Storey: Um-hmm.) And, I think for the most part it was very successful.

Dennis Underwood is Named General Manager of MWD

Dennis did such a good job, then in late 2004 the General Manager, and I can’t remember his name, retired from Met, and they did this big search, and they took until late April or early May of ‘05 to name the new General Manager, and it was Dennis. Three weeks after Dennis was named General Manager he was rediagnosed with cancer. It started out in his colon, colon cancer metastasized into his liver. And, the fact is the first symptom that he saw that made him realize that he had a problem again—he’d had surgery before, back in the ‘90s, and thought he got rid of it. But, the first symptom that he saw was a yellow tone to his skin, went to the doctor and sure enough it was back. And, he worked with that and started treatments for about one to two months, and then he actually got really sick and had to turn over some of the operations, but he stayed on the job and worked out of his house for a few more months, and then he passed away in the fall of ‘05. But, Dennis was a good man.

Storey: So, at that time he was the General Manager of Met?

Keys: He was the General Manager of Met.

Storey: Okay.

Keys: When he was really sick he divided up the duties and had a team that he was working with to keep things running. When Dennis passed away they readvertised and Jeff Kightlinger is now the new General Manager, and he has hired Roger Patterson as one of the people that works with him.

Storey: Yeah, I saw that.

Roger Patterson Has Now Gone to Work for MWD

Keys: To get that done. And Roger’s a good man. Roger was our regional director out there,⁵⁵ knew the politics, although he was in a different region he still

55. Roger Patterson served as regional director of the Bureau of Reclamation in the Mid-Pacific Region, in Sacramento, from 1991 to 1999. He was previously the regional director in Billings, the Great Plains Region.

knows California politics and knows Colorado River water pretty well. Roger's a good man, doing a good job.

Storey: Yeah. I was surprised after he'd gone back to Lincoln and the dream job and things.

Nebraska's Over-development of Groundwater Resources

Keys: Well, he worked with Nebraska Governor Mike Johanns very closely and was his—he went back there as Director of Water Resources, and then it was not very long until he was named Director of *Natural* Resources. And, when I went back into the job as commissioner we worked very closely with him on the Platte River stuff. (Storey: Um-hmm.) He was the Nebraska rep, and I was the government rep on the Platte River Governance Committee. I was Interior rep. And, we worked very well with Roger. Roger went into Nebraska politics at a tough time. In the heyday of water development in the West, Nebraska's approach to things is, "We have an *unlimited* water supply in the groundwater," and they gave permits to everybody that asked for them. They overdeveloped every aquifer in the state, and there was no recognition of the connection of surface water to the groundwater. Roger's job, when he went in there, is to get control of that situation. The first battleground was a big brouhaha in the Republican River basin with the, *Kansas vs. Nebraska* court case. Roger helped negotiate that one, and, the end result is they had to shut down *hundreds* if not thousands of wells in the Republican River Basin. They are facing the same thing in the Platte River Basin. They had *stopped* giving new permits until they had got the Endangered Species Act compliance done. *That* was waiting for this agreement that we were working with on the Platte River between Colorado, Wyoming, and Nebraska, on the four endangered species: the whooping crane, the pallid sturgeon, the least tern, and the piping plover. We worked very well with all of them. It still hasn't been signed, because Nebraska won't agree to help and put up the water or any money. And I see that they're out campaigning around the West *against* having to provide water for it. Well, it's a hundred and fifty-some-odd-million dollar agreement, and Nebraska doesn't want to put up any money. They said, "Okay. We'll give you credit, money credit, for the water that you're going to put up." And, Colorado and Wyoming were going to put up money. Still don't have the thing signed. It runs out in October and this is like the fourth extension that we had put together. So, if they don't get it, they don't have ESA [Endangered Species Act] compliance for all the developments on the Platte River, *and* you've got a ton of those wells down there that are going to have to be shut down. When Governor Johanns left to be Secretary of Agriculture in late '04, Roger resigned right after that and went into doing consulting work. And, he was consulting in Nebraska, but Met hired him to do some work, and I think he proved himself doing the consulting work and it got more, and more, and more, and then finally he is on their payroll now as one of their assistant managers. (Storey: Um-hmm.) I don't know whether he's assistant general manager or not, but I think, I think he's doing what Dennis was doing covering the Colorado River for them.

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- Storey: But back in California?
- Keys: He lives . . .
- Storey: So, L.A.'s a lot different than Sacramento? (Laugh)
- Keys: Oh yeah. Oh absolutely. He lives, I think Roger physically lives in Phoenix and commutes back and forth to California.
- Storey: Really?
- Keys: Yeah. His daughter lives in Tucson, there. Roger's been a big part of Reclamation for a long time.
- Storey: Yeah. On one side of the table or the other side, I guess. (Laugh)
- Keys: Oh, that's right. I thought he was a good regional director when he was in Sacramento (Storey: Um-hmm.) for Reclamation. And then on the other side, we did good work with him when he was in Nebraska.
- Storey: Why don't we talk a little about Klamath? You said that was number one, I believe?

Klamath Project Issues

- Keys: Well, you know, we got into a lot of the details on Klamath when we were talking before. (Storey: Yeah.) I guess, when we left it before we had had the fish kill in late '02 when we got water back on the project. People used to say, "What's your approach to Klamath?" And I'd say, "My approach to Klamath is one step at a time." You know, we came in and there was no water and we put together a water bank, a plan for a water bank that said, you know, first year in . . .
- END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1. AUGUST 15, 2006.
BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 2. AUGUST 15, 2006.
- Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey with John W. Keys on August 15, 2006.
- Keys: When I first became commissioner, folks would ask "What's your approach to Klamath?" and my approach to Klamath, and I think what we had put together among us, is "One step at a time." When we came in, that first year, we put the water bank together so that there was a block of water set aside to take care of the endangered species. Like I said in '02 it was 30,000 acre feet, '03 it was fifty thousand acre feet, '04 it was seventy-five thousand acre feet, and '05 and beyond it's supposed to be 100,000 acre feet a year, and it was there to keep the level of the lake up for the chub and then to have water to release for the salmon in the river. For the most part I think it worked *really* well, and it

conformed with what National Academy of Science said was the problem. We worked very closely with the Fish and Wildlife Service, and I think it was working. But, there were other things to do and that was the first step. The second step, we built a new fish screen on A Canal. A Canal was their *big* diversion into the project, and we built a state-of-the-art, up-to-date screen there on the A Canal diversion. We put a fish passage facility for the salmon on one of the other dams that blocks the main river. We were working with Agency Lake Ranch, and Agency Lake Ranch lands to provide more storage. We were working with the Barnes property to provide more storage and get other things in. We worked with Nature Conservancy on the Tawana Farms water. And, it was just, as I said, I thought one step at a time to getting it up to where we had a good project. And, I thought it was a good plan, but it was not enough for the locals.

"The locals really wanted us . . . building *big* storage. . . ."

The locals really wanted us doing more. They wanted us building *big* storage. I know they had us looking at additional storage in Long Lake, which early investigations had said wouldn't work because it was too porous. Now, that may not be true, I don't know. But, they wanted more storage there. They wanted continued cheap power. The power contracts ran out and they're still negotiating the power rates for the project. But, it just seemed like we couldn't do enough for the locals there.

"It was like feeding jelly beans to the bear. You know, you give him your handful of jelly beans, and, when he gets done with them, he starts up your arm. . . ."

It was just like feeding jelly beans to the bear. You know, you give him your handful of jelly beans, and, when he gets done with them, he starts up your arm. (Storey: Um-hmm.) We just couldn't do enough for them. So I thought we had a good plan. I still think it's working. I think that there's still more acres being delivered water than should be in that basin, and it's not just the Reclamation project.

". . . about 500,000 acres of land in that basin . . . 240 of it is the Federal project. The other 260 is on private water rights. . . . The Federal project bore the whole brunt of it. . . ."

There's about 500,000 acres of land in that basin that gets water, 240 of it is the Federal project. The other 260 is on private water rights. The private water rights lands never lost a drop of water during the cutoff in '01. The Federal project bore the whole brunt of it. We actually put a lot of money into the adjudication of water rights to try to do something about that. I don't know where that stands. Paul Cleary was the Oregon Director of Water Resources that we worked very closely with. He left in late '04, I think, to be the Oregon Governor's Chief of Staff. I hope that they're still working on getting the

water rights adjudicated in that basin so that it doesn't all *fall* on top of the Reclamation project the next time.

". . . there's still more acres being irrigated than should be. . . ."

But, there's still more acres being irrigated than should be. In our water bank proposal, what we were trying to do is fallow lands to use that water in the water bank. The locals didn't like that at all. They still don't like it. They still don't agree that there's too many acres being irrigated, but I think there are. Our folks are still doing some studies on more storage. It's a year-to-year operation as far as water supply, but the water bank is there for the endangered species.

". . . it's a killer job for area managers. . . ."

Now, it's a killer job for area managers. We had, when I first came into office the area manager had just agreed to go to Billings to be the deputy. Karl Wirkus had been the manager. He went to Billings and left the job *open*, and we couldn't find a Reclamation person to go there for a while. And, Dave Sabo came from Western Area Power, and we got him there. Hell, he hadn't been there a year before he was trying to find a job somewhere else, but he stayed until early this year and did a good job. He did a good job, but it's a *killer* job, and he's got good people there now, or there are good people. I think I just heard that Pablo Arroyave is going up there to be the area manager now. Chris Karas is the deputy. She worked with us in Washington, been out there for two or three years, and is doing a good job. So, Klamath's Klamath. Connie Rupp was there, she was an assistant director out of Salt Lake City. Like I said Klamath's Klamath. Klamath was a really strange project to work on because early on the locals got an ear in the White House, and there were contentions that the White House was calling all the shots in Klamath. I don't think that's right. I think the White House gave some emphasis to getting money into the basin, and our monies, were increased some. There was a lot of Department of Agriculture money that went in there doing conservation projects, lining canals, putting laterals in pipe, helping them with scheduling, and that sort of thing. One year, I think, the federal investment in the Klamath Basin was almost \$100 million. This past year it was about \$67 million, total, from Reclamation and Fish and Wildlife Service, and it was all of the Interior agencies plus the Ag agencies and so forth. So, there was a lot of money going into Klamath Basin. But, I think for the most part it's working.

Storey: Good. I think we're having trouble either there or on the Trinity with salmon this year?

Keys: The Trinity is a tributary of the Klamath [River].

Storey: Yeah. It comes in down near the mouth?

Keys: Near the mouth. And, the Trinity [River] is cold water, and most of the fish that come up the Klamath turn off into the Trinity. There is some cold water out of the Scott and the Shasta Rivers, but then the water out of the Klamath is *hot*, and it's hard to work hot water with salmon. They just don't mix. That was one of the factors that caused that fish kill in 2002 is the hot water, (Storey: Um-hmm.) and they had a big return. They all congregated in the lower Klamath River, and the hot water let the disease—there were two diseases—just run rampant with the fish there, and there were a lot of fish killed. But, you couldn't tag that all onto the Reclamation project because we were *way* up the basin. We were releasing water. We actually were releasing more water than was called for because we actually released some Indian Trust water to help out. But, it was just hot water. The Scott, and the Shasta, and the Trinity Rivers are the cold water sources. Kirk Rodgers and his folks, Kirk is the regional director in Sacramento, working very closely with the Hupas.⁵⁶ The Hupa Tribe is the main one there on the Trinity [River]. And, I didn't get involved a lot although I met with them a number of times and I never will forget.

Hupa Exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian

They opened that new museum in the Smithsonian for the Native Americans in 2004, and I went to the dedication, and I was all enthused because it was really a great facility. Mr. Campbell, or Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell was there and helped dedicate the thing, and I was invited and went. I went over there the Saturday after the dedication, and I was going through the exhibits and I saw one for the northwestern tribes, and it's the Hupa Tribe. And, I swear I went in there and I came out just furious because they had used Reclamation's name a number of times as being overbearing in managing the Trinity River. "They have to get *permission* from the Reclamation to do their ceremony for this. They have to get *permission* from Reclamation to release water for that ceremony," and so forth. It just cast us in the black-hat role and I didn't like it, (Storey: Um-hmm.) and after all we had done with that tribe. But Kirk Rodgers, I understand, put together a water package for the Trinity, and they were releasing the water on schedule. That was last year. This year I don't know where it is. So, if there's some trouble right now I don't know about it.

Storey: Hmm. Yeah. What about Middle Rio Grande?

Middle Rio Grande Project and the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow

Keys: Oh God, Middle Rio Grande. You know, I think the last time I told you that my comeuppance. I'd been commissioner for like a week and a half or maybe two weeks, and I got a notice from the court saying they'd changed the name of Martinez in the court case, *Minnow vs. Martinez* to *Minnow vs. Keys*. This year, I know they've had big monsoonal storms in the Albuquerque area. I

56. Officially known as the Hoopa Valley Indian Tribe on their website at <http://www.hoopa-nsn.gov/> on October 17, 2006 at 1:40 P.M.. The tribe is from northern California, and the conventions on academic sites regarding spelling appear to be that the people are known as the Hupa from the Hoopa Valley.

don't know what it's done for storage down there. But, my whole time in office we were short of water in the Middle Rio Grande River Basin. We have several responsibilities there.

Prior and Paramount Water Rights of the Pueblos

One responsibility is for prior and paramount water supply to the Pueblos. And they have a right to San Juan-Chama water, whatever it takes to meet their prior and paramount water rights, and each one of the Pueblos has a certain acreage that we have to meet. Reclamation met it every year. Have not had a problem. The tribes really don't like the way we do it because we just say, "Hey, we're going to have you the water. Don't worry about what storage it takes to get it there. Don't worry about how we do it. *You will have the water.*" And we did a study, Reclamation does a study every wintertime that says, "Here's how much storage we need from San Juan-Chama to meet that prior and paramount water right." We've *never* shorted them. They would like a certain amount of storage set aside every year for *their* water supply. and then they want to carry it over. We're saying, "No, it doesn't work that way." And, there is a bone of contention there. So, first right on the river is prior and paramount deliveries to the Pueblos.

The second, we put water aside to meet the Endangered Species Act requirements for the endangered silvery minnow⁵⁷ flow, and we would *purchase* water from either the districts or the contractors from San Juan-Chama, like the City of Albuquerque, or the City of Santa Fe, or whatever. We'd *purchase* that water so that we had a block of water to meet the silvery minnow requirements, and then the districts had the big water right. And, the districts got cut off early several times. They purchased water to extend themselves several times, but they were the ones with the lower water right there.

Reclamation is Responsible to Maintain the Channel in the Aggrading Rio Grande

That project also has a unique situation on the river itself. The Rio Grande River is an aggrading river. "Aggrading" means that the bottom is building up. (Storey: Um-hmm.) In a lot of cases the river bed has built up above adjoining lands and it's Reclamation's responsibility to maintain that channel. Now, I never really got a good answer to how Reclamation got that responsibility. But, the bottom line is that we had to maintain that channel to keep water moving, and we did a ton of work on it. Senator Pete Domenici actually got some extra money put into our budget to take care of that work. We thought we had had an agreement with Senator Domenici on a ten-year plan to take care of the river channel, and I think it's still being followed, but we never did quite get the money that we expected to take care of it because we were needing money for buying water and other things in there. But, that's unique

57. The Rio Grande Silvery Minnow.

in that first it's an aggrading stream and second that Reclamation has to maintain the channel to keep flows going through the Middle Rio Grande Basin. *Bad* deal. It's something that never goes away. It's there every year to manage that water. And, the agreement, the compact between Texas and New Mexico is very restrictive. If there's less than 400,000 acre feet of water stored in Elephant Butte Reservoir you can't store water in the upper reservoirs. I think '04 was the first year that we actually got above 400,000, and not very much, and we couldn't store for very long. In '05 we stored it for a pretty good share of the season but not the whole season. And, at the end of '05 there was a big demand for water, and it used up everything that had been stored. And like I said, I don't know about the big monsoonal rains down there this year, and I don't know where it stands. But, that compact with the requirements on the river, with the lawsuit requirements, were just tremendous. The lawsuit itself had a life of its own and results of its own. At one time the judge ruled that we had to use the water we brought over through the San Juan-Chama [Project] to meet the endangered species requirements in the Middle Rio Grande. We didn't agree with that. We appealed it several times, and I don't know where it stands right now. But, it just seemed like it was always one thing or another in the Middle Rio Grande Basin. The districts, the main one was MRGCD [Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District], always had their hand out, always wanting money. The first year that we got Water 2025 money set aside, Senator Domenici earmarked over a million dollars for MRGCD to work. The second year that we had money for Water 2025, Senator Domenici earmarked about a million and a half dollars. Those grants] had to be cost shared. Those] had to be fifty-fifty cost shared, and the dang district drug their feet, and drug their feet, and I think they finally got some *state* money to put into it. This year that we're in right now, Fiscal Year 2006, Reclamation only got \$5 million in Water 2025 because Congress was] trying to prove a point—that we didn't have permanent authorization to do Water] 2025, but they gave a little bit. They then] earmarked every dollar of it. Middle Rio Grande got a bunch of it. They just always have] their hand out, and that was always a bone of contention. (Storey: Um-hmm.) But, it's still a growing part of this country. I mean that, if you look at New Mexico, between 1990 and 2000, New Mexico population] grew by about thirty percent. I think if you looked at '95 to 2005 it's probably up some from that. That part of New Mexico—] Las Cruces to Albuquerque, to Santa Fe, to Taos, that little arc there in New Mexico is just growing like topsy. *Really* a lot of people in there. Hey, Albuquerque is a great place to live. I mean it's, I think, one of the garden spots really, of the West, as far as temperature and cultural events, the mix of cultures there. So, (Storey: Um-hmm.) it's a great place to visit and to live.

Storey: What about this silvery minnow stuff? Do we have anything to do with these *ponds* and things that they're trying out? (Laugh)

Keys: When we first got into the silvery minnow business, we were just supplying water, and the districts didn't like that, and they went to Senator Domenici, and they said, "You know, we don't like giving up our water even though they're paying us for it. It kind of puts us out of business." And, he agreed with them

and said, "Well, there ought to be another way." Well, about three years ago the Fish and Wildlife Service and Reclamation put money into a development near Albuquerque where they were actually raising silvery minnows in an off-site facility and releasing them into the river. Well, Senator Domenici had this idea of his own. Rather than to leave water in the river for the fish, we should develop some ways in some side channels to just run a little water through, take care of the fish, and let the water run back out so you're not really using any water. And, whether it was disrespect or whatever they always called them "Pete's Ponds". And, he came to us and said, "Design it. Make it work. I don't want to spend any extra money but you make it work." And, we always felt that if we told him "No," we would suffer the consequences. On the other hand, it was a good idea and they're actually constructing some prototypes right now, I understand. We had them designed last year, did a lot of changes so that they run water through a different way and so forth, but I think that they're working to build them right now.

Storey: Good.

Keys: Yeah.

Combination of Dam Safety Officer Responsibilities with New Design, Cost Estimating, and Construction Functions

Storey: One of the things you mentioned earlier was John Smart and the Safety of Dams (Keys: Um-hmm.) post? And, we also had an O & M [Operations and Maintenance] post in there and both of those have gone vacant and I guess neither has been replaced. Could you tell me what was going on there?

Keys: The John Smart job, they call him D-S-O [Dam Safety Officer.] It was the oversight review of the Safety of Dams function, which was what John did. When we finished the Animas-La Plata [Project] studies and agreed that we needed to have a review function for all of the design estimates that came out of the Technical Service Center (TSC), the Safety of Dams thing had gotten kind of routine. I mean, the reviews that we got were fairly routine, and John had done a great job in putting the process together. We looked at that job and this new cost estimate review needs, and we said, "Look, neither one of those justifies a SES [Senior Executive Service] job, or an SL job,⁵⁸ so why don't we put them together?" In other words, Reclamation now has the DEC/DSO position.⁵⁹ That person would do the oversight for the TSC cost estimates and the oversight for Safety of Dams Program. We combined them. So, we didn't do away with Smart's job when he retired, but we put it together with this DEC job. So, it's still there. When I left in April, the advertisement was out, and

58. SL is "senior level." Senior level is graded above a GS-15 but does not meet the criteria for a SES (senior executive service) position.

59. DEC is Design, Cost Estimating, and Construction. Part of the guidance for this position comes from the National Academy of Science's study and resulting "Action Item 15: Establish Agency Policies and Procedures for the Oversight of Design and Construction Estimates" in Reclamation's "Managing for Excellence" initiative in 2006-2007. DSO is Dam Safety Officer.

they had applications and were interviewing people for that job. I don't know where it stands now.

Storey: Do you know where it's going to be sitting?

Keys: It would report to, if I'm not . . . let's see. I don't have an organization chart but it's on the organization chart (Storey: Oh okay.) as to where it is. I'm trying to remember whether . . . hmm. I'm sorry. I can't remember who it reports to.

Storey: Doesn't matter.

Why an O&M Officer Is Not Necessary

Keys: But, it's on the chart.⁶⁰ If you take a look at the new organization chart it's on there, but it's not under the Technical Service Center. But, it didn't go away. You know, O & M, we haven't had an O & M director in there for a long time. And, when Bill Rinne first came in he was the Director of Operations. Candidly, we didn't have any maintenance in O & M, when I came in as commissioner. There was not an O & M job there. I don't know that we need one. If we had tens of thousands of people like we did at one time there'd probably be a good function there, but "operations"—yes. Maintenance is so much in the regions anymore that if they need engineering help they go to Technical Service Center but not for the "maintenance" part of it. (Storey: Um-hmm.) The deputy job that Bill Rinne has *is* for operations, really. Now, he supervises directly the regional directors, but he *is* the operations person. And, whether we'll ever have a Director of O&M, I don't see that. (Storey: Um-hmm.) All of the changes in '93 really did away with the need for it there in Denver. (Storey: Yeah.) Candidly, you know, that was one of the reasons that brought the Denver office down a peg, is you had some folks there in Denver that thought that people in the field didn't know how to O & M a project, couldn't do something out there without getting their approval in Denver. Well, that proved to not be right many times.

Storey: Yeah. Well, there were a couple of times when it looked like you had reorganized, and I'm talking specifically about, you know, when you made Bill Rinne and Mark Limbaugh deputies. And then, of course, more recently when we did reorganize? (Laugh)

Keys: That's right.

Storey: Could you talk about those and what was going on, and why we felt a need, and all that?

60. This position is under the Director, Technical Resources, who reports to the Deputy Commissioner – Operations, who reports to the commissioner.

Reorganizations During His Term as Commissioner

Keys: When I was appointed in '01 the organization chart for Reclamation, I thought, looked cobbled up. In other words, it added this here and that there, and it was just kind of a conglomerate of how to get stuff done, and there were no true lines of responsibility. And, when I first looked at it I thought, "Okay. I think one of the ways we could do that is to have a political deputy and a career deputy. And, the political deputy would be doing all of the congressional affairs, the public affairs, the outreach work, and all of that kind of thing. And, the career deputy has got TSC [Technical Services Center] and all of that kind of thing under it." So we appointed Mark and Bill to be the two deputies. We didn't make it *official* that it was political and so forth. The more we looked at it we thought, "Well, you know, it's not functional. It doesn't give that line of responsibility." We had sent Mike Gabaldon out to be the head of the Denver Office and it wasn't working, because there were folks that just didn't like that. There were folks that still said, "We don't know who we're working for." And there were some personalities that got involved, but still it was not a personality thing. It just wasn't quite right, so I put together a group of folks from around Reclamation to take a look at it and say, "Okay, how can we make it right?" That's when we came up with the *three* deputies that we have there now. And, I *think* that it's more functional, and I think that it accomplishes good lines of responsibility. That need really resulted out of that Animas-La Plata incident. Because, there again, there were no good lines of responsibility that we, I think, need at times. (Storey: Um-hmm.) Like I said, they're not personality problems, but the way the jobs had been handled in the past, they just weren't getting it done. TSC was off doing its own thing, and at times I think they *have* to do their own thing because they generate their own money. *But*, they were not part of the organization, and at times there was not a line of responsibility for cost estimates. That cost estimate thing has just been overwhelming, the whole time. And, we've never got TSC's attention of how important it was. So, we had to make a change. I'm not sure that the current way it's set up is *that* efficient. It may need changing again sometime. I don't know when, but maybe sometime it needs changing again, but the way its set now you've got a person that's over the administrative side of it, and a person that's over the Technical Service Center. You've got a person that's the external, and so forth, and you've got the other operations. It was just a way to try to get a handle on things. (Storey: Um-hmm.) Like I said, I don't know whether it's the right way. I wouldn't blame somebody if they came in and changed it, but it was a way that *we* could get a handle on things. I didn't explain that very well because, you know, reorganizations—nobody wants to go through them. The only person that wants to go through a reorganization is somebody that's never been through one.

Storey: Or somebody who thinks they're going to gain from it?

Keys: Oh yeah, and that's a good point, but they're not *fun*. They're disruptive. The change always affects some folks adversely. So, they're not fun. But, it was just a way that we were trying to get ahold of things that were going on. I wish

I had an organization chart and I could talk more fluently about it but I, I have forgotten that dang thing.

Storey: Yeah. I don't think I brought one.

Keys: Yeah. I don't even think I brought one home with me. (Laughter)

Storey: Well, there's an advantage to retiring?

Keys: Oh yeah. Yeah, you know, you're bringing up stuff that, candidly, I just kind of put out of my mind. We remember the good stuff, but that stuff that's *heart wrenching*, that takes so much of your time, we kind of forget about.

Increasing Capacity on the Central Valley Project to Make the CALFED Program Work

Storey: Two-, three years ago, I was getting calls from the Congressional Research Service every once in a while. "What can you find us on Temperance Flats? What can you find . . ."

END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 2. AUGUST 15, 2006.

BEGINNING OF SIDE 2, TAPE 2. AUGUST 15, 2006.

Storey: "Find us on that?" And then months later, sometimes a year later, I get this *little* hint that Reclamation is doing a study of Temperance Flats. Can you talk about these kinds of studies that we're being asked to do? You know, Auburn keeps popping up.

Keys: Sure. Yeah. Well, the Temperance Flats study, has a place. Let me try to bring you up to speed on it. Its part of the CALFED program. CALFED was put together early on as an \$8 *billion* settlement in California. It was going to take care of every environmental problem that they ever had in the San Joaquin River/Sacramento River/San Francisco Bay Delta, and it was going to give money to California to do this. It was a cost share deal, but the state was going to do a bunch, everybody was going to do a bunch. The irrigators saw CALFED different. They said, "If it doesn't have some more storage in there, it won't work. And, Reclamation *you need* to be doing some studies on this storage to be sure that there's water there to make it work when it's agreed to." Well, the final CALFED authorization ended up a *lot different* than the \$8 billion settlement, but we had gone back in the Mid-Pacific region and used other authorities to study storage. We looked at raising Shasta [Dam], and we were using the old Shasta authorization to look at enlarging Shasta [Reservoir]. We looked at building *Sites* [Dam] as a cooperative project with the state, and we were using state assistance money to study that one. We were looking at rehab of Los Vaqueros and we were working with the irrigation *district* on that one. It's actually a *private* facility and we were working with the district on that one. And, we were looking at more storage in the Upper San Joaquin, whether it was raising Friant [Dam], or building smaller reservoirs above

Millerton Lake behind Friant, *or* Temperance Flats, which is another site that's up above Friant. When the new agreement on CALFED was done in late '04, maybe early '05, they had a big deal when they passed the new law, but the agreement was that we would have monies to study those storage facilities. And, our budget in CALFED for Reclamation included about \$8 million to study those four storage sites, (Storey: Um-hmm.) and one of them is Temperance Flats. Now, Temperance Flats itself, the proposal came from Congressman Devin Nunes, who is the U.S. representative from that Friant area. He feels that there must be new storage to make this thing work. And, I think to a point he's correct. So, we've been studying Temperance Flats, and raising Shasta, *and* rehabbing Los Vaqueros and building Sites, and some more in-delta storage in there, to make CALFED work. So, that's some of the storage that's been done there. In the State of Washington, we have been in the Yakima Basin for years saying, "We need more storage," and never could get it done. The locals glommed onto this Black Rock Dam site and they've been getting Congressman Doc Hastings to put money into studying Black Rock dam site for the last three or four years.

Storey: That's the one near Yakima.

Black Rock Dam Study for the Yakima Project

Keys: Yeah. It's too expensive. They have tried to include *everything* in it to make it work. The BC [benefit/cost] ratio is going to end up at less than a tenth to one, but they have been getting money put into studying Black Rock dam site. Our approach to it has said, "Look, we're not just going to study Black Rock. We'll study the whole basin to see if there's other storage sites in there that should be considered, because Black Rock is *so* expensive. There may be a better way to do it." So, we're looking at storage there. There are a couple of other places that we're trying to just get a handle on where more storage might help. In the Pacific Northwest Region we worked with Congressman C. L. (Butch) Otter of Idaho to do a little recon study on more storage in the Boise River Basin or on the Upper Snake River. It seemed like there was somewhere else we did a little study on water storage. But, you know, at some time it's going to take more storage somewhere. Let me back up just a second.

Water 2025

Water 2025 the effort was to say, "Look, we've got these hot spots out there where they're needing more water, and the way that we can do it *now* and protect the existing irrigation water right is to do water conservation projects. And, these people that hold the water rights can free up some water and sell it through a water bank to these folks that need it. But, when you do that, when you do water conservation, you're taking the flexibility out of a project to meet drought, to meet those times when you're short." That's what water conservation does. I mean, it meets the requirement, but it takes away your flexibility of meeting future droughts or bigger needs. *All* of it is going to come down to needing new projects sometime. Now, a new project could be a

storage project. It could be a desalination plant. It could be a wastewater recycling plant or effort, or something else that we don't even know about. So, the water conservation is good, and I think they're on that train right now saying, "Yes, we can do something." But, down the road when we get many more people than we've got now, they're going to have to have new projects. In California there is still water to be developed in those basins that we're looking at. Enlarging Shasta [Dam and Reservoir] is probably the most economic. Temperance Flats storage is really expensive, *but* it's got the most water to be had. Los Vaqueros and Sites reservoirs are more a rereg [reregulation] reservoir kind of thing. So, at some time you're probably going to need new ones, and we were trying to get a step ahead. New storage in California was pretty much mandated in the CALFED legislation, but in these other places trying to get a step ahead of where we might be required to have a new project is hard sometimes. I don't know what Betsy Cody was calling about other than the (Laugh) – it wasn't probably Betsy.

Storey: Oh, I've forgotten the other names. No, Betsy always called or, (Keys: Oh yeah.) or had (Keys: She's a good person to work with.) somebody call. (Laugh)

Keys: Oh, she was a good person to work with. But, that's what we were trying to do, is to look out and see where, in the future, we might need new storage. I said this before and I used to *preach* it to my people. When I came in in '01 they said, "You need a strategic plan," and they started developing a strategic plan for Interior and it was this *god-awful big conglomerate* of a thing. It was just really difficult and complex, and it didn't hit what we were trying to do. We sat down and said, "Okay."

Works with Bennett Raley to Develop Strategic Plan

Bennett Raley and I did this during our honeymoon time, when we were still working together very well. We said, "Look. Reclamation's mission in life and its strategic plan is very simple. First, we deliver water. In other words, we meet *all* those contracts that we have. We do *all* of the stuff. We deliver water. Second, we generate power and we market it, and we operate to deliver water and generate power. The third thing we do is we do everything it takes to get that done, like NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act], like ESA [Endangered Species Act], like Clean Water Act, like managing our lands, providing recreation, and so forth. So, we do what it takes to get that done. And the fourth is we look to the future. What can we do to be ready for those big demands out there in the future?" So, that's our strategic plan. Very simple. That looking to the future is just as important as some of the other activities, and that's what we were trying to do. That's what Water 2025 is all about.

Storey: Which is my next question. (Laugh)

Keys: Um-hmm.

Storey: So, let's talk more about 2025. We've been having fiscal problems, I guess?

Fiscal and Authorization Problems for Water 2025

Keys: Well, it's fiscal problems, and, yet, it's authorization problems. The, you know, the first year—well, let me back up just a second.

I think the time that I made Bennet Raley the most mad at me, he came to us and he said, I want you to pull aside an amount of money so that we can work on projects. My first reaction—I mean, we had tried to do that many times before just to have a source of money—my first reaction is, “Hey, you're talking about a slush fund here, and it's against the law.” And, I told him that. I said, “Bennett, it's against the law for us to have that kind of fund set aside.” Now, what I should have done is said, “Bennett, we can't just set it aside but there's other ways to get it done.” If I'd been a *diplomat* that's what I'd have said instead of, “That's against the law. You can't do that.” Well, he got really upset and he said, “You go find a way to get this done,” and that's when Mark and I started trying to work on 2025. Now, Bennett was leading the effort and was saying, “We want to do this and we want to do that.” and it was good leadership that he was giving Mark and myself at the time. So, we carved out of the next year's budget an amount to get started on looking to the future. We put aside funds under Water 2025, and we got a one-year authorization the first year written into the appropriations bill. And, the first year we only had \$10 million. Part of it got earmarked, and we were able to put the rest of it into challenge grants. Let me back up just a second.

When we started Water 2025 we did wide-area meetings all across the West. The *number one issue*, no matter where we went, was money. The typical comment was “We don't have money to do *any* of this stuff. You need money to make it work.” And, none of us could even *dream* of ever having the amount of money that folks were talking about to fix up old projects and to do water conservation work, and to buy water for fish and so forth. So we said, “Well, maybe what we do is we put some seed money in and require cost sharing,” and that's where the challenge grant requirement came from. And that first year, with the \$10 million, I think we had like \$6 million worth of challenge grants. That's not right. Let's see. How much did we get that first year? Memory's the second thing to go. (Laugh) But, the first year we put together the package and that . . . the first year we had \$10 million. Some of it got earmarked and we had about \$6 and a half million to put into challenge grants. We advertised, got over a hundred applications, and we ended up with forty, almost \$50 million worth of projects out of \$6 million. In other words, our money just *leveraged* itself into a better deal. The second year we put in \$13 million and it leveraged to about forty, almost \$50 million again. And, it was our way of saying, “Okay, we need to do this stuff. Here's some seed money that we will help spring off working with states, working with counties, municipalities, irrigation districts, and private folks.” And, we even got *private money* being put into the challenge grant thing, and I thought it worked very well. So, the first two years, the first year we had \$10 million, the second year

we had twenty. That was '04 and '05. For '06 we asked for \$30 million, *and* we had written a bill to get permanent authorization to get it done, because the committees were barking at us that we didn't have authorization and we were doing it year-by-year through the Appropriations Committee. Well, it came to a head in the '06 negotiations for budget, and they said, "You don't have permanent authorization. We're not going to kill it, but we're only going to put \$5 million into it," and they earmarked every dollar of it. So, in '06 we didn't have any money for challenge grant. Well, we said "Okay," and we put the push on to get the authorization done. I don't know whether they've gotten it passed yet. I know it's not passed. There was one hearing before I left, on the Senate side. So, the Congress got the feeling that we didn't have permanent authorization, and that is why the money got cut back in '06. The '07 proposed budget that we put forward assumed that we had permanent authorization done, and we were asking for \$30 million again. Maybe it got cut back to twenty-five. I don't know where the final budget ended up, the final proposal for '07.

Storey: Yeah. It got cut quite a bit. I don't know the numbers or anything.

Keys: Yeah. I don't know where it ended up, but we asked for thirty to start off with. So, the basis of Water 2025 is the Bureau trying to get a handle on water for the future. The thing that makes it work really well is the challenge grant part and it, I think, has been very successful.

Storey: Now, what kind of grants were we giving? What was this work to be done?

Keys: Well, the nexus that we had to have in giving a challenge grant was a Reclamation irrigation district *or* a result that would benefit a Reclamation district. And, the work had to be associated with water conservation one way or the other. Many of the partners were using the money to put laterals in pipe, to realign canals, to put in better control structures, to put in better monitoring gear, to install SCADA [Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition] systems and that sort of thing. One of the other proposals was to establish a water bank in an area in Oregon, and they were going to use that money to put the framework together and start purchasing water to actually get the water bank going.

Issues with the Warren Act

If you look back, one of the missions of Water 2025 was to try to get rid of cumbersome rules and regs, and that sort of thing. One of those cumbersome rules is the old Warren Act. And the old Warren Act says that you can use a government facility to carry water or store water as long as it's for irrigation. Well, irrigation's not what needs more water now. It's cities, I mean municipalities. It's new industry. It's endangered species, or fish, or wildlife requirements, that sort of thing—not authorized for under Warren Act. We actually proposed a change in the Warren Act during the 1990s, and it got shot down. When I left we were trying to get the process started again to change the Warren Act. That was just one of the sidelines and water bank fit in with that

very well to help protect that basic water right for the districts but then free up some water from it to help out people that needed water. Like I said, I thought Water 2025 was a good deal. It took us almost *two* years working with the assistant secretary, working with our own folks, working with the water organizations to get the thing to the point where it is now. But, I think it's a good deal.

Storey: Good. Well, why don't we break so you can get to your appointment comfortably?

Keys: Okay.

Storey: And, we'll take up after lunch.

Keys: Okay.

Issues with Reclamation's Rural Water Supply Projects

Storey: Well, I think one of the questions I haven't asked yet is how the rural water supply things are going?

Keys: Okay. We can go over that.

Storey: I know they cause us budget issues (Keys: Um-hmm.) and various other kinds of things.

Keys: Okay. Rural Water, and Title XVI we should talk about, (Storey: Okay.) which is wastewater and reuse. And then, as I was leaving you were asking about things I wanted to get done and did I get them done, and things I didn't get done and (Storey: Okay.) and that kind of thing.

Storey: Good.

Keys: Okay.

Storey: You want to talk about rural water supply?

Keys: When I was regional director in Boise the rural water supply projects were just getting started over in the Great Plains Region. And, all of us looked at those projects and said, "My god, what's going to happen because they're going to take our whole budget." Congress, without any input from Reclamation, was authorizing these \$200-, \$300-, \$400 million projects. We had nothing to say about the planning, nor the criterion for the project, nor the engineering, nor the construction. It's just, "Give us the money." In a couple of instances we did have some input on the engineering, like on the Garrison [Project] and on Mni Wiconi. But, there were *others* that it's just, "Give me the money." Most of them were associated with Indian reservations and the *non-Indian* folks were tagging onto them. Like Mni Wiconi's got West River, Lyman Jones; the

Lewis & Clark has got the city of Sioux Falls. That's not rural water but Sioux Falls is a big part of it. So, we saw it as just a big drain on us. And, when I was regional director before, our approach was to try to put a cap on it, but we were never successful on putting a cap on how much they put into it from Reclamation every year. When I became commissioner, Congress was still authorizing rural water projects and we were still spending *big bucks* on them. So, we said, "Look. We can't get in the way of them. We can't talk Congress into doing something different so let's put together a rural water program." And, we went to a number of the water user groups. We went to the National Rural Water Association and said, "Help us develop a piece of legislation that gives us some common criterion, some ways of funding these projects that would get local money into them instead of it all just coming from the federal government. Get some control over it so that we can *plan* ahead and know how much we're going to get hit for." And, we developed a piece of legislation, and Senator Domenici and Senator Jeff Bingaman, both from New Mexico, but one a Republican and one a Democrat, developed a bill a lot like ours. In early 2005, the senators' bill was introduced into the Senate. We started in '01, and it took us four years to get everything together, get some kind of agreement among the water users and the senators. The loan guarantee provision was added to it so that the locals would have some way of funding their portions of them. Because in talking to the senators, they wanted some local cost share into them. So, we got the bill ready. We had a hearing in the Senate, before the full committee, not just the subcommittee but the full committee, in early '05. And it was, I think, probably one of the best hearings that we ever had, because the Senators did not come in with an agenda. They were asking good constructive questions. I had plenty of time. I was the only government witness on my panel. I had plenty of time to *answer* and do an exchange with them. The fact is, David McCarthy, who, at that time, was our head of Congressional Affairs, made a DVD out of the thing to use in working with folks to show them how a good hearing should go. And, we thought it went really well. The Bill passed the Senate, but when it got to the House, it almost died because the House subcommittee staff, for some reason, had a thing against it. And, only in July of this year did the House finally have a hearing on the bill. I understand in talking to the folks that the hearing went very well. Rural water people still support it, including a number of the municipalities that are still trying to get projects supported. And the loan guarantee part of it has spinoffs everywhere. We have actually been pushing the loan guarantee part of it to help out with maintenance where little districts or even larger districts can get a loan to rehab their system and us guarantee it. It only costs one percent, and they can up-front the one percent and it's done. And, in scoring it doesn't score against Reclamation. Now, for some reason OMB [Office of Management and Budget] is skittish about it, and our folks have had to go over and explain it to them. I went over a number of times before I left. Mark's talked with them, and our folks are still working with them to be sure that they are okay with it. But, the way it works is a district gets together their engineering, and we help them go to the lending institutions, get their loan, and like I say it's one percent. And, we are the guarantor. What we do is take the facilities and equity that the United States holds in the project

and uses that as the guaranteed portion. In other words, we hold title to the canals, and the laterals, and the head gates and all that stuff and we use that as the collateral. So, we think it's a good idea and that's actually part of the Rural Water Bill. So, it didn't get passed. One of my goals in going into Reclamation was to get a handle on it. And, we were just that close, but it's still not done yet. I'm hoping they get it done before the election this fall. I don't think it'll get done before the election but I sure hope it does.⁶¹

Storey: Somebody was telling me the other day that there's apparently a new twist on all of this. Somebody, I think it might have been a tribe, went out and took out a loan (Keys: Yup.) without talking to Reclamation, I guess, so they could finish their project, and now they're suing us to pay back the loan and the interest?

Keys: They want to use appropriated money to pay the interest on a loan, and we said, "No, you can't do that," and there's a lawsuit out there. That was going on just as I left. It has not been decided yet.

Storey: Now, which group was that?

Keys: The, Tex Hall's group up there on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. It's in North Dakota.

Storey: Hmm. Well this, whoever told me this told me that the judge agreed with the Indians.

Keys: Did he? Oh, so maybe there's been a decision?

Storey: Yeah. It sort of amazes me that somebody can go off and then come back on us that way.

Keys: You know, it's not that we haven't used appropriated money to pay interest before. It's been done, but it was done under authorization and under prior approval. These guys just went out and did it and said, "Okay, now you pay." (Storey: Yeah.) We didn't have anything to do with negotiations for the rate, or how much, or anything. They just went out and did it, and that's the real crux of the thing. (Storey: Yeah.) Yeah. It's the MR&I portion of the Garrison Diversion Unit for the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota.

Storey: Anything else on rural water supply?

Keys: No, I don't think so.

Storey: Are any of them finished?

61. The Rural Water Supply Act of 2006 (S. 895) was passed by both the House and Senate in November of 2006, and it was signed by President George W. Bush on December 22, 2006.

- Keys: We finished Mid-Dakota last year, this year. What darn project was that?
- Storey: Well, this might be a perfect time for them to be asking for the loan to be paid off. (Laugh)
- Keys: Yeah. We finished up the Mid-Dakota Rural Water Project and there's been a couple of other smaller ones finished. But, Mni Wiconi's the first *really* big one that'll be done and it's three-, two-, three-, four- years out, maybe five years out. (Storey: Um-hmm.) They're just big projects. You know, my biggest fear in the thing, with the lack of controls on it, is they're putting *crap* in the ground out there. You know, I'm afraid that if they just run out there and start sticking PVC pipe in the ground, it just won't last.
- Storey: PVC?
- Keys: PVC pipe. I'm afraid that they're going to end up with a system that is going to be breaking down and the maintenance is going to be horrible on it, and *we're* going to get stuck with the bill. The other piece of it, a couple of them got O&M approved as a project purpose and authorized, and we're paying O&M on some of them. And, that's going to be a drain on Reclamation's budget from now until the earth quits spinning, and that's a bad deal. We've tried to find ways to not let that happen. The Senate, to their credit, and the House are not authorizing projects anymore with O&M in them. The locals have to provide O&M, but there are some of the Indian projects that have got O&M in it. They're just killers. For each one of them it's ten or twenty million bucks a year, *whack*, just right off the top of our budget. No say about it. It's just, "Give them the money so that they can O&M the project." And, a lot of them don't even pay for the water. They *don't even charge their customers* for water. And we're saying, "That's no way to do business." I have some really good friends in those projects. You know, Mike Curley over at West River-Lyman Jones is one of the finest guys I ever knew in my life, good friend. He knows how I feel, and I think after he gets his project done he'll probably agree with me, but while he's building this project he wants the money. There's a real need out there for rural water projects. I don't dispute that. I don't know that Reclamation is the agency that should be doing them. You've got HUD [Housing and Urban Development], you've got EPA [Environmental Protection Agency], you've got a number of different agencies whose responsibility is to provide rural water to small communities. And, we just happen to be a convenient vehicle for the committees that we work with when they come calling on the Hill wanting money. Actually, one of the reasons that it took us four years to get a bill, when we first went to OMB with our draft, which we always have to do, they said, "We don't know that you're the right one because there's ten other agencies out there doing rural water projects. You're number eleven. Should we combine them all together? Are *you* the right one? Who has the best criteria?" and so forth. And, they tried to look at it and then just kind of let it die. And we said, "Look, we can't wait on you anymore and that's when we took our bill and tried to get it done." (Storey: Um-hmm.) But, that's one of the issues. I don't know that we're the

right people. One of the reasons that we said, "Look, we don't mind doing this," is we think there's other ways to do it. All those little towns that need water, little communities in South Dakota that sit over brackish groundwater . .

END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 2. AUGUST 15, 2006.

BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 3. AUGUST 15, 2006.

Storey: [This is] tape three of an interview by Brit Storey with John W. Keys on August 15th, 2006.

Keys: We think that in some cases it would be much more economic to go in there with a little desalting plant, drill a well and put the little desalting plant down and desalt it. You could do that for a minuscule amount of what they're paying to go to the Missouri River, build a big pumping plant, put three hundred miles of pipe out there to all these little communities. We think it would be much more economic for a desalting plant on that brackish groundwater. We haven't gotten any of them done yet.

". . . Hurricane Katrina did us a big favor in Reclamation on desalting. . . ."

I'll tell you, Hurricane *Katrina* did us a big favor in Reclamation on desalting. When Katrina hit they were calling around the agencies asking—yeah, we need to talk about Katrina later. (Storey: Um-hmm.) But, they were calling around asking for water treatment facilities. We had two units on a pad at Tularosa, New Mexico, that we were starting testing for the Navy. FEMA and the Corps of Engineers called up on Monday and said, "Do you have anything?" and we said, "Hey, we could do this." Tuesday they called and said, "We want them." They were going to send a C-130 out there and fly them back to the area hit by Katrina, and they got all balled up in their paperwork and everything. Our guys said, "Hey, we can do better than that." Wednesday they had both of those desalting plants on lowboys, trailers, and trucked them to Louisiana and Mississippi. Friday afternoon they hit the ground in Biloxi and they started setting them up. Saturday morning we were producing 200,000 gallons of pure water a day in Biloxi for the Regional Medical Center and whoever needed water. Two hundred thousand gallons of water provided about 50,000 people with their daily water supply. They worked like a charm until Hurricane Rita came through. We took them down, took them to the airbase to get them out of harm's way when Rita came through. Rita came through. We took them back and set them up again, and they were there until they didn't need them anymore, which was a couple of months. Took them down, took them back to Tularosa and went on with the tests. They're still being tested at Tularosa. We had volunteer people running the things for us. The National Rural Water Association had volunteers in there and it worked like a charm, and it showed people what those little desalting units are worth, each one of those cost about a million dollars apiece. And, they're expensive because they have to be mobile. You have to beef them up if you're going to be moving them around. (Storey: Um-hmm.) And, they worked like a charm, so it kind of did us a

favor. But, we wanted to be in charge of the Rural Water Program so we could look at something else besides this *big* pumping plant on the Missouri River and 300 miles of pipeline going to all of these towns. Because, 300 miles of PVC pipe is *going* to have O & M problems. And, we were saying, “There’s a better way.” So, that’s rural water.

Storey: But, they weren’t listening I guess?

Keys: You know, when you’re not building dams and building big projects, or little projects, or whatever, it’s hard for the politicians to be able to produce something for their constituency. And, rural water and the Title XVI projects are a way to do that. They’re reluctant to give it up.

Storey: Well, let’s talk about Title XVI.

Title XVI of P. L. 102-575

Keys: Title XVI of P. L. 102-575⁶² was a way to help develop the technology to reuse wastewater. It’s wastewater reuse and recycling. And, there’s actually a research function of the law that was handled by an association that was formed to do research, and we still put two or three million bucks a year into their research programs. But, it was done in 1993, I think, three-, four-, five-,⁶³ somewhere in there. And, to me the real purpose of the Act was to develop the technology. Early on, it was obvious that the way to develop the technology was to actually do some on-the-ground projects. The program started out with like nine projects and then it went to thirteen, then it went to thirty, and now there’s somewhere around \$4 billion worth of projects authorized. We were trying to get a handle on that one also, just like the rural water thing, because it got out of hand. They were authorizing them without any input from Reclamation. We had no say over the criterion *or* which projects actually got funded. A lot of the projects were authorized for the really high-priced water area in the cities that can afford it, giving them money to put these things in. And we said, “It doesn’t fit with the hotspot map (Water 2025), doesn’t fit with who needs the water, it’s just a way to funnel money to cities.” So, we were trying to get a handle on that one also, and what we said is, “Hey, claim success because P. L. 102-575, Title XVI, is a humongous success. It has shown that there’s technology out there that works. It has developed some technology. It’s helped with desalting. And *yes*, you can treat wastewater. *Yes*, you have uses for it, and you can recycle until the cows come home. So, success.” But, they still want to keep pumping money into projects, and every one that came up for authorization in the five years that I was there, I can’t tell you how many of them came up, we testified against every one of them because they were working on existing technology and they were just funneling

62. The Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act (106 Stat. 4664) is Title XVI of Public Law 102-575, the Reclamation Projects, Authorization, and Adjustment Act of 1992, an act of October 30, 1992. (106 Stat. 4600).

63. Meaning 1993, 1994, or 1995.

money into these towns and cities that could afford to just do it anyway, were going to do it anyway. But, they were looking for sources of money. I believe in recycling and wastewater reuse. It was one of the things that when I went in I wanted to pay attention to. And, I gave a talk to the Wastewater Reuse Society, or Association, or whatever Boyd Miller's outfit is, and I said, "The next river to tap for water supply is our wastewater." And, it went over really well, but then we couldn't get any traction on getting the cities to pick up the slack. They still wanted that Federal money being pumped in there. And, we fought to try to get a handle on those expenditures. I'm sure that Grace Napolitano, the Democratic Representative from an area down there in California that has a number of those projects feels differently, she and I argued constantly about whether we ought to be putting Reclamation money into that. She thought we should. Grace is a good friend, by the way. I worked on other things with her, and we did very well. We just didn't agree on the approach for wastewater reuse, Title XVI projects, but they're still authorizing them. Each one has to be authorized. There's about thirty of them in the wings waiting to be authorized now and we've said, "Wait a minute. There's *got* to be another way to do this." Fortunately they haven't authorized any this year or last year. It needs to be done. The technology is out there. We helped develop it. The cities, the states, and the districts ought to jump onto it. I just don't think they ought to be pulling Reclamation money into doing them. So, good projects.

Storey: Once again, EPA or somebody else maybe?

Keys: You know, EPA was one of the primary funders of it before they drug us into it. HUD was doing some of this stuff. Oh gosh, there were a couple of other agencies and I can't, I just can't remember them, but there were a number of agencies doing the work. And it, like I said it's good stuff. There's water out there to be had, but we just didn't think they ought to be tapping us as a funding agency. As a development agency, *yes*, not as a funding agency.

Storey: Are these like the rural water supplies? We get the projects but we don't get any appropriations to (Keys: That's right.) go with them?

Reclamation's Budget

Keys: That's right. It has to come out of our existing appropriations. You know, when I went into office in '01 our budget was at about \$900-\$910 million. When I left, our proposal for '07 was \$930 million. That's just as flat as a fritter. The fact is, it's going down because you count inflation in there and we're losing money. Out of that, we had to develop and implement and fund a security and law enforcement program. That's another one you ought to put down that we ought to talk about. (Storey: Yeah.) That came out of that base and we got *no* new money. So, it seems like we're always being told to do stuff but our funding level's almost exactly the same.

Storey: It makes it sort of hard?

"Bennett Raley was the assistant secretary, and he came to us and he said, 'I want you to eliminate a program . . .'"

Keys: It is hard. (Sigh) When Bennett Raley was the assistant secretary he came to us and he said, "I want you to eliminate a program," and we said, "We're not doing anything that we shouldn't be doing." He said, "*I want you to eliminate a program* just to show that we're listening to the message that we need to be doing some less and free that money up for other stuff." I will tell you, that is a tough assignment. The one that we ended up doing away with was one, the old salinity program that had come out of the Kesterson incident, for selenium treatment, and we found a way to shift that off to the districts. In other words, *finish* the program and shift it off, and get some Department of Agriculture money put into it. And the next year he said, "Eliminate a program," and that's really tough. I can't remember the one we did the second year. He said, "And I don't want any haircuts." In other words, "Don't just go in and reduce a program. Do away with it. Something that you think that somebody else should be or could be doing." That's tough. After he left, we *still* asked ourself that question every year, but we didn't eliminate a program after that. Hard deal. I will tell you, Mr. Storey, that the History Program was one of them (Laugh) that we thought we had to do away with a couple of times. (Laugh)

Storey: Why am I not surprised?

Keys: Why are you not surprised? Yeah. But, we fought. We kept it, and it was one that we had a good feeling for. (Laugh)

Storey: Yeah. His brother⁶⁴ told me that he would probably attack the History Program.

Keys: But, you know, it's an exercise that we all should go through. What could we do without? In other words, I even look at my house here and say, "What can I do without here?" There are some things you could, if you *had* to, you could do without. (Storey: Um-hmm.) We took a hard look at our programs in those days and it kind of fit in with what we were trying to get done when we came in.

Storey: Now, when you say the "salinity program" is that the Colorado River?

Keys: No.

Storey: The salinity program?

Keys: When Kesterson happened (Storey: Yeah.) back in the late '80s.

64. Bradley F. Raley, Ph.D., University of Oklahoma, 2001, wrote his thesis on Reclamation's Collbran Project and his dissertation on the Grand Valley Project.

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- Storey: And we had the selenium problem?
- Keys: Well, what they did is they were building the Peripheral Drain that was going to catch all of the drain water from the Central Valley [Project] and put it out through the Bay delta. (Storey: Um-hmm.) Well, the court said, "You can't do that." So, their answer was, "Just plug up the drain." And then all of the drain water ended up in Kesterson [Wildlife Refuge]. Well, there just happened to be these large deposits of selenium in the area, and we got that selenium poisoning in Kesterson waters that deformed the birds, killed birds, and that kind of thing. Reclamation went in and took care of the Kesterson problems, rerouted the drains, actually plugged the drain and rerouted the drain water, and rehabbed Kesterson [Wildlife Refuge]. They took a look at the rest of the western United States and said, "Where do we have other problems?" Well, I can remember three other places that they had this same kind of problem. One was in Nevada, with that big sump there just east of Sparks and Reno.
- Storey: Oh, Lahontan?
- Keys: Well, it was the runoff from Lahontan Project [Newlands Project] that created the bad conditions there.
- Storey: Yeah, that was the Lahontan (Keys: It's got a name.) Wildlife Refuge, the Carson Sink.
- Keys: The Carson Sink. (Storey: Okay.) The Carson Sink. That's the one. And then there was one up in Wyoming on the Kendrick Project, same thing. *And*, there's some over here in the Uncompahgre Project in western Colorado. And, this program was put together to put money in there so that they would develop facilities to keep from having another Kesterson situation. And, we put money into that for a long time, and districts lined canals, put laterals in pipe to keep the water out, to keep the selenium out of the return flows. And we said, "Okay. We've done enough of that and you ought to finish them up." We didn't just cut it off immediately. When we did cut it off, it was two years in the future because that was the budget we were formulating. So, we said, "Between now and then you guys find a way to end this thing up." At Kendrick [Project] it worked. Uncompahgre it almost worked. They still need a little more money and we helped them find it another place. Carson Sink they never did work with. I don't know that there was ever a big project on that one. But, we found a way to cut it off. So, it wasn't *the* Salinity Program. It was, it had "salinity" in the name of it but I just can't remember the exact name of it.
- Storey: Yeah.
- Keys: That was the program that I'm talking about, the one that came out of the Kesterson National Wildlife Refuge incident. Interesting, interesting thing to look at those, but we'd been putting money into them for fifteen, no almost twenty, years. (Storey: Yeah.) So, it was time to do something else.
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- Storey: History Program? That would have been fairly (Laugh) painless.
- Keys: Would it? (Laughter) For all but one?
- Storey: For most folks.
- Keys: Yeah. (Laugh)
- Storey: Well, are we done with Title XVI?
- Keys: Yeah. You know, it was just one that we were trying to do some good with (Storey: Um-hmm.) that we had been stuck with. That is a good program, but we just didn't feel that the money ought to be coming from us.
- Storey: What about water conservation activities? I've forgotten, isn't there a title for that too?
- Keys: Oh, there's a half a dozen different titles for water conservation work. The fact is, when we were trying to get Water 2025 started there were a lot of people that said, "Hey, it sounds good but if you do that you're going to take money away from our other programs, like the Water Conservation Field Service Program," which the region's *really liked*. Because, an amount of money was divvied to the different Regions for them to work with districts to do conservation work. And, in a lot of cases it was a way to get into a district and work with them, to be a cost-share partner on some lining of canals, on new measuring facilities, new control facilities, (Storey: Um-hmm.) and that sort of thing. We made a conscious effort *not* to affect the Water Conservation Field Service Program. In other words, we would not take the money away from it to make Water 2025 happen. Because, there were two *separate* target areas. With the Water 2025 program we were trying to target conservation for delivering new water to somebody. In the Water Conservation Field Service Program, the objective was to try to better the efficiency of a project. To a laymen that might not make any sense, but to the Reclamation folks they understood (Storey: Um-hmm.) the difference. And, we were successful at that, I think. There are a number of different other small authorities that we were using for water conservation. But, they were all targeted to trying to get a handle on making irrigation more efficient and helping save some water. I would tell you that over the last thirty years, twenty-five years, those programs have been *wildly* successful. When I first moved to Denver in 1975, I was chief of hydrology. This is in some of your other tape stuff. But, I was chief of hydrology and one of the branches that I had working for me was Water Utilization. Al Gibbs was the Chief of it in those days. And, their job was to look at Irrigation Management Services. I-M-S [Irrigation Management Services] was a program that was trying to increase the efficiency of irrigation.

Changes in Irrigation Efficiency

The average efficiency around the western United States, for irrigation projects, in the early '70s was fifty to fifty-five percent. If you go around the western United States now and look into the irrigation projects, you'll find the irrigation efficiency somewhere in the eighty to eighty-five, a lot of them ninety-five percent efficient. I mean, they have combed it. They have put in new equipment, like sprinklers, laser-leveled land. It's hard to find old siphon tubes anymore, because they don't use them anymore. But, that's part of the efficiency. (Storey: Um-hmm.)

The fact is, in some places we've been too efficient. Idaho. In the '40s, '50s, they were growing potatoes in eastern Idaho with a system called subirrigation. Bring the water table up, and irrigate the crop from the bottom. And, you didn't have to do much because the canals and the laterals all leaked, and when you used siphon tubes to put water on it all went right into the Snake River aquifer. Well, that was fine until we said, "Be more efficient." They started using sprinklers, and they started lining canals and laterals. What happened? Snake River aquifer started down. It wasn't being recharged with all of that water, and that's part of the problem in Idaho that they're having to deal with with their well permits now. Now, they created the problem themselves because they thought that that Snake River aquifer was *endless*, and basically they just gave out too many permits for pumping groundwater. Now it's coming back to haunt them. But, part of that was the water conservation effort that *did not recharge* the aquifer, (Storey: Um-hmm.) or it caused their aquifer not to be recharged like it was before. So, that's just a by-story. (Storey: Hmm. Interesting.) No action is without its reaction. (Laugh)

Storey: But, we aren't involved with the wells issue up there and the fish farms, and all of that?

Keys: Not directly, but indirectly we are. When I was regional director up in Boise we worked with the State very closely in trying to get a handle on the groundwater situation. We put tens of thousands of dollars, hundreds of thousands of dollars into studies of the groundwater system and interaction with the surface water. And, it's mainly because we had some projects that actually pumped groundwater up there. (Storey: Um-hmm.) A & B Irrigation District has a groundwater unit in it—where they pump groundwater out of the Snake Plain Aquifer. We had other places we were actually *injecting* wastewater into the Snake River aquifer. We don't do that anymore, but in the old days we did. So, we were helping them study the groundwater. When they started having problems we actually were one of the filers complaining that the groundwater was affecting our surface water rights in Idaho. We were one of the claimants in the action up there. So yeah, we were part of it.

Storey: Hmm. Actively a part of it, (Keys: Absolutely.) I guess? Yeah.

Keys: Absolutely. Hey, Bill McDonald's a water lawyer. As regional director, you don't think he's going to be active in that? (Laughter)

Storey: Yeah. Why don't we talk a little—are we done with this topic?

Keys: Yeah.

Storey: Why don't we talk a little about a couple of catastrophes? First, 9/11 and then Katrina.

9/11, Reclamation, Security, and Law Enforcement

Keys: Okay, 9/11—of course 9/11's one of those defining moments when everybody remembers what they were doing when it happened. I had been to California for a meeting with the Colorado River Basin states, and it was on the Quantification Settlement Agreement. We had our meeting on Monday, and I flew back to Boise. I had some meetings with Bill McDonald, and he had the Idaho state people coming in. We were talking, were discussing the groundwater thing that we were talking about just a minute ago, and the Nez Perce Indian water rights settlement, the claim by the Nez Perce tribe for Snake River water. We were going to have a meeting with all of the water users to discuss that thing on Tuesday morning. Well, I had breakfast with Bill at Elmer's Restaurant in Boise. We left, and we pulled up to the back door of the office, and I saw Wanda Shearer a friend who was the RRA [Reclamation Reform Act] coordinator, and she said, "Have you seen the news?" I said, "No." She said, "An airplane has flown into one of the World Trade Center towers. And they don't know whether it's an accident. Don't know what's going on." Well, we went upstairs into Bill's office and turned the TV on, and *just* after we turned the TV on the second plane flew into the tower. Actually saw it happen. And then we sat there and we watched them fall. And, I started trying to call the office, and it was really hard to get through. I mean, you know, the phone systems were already jammed. Then you had the Pentagon hit, and we couldn't get into a D.C. telephone. But, I finally got through, and they had implemented the emergency system. The secretary had gone to offsite, and our top folks were on their way to offsite, and so forth. We told our people, "Hey, everybody just keep working but be ready to react if we have to do something different." Well, they were making decisions all of the time about whether to send people home and so forth, and of course the decision was made to send everybody home. Washington, D.C., just gridlocked, and they had a real hard time getting everybody home when they said, "Everybody go home." While we were talking to our folks, we found out that all the planes had been grounded and we had people out trying to get home and so forth. So, I actually just set up office in the conference room in Bill McDonald's office in Boise, and we had a satellite phone that we finally got up. Had to charge the battery on the dang thing but we got it working. That afternoon I talked with the secretary and told her where I was and I said, "You know, I'm in Boise here. I'll get home as soon as I can." And she said, "John, we've got Fish and Wildlife Service, BLM [Bureau of Land Management], BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs], the Fire Center, and Reclamation in Boise. *You* stay in Boise and be my contact while all this is going. You can run Reclamation from there, and you can be my contact with all these other agencies in the Northwest." So, I

stayed there for over a week doing that. We had two-a-day phone calls with all of our Reclamation folks that whole week. I met every day with the other agency heads and so forth, coordinating all this stuff. It worked out really well. On the afternoon of that first day, we got word to get everybody back to work the next day so we could show business as usual, and that the terrorists didn't put us out of business. And the first thing we were doing was trying to find everybody. We had people on travel. We had people on leave. We wanted to be sure where our people were to see if we had any that were harmed or directly affected by the incidents. It turned out we did not. We had people traveling all over the place. We had some in, actually in Mexico that were the hardest ones to get home. Actually, assistant secretary Bennett Raley was with our folks in Mexico meeting on the *Ciénega de Santa Clara* with the Mexican people. So, we were trying to find our folks, get them home, and then after that we were trying to get them all back to work. (Storey: Um-hmm.) It was a little inconvenient working out of Boise, but it actually worked out really well. After things got settled down, then we got into the real hard issues on security of our facilities. At that time we did not have law enforcement authority in Reclamation. We had a police force at Hoover [Dam], but that was by special act of Congress under the Boulder Canyon Act or one of the later acts that gave us the authority to have a police force there. Everywhere else we had no authority for a police force. We had some security authority, but no law enforcement authority. We *knew* this and had tried to get it before, but we couldn't make it happen. Well, we put together a new bill to give us law enforcement authority, and it was passed in October 2001. We then sat down with the secretary, and the first thing we talked about was the security of our facilities. We pulled out all of the old evaluations that we had done in the mid '90s after the first Trade Tower incident. That first incident triggered a big move on security around the western United States. And at that time we put together our plans, but we didn't have the money to implement them. And, in the PN region we put together a ten-year plan for implementation. It just happened that that year, 2001, we were almost finishing the implementation of the first round of security work. (Storey: Um-hmm.) Not quite done but almost done. So, anyway we looked at all of that and the secretary wanted a plan for how we were going to ensure the safety of all of our facilities on a long-term basis. And, we had Larry Todd, who at that time was Chief of Operations, and we said, "Larry, we want you to put us a plan together to look at all of the facilities." What they came up with was a top five called National Critical Infrastructure, a top fifty-five, which was Critical Infrastructure, and then we did everything else, .348 . . .

END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 3. AUGUST 15, 2006.

BEGINNING OF SIDE 2, TAPE 3. AUGUST 15, 2006.

Storey: You did all the dams and powerplants?

Keys: Three hundred and forty-eight dams, all fifty-eight of the powerplants, some other facilities like the Tracy Pumping Plant, like the New York Canal through Boise, Idaho, things that could have a big impact if something were done to

them. And, we started the process to evaluate every one of them, just right down the line, top five, fifty-five, and then all of them. And, it was going to be a two-year effort to do the evaluations, before we even started implementing. And we got, that first year I think we got twenty-eight million dollars from Congress under a special supplemental appropriation for '02 to do the work.

Reimbursability and Security Costs

And, I'm going to get to security in a minute, but when we started out we said, "Look, the security work traditionally has been reimbursable but this is extraordinary. And, we don't know what it's going to take, both guards and surveillance-wise or retrofit, or new hardware, or whatever." And we said, "For the first five years we don't think that the new security should be reimbursable," and we declared that, and we found out we had authority to do it. So, we were just going to say, "For the first five years, non-reimbursable," and then after that all of the new hardware and retrofit and stuff we thought would still be non-reimbursable but they should pay for the operations part, like security, the guards and surveillance and stuff. And everybody said, "Okay." Finishing up that part of it, we went four years and OMB (Office of Management and Budget) got huffy and said, "We want you to start collecting the fifth year." And we, being good soldiers, put it in the budget and the Senate took care of it. They took it out, said, "Non-reimbursable." And then last year, which is this year, '06--(whispering) '01, '02, '03, '04, '05--'06 we started collecting *some* reimbursability. In '07, all of the guards and surveillance becomes reimbursable. We started collecting half of it this year in '06, \$10 million. In '07 they'll collect all of the guards and surveillance, which is about \$19-\$20 million. So, that's one of the things that caused a big uproar and there's still uproar. There's still folks that say, "We shouldn't be paying that." They say, "Go back and look at World War II. During World War II there was extra security, extra facilities and stuff, and *we didn't* have to pay. It was a national interest and the water users should not pay." Our retort is, "Hey, you had to pay regular security before. This is regular security now. It's not extraordinary anymore because we gave you a five-year break-in on the thing and you're not paying for the physical facilities, just the guards and surveillance." I think that's reasonable but there is move afoot to get legislation declaring all of the security costs non-reimbursable. CREDA,⁶⁵ the power people, don't like paying it because they have to pay most of it. There are some districts that have to pay some that don't like it. I worked it out in the Columbia Basin. They were barking at me about having to pay, it works out to be twelve cents an acre that they have to pay for security (Storey: Um-hmm.) and my retort to Columbia Basin is, "Hey, you have a guaranteed water supply year in and year out, surely to heck the security of that stuff is worth twelve cents an acre?" So, I guess for 960 acres, what is that about \$100 a year? I think that's a pretty good bargain. (Storey: Um-hmm.) So, anyway that was the payment.

65. Colorado River Energy Distributors Association.

Issues in Dealing with Security and Law Enforcement at the Dams and Powerplants

One of the big issues we got into is, “Okay, you get them retrofitted and you need security forces at the dams. Do you create a Reclamation police force to do that, with law enforcement authority and everything, or do you just have *unarmed* security folks?” And, there’s a big difference there. So, we sat down with the secretary, and her first words to us is, “I don’t want another police force in Interior. We’ve got police forces in BLM. We’ve got police forces in the Park Service, in BIA, and I don’t want *another* one. So, when you need law enforcement your first stop is go to the other agencies. Second stop is to go to the states. Third stop, go to the county and city, and if you can, and by contract, get that provided. You can have security folks, folks that know the dams, know the federal system and so forth, but don’t carry guns.” So, we tried that around the western United States and at most places it worked. At Hoover [Dam] we already had the police force, so that one was taken care of. At Shasta [Dam], Mike Ryan, the area manager at that time, got good help out of the county and they provide it at Shasta. At Glen Canyon [Dam], they had a combination of private and National Park Service folks that provide it. At Folsom [Dam], the city, Folsom, and Roseville, and the other, one other small town there provide the security for them up on the dam. Grand Coulee is where we had the problem. Grand Coulee Dam is located *ninety* miles outside of Spokane, and it’s *hard* to get folks to live out there, and the local cities and counties don’t have the people to provide any kind of security force or help. The state doesn’t. So, we went back to the secretary and said, “Okay, we agree with you with not having a police force, but at Grand Coulee the exception is that we need to arm our security folks because there’s no place to get them, and we need an armed presence there.” And she agreed, and we have *armed* security people at Grand Coulee, and that’s the only place we have Reclamation armed people, besides the police force at Hoover. And, it’s working. It’s working very well. It had its hiccups to get started, but still it’s working very well.

Training Reclamation's Managers at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC)

We actually took all of our top managers to FLETC, Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, at Glynco, Georgia. We took all of our regional directors and top Managers down there for a three-day course on what it takes to manage security and law enforcement. I went myself, and it was a real learning experience. I also got to shoot the Glocks, and the machine guns, and stuff like that. But, it was a real learning experience to go to that. So that was getting things started. When we put together our program for evaluating *all* of our facilities we said, “It’s a four-year job,” and we were using contractors to do our inspections. They call them RAM-D,⁶⁶ “D” was for dams, “T” was for transmission, and “M” was for management, Resource Action, R-A-M. I can’t

66. RAM-D means Risk Assessment Methodology - Dams.

remember what it stands for. Anyway, it was an evaluation of that piece of our operations, like dams, transmission lines where we had them, and our management to be sure that we were managing for security. On some of the dams they actually did a DTRA inspection,⁶⁷ which was a terrorist evaluation on the national critical infrastructures. We did all of those. We finished in the four years. Evaluated *every* structure in Reclamation, put together a plan for implementation of the *hardening* of the facilities, new equipment, anything, new fences, whatever it took, closed circuit televisions, whatever it took to get the facility up to speed. Now, you can never make them completely safe or completely secure. It's impossible. But, we came to an agreement on what we thought was reasonable. A great help in this effort was Tom Weimer deputy assistant secretary. Tom Weimer, had worked with Sandia Lab on security. He had a real background in security that *really* helped us out a lot and gave us guidance in how far we went. We worked very closely with the department's people. Steve Land was the guy at first, and then it was Steve—god, how quick we forget. I can't remember his last name. Anyway, we worked very closely with the department people. I mean, they approved everything we did—as a representative of the secretary. I think that guy, Steve, was made a deputy assistant secretary to manage the security programs. But, we got them all done. We laid out a *plan* for implementation. If you look at a graph, you had a real sharp peak that peaked out at about \$100 million a year in the fourth year and then dropped off. We truncated that and said, "Okay, at \$50 million a year cap, here's how long it's going to take." And, it takes four, five, six years to get it all done. We're into that now. (Storey: Um-hmm.) Our request for '07 was for, *including* the reimbursable money, was about \$50 million.

So, you know, 9/11 – oh, there's another point to make on this thing. 9/11, we'll never be the same since it happened. One thing that we were doing before 9/11, we were actually using our facilities as educational facilities. We developed visitor programs in all of the dams. Almost *every* place had a visitor program. And, like at Hoover, they had three different levels of tours into the dam. They had one that just got you into the top, one that got you on the generator deck, and then the Hard Hat Tour took you down in the bowels. Well, of course, the Hard Hat Tour is gone now. Can't have it. And, what it did is put some pressure on the visitor's centers to show people how the facility worked, what's down in there, and what good it is to them. Where before, we just took them down in and showed them. Well, now the visitor facilities have to do a lot of that. So, we'll never have people as far down in the dams as we had before, and it creates a new atmosphere for your visitor facilities. We've redone the one at Hoover [Dam]. We've redone the one at Grand Coulee [Dam]. They're *working* on the one at Glen Canyon [Dam]. They put a new one in at Folsom [Dam]. Shasta's the only one that hasn't done a lot of work but on the big facilities it makes a difference. (Storey: Um-hmm.) We'll never be the same for that.

67. DTRA means Defense Threat Reduction Agency. Pronounced "ditra."

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- Storey: Now, when you say the cities are providing security at Folsom, does that mean they're providing the security on top of the dam and the traffic's open now?
- Keys: No.
- Storey: No? This is . . .
- Keys: They keep it closed.
- Storey: Just basic security?
- Keys: Yes. Of course, we pay them to do this now. It's not that they do it on their own.
- Storey: For free? Yeah.

Issues at Folsom Dam

- Keys: Yeah. We pay them. But Folsom [Dam] was a different story. Actually Folsom was built by the Corps of Engineers, and we were asked to operate and maintain it. Everyone says it's a Reclamation facility now, and I don't agree with that, but that's what they say, so I'll go along with it. Because, the Corps is actually in there trying to do flood control work on the dam now, raising it and so forth. But anyway, when it was built, there was an O & M road across the top. It was not a highway. It was not a street. It was just a damn O & M road. At first it wasn't even paved. (Storey: Um-hmm.) And then, they just paved it. It doesn't have the right curbs. It's not the right width. It has *no* pullouts. It's just two little lanes across that dam. And, way back somebody let some traffic go across there, and then it became established, people driving back and forth. And then, the cities actually *built* these really nice approaches to both ends of it, but still, up on top, all you have are these two little old lanes. And, when 9/11 happened we closed it. We had closed it temporarily before for O & M and construction, when we were doing work on it and so forth and they would just cuss and carry on like crazy, because it *physically* cut that town in two, the town of Folsom. Or, it didn't cut it in two, but it cut it, it separated it. They had to go around to get around. But, after 9/11 we just said, "We have got to close it," and we closed it. Just period, flat closed it. They came back and said, "What if we, the cities, came up with a security plan that would take care of it, would you let us have traffic?" We said, "If you can come up with a plan that we agree with, we'll do it." Well, they did, but it was too expensive for them to do, and it's still closed.

Bypass Bridge at Folsom Dam

Now, the other action that's going on at the same time, the Corps, in its looking at flood control work on Folsom Dam, was going to do a temporary bypass bridge downstream, and it was going to cost them \$30 million just to do a temporary bridge down there. We went to the Corps and the city, and so

forth was with us, and we said, “Look, you put up your money to do the temporary, two-lane bridge, the city, county, and state will put up the extra money to make it a four-lane and make it permanent.” A nice cost-share agreement. Well, that wasn’t good enough for the city so they went to Congress, and Congress wrote in a new bridge, a permanent *two-lane* bridge, with the agreement that if they went to *four* lanes the city would pay for it. It was supposed to start this year. It’s not close. I doubt that it’ll even start next year. But, everybody’s pushing to get that new bridge done just downstream from Folsom [Dam].

Security at Hoover Dam and Other Locations

At Hoover [Dam], you know at first we closed all of the traffic across Hoover. I mean, the immediate security reaction is just, “Cut the traffic off of Hoover.” We opened it about Saturday, after 9/11 on Tuesday, to car traffic. We said, “No big trucks. No buses, trucks, that sort of thing.” The states of Nevada and Arizona said, “Wait a minute. We’ve got industry on the other side of the lake, gravel industry, rock industry, cement, that kind of thing.” And, we worked with Clark County, and came up with a permit system for local trucks to use the road across the dam. But, the big trucks are still off of Hoover, haven’t been on since 9/11. They have to go down the river to Laughlin to cross. Buses, they’re letting across but they have to inspect them all, and some campers. It was fortunate that already in the works there was a new bridge being talked about, and I think they had even started designing it. And, the crux of the thing is that the DOT [Department of Transportation] was going to put in half of the money, the states of Arizona and Nevada were going to put in the other half of the money to build the new bridge downstream of Hoover. It’s being constructed even as we speak. The approaches are done and two of the pillars in the river. I was down there just before I left Reclamation, and they had the wires strung across and were actually moving equipment back and forth across the canyon on the new wires. I mean, a track, they were testing it with a track hoe once when I was down there, taking a track hoe from one side to the other. (Storey: Um-hmm.) A track hoe weighs probably fifty or sixty tons. So, that’s underway. It’s supposed to be done, I think, next year but it could be the following year. It could be ‘08 instead of ‘07. Anyway, in the meantime all of the long haul truckers are having to go down through Laughlin, around Hoover, and they don’t like it at all. We were blamed for a number of accidents because they were having to go down there. That’s just the way it had to be. At Grand Coulee [Dam], we closed it but it was no highway. There’s a bridge right below Grand Coulee. There’s no highway across Glen Canyon, and Shasta they closed. So, we did close it across the majors.

Storey: Yeah.

Keys: Yeah.

Storey: More about Hurricane Katrina, I think?

Hurricane Katrina and Reclamation

Keys: Katrina. I think Katrina brought out the best in Reclamation. Katrina had some real positives for Reclamation. I was in St. Louis, Missouri at the President's Cooperative Conservation Conference on August the 28th, that Sunday. And, I got a call from Lieutenant General Carl A. Strock,⁶⁸ and he said, "John, Katrina is coming." He said—well, let me back up.

When there is a national catastrophe, the first agency that deals with it is FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency], and if they can handle it they do it. If they need basic help, engineering, basic on-the-ground help, they go to the Corps of Engineers. If the Corps needs help then they come to us. We're their third line. FEMA, Corp, and then us, in that progression, but we don't go in unless the Corps asks us to. General Strock called me on that Sunday and he said, "John, normally we don't call until after it happens, but this is a big one coming and we're going to need your help, and here's what we need." And, we talked about equipment, and we talked about people, and his first request was for two hundred people to go in there, be ready to go in once it was over with. It hit on Monday morning. The fact is we were at that conference, and I was standing with a couple of people at the USGS [U.S. Geological Survey] booth at the conference. They had a laptop set up and we had the Fox River near Biloxi, the gauging station hydrograph on the screen. And, in a fifteen minute period we saw a thirty-foot rise in the stage, in the elevation of the water at that gauging station. It was the storm surge. In that fifteen minutes it went up thirty and then eventually it topped out about thirty-five feet high. And, I got another call from General Strock that afternoon saying, "It hit, and it's not over with." Because at that time the dikes hadn't broken. He said, "But we've got big, big problems." The dikes then broke, flooded the Ninth Parish and Charles Parish and so forth. He also gave me a couple of his other folks to work with. From then on, it was get as many people and as much equipment down there as we could. I talked about the water treatment facility, the mobile desalting plant that we got down there.

We had some people *on the ground* the next week, and at first they were living in tents. There was a big tent city that they had set up down there, these big circus kind of tents. We had some people there. But, we were put in charge of SF3, Special Function Number Three, the engineering services that did the Blue Roof Systems, and debris removal. Blue Roof System, when you have a hurricane come through, normal hurricanes the primary damage is to roofs of houses. And, there's a tarp system called Blue Roof that they can put on. It puts a tarp over the whole housetop, and it's temporary until they can get the contractors in to fix the roofs of the houses. And, we had done that work the year before when the four hurricanes hit Florida. The two, Ivan hit twice and whatever the other two were. And, we had some people that knew what they were doing. We got those people on the ground first. When it was all told and over, we ended up with almost five hundred people out of Reclamation that

68. Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

went down and helped out down there, from Denver and from all of the regions, and from all of the project offices. And, the Corps just couldn't say enough good about our folks. They were good. They knew what they were doing. They trained very well. They were mission oriented. They worked umpteen hours a day, six and a half or seven days a week while they were down there. And, at times our Reclamation folks were even training Corps people on what to do with the Blue Roof Systems and so forth. We gave some awards after it was all over, and there was one lady, Terri Wilson—Terri is, I think she's a cartographer out of Phoenix Office, and I'm telling you she was just super. She knew what she was doing. She could manage. She could work with those folks, and her and a number of our folks just did really well. So, it, first it provided a hell of a service. Second for those folks down there it was a great experience. They all came home humble and just over-awed with the damage that was done down there. I think for the morale of Reclamation it did a tremendous amount. We shone in that thing. We showed people that we could react and do stuff.

I went down there a couple of times and met with the people that were there. First off, I'll tell you the devastation is like none I'd ever seen before. I drove along that Biloxi-Gulfport stretch of the beach down there, and there was nothing left. And, these big casino barges were back up on the land. They told me that there was a twenty-five to thirty-foot storm surge, and then you had waves on top of that. In some places you could have had forty to fifty feet of water (Storey: Um-hmm.) on a place, and nobody understands what devastation that does. And, it just washed everything away. But, our folks really did a good job in that effort.

Storey: I'm surprised you could drive around down there?

Keys: Oh, I had to have all sorts of permissions and everything. But . . .

Storey: But the roads had been cleared?

Keys: Some of them had, yeah. Fact is, I think that was one of their first priorities. I was scheduled to go down there like the second week after it happened, and Hurricane Rita came, (Storey: Uh huh.) and we had to postpone that trip. So, it was a couple- or three more weeks. So, it was over a month after it happened when I first got down there, so the roads were clear. You know, there's another little bit of a story in that thing.

The Saturday *after* Katrina hit was the Saturday before Labor Day. I was supposed to go on a Colorado River trip with a bunch of folks to look at what we were doing with the spike flows out of Glen Canyon [Reservoir] and with the endangered fish, and with the other agencies and stuff. It was supposed to be an eight-day trip. And, I was *here*, physically in Moab, that Friday getting ready to go on this trip, and I was going to fly my own plane to Page, Arizona, and get on the boat. And, we started talking on the phone, and then we got down to the point where none of us should really go on that trip because it

would not look good for us to be on a river trip with everything that was going on, so we canceled the river trip. There were people even in transit, on their way here to go on the dang thing (Storey: Um-hmm.) and we just canceled the whole thing. But, I thought it was a great demonstration of the kind of people and the kind of work that Reclamation can do.

Storey: Good. We didn't have any people hurt or anything?

Keys: Nope. We had people there from early September through April of this year. Early they were doing the Blue Roof thing. I think the final toll is they did almost 150,000 Blue Roof Systems down there. Our people did a big share of those. And then later on they were doing debris removal contracts. That's what they were doing right up until the end. I mean, there are still debris removal contracts going on now, but the Corps and FEMA are doing them. But, our work ended in April of this year.

Storey: Well, one of the things that's come up fairly recently, there's been a *big* Indian water rights settlement with the Gila River, for instance. (Keys: Um-hmm.) And I'm assuming that somehow that's affecting C-A-P [Central Arizona Project]?

Gila River Indian Community Water Rights Settlement

Keys: It affected CAP and a lot of other activities in Arizona. It's called the Arizona Water Settlement Act, and it was passed in '05. It was another one of the *big* things that happened on the Colorado River. And, it *potentially* will settle the disagreements between CAP, the CAWCD, Central Arizona Water Conservancy District, and those tribes that have water coming from CAP. It gave a funding source, and it doesn't start until 2010, but it gave a funding source for building the Indian distribution systems for the Gilas and several of the other tribes there. But, it was a big settlement. John Kyl, Senator Kyl and Senator John McCain were the real backers of the bill. Senator Domenici was a big part of it. But, John Kyl was the main mover and shaker on the thing. But, it was *big* and it gave, first it settled that ongoing argument between the tribes and CAWCD. CAWCD, at times, were looking for ways to supply the tribes with water without giving them water. This act brought some sense to that thing and gave a funding source. The funding, like I said, it doesn't kick in until 2010, and it's a trust fund that's being set up. But, it was a big deal on the river. Bob Johnson and his people, early on, were *big* parts of it. Toward the end, the political folks pretty much carried the water on it, but Bob and his folks out of Phoenix were big parts of that thing.

Storey: In the past, the Congress has approved Indian projects and not funded them. Is this being funded properly?

Keys: I would tell you that before 2010 maybe not, but after 2010 there *is* a funding source that will be used to construct the Indian parts of the project. And, that money comes from the sale of CAP water. There's some way that it sets it up

to put money (Storey: Uh huh.) into a fund. We struggled with the Gilas and others in Arizona trying to fund it.

END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 3. AUGUST 15, 2006.

BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 4. AUGUST 15, 2006.

Storey: This is tape four of an interview by Brit Storey with John W. Keys, on August 15, 2006.

Keys: Well, you know, the CAP is being handled out of the Phoenix Office. Carol Erwin is the area manager there, and our budget into the CAP every year was eighty-, \$85 million a year, and a lot of it was going into some of that construction. And, I think that'll probably continue until 2010, and then there will actually be a benefit to us when it goes on the other funding. But, it was always a struggle to get enough money in there to operate *all* of the projects and yet have, have some money set aside for construction. Bob Johnson and his folks did a *masterful* job of trying to keep them all happy and yet not spending our *whole* budget on Arizona issues. The Arizona Water Settlements Act⁶⁹ was a *big* deal, and the congressional folks and the tribal folks made a big deal out of it, and it was a big deal. And, when I talk about other stuff on the Colorado River, like Quantification Settlement Agreement and Multi Species Conservation Program, and the Shortage Criterion, Arizona Water Settlements Act was probably as big as any of those because it gave a way to meet the obligations in Arizona to keep from impacting everything else and to satisfy the tribal requirements, and demands, and obligations, and that sort of thing. So, it was a big deal and we were glad to see it done.

Storey: Well, did it include also dealing with CAWCD's debt?

Keys: It did.

Storey: Or the repayment obligation, I should say?

Keys: It did and I'm sorry I don't know the details of that. It had something to do with it, and I'm sorry I just don't know the details. There was a—oh, the gray matter is mucking up some here, but there was, there was a portion of it that dealt with that. I'm sorry, I just don't know the details. (Storey: Um-hmm.) Yeah. Or, I don't remember the details.

Storey: Well, another Indian group that got a water settlement was the Nez Perce. Did that affect us?

Nez Perce Water Rights Settlement

69. Arizona Water Settlements Act 2004, Pub. Law 108-451. Specified, among other items: 197,500 acre-feet of Central Arizona Project agricultural priority water allocated to various Indian tribes, and use outside the tribe requires Congressional authorization; payments into and out of the Lower Colorado River Basin Development Fund.

Keys: It did, and actually I worked on that one quite a bit. Back in 1985 the adjudication of Snake River Water Rights was begun by the State of Idaho, and there were several tribes that had claims in the adjudication in Idaho. Some of the easier ones to handle, the Shoshone-Bannock settlement we were involved in, in the Upper Snake River Basin. The Shoshone-Paiute settlement is still under, Duck Valley Reservation, is still underway, but it's fairly easy. The *big* one and the hardest one to deal with was the Nez Perce tribal settlement, because the Nez Perce tribe was downstream, but all of their usual and accustomed fishing spots were upstream, and their hunting territories were upstream. And, they had a claim for water at their reservation and for those customary fishing spots, and that's what they were trying to accommodate in the adjudication. Our part in that activity was that we had been purchasing and releasing water for the salmon since 1991, and part of the settlement was that the tribe wanted that water to be made available for the fish every year and to be, sort of, guaranteed. During drought years, there were provisions for not making the delivery, but they wanted that water in the river for the salmon. And, our part in it is we were there on behalf of the United States saying, "There are some things we can do to help make that a long-term part of the solution." Ann Klee, (Special Counsel for the Secretary), was the major negotiator for Interior, but she came to me a lot on the technical parts of Idaho water and what you can do and what you can't do and so forth. And, she and I met in Idaho with the folks *many* times, in Washington with the folks *many* times, and then she left Interior, and I went out and was there finishing it up right at the end. And, I think it turned out to be a fair settlement. I think there was something in it for everybody. The irrigators got *thirty years* on their Biological Opinion for delivery of water. Now, that's being challenged again but still they got thirty years out of it. The tribe got that water in the river guaranteed. They got some other waters that we actually ended up just paying them for the water instead of giving them the water. But, from our standpoint it was a pretty good settlement.

Storey: If you read the newsclips coming out of Idaho it was a huge catastrophe.

Keys: Well, like I said there was something in it for everybody and not everybody was completely happy about it. The northern Idaho folks felt that they gave away too much timber in the settlement. In other words, lands that they could not take the timber off of, out of the forest. There were some folks in the Salmon River side of it, which we didn't have anything to do with because we don't have projects on the Salmon River, but they felt that there was too much guarantee of water out of the Salmon. Some of the irrigators didn't want to make the concession that that 427 427,000 acre feet should be available all the time. And, oh by the way, we agreed to buy some more water to go with it, another 60,000 acre feet, off of some of the high pump lands that were going out of business. We ended up paying the State of Idaho to help make that water available. So, I would say nobody was *happy* with the whole thing because everybody had to give up something, even in the Shoshone-Bannock settlement everybody had to give up something. We ended up giving up more than anybody else on that one. But, the claim had sat there, unsettled since

1855, and that was 2005. So, people had to give something to make the settlement. I mean, you just don't make water out of the air. (Storey: Um-hmm.) I overall think it was a fair settlement. I hope it holds up.

Storey: Good. What about Central Utah Project?

Central Utah Project

Keys: (Laugh) Well, we talked about Central Utah some before and about the Central Utah Settlement Act. The Central Utah Settlement Act should have been a wake-up call for Reclamation, and there are a lot of people that didn't pay a lot of attention to it. I went to work on the Central Utah Project in 1964 when I first came to work with Reclamation fresh out of school, and we were designing and even building some of the project at that time. And, the districts were always complaining that we were gold plating the system, that we were charging too much, that they weren't getting their full benefit for the money that was being put into it, and that the district felt like they could do it better. I was not in the region at the time, but it came to a head in the early '90s, with *all* of the work that was being required on the environmental impact statements. Environmental impact statements and Endangered Species Act requirements were just killing the project, and the federal government was spending *tons* of money, hundreds of millions of dollars on those things. The district said, "God dang, we're having to pay for this. Enough is enough."

Central Utah Settlement Act

So, they went to Congress and got the Central Utah Settlement Act passed that said we had to give *them* the money and they would manage the completion of construction on the Central Utah Project. And every year since then we've put about \$35 million into the Central Utah Project. Now, the district can *contract* with Reclamation to do work for them, and we're doing a *ton* of that. And, we're still responsible for all of the Safety of Dams, and when they get done they're still federal facilities, but the district gets to manage the construction, and they're doing that. Don Christiansen, their manager was going to retire a couple years ago, but he extended his career to get them to a point where it was almost done. They had CH2M Hill in there doing a ton of work for them. They've had several different engineering groups.

"It should have been a wake-up call for Reclamation, but some of our folks just don't pay attention. . . ."

It should have been a wake-up call for Reclamation, but some of our folks just don't pay attention. But it is a different way of doing business. They just didn't feel like they were getting full value with *us* managing the money, and they had a receptive audience in Congress. I think Congress is still looking at it, and I don't know that there'll be more of them but this Managing for Excellence effort is looking at how it was done. So.

- Storey: But, they aren't required to do the environmental reviews?
- Keys: Oh, they have to do environmental work, yeah, it's just that *they* feel they can go to a private contractor and get it done for a lot less than we were doing it for. That's what I mean. I felt . . .
- Storey: And do we know what their experience was?
- Keys: They're building, and the EPA's accepting their EISs [environmental impact statements]. They've had us do a lot of the work for them, but still it's them managing instead of us managing. (Storey: Um-hmm.) Regional director Rick Gold has a pilot program where we're trying to get *back* into it a lot heavier. A lot of the early problems, there were personality problems, differences between the district and the region, differences between the district people and the project people. Right after I got in, Rick came in with a pilot program that says, "Hey, let's try to get us back into the mainstream of this thing and working with them." And, Don Christiansen and his folks were receptive. Rick appointed one of his good people to be the daily contact with the district—Brent Rhees is his name. He is *the* representative to the district from Reclamation, and we're doing a lot more with them than we were when I first came here. That's a minor success. It's a success, but it's just one step in trying to get back into the management of the project. I think you'll see some reference to that when the final Managing for Excellence material comes out.
- Storey: Hmm. Interesting.
- Keys: Yeah.

Eliminating the Drainage (Salinity) Program

- Storey: Drainage is a program that got cut along the way? Was that while you were here or before?
- Keys: The drainage that we talked about, those programs that, from, that came out of Kesterson, like Kendrick [Project] . . .
- Storey: Oh, the salinity thing?
- Keys: Yeah. That one and Uncompahgre, the Kendrick Project, and the Carson Sink. So, is that the one you're talking about or drainage in . . .
- Storey: This is the one that John Harb managed.
- Keys: Yeah. That's the one.
- Storey: Oh, okay.
- Keys: That was the one that we cut out (Storey: Oh.) because of that. Yeah.

Storey: Okay.

Keys: I called it “salinity” and you’re calling it “drainage.” It’s the same program.

Storey: Yeah. Well, that’s the way it . . .

"You *physically cannot* irrigate without drainage . . ."

Keys: It’s the salinity of the drainage. You know, the drainage is one that has been a nemesis. Look, you can’t irrigate without drainage. You *physically cannot* irrigate without drainage, because there has to be enough water pushing through the root zone to take the salts away from the roots, or you end up sealing the soil or salting it out, as they call it. So, you *have* to have it. If it goes deep, so be it. But, in *most* cases you have to collect it and get rid of it. On the Columbia Basin, 610,000 acres that we’re irrigating up there, when the project was built, we agreed to defer the drainage until the groundwater mound built up and it was necessary. When I was in that Region we were building the drainage system to take care of the water as it got up to that level. When the Columbia Basin Project was first started the water table was way and the hell gone below it. As you go through the years it builds up and gets up to where you need to take care of it in some places, and we did that in the Columbia Basin. In the Central Valley of California, after the Kesterson incident, and in a lot of places, we just walked away from drainage and didn’t do anything about it, and then we started getting the lawsuits. We had two lawsuits that we had to settle while I was there—the Britz Settlement and the Sumner-Peck Settlement. The first one, the Britz Settlement was for about 5,000 acres, and the Sumner-Peck settlement was for about 35,000 acres of land that we had not provided drainage for that had gone unproductive. They filed a suit and the court agreed with them. We ended up paying a settlement of about \$105 million to them.

Storey: But, I remember when that settlement took place and there were a lot of editorials about that.

Keys: We paid them \$105 million in three installments after an initial payment of \$10 million' \$35, \$30, and \$30 (Storey: Uh huh.) over three years and there was a small one called “The Britz” settlement part of it. Oh, darn. The Britz Settlement was for another eight thousand acres. Anyway, there was two settlements. Now there’s still the big Westlands, the big Central Valley part of it that still needs to be settled. When I left we were working closely with them through our South Central California office in Fresno trying to come up with a way to fund the settlement with them, which is *big* dollars. It could be hundreds of millions of dollars.

Storey: And this was over drainage again?

Keys: All drainage, yeah. It's because we did not provide the drainage in the Westlands and in these other areas that should have been (Storey: And now . . .) drained.

Issues Involved in Disposing of Agricultural Wastewater from the Central Valley Project

Storey: Somebody's started up drainage again because—I've forgotten which coastal town—one of the coastal towns is all upset because they want to dump the water into their bay.

Keys: Well, see that's the deal. You don't know what to do with it, out of Westlands and so forth. Westlands, we had a multi-year study done of the drainage in the Westlands Irrigation District. One of the options is to take it over the hill and out through the California Bay Delta. One of the options. Another is to desalt it. Another is to put it in an evaporation pond. Another is to manage it so that you desalt and get it down, and then have a final disposition of what's left over.

Storey: So now, did we buy the land or were we just . . .

Keys: Nope. Nope. We paid for the damage.

Storey: We paid damages?

Keys: Right.

Storey: So, they still own the land?

Keys: They own the land. They still get to keep the water that comes off of it. We just paid the damages. In other words, lost production. And, now part of the settlement was that they wouldn't keep on irrigating it. In other words, it was not to just let them keep making the thing worse. And that's what we were negotiating with Westland when I left.

Storey: Hmm.

Keys: Go ahead.

Storey: You mentioned the *Ciénega de Santa Clara*.

Ciénega de Santa Clara

Keys: Well, *Ciénega de Santa Clara* is a different issue. That's on the Colorado [River.] In 1944 the treaty with Mexico said, "Mexico gets 1.5 million acre feet of water out of the Colorado, and United States you have to deliver that every year." We've never missed a year. In fact, if you look at the average it's way above that, because of flood flows and spills and that kind of thing. And, when Mexico started really developing their water use down in Mexico, they

used the whole 1.5 and for the longest time the river was dry before going out the mouth into the Gulf of California. One of the agreements was that we were going to implement the desalting plant and then put the brine stream in the Gulf of California. Well, with us not running the desalting plant we're bypassing about, oh, a 100,000 acre feet of water a year down the Santa Clara Slough. That has helped establish, that, and other extra water, has helped establish this *Ciénega*, this lush, environmentally-green area right at the delta. And, there's some Mexican endangered species there. Mexico wants more water. That's not right. The environmental groups in the United States want us to put more water into the Colorado [River] in Mexico for the *Ciénega*. (Storey: Um-hmm.) Mexico has not said much at all, other than to support the environmental groups. And we've said, "We can't do it. It's not our water." But, they want more water put down there. Once, we actually offered to them to help do engineering work in Mexico on *their* facilities to save some water to put down there. They turned their back on us. Never answered. So, now some of the Mexican groups, environmental groups, are calling on us to put more water down the Colorado River to keep this *Ciénega* alive. It's a *big* delta and it's got all sorts of greenery in it, all sorts of fish and birds and everything. And we're saying, "It's not our job. It's *your* water Mexico, you decide how to use *your* water. You can't have any more of ours." Well, with us not operating the desalting plant, we've been bypassing about 100,000 acre feet a year down there.

The States Want Reclamation to Run the Desalting Plant on the 100,000 Acre Feet of Saline Water That We Bypass to the *Ciénega De Santa Clara*

The states are saying, "We want you to run the desalting plant so you can cut that out," and the Mexican folks are not very happy about that. Bob Johnson says there's a better way to do it right now. That is that we ought to go in and buy some water to provide the replacement water rather than running the desalting plant. That would keep the water in the *Ciénega* and keep the other folks happy. The states still don't like it. They want the desalting plant running. Now, the desalting plant is fairly outdated, and it would cost us about \$30 million to get it up to speed and running, and then the annual power costs and chemical cost is another \$25-\$30 million. Very expensive. And, we're saying, "There's a better way to do it." But, the states, especially the State of Arizona, wants it run. If I'm not mistaken, they're going to run it at a third capacity for sixty days this next year, in '07. I'm pretty sure they're going to. That was our plan anyway. But, the *Ciénega*, it boils over into other issues. In other words, when we build a project, do we have to take into account the endangered species on the other side of the border? In the past we've said, "No." But, *that* is one of the issues there.

Teck Cominco Mine Slag Dumped into the Columbia River and Lake Roosevelt Behind Grand Coulee

That boils over into North Dakota on some of the Garrison work, not the Garrison work but the work on M, R & I systems up there in the Red River

Valley. Municipal, residential, and industrial systems are all that's left of the old Garrison Project, instead of the irrigation. So, do we do an environmental impact statement for impacts across the border? Haven't done. And Canada doesn't. Mexico doesn't. But, they want us to do them. Hell, one of the run-ins that I had in there was with the Canadian folks on the Columbia River. There's a large mine up there called the Teck Cominco Mine that was *dumping* slag into the top end of Roosevelt Lake above Grand Coulee [Dam] for years, and years, and years.⁷⁰ And, every time we complained, they just turned their back on us. Well, they are actually trying to find a solution to it now, and wanted to "settle it." They wanted to just throw \$10 million at it and then walk away. And, we said, "Wait a minute. That's not right." So, those crossborder issues are still out there to be settled. Interior was fairly firm. "No, we don't go across the borders." CEQ, Council on Environmental Quality, said something different than that, and we were trying to get it straight as I was leaving.

Storey: But, if you run the desalting plant I assume the theory is that you're delivering another 100,000 acre feet to Mexico, or whatever you get out of that?

Keys: See, well you *don't* run the desalting plant so you *have* to put bypass water in to dilute the return flow from Wellton-Mohawk. (Storey: Yeah.) If you run the desalting plant you desalt the Wellton-Mohawk water and all that goes down the Santa Clara slough is the brine stream. (Storey: Right.) So, you're wasting about 100,000 acre feet now in the bypass stream that you're putting into the [*Ciénega*]- well now, let me just back up.

The purpose of the desalting plant is to maintain a *difference* in the salinity at the Colorado River. It's not to maintain a level. It's to maintain a difference between the salinity at the northern boundary and the salinity at the southern boundary. And, right now they're bypassing all of the Wellton-Mohawk water into the river, into the slough.

Storey: Um-hmm. So it doesn't get in the river and raise the salinity (Keys: Exactly.) of Mexico's water.

Keys: Exactly. It goes, you bypass it into the slough so you're losing that 108,000 acre feet. Okay, if you run the desalting plant, you run the Wellton-Mohawk water through the desalting plant, and then you *dump* the good water into the river but you get credit for it. You don't get credit for the bypass water. So, now you're bypassing 108. Don't get credit for it. If you run it through the desalter, you actually get credit for about 80,000 out of the 108 that's being bypassed now. So, that means you can release 80,000 acre feet *less* from Hoover into the 1.5 maf that Mexico receives each year.

Storey: Or 80,000 more for CAP?

70. This processing plant is located at Trail, British Columbia.

- Keys: Whoever. Whoever's got the right to it, or the contract for it.
- Storey: So they, just because they do a return flow doesn't entitle them to that amount of water?
- Keys: That's right.
- Storey: Okay.
- Keys: Yeah. (Storey: Um-hmm.) Yeah. Very complicated.
- Storey: Interesting.
- Keys: And, I didn't explain it very well. I'm sorry.
- Storey: Did you go down and visit the *Ciénega*?
- Keys: I did not. I was supposed to go down there a couple of times and then things just came up. (Storey: Yeah.) But, Bob Johnson and his people were working very closely with them.
- Storey: Do we need to talk anymore about SSLE [Safety, Security and Law Enforcement]?
- Keys: I don't think so. You know, you call it SSLE, you know it started out just Security and Law Enforcement, and to, we were trying to get all of the safety and security folks together. We put Larry Todd in charge of it after he had developed all of the plans and everything, and then we put Safety of Dams in there because it fit with the safety aspects. We put the safety people in—Linda Rowley's people. So, all of the safety and law enforcement, and so forth, is all together. So, that's how that whole outfit got started.
- Storey: Hmm.
- Keys: And, it's doing very well, you know. They are doing stuff. Larry Todd's kind of an equipment junkie, and they've got all sorts of fancy gear in there but they do a pretty good job.
- Storey: What else should we talk about?
- Keys: Well, before, at lunch time before, as we broke, you were talking about what goals we came in with and whether we accomplished them and that sort of thing.
- Storey: Yeah. You want to talk about that now?
- Keys: Sure.

Storey: Well, what did you come that you accomplished that you liked?

What was accomplished that he liked

Keys: Between the time that I knew I was going to get the job and the time that I was actually sworn in, I talked to irrigation districts and water organizations about what we ought to try to get done. Of course, everybody had their pet project and so forth, *but* the resounding tenor of all those discussions was that, "We don't trust Reclamation now. Reclamation does not work with us now. It's *not* the old organization that it was, that we could depend on." And, they didn't like that. So, when I came in, I thought our first matter of business would be to get ourself back to where we were close to our supporters—the districts, the organizations, and so forth. And, it has a history. You know, if you look back at Reclamation, it worked very closely with the districts and the water users and then Teton happened. I don't think the districts took a hike on us, but there was a lot of folks that said, "Boy, look at those guys. They're not the old Reclamation that we *trusted* all these years. They did something wrong." Well, we did Safety of Dams, got the Safety of Dams Acts implemented and everything.

". . . and then that damn Reclamation Reform Act came through, and it made enforcers out of us. . . ."

Things were pretty good then, I think. Pretty close to normal, and then that damned Reclamation Reform Act came through, and it made enforcers out of us, regulators, where we didn't know how to regulate. And, we had to go in, get into their records, show them what to do, tell them what to . . .

END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 4. AUGUST 15, 2006.

BEGINNING OF SIDE 2, TAPE 4. AUGUST 15, 2006.

Storey: When they . . .

Keys: When they didn't do it we sent them a bill for a fine or a settlement or something like that, and *boy* they didn't like it. And, Reclamation didn't do a good job of working it out with them, staying close to them during that time. We tried, but we didn't do a very good job at it, and we got away from the districts.

How Dan Beard and Eluid Martinez Interacted with NWRA

And Dan, when Dan Beard came in as commissioner, it got worse. I liked Dan and I worked very well with Dan, but Dan couldn't care less about what people thought about him. He would *not* work with NWRA. It was almost like he wanted to pick a fight with districts at times. And, it was, "*You do* the Reclamation Reform Act. Get it done. I don't care how much it costs them, you get it done." And, an example is Dan would go the NWRA meetings and wouldn't meet with the districts. I'll talk a little bit more about that, but Dan

wouldn't meet with them. That was not his job. And, they hated him, almost to a district they hated Dan because of it. And, when Eluid came in, Eluid's approach to things was just kind of laid back. In other words, not out there *aggressively* trying to get some stuff done. Eluid was a good commissioner, but he, his approach was just not that outreach kind of thing, and we suffered from it. And, when I was talking to people, almost categorically that feeling was out there.

"Okay, the first order of business we're going to do is get back so that they [water organizations] trust us . . ."

So I said, "Okay, the first order of business we're going to do is get back so that they trust us, they come to us, and we work very closely with them." And, we did that. I never will forget, the first fall I was there, the ACWA, Association of California Water Agencies, meeting was being held in San Diego, and I put it on my calendar. I put NWRA. I put ACWA. I put Family Farm [Alliance], and all of the big districts, the big organizations' meetings I put on the calendar. And, we got down to planning some of this stuff and they said, "Well, you don't go to ACWA." I said, "*What?*" And they said, "No, the commissioner doesn't go to ACWA." And I said, "Baloney. Why not?" And they said, "Well, Eluid went the first time and they didn't invite him back so we don't go anymore." And I said, "Listen. I am Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation. I am *not* commissioner of all of the states except California, and I will talk to David Reynolds and I'll talk to Steve Hall and we're going to be there." And we got ourself on the program, and we worked very closely with them ever since. And, you could say the same thing about NWRA. Dan wouldn't have the meetings with them. Eluid sometimes was blasé about the meetings. We emphasized them. We emphasized the little meetings at NWRA. The annual meeting of NWRA is in the fall, late October, November, sometimes it even gets over into early December, but it's their annual meeting. They have speakers. They have the congressional folks come. We always speak and have a roundtable with them, but we, myself and like Dennis Underwood, when he was commissioner, we never got to go to the meetings that much because we had all of these side meetings with the districts. When you went to those meetings, we didn't go to the presentations, it was our time to meet with districts. And typically, if it was a five-day meeting we'd have sixty or seventy fifteen minute meetings with districts. The agreement was we weren't going to make any decisions there, but we would listen to what they wanted to talk about. And, a lot of them justified their trips on, "We're going to NWRA and meet with the commissioner." And, it was a big deal to them, as it should be. And, I loved the things. I looked forward to them and put a lot of effort into them. I'd have a book put together and everybody sent in the meetings that their districts had requested and we would schedule them, and they'd give me an issue paper on every district that was coming to meet with me, and I'd read them so I'd know what they wanted to talk about ahead of time. We put a lot of work into them. But, we could go to a five-day meeting and meet with sixty-, fifty-, seventy-one, one year, irrigation districts in *one* week, and I thought it was a big deal, and I put a lot of effort into them.

And, I think they really appreciated that, and that helped us get back with the districts that felt that they had been abandoned at times. Other big organizations didn't want that.

"Colorado River Water Users Association . . . got *mad* at us when we scheduled meetings around their convention. . . ."

Colorado River Water Users Association, I mean they got *mad* at us when we scheduled meetings around their convention. They wanted us *in* the meeting so that we could answer questions and stuff, and we accommodated some. But, you don't just go to sit there and listen. You go to work with folks. (Storey: Um-hmm.) And, I thought we got a lot done. The Family Farm [Alliance,] it was not nearly as bad as far as number of meetings, but we still had meetings around the meetings there. I just think it was a good use of our time to be able to concentrate on hearing a *lot* of people in a short time. (Storey: Um-hmm.) I think it helped.

". . . by the time I retired I thought we had accomplished getting back close to the districts . . ."

In the end, by the time I retired I thought we had accomplished getting back close to the districts, getting close to all of those organizations, making *them* feel like we were listening when they said something. Like, Managing for Excellence, we had *all* of the organizations and a number of different districts involved in the work teams for Managing for Excellence. When we were doing different pieces of legislation, like this law enforcement, we went to the big districts and those that had security forces of their own, to get their input. Almost everything that we did we had involvement from the organizations and a number of districts. So, I thought we accomplished that.

Title XVI

When I came in I wanted to help do something about rural water and about Title XVI. Rural water, I think we're close. I think sometime, if not later this year maybe next year, we'll have some kind of bill passed that will give us some control over that program. Title XVI, I think, is harder to do because we haven't got the support from some of the organizations that are out there, like we did from the National Rural Water Association. I put a lot of effort in working with those folks to be sure they knew we weren't just trying to run away from them, but we were trying to find a better way to do it. I don't think the Title XVI folks see it that way yet. So, those two were close, but we didn't quite get them done.

Things came up, like the Animas-La Plata Project and like the Klamath Falls Project, that became goals to get things done. On the Animas-La Plata Project, I think we were very successful in getting the districts back, the project sponsors, to getting them back with us so that they trusted our people and they wanted to get the project built. I think when we got into that at first it was not

there, but I think at the end we were there. I think it's different on the Klamath Falls Project. Folks there still have their hand out for money, but I think we ended up with a good solution and can see the daylight out of the thing.

Did I get a dam built? Well no, not really. I mean, we're doing Ridges Basin Dam on the Animas-La Plata project, but we didn't get that done. I did *not* go into the commissioner job to measure success by how many facilities we got built, or whatever. I *treasure* those relationships though and that was very important. I did not go in there to just status-quo it, because there were still a lot of folks that didn't think that Dan took us in the right direction. I think, after I left folks looked at us as water managers rather than a construction agency, and that was one of their things to try to get done.

Storey: What about things that didn't get done that you would have liked to have done?

Keys: You know, we always have lofty goals on trying to come up with a better way to do NEPA, a better way to do the Endangered Species Act. We worked very closely, early on, with the Interior folks. I think we made some of the NEPA process a little easier to deal with, like categorical exclusions. But overall we didn't get much done on it. Endangered Species Act, we didn't get any changes made.

Improving Relations with Other Interior Bureaus

Let me back up just a second. There's another real success. I can remember times in the past when you had a commissioner working with other agencies in Interior and the relationship, at times, was antagonistic, like between the commissioner and the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, or between the commissioner and the Director of the BLM, because they wanted lands back in, and so forth. And others, BIA. And, I swore that I'd never let that happen because a walk down the hall can do wonders. And, I will tell you the two Directors of the Fish and Wildlife Service that I got to work with, early on it was Steve Williams and then Dale Hall right at the end, no two finer guys in this world than those two fellas and we got along famously. There was not *anything* that I wouldn't discuss with them. And, the fact is one of my differences with assistant secretary Bennett Raley is he didn't want us working that closely with Fish and Wildlife Service. I disagreed with that, because to me I could go down there and talk to him about something and get something reasonable rather than wait for some idiot thing in writing that somebody else wrote. And, I prided myself on working with those two guys. The Director of the Park Service was also a friend, we did a *bunch* of stuff together to help us with recreation. Some of it with the assistant secretary's approval, and some of it without it, because we could get it done. I knew Fran Mainella on a first-name basis. She and I were confirmed at the same time, and I don't think there was anything that I would ask her to do that we didn't get done, or that she asked me to do that we didn't get done. Kathleen Clark, the Director of BLM, we got stuff done famously with our lands, with some of the energy issues that she was having to deal with. USGS, Geological Survey, our sister agency

under the assistant secretary, Chip Groat and I worked very well together. We got stuff going that had been *languishing* for a long time. We swapped visits. Working with those other agency heads was a *highlight* for me, and I never distrusted one of them. I'm not sure that some of the other folks in Interior liked it or appreciated it but every other month or so—we tried to do it every month, but with travel schedules it probably averaged out every other month—but all of the agency heads would get together for lunch in one of our offices. Close the door. No Actings. No Assistants. Close the door and talk about stuff. And, we got along really well. And, you say “What kind of stuff did you talk about?” Performance rating, SES performance ratings. We thought it was handled terribly in Interior and we'd get together and talk about how to handle it. In other words, we'd all do our ratings and get them where we wanted them, following the guidelines that we'd been given. Then some bunch of folks down in the front hall would change them all, and we didn't like that and we'd talk about ways to try to do something different. (Storey: Um-hmm.) That's just an example. I thought we were very close, and I think the secretary appreciated that because she had a hell of a team there for a while. She had a hell of a team for a while and I was proud of that. (Storey: Um-hmm.) So, those are some of the things. I wish that I could tell you that I got 200 miles of canal built, or three more dams built, or another powerhouse built, but its just not that kind of time.

Storey: Yeah. That isn't the kind of thing that happens nowadays.

Keys: No.

Storey: Hmm. Anything else we ought to talk about?

Keys: Uh . . .

Storey: Any big issues that stand out in your mind?

Water Rights Settlement for the Black Canyon of the Gunnison

Keys: Boy, I'm kind of drawing a blank. Maybe we'll think tonight and come up with some new ones. The settlement of the water rights for the National Park Service in Black Canyon of the Gunnison, Colorado, was one. (Storey: Um-hmm.)

When the park was established, the ruling was made by the courts that a park had a water right compatible with its formation date. And, they had enough water to do whatever they needed to do in the park. Well, some folks got carried away with that and said, “That means that they were entitled to have an X-number of second-feet running through there just so people can see it.” Or, in the Black Canyon of the Gunnison case, “So that they could *hear* the water running through the canyon.” Well, that's not western water law. And, when I was sworn in, or when I was going through my confirmation, Senator Campbell asked if I would work with Fran Mainella to settle the Black Canyon

water rights issue, and I told him, “Yes.” Well, the Park Service had put in a claim for, my goodness, about 1,500 second-feet of water, just to run down the river. (Storey: Um-hmm.) And we said, “No. That’s not the right way to do it.” So, we had our folks do a bunch of studies to see what it took to keep the river alive and still meet all the water requirements down below. It turned out to be a 300 second-foot minimum flow, and then some shoulder flows when there was flood flows available every seven or eight years then that amount of water we’d let come down. We worked out an agreement between us, and the Park Service, and the State of Colorado, and we actually signed the darn thing. I signed it for Reclamation. Deputy director Randy Jones signed it for the National Park Service, and attorney general Ken Salazar signed it on behalf of the State of Colorado. It tried to unravel several times, and we worked very closely with our solicitors to keep it together, and it’s still together right now. I don’t know how, I hope it stays together because to me it was a fair settlement. It left water in the Gunnison River, but it did not, I think, waste water. (Storey: Um-hmm.) So, that’s one of the issues we worked with. CREDA, the Colorado River Energy Development Association, had a big interest in it. The Fish and Wildlife folks had a big interest in it because of the endangered fish in the river, but I thought it was a fair settlement. So, that’s one that we worked on.

Changing Operations at Glen Canyon Dam for Environmental Purposes

The work at Glen Canyon [Dam], the AMWG, the Adaptive Management Work Group, we did a ton of work with that group trying to find a way to keep the endangered fish below Glen Canyon alive and yet maintain the power production at Glen Canyon. Two big issues there, water temperature and sediment. The water temperature was one that we could get a handle on. *I thought* we had agreement on temperature, but I understand they’re still working on it, working on a temperature control device for Glen Canyon [Dam], like the one we put on Shasta [Dam], like we put on Hungry Horse [Dam], like we put on Flaming Gorge [Dam], to draw water from higher in the reservoir and not being so cold and accommodate some of the endangered fish. The sediment is a harder issue, because it’s all dropped in the top end of the reservoir. But, we did one of those spike flows around Thanksgiving of ‘03, to try to test again that whole concept. But, it was hard working. Regional director Rick Gold and his people, I think, did a phenomenal job of looking at different ways to accommodate the fish, and they worked with the Adaptive Management Work Group trying to get the best solution. It’s still ongoing. Still don’t have a good solution, but they’re working at it. It took a ton of our time, but it was a good one to work on. Other projects?

Truckee-Carson [Newlands] Project

Hmm. I worked closely with the Truckee-Carson people. Truckee-Carson [Newlands] is another one of those *old* projects that’s falling down. You can’t get them happy because they will go out of business one of these days. All of their lands are developing around Reno and Carson City, and around Sparks,

and Fallon, and they're down to about 60,000 acres from a high of a hundred and some odd thousand acres. Eventually they'll not be able to keep business. But, we worked very closely with them trying to come up with some settlements. They had taken water in the past that they were not entitled to, and the court said they had to pay it back. We were trying to find an amenable solution for them. They wanted some land for their office buildings and stuff, and we did a title transfer on some land for them. The fact is, it was *just* passed by Congress a couple weeks ago just before they left for August recess.

Storey: They're planning to build a building instead of be in that trailer that they had?

Keys: That's right. And, the key to it was us transferring that land to them there that they were on. (Storey: Um-hmm.) The bill was finally passed by Congress just before the August recess this year. I actually got a call here from Ernie Schank, the president of the Board, and so that got done. (Sigh) I can't think of others, but there was a lot of them going on. What else did you have written down?

Storey: I think that's all I had written down.

Keys: Hmm. Well, you want to just dog it off them and maybe get back together in the morning after we think of others?

Storey: Okay. Let me ask if the information on the tapes and resulting transcripts can be used one year after you retired from Reclamation?

Keys: Yes.

Storey: Okay.

Keys: Yeah.

Storey: Good. Thanks.

END INTERVIEW. AUGUST 15, 2006.

RESUME SIDE 2, TAPE 4. AUGUST 16, 2006.

Storey: This is a continuation of tape four, of an interview by Brit Storey with John W. Keys. We are resuming on August the 16th, 2006.

Well, I really appreciate your thinking, last night, (Keys: Yeah.) about new topics for us to talk about. How about foreign travel?

Work In Hawaii on Water Systems

Keys: I had two things that I did. One of them's actually not foreign because it was in Hawaii, and the other was a trip to China. The trip to Hawaii came from Senator Daniel Akaka asking us to work with the State of Hawaii to look at

their irrigation facilities. If you look at the history of Hawaii, it had its ancient history; and then it had its intermediate history with the trading and whaling ships visiting the islands; but then the third part of its history was actually plantation farming, the cane plantations, and now it's changing. The period up to about ten to fifteen years ago was dominated by the cane plantations on the islands. The water in Hawaii is owned by the state, like the other states, but the cane plantations built their own irrigation systems and over the past fifteen to twenty years there's actually an evolution going on of agriculture in Hawaii, and it's changing from the plantation economy to a diversified agriculture economy. Other places in the world are outdoing them on the cane, and it just got dropped. There's only two cane plantations left on the islands now, one on Kauai and one on Maui, and they're tenuous. They don't have the old mills that they used to have to process it. It's just not *there* anymore.

Storey: And I think they also don't have the government supports for sugar?

Keys: No, that's exactly right. Well, when the cane plantations saw this coming they just let the irrigation facilities deteriorate. They didn't keep them up.

". . . in the end the state ended up owning a deteriorated irrigation system . . ."

And, in the end the state ended up owning a deteriorated irrigation system with what water the state had there. And, they were trying to find ways to diversify the agriculture on the islands. Now, pineapple is still big in some areas. They were looking to get into production of what we would call "truck crops," melons, and cantaloupe, and vegetables, and that sort of thing, especially on Kauai. The State of Hawaii came to us through Senator Akaka, and said, "We'd like you to do a study of our irrigation facilities and what it would take to rehabilitate them so that we could provide this water for them." Working through the state Department of Agriculture, we did that study. In August 2002, Bob Johnson, and myself, and John Johnson, and Amy Porter, their Native American affairs and Hawaii coordinator in Lower Colorado Region, went over and had a full week of meetings with the Hawaiian government. We met with the Governor. We met with the Department of Water Resources, the Department of Agriculture, and I'm telling you they're some of the nicest people in this world. They treated us really nice. We had good discussions. We met with the whole congressional delegation while we were there. Congresswoman Patsy Mink was there, who has since passed away. Congressman Neil Abercrombie is the other one from the islands. And, of course, Senator Akaka and Senator Daniel Inouye were there, we met with all of them about this study. We contracted the study. The Department of Agriculture there did it with monies that we made available to them, and it showed what could be done. And, while we were there we met on Oahu with the Governor and his staffs and with the staffs there. Then we went to Maui, got a really good tour of the East Maui Irrigation District with Garret Nu who is the Manager of the district there.

Storey: How do you, how would you spell Nu?

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- Keys: I think it's just N-U.
- Storey: Okay.
- Keys: And, he gave us a great tour. There's no *storage* on the system.
- Storey: Well, it's interesting . . .
- Keys: There's so much rain and it comes down and they just catch it in the canals, and it runs out and they use it.
- Storey: But, most of the rain is on the windward side and most of the agriculture's on the leeward side isn't it?
- Keys: That's right. That's right.
- Storey: I mean, they must have a real transportation system?
- Keys: They really do, especially on Maui and on Kauai. We toured the system with them, and they explained how it worked. We visited Oahu, then we went to Maui, and then we went to Kauai. On Kauai they had actually set up a helicopter tour for us which was just out of this world. I mean, it was amongst the craters and the water falls and out on the Na Pali Coast, and it was really nice. But, they were showing us their systems and we were showing them what *we* would direct the study toward, and so forth, and it turned out really well. I stayed over on Saturday. We worked there all week and I stayed the Saturday, and one of the fellas from Kauai and his family and I went out to Niihau, actually a crater by Niihau, to go snorkeling, which was really a lot of fun. Niihau is a little island off of Kauai that is *closed* to the public and only native Hawaiians live there. You can't touch the shore, but there's a crater in the ocean next to it that we went snorkeling around, which was really a lot of fun, and then I flew home on Sunday. I followed up that trip with a return visit in September 2003 because the governorship had changed. Governor Linda Lingle was elected in late 2002. Governor Lingle was elected in the off-term there. We were there in '02 and '03, and they had changed governors in between. When I went back, I met with Governor Lingle and a lot of the same folks that we had met with before, and it turned out really well. I met with them another time. NWRA had their annual meeting in Hawaii in November '05, last year, and while we were there we went back and met with them again. And, their study came out. It was a good study. I don't know what they're doing with it. But, it was really interesting that we were seeing a culture change happen right in front of our eyes. The culture from the old cane plantation where everybody worked for the company, and they were trying to change it to diversified agriculture where all of the individual farmers would get the water from the state and the district. They were trying to form a district. And, it was quite interesting. I actually wanted to do more than what we did, but the assistant secretary didn't want us doing that kind of work because Hawaii was not, is not a Reclamation state, is not one of the seventeen.
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Now, there are some that contend that there was legislation that added Hawaii and some of the South Sea Islands to our territory at one time, but in Interior that never was quite accepted. So, we let them do the work and the money just came through us from Senator Akaka and the Senate, and it turned out pretty good.

END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 4. AUGUST 16, 2006.

BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 5. AUGUST 16, 2006.

Storey: This is tape five of an interview by Brit Storey with John W. Keys on August 16, 2006. This is a continuation of tapes begun on August the 15th.

Keys: So, that was the one outside work that we did. All of the time that I was commissioner, the Chinese delegation visited several times talking about Three Gorges, the famous Three Gorges Project on the Yangtze River.

Storey: Excuse me. Before we go to China, (Keys: Oh, okay.) did you only, did we only work on Kauai and Maui?

Keys: Yes. We did not go to the old projects on the one off of Maui. The island . . .

Storey: Molokai?

Keys: Molokai!

Storey: Yeah.

Keys: Way back when Reclamation did some work on Molokai, actually built a dam on there for them, but we did not go to Molokai.

Storey: And we didn't do anything on Hawaii with the huge pineapple plantations there?

Drought Work on the Island of Hawaii

Keys: We didn't go there on this trip because it wasn't one of the shifts in agriculture that they were looking at. They weren't looking at the irrigation (Storey: Oh. I see.) on Hawaii. Now, we were doing some drought work on the big island Hawaii during this whole time. We did drought work on all of the islands, doing drought management plans for them and that sort of thing, all through the whole time I was there. Because, there was a drought on the big island that was pronounced during that time and we did some work with them on that. But, this trip was just limited to (Storey: Um-hmm.) Oahu, Maui, and Kauai.

Storey: Okay.

Visiting China and Three Gorges Dam

Keys: Okay. Then the other thing, during the whole time I was there the Chinese visited us many times talking about Three Gorges Project, the big dam and power system that they were building on the Yangtze River. When I first got there, there was a Memorandum of Agreement with China that we would do *some* work. It was not work on the dam because previous commissioner Dan Beard had kiboshed that during his tenure, but it was doing some looking at environmental aspects, endangered species things, and that sort of thing. But, it was just a loose M-O-A [Memorandum of Agreement] and we would correspond and answer questions and that sort of thing.

**"The Chinese really wanted us back in there doing consulting with them *on* . . .
 . Three Gorges, and *on* the environment, and *on* endangered species
 problems. . . ."**

The Chinese government really wanted us back in there doing consulting with them *on* the Three Gorges, and *on* the environment, and *on* endangered species problems. We never really got back into a full M-O-U [Memorandum of Understanding] or M-O-A [Memorandum of Agreement] with them. It was just too controversial. A lot of controversy over building Three Gorges.
 (Storey: Um-hmm.)

"They had to move millions of people. They cut off several runs of fish and got in the way of several different habitats of fish, and so forth. *And*, building Three Gorges, potentially, could make a cesspool out of a fifty-some odd million acre-foot reservoir. . . ."

They had to move millions of people. They cut off several runs of fish and got in the way of several different habitats of fish, and so forth. *And*, building Three Gorges, potentially, could make a cesspool out of a fifty-some odd million acre-foot reservoir. Because everything above there, they still don't treat a lot of their sewage. Shanghai dumps raw sewage into the Upper Yangtze River. I mean, all of those towns up there, not many of them treat their sewage. *And*, as a result, Three Gorges [Reservoir] is catching a lot of the crud. They had asked us many times to go over there, and we had tried several times to make the trip, and we finally pulled it off in September of 2005. *And*, I will tell you it was quite a trip. We did it in coordination with the International Committee on Irrigation and Drainage meeting in Beijing. I went to Beijing and gave a paper, a talk, met with several of the premiers there, and Chinese officials, which was, I'm telling you, just something else. Their pomp and circumstance just leaves me befuddled sometimes, but it was still a real event for me to go and represent our country to those folks and talk to them about our facilities and the Three Gorges [Project.] We got to Beijing on Wednesday, and gave our paper, and then we had the weekend to see the Great Wall, and the Forbidden City, and the other tourist sites, which was really nice for me to be able to see. *Then* we flew up to the Three Gorges Project in Hunan Province. when we arrived in the airplane—we had to change once or twice, whatever, but we landed—and everybody had to stay seated until they let us out of the airplane. Dick Ives and Bruce Moore, and I, the three of us were

there. The reason they made everybody stay on is to get us off and get us with the officials there. The police met us, got our bags, put them in two police vehicles. We were in the second one and the first one led us to the dam, with his lights flashing and the whole bit. (Laugh) And I'm thinking, "My goodness." Well, at Three Gorges [Dam] they actually have a hotel built at the end of the dam, Three Gorges Hotel, and we got there fairly late at night and they were wanting to feed us and everything. We said, "No, we've already eaten." But, it was funny because we were getting checked into the hotel and we had insisted on paying for our rooms. They didn't want us to pay for our rooms (Storey: Yeah.) but we insisted on paying for the rooms. Well, they got Bruce lined up with his room, and they got Dick Ives lined up with his room. And, I'm thinking, "Wait a minute. What's going on here? How come I don't have a room?" This lady came down and she said, "I'll take you to your room." We got on the elevator and there was three or four folks there to help me carry my bags and all of this stuff. And, we got up to there, and we got off the elevator, and I didn't have a room. *I had a floor.* (Laugh) The whole floor was mine. It had a bedroom and this big humongous bathroom. It had a meeting room. It had a living room. It had an office. It had a kitchen. I mean, you name it and it was on that floor, and it was mine. One of the incidents, the translator that was with me, a nice young Chinese fella, but I told him, "You know, I really can't get used to somebody being right at my elbow, carrying my bags, and doing this and that and the other." And he said, "Mr. John, let them do it. If you don't let them do it, they don't have a job." And, it didn't bother me anymore after that, (Laugh) because if they weren't doing that for me they didn't have a job. They were really very nice people. Didn't understand English, (Storey: Yeah.) but they were very nice people and they treated us really nice. And, this *suite* that I had, it was really funny but the bath mat said, "VIP. Three Gorges Hotel." And, I just made a comment to the translator about how nice that was. Well, when they left they gave me a bath mat. (Laughter) I still have it somewhere around here. But then, the next day they took us down, and first we got on a boat. And, to me it looked like a gun boat, but they said it was one of the police boats that they use there, and they took us about fifty miles up the lake to see where all of the things had been inundated and how far up the water was going to go, and so forth. We went all the way up into the canyon. It's a beautiful, beautiful area, and they showed us some of the relocation, where folks had been relocated to. *And*, we saw a lot of the trash and crap that's being trapped by the reservoir. As we were going up they had their whole contingent there and we were talking about different stuff. It turned out, they wanted to talk to us about the sociological impacts of moving a million and a half people.

"They wanted to talk to us about the environmental effects of putting that dam in and catching the sewage from all of those places up above, and about a couple of the endangered species that they had *cut off* from their native habitat. . . ."

They wanted to talk to us about the environmental effects of putting that dam in and catching the sewage from all of those places up above, and about a

couple of the endangered species that they had *cut off* from their native habitat. And, we shared with them some of our thoughts on it. They said, "How would you take care of the, of the pollution in the reservoir?" And I said, "You can't take care of it here. You've got to treat it up above." And we told them about a lot of our treatment facilities and we recommended that they talk to EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] folks because we don't do that kind of thing very much. But, we gave them some names over at EPA that they should talk with.

Touring the Locks at Three Gorges Dam

After we did the trip up the reservoir we came back and then they took us around the locks. Big locks. Two separate sets of locks. One to move folks up the river and one to move them down the river. Big. And, the amount of barge traffic's phenomenal on that thing.

Touring the Powerhouse at Three Gorges Dam

And then we went into the powerhouse. The left powerhouse was completed. There were fourteen, 500-megawatt units all running at the same time in the left powerhouse. They were still working on the *right* powerhouse, which was going to have *twelve* 500-megawatt units; and they had started excavation on an underground powerhouse on the right side where they were going to have *eight* 500-megawatt units. These are big units, 500 megawatts. Seven thousand megawatts in the left powerhouse is more than Grand Coulee, our largest powerplant in the United States. You add on the twelve 500-megawatt units from the right powerhouse, that's 6,000 megawatts. And then the eight on the underground, so that's seven and six is thirteen, and four is 17,000 megawatts in that one power facility. (Storey: Um-hmm.) While we were there, they told us about the upstream plants that they have already started building, and they were going to build another complex on one tributary and another complex on another tributary, but it was all part of the Three Gorges complex. By the time it is done, they are going to have a power complex there that has about 63,000 megawatts of hydropower. Unheard of. I mean, just humongous. The plant capacity at the dam itself, 17,000 megawatts, is *three times* the size of anything else in the world. So, it's big. And, we got to see the finished unit. We got to see everything from a unit sitting on a pedestal all the way down to them still working in the hole, in the pit on the draft tubes, and on the scroll case. So, it was really quite a visit. Then we met with the dignitaries, stayed another night, and then we left the next day.

"I would have to say that Three Gorges is just the mother of all projects. . . . it's just humongous. . . ."

But, I would have to say that Three Gorges [Project] is just the mother of all projects. It's just humongous. (Storey: Yeah.) I just can't talk about how big it is. But, it was a great visit.

Storey: Were the locks single rise?

Keys: No.

Storey: Multiple rises?

Keys: Multiple. I think they're five unit lifts.

Storey: Yeah. That's more or less the way Jack Savage designed it, (Keys: Yes.) I think?

Keys: Yes. And, all along the way we're exchanging gifts. I had taken a bunch of stuff along to give to them and they gave us stuff. They did their toasting, I mean I think they look forward to dignitaries coming so they can drink, and I don't drink. So, I was using diet Pepsi Cola part of the time and an orange drink that they had part of the time, and just water part of the times. It was very important that we do it, but they didn't insist that I drink their liquor, (Storey: Um-hmm.) which was fine. I mean, I don't make a big deal out of it. I just don't do it. (Storey: Um-hmm.) (Laugh) And, but it turned out really well. They had several different dinners for us with all of the different courses. Some of it I could eat and some of it I couldn't eat. But, we tried everything. But, they were really nice to us.

". . . they *want* help to deal with some of the problems that they're having with the project. . . ."

They *want* something. I mean, they *want* help to deal with some of the problems that they're having with the project. So, that turned out really well.

As I said, Dick and I, on that weekend, went to the Great Wall of China. We went to a silk factory. We went to a jade factory. We went to the Forbidden City. I tell you, by the time Monday morning got there, I had been to enough shrines and tourist sites to last me for a while, but it was really, really a good trip. So, any other questions on the China trip?

Storey: No. I don't think so. Did they serve you Eskimo Pies for dessert every meal?

Keys: No. (Laugh) No.

Storey: Chinese desserts?

Keys: Chinese desserts, yeah.

Storey: I had a friend who went on a trip and he, well he ran the The Fort Restaurant in Denver.

Keys: Oh, I know The Fort.

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- Storey: Yeah, Sam Arnold, and this was a fairly early tour after China was opened up, and everywhere they went they served them Eskimo Pies for dessert (Keys: I'll be darned.) because they thought that's what the Americans wanted. (Laugh)
- Keys: No. Everything they served us was traditional Chinese food. Like I said, I could eat most of it. There were some things that I didn't really care for that much, but it was good.
- Storey: Yeah. Bitter melon and some things you've got to develop tastes for.
- Keys: Yes, you do. (Laugh) So, it was a good trip and it was really a good opportunity for me to see at least something in another part of the world. It really the only foreign trip that I made. Well, that's not right. I went to Montreal to an I-C-I-D [International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage] meeting in 2002, but other than that I didn't get out of the United States while I was commissioner, and that's fine. That's fine.
- Storey: You said there were some personal things you wanted to talk about?

Working with Assistant Secretary Bennett Raley Was Hard

- Keys: Well, you know, there were, during my stint as commissioner I think there were two personal things that I really had a hard time dealing with. The one of them was working with assistant secretary Bennett Raley. He was a hard man to work with, and I just didn't get along with him. That was the one thing.

Family Difficulties in 2004 and 2005

The other, 2004 was a hard year. In 2002 my daughter, my middle daughter Jennifer, came to visit me in D.C., and I had lined up a lot of stuff for her to do over the Fourth of July when she visited. I mean, we went to the parade, and we went to the fireworks, and we went to see the professional soccer team play. We went to Kennedy Center to see *Aida*. We went to see a baseball game. We went to [Wolf] Trap to see the Beachboys. I mean, we just did *everything* that a person would want to do on a trip like that, and it was a great time for her and I to really share the experience there. At the time she was pregnant, early pregnancy, third, fourth month, whatever it was. As she was getting ready to leave she said, "Dad, they have found a lump in my side and when I get back they're going to take it out and do a biopsy and so forth and we'll see what's going on." Well they did that and they found that it was cancerous. And then, as they were tracing it and so forth it ended up that she had a tumor in her brain, but they waited to do any treatments until she had her baby. They actually induced labor and she had a son on Veterans Day, November 11, 2002. All through 2003 and early 2004 she was having surgeries and treatments. She was a school teacher. She taught chemistry and biology at West High School in Billings, Montana. And, she was doing treatments and surgeries. They operated on her a couple of times and they were doing different kinds of radiation therapy and chemotherapy. Jen always

wore her hair really long, down her back, and she was going to have surgery in like December or January after she had her baby. She donated her hair to one of these outfits that makes wigs for people that lose their hair to cancer therapy. But anyway, all of that was going on, and my wife, being a doctor, kept telling me that it was *really* serious and that Jen was probably not going to get well. Christmas of 2003, just before 2004, I flew into Billings and Dell and I had Christmas with her and her son, and her husband, and then we drove back down here. But, the rest of early 2004 Jen started having seizures, and they could not treat the cancer anymore, and she just went downhill really fast.

When I was home Christmastime 2003—all through my life, with my doctor-wife she had insisted on me getting PSA [Prostate-Specific Antigen] tests for prostate cancer—I got a test when I was home Christmastime. It was elevated. Then she was barking at me to get another one to see if it was the same somewhere else. So, when I got back to D.C. I got another test and it was elevated also. I went to see a urologist and—this has taken several months to get done—and in April he did a biopsy and found that I did have cancer in the prostate gland. It was in early stages, but it still was there. The doctor, after a bunch of other tests and other things sat down, and we discussed what to do and my immediate reaction is, “Just get it out of there.” At that time I was sixty-two years old and I had read a bunch of stuff that said, “Really, the only cure is to get it out.” So, we did all the tests and scheduled everything in. In June of 2004 I, late June, I had the operation to remove the prostate gland. And fortunately, they got it all and I didn’t have to do *any* follow-up treatments other than to just get well. That was June 27th when I had the surgery and Jen—I had gone to see Jen in Billings, over Memorial Day, and I knew that Jen was not going to last very long. It was the last time I got to see her. Anyway I had this surgery, and, God, I’ve got a catheter and I’m carrying a bag on my leg. I was only in the hospital a couple of days, and then Dell came back to Utah, and I was there by myself over the Fourth of July. I went back to work on the sixth, still carrying a bag on my leg. In the morning of the seventh, Dell called, and said Jen had passed away. I *immediately* had to make a lot of arrangements. I went back to the doctor to be sure I could travel. I, of course, talked to the office, and then I traveled out to Jen’s funeral in Billings, which was on a Saturday. That would have been the tenth, I think, ninth or tenth. Just a really hard time. I went back to D.C., and immediately went to the doctor to get that bag off my leg and the catheter out, and he did. On the Saturday after that I was trying to do some walking to get myself—and I had gone back to work—but I was trying to do some walking to get myself back to breathing right. I felt a little pain in my side and I thought, “My goodness. What’s that?” The Saturday I was not feeling well, and I started having some pains up in my chest on the Sunday I was just in mortal pain all day long. At first I thought I might be having a heart attack. I had a laptop there with me that I’d taken home and I pegged up on the computer to see what the symptoms of a heart attack were. They weren’t the same. I called the doctor, my urologist, who was not a general practice guy, told him what was going on. He says, “Well, can you wait until in the morning?” I said, “Well, probably.” So, I was in mortal pain all night long. I went to him the next morning. He looked

at me and he said, "Go immediately to this other doctor." I went to the other one and they did a bunch of tests and everything, and I'd had a pulmonary embolism, and luckily it went through and didn't hit the heart or hit a bad place in the lung. It just went out and ended up in the lung. They immediately put me in the hospital for about three more days and on these blood thinners and all of that stuff. So, I was off for another week. I finally got to go home from that and then back to work. Overall I was probably off from work for almost a month with the cancer surgery, and then Jen passing away, and then that embolism thing. So, it took me a while to get back on my feet and going again. Really a bad time.

Let me back up just a second. My wife had been going up to see Jen a lot, and in March she had been back here in Moab and had gone over to see my oldest daughter in Montrose, and the grandson, and her husband. Her husband had, at that time, what they thought was appendicitis. Took him into the hospital and found out that he was in stage four of colon cancer. And, this is all going on while Jen's going down really bad. Well, Kathe started working with her husband trying to see what they could do for him, and he got some treatments during the rest of '04. In early '05 he started going down really fast, and then he passed away in April of 2005. So, we lost our daughter, went through cancer surgery, a pulmonary embolism, and then we lost my daughter's husband, all within a year there. That was a tough time.

Storey: Yeah, it is.

Keys: You realize what your mortality is when you look cancer in the eye and you see your daughter pass away. Parents aren't supposed to bury their kids, and we really had a hard time with it. I still miss Jen. I still see her in the airports and stuff when I go through the airports. We get up to see the grandson quite often. We just spent a few days with them up at West Yellowstone, week before last. One of the reasons we were up there is we did the final spreading of her ashes from my airplane. She wanted to be spread over the upper Yellowstone Valley, up close to Yankee Jim Canyon and Immigrant Peak. We did that a week and a half ago. That was a hard year, and, you know, you realize how good the Reclamation family is when something like that happens. I will tell you that during that whole year the Reclamation family just kind of reached out and put their arms around us. It was quite a deal. The Billings Office was just fantastic to us, with Jen's family there. And, the Washington Office, God they just did everything for me, just took care of me. So, it was a hard year but it showed how good Reclamation can be (Storey: Um-hmm.) as a family. So. Anyway, that's what I wanted to talk about.

Storey: Um-hmm. That's a lot to deal with.

Keys: Yeah.

Storey: What's next?

Special Events the Commissioner Is Invited to Attend

Keys: When you're a working person you just work, and you don't get to do a lot of special stuff, but as commissioner there's a lot of *stuff* going on that you get to do and represent Reclamation. It's *really* neat stuff to do. There was a few of them that were just really special that I thought I'd talk about, and then I want to talk about the inauguration, which was different.

South Dakota Buffalo Roundup

Every year the Governor of South Dakota, Governor Mike Rounds, has a buffalo roundup. At Custer State Park, just south of Rapid City, they have this buffalo herd and they round them up every fall, and *cull* out enough to keep the herd healthy. They also sell of enough meat, to make enough money to run the park for the next year. The governor takes that opportunity to bring in industry. I tell you he's one of the most charging governors I've ever had a chance to work with in trying to get *new* business into South Dakota. And, he asked me to come to this thing every year because of our work with the water systems and folks wanting to talk to us about *when* water would be available on these rural water projects. It's kind of a (laugh) an anomaly because we're dragging our heels trying to get a different way of doing it, but they're being built at the same time. And, he had me come every year and it was a great event. I got to go two different years, '04 and '05. They asked me in '03, and things were in such a turmoil I couldn't go at that time. That was the Animas-La Plata report, and so forth, going on then. But, you know, we stayed at the Lodge House there at Custer State Park, and the Governor had dinners and they would give us a jacket or a coat, and all this stuff to wear and everything. And, it was really a good time to represent the Bureau and talk to industry, (Storey: Um-hmm.) and to see how . . .

END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 5. AUGUST 16, 2006.

BEGINNING OF SIDE 2, TAPE 5. AUGUST 16, 2006.

Keys: It was interesting to see how different governors approach trying to get business in their state. I mean, here's Governor Rounds. He puts on this buffalo roundup and invites *all* these different industries in, some that are already there, some that they're courting, trying to get them to bring their business in. He also has a, a pheasant hunt in the fall where he brings all these folks and stuff in. And, I mean he was just *actively* working on bringing business into his state. And, I would look at North Dakota, and, at times, I would think "God dang it, get off your butt and do something." They would sit there and say, "Oh, poor me. You took all of our land when you built the reservoir system, and you didn't build the Garrison Diversion Unit for us, and you haven't done this, and you haven't done that." And, it was not, "Get out there and try to attract this business in there." And, Montana's kind of half and half. Sometimes they do and sometimes they don't. But boy, there's Governor Rounds from South Dakota out there saying, "Look what we've got here. We've got labor sources. We've got water. We've got land. We've got clean

air. We've got all this *stuff*. Sure the winter's are bad, but hey, winter's are bad in a lot of places." And, he was attracting business into South Dakota. It was just amazing to me to see that work. I was glad I could be part of that for a couple of years.

Congressional Sportsman's Caucus

Another one happened in the spring, back in Washington, D.C. The Congressional Sportsman's Caucus sponsored an event called "Casting Call," in the spring, and later in the early summer they had an event called a "Shootout." For the Casting Call they would put together a fishing trip on the Potomac [River] there at Fletcher's Boathouse. There would be a dozen to two dozen Congressional folks, Congressmen and Senators, agency heads, a couple of Secretaries, and so forth, and they had this fishing event, mainly when the Atlantic shad were running, and I went to that a couple of years. It was really a good deal. For the Shootout they had skeet, and trap, and sporting clays. They furnish the guns and people shot and so forth. Really a good chance to get to know Senators and Congressmen on an off-the-business basis. We developed a couple of really good relationships there with people that we had *casually* worked with before and after that we worked very closely with them. So, it was a good deal.

". . . the holiday that just *characterizes* Washington, D.C., is July Fourth. . . ."

If you travel around the United States there are holidays that you associate with different cities. The holiday that just *characterizes* Washington, D.C., is July Fourth. And, I love July Fourth in Washington, D.C., because of *everything* that's going on there. One year my daughter was there. In '05 my wife and the daughter that lost her husband, and grandson came and went with us. A couple of times I was there by myself and just did stuff with Reclamation people. It starts early in the morning. There's a parade and one of our employee's mother was actually the coordinator of the parade. And, I got to sit under the canopy with the marshal and all that kind of thing. You had the parade, and then in the afternoon the secretary would have an awards ceremony for people getting thirty and forty year awards from the last year. And then in the evening there was dinner of hotdogs and hamburgers, and then the fireworks display up on the roof of the Interior building. *One year* I was asked over to the White House, on the lawn, to watch the fireworks. So, we always love the Fourth of July in Washington, D.C.. It's just a *special* time.

White House Kick-off for the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial

You know, talking about the White House, there were several White House events that as politicals we got to go to. The first, let's see it was in 2003, I was asked to go to the White House for a kick-off event for the Lewis & Clark Expedition. I had been to the kick-off, the *real* kick-off, down at Charlottesville, at Monticello, in January of that year. It was a great event but I

almost froze to death. It was up on that hill, the wind was blowing, (Storey: Um-hmm.) and the temperature had dropped to about ten degrees.

Storey: And it was moist?

Keys: Oh, God, it was, oh, and there was snow on the ground. The ground was covered with four or five inches of snow, and we sat there for several hours through that thing. I thought I was going to freeze to death. But, it was a good event.

But then they had this event at the White House, and Steve Williams, the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, and I, both of our wives were not there, went to it together. And, the President spoke. Several Native American tribes spoke and it was really a nice event.

Tours and Events at the White House

Every year at Christmastime they'd have open houses and tours through the White House, and I went several times and took different Reclamation people with me. Gosh, I took Bill Rinne one year. I, oh crum, who did I take last year that had not been in the White House before? Anyway, I'd take different Reclamation folks with me to the thing. That was really nice. But, my wife still hadn't met the President. I mean, we had been to the inauguration, but it was just a zoo, and I'll talk about that in a little bit. But, she'd got to just get a glimpse of him, but she'd never met the President or the First Lady. Well, this past March, I was asked to come to an event at the White House commemorating Benjamin Franklin's birthday. Dell flew into Washington to go to this with me. We went over to the White House and they had a little reception there with champagne and stuff to eat. Then we went up into the hall and there was the President and the First Lady. Mark Limbaugh and I were together, his wife Cindy, and I and Dell all went together, and we went up there and we were some of the first ones upstairs. We had just been standing in the right place. When they opened the door we went in. And, I will tell you he just kind of turned on the charm to everybody. He was very *gracious*, and he and the First Lady, talked to Dell and I for a half minute. That's a long time when you're going through a receiving line kind of thing. (Storey: Um-hmm.) And, they asked what I did and what she did, and thanked me for working for him, and thanked her for her service. She's a member of the Army Reserve. And, thanked her for her service and so forth. The program was an impersonator portraying Benjamin Franklin, and then it was over, and we left. The President and Mrs. Bush were there during the thing, so it was really nice to get to go to that. Over the period of five years, I got to meet with him and interacted a *little* bit with him three different times. So, it was a good deal.

George W. Bush's Second Inauguration

The inauguration. I guess I got my expectations built up too much for the inauguration, and I guess if I had to characterize the Inauguration it was the good, the bad, and the ugly. I had thought that as a member of the administration we would be fairly close to the stage. Wrong. I was given tickets, and we were way and the hell gone out on the front lawn, over to the side. Had to stand in a *humongous* line to get through security. Got in *just* before the thing started, and we were so far away we couldn't tell who the people were. (Storey: Um-hmm.) We'd look at it and then look at a big TV, teletron to see what was going on. So, that was disappointing. The parade, we had been asked by Salt River Project to visit their suite in the Washington Hotel and watch the parade. So, we walked from the Capitol down there, but the parade was an hour and some odd late getting started. By the time the parade got started and got to where we were, it was time we had to leave to get to the Inauguration Ball. So, we rode the Metro home to my apartment, changed clothes, and got our tickets for the Independence Ball at the Washington Civic Center. Rode the Metro over there and walked up to that, and met Mark and Cindy Limbaugh, and Matt and Kathy Eames there. We saw the secretary and got to talk to her for awhile. Fran Mainella and her husband were there. And Kit Kimball, the director of external affairs for the secretary, was there and her husband. So, we got to see some of our friends there. But, the president and the vice president came in and people were jumping up on chairs to see, and then the rest of us couldn't see. We hardly even got to see the president and the vice president during that thing. And, the music was not very good music. So anyway, up to that time I'm thinking, "Good god almighty this is not something we paid a bunch of money for here." I happened to see an ad somewhere that Mark Russell was going to be in town, Mark Russell the political satirist?

Went to See Mark Russell on Inauguration Night

- Storey: Oh, I know who Mark Russell is.
- Keys: He plays piano and does his satire. (Storey: Yeah.) He's been on public television for years.
- Storey: Has his grand piano and his rug with the (Keys: Exactly.) red, white, and blue, and the stars. (Laugh)
- Keys: He was going to be at Ford's Theater. I went to buy some tickets and they said, "Oh boy, we don't have any left." So, I went to see Fran Mainella and I said, "Fran, are there any tickets available for Ford Theater, for Mark Russell?" She said, "I'll take care of you." (Laugh) I had to pay for the tickets, but she got me two tickets right down on the, next to the front row to see Mark Russell and that was the good. We just loved that concert, you might call it, because we've seen Mark Russell for years and years, and he's *always* funny. He was funnier than all heck, and that was the good. So, there was a good time, and then Dell left the next day going home. So there I had built myself up too much thinking it was going to be a big deal, and then there were a million and a half other

people who had decided to do the same thing at the same time. (Storey: Um-hmm.) And, it just don't happen.

Storey: And, I guess there are a bunch of inaugural balls and the president has to (Keys: Exactly.) skip from one to the other?

Keys: He spent maybe ten minutes there, he and Mr. Cheney and their wives.

Easter Egg Rolls at the White House

The other event at the White House that we really enjoyed were the Easter Egg rolls. In 2003 my grandson that's here from Montrose, Casey, with, and his mother Kathe and the husband that passed away last year, came back to D.C., and Dell came in, and we all went to the Easter Egg Roll in 2003, two or three? It was in 2003 and the family, Dell came back, daughter and her husband and the grandson came back, and we took Casey to the Easter Egg Roll. It rained the night before. Everything was soggy, but we still had a nice time. Casey got to see all of the cartoon characters. Lynn Cheney was there reading stories to the kids, and the grandson got to sit next to her and listen to her read a story to the kids, which was really nice. The fact is, Lynn Cheney wrote a book for kids, the ABCs of America, and I got copies that she had signed for all three of my daughters at the time. But, in 2003 we went to the Easter Egg Roll with Casey, and then this year in 2006 we had the other grandson, the one who lost his mother, and his dad. They came back, and Dell came back, and we went to the Easter Egg Roll. It rained like a son of a gun. I was surprised that they didn't cancel it. But it rained, but we still had a good time. So, those are some of the events at the White House that we got to participate in.

"The centennial was a great time for me. . . ."

There were other special things, you know, getting to be out with regional directors and area managers doing special stuff. The centennial was a great time for me. I used to tell people around Reclamation that during the centennial I had a perfect day when I went to Casper with area manager John Lawson for an event at Pathfinder [Dam]. I flew in the night before and early Saturday morning John Lawson picked me up, and we went out to Pathfinder Dam, had a centennial event, and dedicated a stretch of river that they had reclaimed there that had been dry for years. They had reclaimed it working with the local fly fishing group, and the Wyoming Fish and Game Department. They had put in rocks in the river, and had guaranteed flow through there, and it was just *thriving* with fish. So, we got to do that in the morning, had a nice lunch with everybody, and then John and Maryanne Bach, who was the regional director at the time, and a Wyoming fish and game guy, and I went over to the river, to the North Platte River, got in a couple of drift boats, and fished. And, I caught eight of the prettiest fish you ever—that's not right. There were, I caught three rainbows, two browns, and three native cutthroat. Pretty fish. *Great* afternoon. The fishing was super. Then we went to Casper and

didn't have supper, but John Lawson and his wife Ginger, and Maryanne, and I went to the baseball game. The Casper Rockies were playing the Ogden Raptors. So, if that's not a perfect day I don't know what it is. (Laugh) You know, you're out with Reclamation people in the morning doing good stuff, you get to go fishing in the afternoon, and go to a baseball game at night. There were a number of times being out with the regional and project people that were *really* special.

Several times at Grand Coulee, several times at Hoover, and I even did a river trip with Bob Johnson and Yuma area manager Jim Cherry. They have a river trip from Yuma all the way to Hoover Dam, and they take district people and other folks to look at the levees, to look at the sediment work that they're doing, *and* to get to know them. I did that one year, which was a lot of fun. So, a lot of special stuff that a commissioner gets to do that I *thoroughly* enjoyed. So, that's some of the special stuff. Did you (Storey: Good.) have any questions? Or . . .

Storey: No. But, you mentioned Maryanne?

Keys: Yeah.

Storey: Can we talk more about her maybe?

Keys: Sure.

Storey: About her being regional director, and so on?

Maryanne Bach

Keys: Well, when I left Reclamation in '98 I think Maryanne was the deputy in Billings. She was the deputy regional director to, I think, Neil Stessman. And when I came back in 2001, Maryanne had been appointed to be the regional director there. Maryanne is one of the smartest people I ever worked with, and her management style at times was, I would call it meticulous, almost to the point of having to be perfect. She worked the same way with her area managers. At times she had to approve maybe more than she should, so that she was too close to it at times. But, Maryanne would work herself sick. She would work twelve or thirteen hours a day, and travel, and travel, and then she'd get sick and have to be off for a while. Then she'd come back and just throw herself back into it. At times I talked to her about delegating to her area managers more, and to her people in Billings so that she didn't have to have her thumb on everything in the region. She came to me in late 2004, and said, "I need a change." And, of course, my immediate thought is she had a health problem or something, (Storey: Yeah.) and I talked to her a couple of times and other than just saying that she needed a change, that was it. She had family in Denver and she wanted to be transferred to Denver. At that time we had a vacancy there, the director of research, Shannon Cuniff, had taken a job with the Corps of Engineers, and that left the director of research in Denver position

open. We reassigned her and started a process to find a new regional director in early 2005. Maryanne was a good regional director. It's just that her management style was close. She really needed to have her thumb on everything in that region, and at times the area managers balked at that, and at times her Billings folks balked at it, but she was a good regional director. One of the smartest people I ever knew. (Storey: Um-hmm.) So, I don't know what else you had in mind for Maryanne?

Storey: Well, you got a replacement for her?

Mike Ryan

Keys: Yes. We advertised, had two *really good* Reclamation people that we were considering, and decided to go with Mike Ryan. Mike Ryan, at the time, was the area manager at Shasta [Dam]. He had been the area manager at Klamath Falls several years before and had been the area manager at Shasta for, I think, five or six years, and had done a really good job. Mike is one of the thinkers that we depended on a lot. We selected him and I think he reported in July of 2005. Right after he reported we had a Lewis & Clark event at Clark Canyon Reservoir. Where Clark Canyon Reservoir sits just south of Dillon, Montana, is where the Lewis and Clark expedition met up with the Shoshone [Indians,] Sakakawea's family and they got the horses and supplies to help them get over the mountain. But, we had an event and I was able to meet his wife Shelly and get to know Mike as a regional director and explain to him what we were looking for and so forth. Mike's been there for a little over a year now, (Storey: Um-hmm.) as regional director. Maryanne was director of research for a while. We had her acting in a couple of other jobs while we were reorganizing and doing some stuff. Now she is director of resources, in which she supervises research, and the Technical Service Center. It seemed like there was one other thing that she supervises,⁷¹ but that's what she's doing now. A very capable person.

Storey: Um-hmm. How about the other regional directors? Let's see, there's Bob Johnson.

Bob Johnson

Keys: Bob Johnson, I've know him for twenty-five, thirty years. I first met him in Washington, D.C., back in early 1980, or '81. So, twenty-five years I've known him. He's an economist by trade, went to the University of Nevada for his degrees, and is a native Nevadan. His family still lives in Lovelock. They get water off of the Bureau of Reclamation project there. Bob is a *good* man. I remember when he was named deputy in Boulder City, and I worked very closely with him. He was appointed to be regional director while I was regional director, and we got along famously. At times he and I thought just almost exactly alike on how to do some stuff, and we got along really well. As

71. Also supervises the Power Liaison officer and the DEC/DSO.

regional director, while I was commissioner, I didn't have any better than him. He was as good as there are because he was dealing with those *complex* Colorado River issues, those *complex* CAP issues. We had assistant secretary Bennett Raley in there working on some of the issues, and Bob had to provide the support and do the stuff for him. And, they came up with really good results—the Interim Surplus Criterion, Quantification Settlement Agreement, the Multi Species Conservation Program, and now working on the Shortage Criterion. He has brought in and helped develop great people and has a really *good* management style that lets folks do their job but gives them leadership at the right time. Bob Johnson's a good man. I think a lot of him.

Storey: Good. (Keys: Yeah.) And, of course, now he's been nominated as commissioner?

Keys: Yes. I supported that nomination. I actually gave him some suggestions as he was going through the process, and a couple of weeks ago I wrote a letter to the committee recommending his approval. (Storey: Um-hmm.) I actually checked with the Ethics Department back in Washington to be sure that was okay, and they assured me that it was. But, I *believe* in Bob Johnson. I think he would be good⁷² for Reclamation.

Storey: Good.

Filling Vacancies Upon Arrival at Reclamation – Rick Gold and Kirk Rogers

Keys: The other regional directors, when I first came in as commissioner we had vacancies in Salt Lake City, because Charlie Calhoun had retired. We had vacancy in California because Lester Snow had taken another job. We advertised to fill those jobs early on, and it took us almost a year to get it done. We were fortunate to get Rick Gold approved as regional director in Salt Lake City, and fortunate to get Kirk Rodgers approved in California.

Rick, I've known him since like 1968. Rick graduated from Utah State University and came to work with Reclamation right out of school in the Central Utah Project where I was working. And then, he kind of *followed* me. After I had left the Upper Missouri Region, he came into the region in the job that I had. Then he went to Durango as project manager, and then he had been the deputy in Salt Lake City for a number of years. The regional director job was a natural for him. He just moved right into the regional director's job and hardly missed a beat.

Kirk does not have a degree. Kirk Rogers, when I first knew him, was in Burley, Idaho when I went to work up there as assistant regional director in 1980. Kirk worked himself up through the ranks—was the administrative officer in Burley when I knew him first. He had *been* a supply

72. October 17, 2006, several weeks after this interview, Commissioner Robert (Bob) W. Johnson was sworn in.

clerk–administrative officer, got off doing other special assignments, and Roger Patterson hired him into the Klamath Falls Project to be the area manager there. Kirk was the area manager in Klamath for a few years. They then took him into Sacramento to manage their Endangered Species Act programs, he proved himself, and then at some time or other he was named assistant regional director. When Roger first retired, they took Kirk and made him acting regional director. There was a lot of stuff happening at that time and it kind of ate him alive. He ended up with a bad taste for that job. Lester Snow came in, from the State of California, and he did not know Reclamation that well. Kirk was his right-hand person. Lester only stayed for a year or a year and a half as regional director. When Lester quit and went back to the State, or went to private practice at that time, he’s now the State Director of Water Resources, they made Kirk acting again. And, the second time he performed *famously*, did everything right, was really doing well, and then he applied for the regional director’s job. We selected him, and he has been a great regional director every since. So, I’m really proud of Kirk Rodgers and Rick Gold because I selected them. (Storey: Um-hmm.) And, I’m really proud of them for what they get done.

Bill McDonald

Bill McDonald is the regional director up in Boise. When I retired in 1998, my deputy, Ken Pedde, had been, doing all of the salmon work, and it was overpowering. There was just a ton of work to do on salmon. I sat down with him before I left and I said, “Ken, that work needs to carry on. We can’t slack off on anything, we can’t miss a beat on that Salmon Program.” And, I said, “It is no discredit to you. I will make public statements that it’s not because of anything that you have done or haven’t done, but that program is so important I need you to concentrate on it, so I’m not going to recommend that you be acting regional director when I leave.” And, we agreed on that. Now, deep down he may have had a problem with it but he always supported what I did. I recommended that Steve Clark, the power manager from Grand Coulee, be the acting regional director when I left. Commissioner Martinez agreed with that. And then they advertised and Bill McDonald, who was working in California at the time, was selected and took over my job up there. Bill’s a lawyer by trade and Bill’s lawyer approach to stuff at times grates the irrigation districts. Some of them he’s very close to and some of them he’s very distant from. And, some of them have had problems working with Bill, but Bill’s a good regional director. He’s always done outstanding work. He has been a good part of the Reclamation team. I think that gets them, doesn’t it? Am I missing someone?

Storey: Okay. I have a question.

Keys: Okay.

Storey: You said, “We were *lucky* to get them approved.” (Keys: Yeah.) Could you talk to me about that process?

Keys: Well, the process for getting people approved for the SES [Senior Executive Service] Program, sometimes it's . . .

END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 5. AUGUST 16, 2006.

BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 6. AUGUST 16, 2006.

Storey: This is Brit Storey interviewing John W. Keys on August 16, 2006. This is tape six. This is a continuation of tapes begun on August the 15th.

Approvals for SES Slots Where Candidates Have Not Completed the SES Feeder Program

Keys: If someone has been through the SES Development Program it's fairly easy to get them appointed to SES positions. You have an SES Review Board, and then it has to be approved by OPM [Office of Personnel Management] and so forth. It's not political. We *insisted* that it not be political and we fought years and years to keep our regional director appointments from being political. I mean, they were political a few times. (Storey: Um-hmm.) Dave Houston [pronounced how stun] was a political. He's the one that comes to mind, but we've *fought* to keep them from being political. But, Kirk and Rick had not been through the SES Development Program and we had to promise that we'd get certain training for them. We had to write special things to show their experiences and so forth. It was not that they didn't want them in there, it was just we had to go through a lot of paperwork to get them approved, since they hadn't been through this SES Feeder Program. Mike Ryan, was just a snap, because he was finishing up the SES Feeder Program when we selected him after Maryanne changed jobs. It didn't take very long at all, really. But, it was just the application process. I think we advertised those two regional director jobs in September 2001. We made the selections in December, and then it took three or four months to get them approved. So, it took us almost a year from when I got in to get those two guys advertised, selected, and approved to be regional director. Is that what you meant?

Storey: Um-hmm.

Keys: Yeah. It's just . . .

Storey: But who do you have to go to for approval?

Keys: Well, the first person I had to go to was Bennett Raley, the assistant secretary, and convince he and Tom Weimer, the deputy assistant secretary, that Kirk Rodgers and Rick Gold were the right people for the jobs. And, that was pretty easy because they had had a chance to work with them in their acting capacities. But, we still had to convince them that they were the right ones. For Rick, it was easy. He had been a long-time deputy, and so forth. It was a little harder for Kirk because of that experience he had right after Roger Patterson left. There were a couple of issues that had really been hard for Kirk during that time and we had to convince them that Kirk was the right person.

They agreed after a while. Then we had to go to the secretary, and all of the minions between Bennett Raley and the secretary. It ended up that I had to make a presentation to the secretary on those two guys. And she agreed, and that's when we started the other process in December, when we actually made the final selection. *Then*, it has to go through an SES Review Board. That's where the lack of training in the SES Feeder Program became important, because they questioned all of their qualifications. Kirk and Rick had to write up special justifications telling how they'd do stuff and so forth. After the Executive Review Board gave its approval, *then* it has to go to OPM, and god only knows what they do over at OPM. I mean, they take forever. OPM is a different animal.

Retirement this Time Was Not as Smooth as in 1998

When I retired in 1998 I retired on the third of June, never missed a paycheck, just like clockwork. Retirement was just fine. This time, crap, I retired on the fifteenth of April and it was the first of August before I got a paycheck, because OPM had to do this, and that, and the other, and it just took *forever* to get stuff done now. So . . .

Storey: Any kind of a paycheck or a full paycheck?

Keys: Any kind of a paycheck. I ended up getting a two-month lump sum for May and June. (Storey: Yeah.) And then a check for July and then the first check for August. So, it was a mess. But, back to the appointments of Rick and Kirk, it just took a while to get it through OPM. I can't remember exactly when the appointments were final, but it was May or June before we actually finished up for Kirk and Rick. And, we were doing them parallel, both at the same time. But we finally got them done. Those are the regional directors that I've worked with, and, like I said, I got to pick three, three out of the five of them, which was a good deal.

Mark Limbaugh and Bill Rinne as Deputy Commissioners

You know, there's some other people to talk about besides the regional directors. We talked yesterday, earlier in the interview, about Mark Limbaugh and you know just to kind of cap that one off. I'm dead serious when I say I couldn't do my job without Mark Limbaugh and Bill Rinne. In the early days Bill was the deputy, and Mark was director of external affairs, and then we got them both appointed as deputies. They're just tremendous people to work with. Now, I had known Mark in Idaho before.

Bill Rinne, I met Bill Rinne for the first time, when he was a biologist in the Lower Colorado Region working out of Boulder City. We had done a EIS on one of our salinity control projects in the Lower Basin, and we had a public hearing in El Centro, California. Phil Sharp, who was the regional environmental specialist, this is '76 or '77. But, we rode from Boulder City to El Centro together. That's when I first knew Bill Rinne. It's funny because

going down there those two guys being biologists were telling me about every variety of *cactus* that we ever saw, and there were eight or ten varieties between Boulder City and El Centro, and all of the desert flora and fauna. I tell you I remember that to this day. But, Bill Rinne has *always* been a good friend, from that day on. I've know him, kept up with him.

Larry Todd

In my second year as commissioner, in 2002, we had moved Larry Todd to doing other work after 9/11, on the security assignments. The five regional directors at that time reported to Larry in Operations, but they didn't like that very much. I actually was more their supervisor than anybody else. They wanted somebody to talk to before they came to the commissioner. And, the more I thought about that the more I liked it, because it gave us a second level of action or review. In other words, if they came to me and I said something, "Crap, the only way to change it is to go to the assistant secretary." If they came to a deputy and they made a decision then they could come to me and had another level in there that we could change things if we wanted to, or get something done, and we all liked the idea. We went to those five regional directors and said, "Okay, who could you work for? Who in Reclamation could you work for?"

Storey: But, they were working for Larry weren't they?

Keys: Well, *not exactly*, because we have shifted Larry off, but they had been.

Storey: Oh. Okay.

Keys: They didn't like it very much, because they didn't like the way Larry did business at times. We said, "Who could you work for?" Well, it turned out no one of the five was acceptable to the other four, because we'd say, "Okay, one of you guys can come in and be the Deputy for Operations, and the others will report to him." No one of the five, none of the four could work for the other one. I mean, it was all over. We said, "Okay, who could you work for?" And they said, "Well, who'd you have in mind?" And, we talked about a few people. Bill Rinne was one of the people that we talked about, and all of them agreed that they could work for Bill Rinne. We said, "Bill, could you come in and be the deputy commissioner?" and he agreed to do it. And, I will tell you it was one of the best moves that I ever made in my life, to bring Bill in as our deputy. And, we ended up with Bill and Mark as our two deputies, and I'm telling you it was just really good business. Not at small sacrifice either. Bill's wife, Jan, never moved back to D.C.. She was manager of the credit union in Boulder City, Nevada—good job, good pay, good people, and Bill lived in Dennis Underwood's condo. Bill is still living in Dennis Underwood's condo in Washington, D.C., in Crystal City there. Bill and I rode this, the Metro home every night together. We would be there until seven-thirty, eight o'clock, eight-thirty, nine o'clock trying to finish stuff up, and then we'd ride home together. One night, it only happened once and then we kidded each

other too much after that, we're on the train, eight-thirty at night after having worked thirteen hours or fourteen hours in the day, and we're still talking about work. We were talking so intently we missed our stop on the Metro, ended up at National Airport. And, from then on we'd remind each other (laugh) to not miss our stop on the dang Metro. (Storey: Um-hmm.) But, Bill Rinne's a good man. Bill, before he came back there, was fighting cancer. He had lost a kidney to cancer. And, he had a flare-up last year, and they think they got it all this time and had to have some treatment. It was not a small sacrifice for him to be back there. He actually talked about retiring this past January, and I actually gave him a retention bonus *to stay* past my retirement, until we got a new commissioner. I think he'll probably retire when Bob Johnson's confirmed. I know there's some rumors out there about him wanting to go back to Boulder City as regional director, but I don't think that'll happen. (Storey: Um-hmm.) Those are the deputies.

Storey: But, wasn't he in Phoenix?

Keys: I don't--no.

Storey: I guess I'm confused (Keys: Yeah.) as usual. Anyway.

Keys: They were just good people to work with. When I went back to D.C., the *tradition* was that they have a political chief of staff. For Dennis Underwood it had been Dave Reynolds, a good man. For Dan Beard it had been Ed Osann, not a good man, and then it had been Steve Richardson.

Storey: Richardson.

Making the Chief of Staff Position Non-political

Keys: Steve Richardson for Eluid Martinez. I made the pitch for the chief of staff being a career person, and was able to sell that. That's when we agreed that our director of external affairs would be a political person, our congressional affairs would be a political, which traditionally had been a career person, and then we'd have another political. That would give the Bureau three politicals.

Bob Quint as Chief of Staff and in Iraq

So, I sold it and Bob Quint⁷³ was there, and I had him as my chief of staff for the first three years. Bob did *great* work for me. I never asked him to do anything that he didn't get done, but he and Bennett Raley didn't hit it off together. Bob had a quirk of sometimes making a joke out of things, and he did that one too many times with Bennett and got on his bad side. Bennett just took a dislike to him, and we were having to make concessions. Bob was also having some tough sledding at home there for a while that we were working

73. Bob Quint served as chief of staff from November of 2000 to October of 2004. He assumed the position during the term of Eluid Martinez as Commissioner of Reclamation.

with him to try to help him past. In 2004, he had been my Chief of Staff for about three years. We were asked by the Corps of Engineers and by the foreign affairs people if we had a management type person that could go to Bagdad in Iraq and work with the Iraqi government. Actually, they wanted a fairly high-level appointment, SES-level job. Bob and I sat down, and we were thinking about who we could send over there. Toward the end of the conversation, when we had talked about a number of people, we had thought about sending Rick Gold over, asking Rick if he wanted to go, or asking Fred Orr. And, we mentioned a couple other folks. The next day I called those two guys, and neither one of them were interested. Bob and I sat down, and he had thought about this for a couple of days, and he said, "How about me?" And I said, "Bob, is that really what you want to do?" He said, "Yeah, I could do that job." And I said, "How's it going to affect your family situation?" And he said, "Well, I don't know, but it may do it some good." So, we started the process, and in October of '04 Bob Quint went to Baghdad for a year assignment and stayed until late August of '05. He did a great job for us, developed a *tremendous* rapport with the Iraqi government people there. We sent some Safety of Dams people to assignments over there, had them doing work outside, over here for over there, and Bob did a good job. He had a *hair-raising* experience on one of his trips out of the Green Zone in Baghdad in early '05. They were in a troop carrier. He was down inside and they got hit, and it killed the young fellow that was in the turret, and he actually fell down in on top of Bob. It scared him, scared all of us. All of us were really bothered by that. And, he wouldn't tell anybody about it for the longest time. The fact is, there's not many people that know about it now.

Storey: Yeah. It wasn't in his "letters from Iraq."

Keys: No. He asked me about doing those regular reports for everybody and we said, "Sure." And, all around Reclamation, everybody was reading those things. I mean, all of us looked forward to hearing from him and (Storey: Yeah.) what he was doing. And, he came home three or four times during that time, and then we brought him back in September and did not send anybody back. We offered to do the same as we had done with Bob, but they wanted the person to be a State Department employee. We didn't find anybody that wanted to quit their job and go to work with the State Department, so we ended the thing.

Eileen Salenick

When Bob left I advertised for chief of staff and Eileen Salenick had been back there working for Larry Todd and then was working for Mark Limbaugh on Water 2025. I had known Eileen before because she had done the Snake River Resources Review study for us up in Idaho when she was still working up there when I was regional director. And then she came back there working for Mark and for Larry Todd. I had talked to a number of people about who I should hire as my chief of staff, and almost every one of them said, "You couldn't do any better than Eileen Salenick." So, I hired Eileen as my chief of staff, a *great* move. She just did a *tremendous* job as chief of staff. Fact is, she

kept asking me, “What are you going to do when Quint comes back?” And I said, “This is your job.” I actually had to do some special paperwork to make that happen. We promised Bob another job, and he’s an associate working with Bill Rinne now. We made it permanent for her, and she just did a great job, did a lot of the legwork on Water 2025, is just a good thinker, a good writer, and she was really good to work with. When Eileen retired in February, Cathy Konrath from Boise filled in until I retired in April. So, that was my chief of staff.

Filling the Congressional Affairs Position

Congressional Affairs, when I first went back there, we had agreed to get a political as our chief of Congressional Affairs. The agreement that I had with the White House Liaison is they wouldn’t make me take just anybody. I had to agree to take somebody. And, I tell you, I reviewed résumés from political hacks like crazy, interviewed them, and I just didn’t find a fit. Mark and I were talking in late ‘01 and both of us knew Matt Eames, who at that time was working with Idaho Power Company in Boise, and we had heard that he was trying to make a career change. So, I called up Matt and talked to him, and yes he was interested in coming. Well, we had to go to the White House folks and get Matt’s name put on the list that was acceptable, and then go through all the rigmarole. It took us several months to get him approved, but he was our director of Congressional Affairs and did a really good job. He did such a good job that when David Bernhardt, the department congressional affairs director, changed jobs the department hired Matt in to be the Department’s congressional affairs director. When Matt left, that was like in ‘04, late ‘03 or early ‘04, we advertised again, and again we were getting political hacks like crazy. Mark came in one night and he said, “I *found* our Congressional Affairs Director.” And, I said, “What’s his name?” And he said, “David McCarthy.” McCarthy had worked on the Hill, had been involved in Homeland Security Committee activities, and had quit. He quit to write a book, a book for brides that are going to get married, and how to do their marriage. No connection whatsoever. And, he wasn’t working at the time. So, we interviewed and I agreed with Mark that he was the right person if we could get him. And, again we had to be sure everything was okay, but we brought David on. He did a great job as—fact is, he knew *so many* people on the Hill that every time I went to the Hill with him, it amazed me because he knew everybody up there. More than that, they knew him, and he did a great job for us. This past spring one of the committees—David was a lawyer by trade, by the way—one of the committees called David and offered him a job as legal counsel for the committee, which is a *hell* of a good job, pay raise, good responsibility, just a heck of a job, and David came to us and told us that he’d like to take it. We, of course, agreed that he could do what he wanted to, and so forth. Again, we started interviewing political people and we offered the job to one young fellow and he ended up turning us down. I had worked very closely with Senator Bob Bennett of Utah and his people over the years, and with his director of Legislative Affairs, Luke Johnson, who was handling the Interior contacts also. We asked around and everything was fine, so Luke Johnson is

now the director of congressional affairs. Good young man, good young Utah guy that's back there. He had worked for Senator Bennett for a long time, had experience on the appropriations side *and* on the authorization side and I understand he's doing a really good job for them now. There's one other person that I would talk about.

Gertel Harris-Brace

Back when I was regional director, I would go into Washington, D.C., meet people and exchange ideas and stuff, and I got to know Gertel Harris. Gertel Harris-Brace is her full name. She's in public affairs, and she always was giving me the Bureau stuff, you know, patches, and folders, and the little ducks, and all of that stuff. I got to know her very well before when I was regional director. Just a good friend. If I needed something I'd go and say, "Gertel, I need this or that," and she'd get it for me. When I went back to be commissioner I made it through the Senate on a Thursday, and they called and asked me to be in D.C. on the next Monday to be sworn in. They got the paperwork through the White House and so forth. I hit the ground in Washington, D.C., on the fifteenth, that Sunday, went into the office the sixteenth, the Monday morning, and the lady in Personnel, named Sandy Streets, swore me in, in a little old back closet back behind her office, just so I could go to work. Because legally, you can't go to work until you're sworn in. They were going to have the official ceremony later on. Well, Fran Mainella the director of the Park Service, Bennett Raley the assistant secretary of water and science, Neil McCaleb the assistant secretary for indian affairs, myself, and Steve Griles the deputy secretary of the interior all needed to be sworn in.

Storey: The deputy secretary?

Keys: Deputy secretary. Yeah. All of us needed to be sworn in. So, they hastily put together a ceremony for that next day, the seventeenth, a Tuesday. McCaleb had his daughter there to hold his bible. Steve Griles had his daughter there to hold his. Fran Mainella had somebody there to hold hers. Bennett Raley had asked Tom Weimer to hold his for him. I looked around Reclamation and I thought, "Who in this world could I get to hold the bible for me when I was sworn in?" I was walking down the hall and the idea just hit me, and I said "Why not Gertel? Everybody in Reclamation knows Gertel Harris. And, why don't you let her do it?" I went down and I said, "I need two things. I need you to find a bible, because we can't find one, and then I'd like you to hold it for me." One of the best moves I ever made in my life, because she was just tickled to death, did a great job, everybody knew who she was, and she's just such a *good* person. I was always glad I did that. That's what I had in mind for special people, unless you had somebody else you wanted me to . . .

Storey: What about maybe Secretary Norton?

Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton

Keys: When I interviewed with Secretary Norton in April 2002, it was the first time I'd ever met her. On the Fourth of July weekend, before I had been confirmed by the Senate. She had a meeting at Shepherdstown, West Virginia, at the NCTC, National Conservation Training Center of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Got all of us together to decide what we were going to do as a department together. We got to know *her*. We got to know all of the different people we were working with, and from the very start she showed *me* and *Reclamation* nothing but the upmost of respect. I never felt that she did not support our Reclamation program or the water programs that we were trying to do. She was an attorney by trade. She always wanted to know *everything* there was to know about something, and she was the most voracious reader I ever saw. And, she could pick up stuff quicker than *anybody* I ever saw. But she worked with me very closely as a bureau head, and I came away from there with just a great feeling for Secretary Norton. She put together a team. The bureau directors, the assistant secretaries, were all there to make that team work, and I had nothing but the greatest of admiration for Secretary Norton. Fact is, she left just before I did. She left at the end of March in 2006 when I left April the 15th. They put together a little video for her, and they had me on there asking me some questions. The way I put it was, "there are only about two people in this world that I'd jump off a cliff for and Secretary Norton is one of them," because she selected me, she supported me, she *helped* me get stuff done, she helped us with ideas on ways to get it done when she needed to, like the security activities in 2001 and 2002. But, it was our program and she let us do our jobs. When I was having the difficulties with Bennett Raley, it never got to her because she wanted us to work with Steve Griles so that there was always a fallback if there had to be. And, she never had to get into it, because we were big enough men to make it work with Griles. But, she was so good to me. I made her cry a couple of times. You know, when I was going through all that stuff in '04 and '05, she called me in and wanted to know what was going on and everything, and she cried with me. So, that meant a lot.

Storey: Yeah.

Keys: So, I can't say enough good about Secretary Norton. She was just above and beyond. (Storey: Um-hmm.)

Storey: I think you were interested in talking about some of the organizations and the people who head them?

Keys: Yeah. You know . . .

END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 6. AUGUST 16, 2006.

BEGINNING OF SIDE 2, TAPE 6. AUGUST 16, 2006.

Keys: When I first got into a position to recognize NWRA, Pat O'Meara was the director. He was the good old boy that knew all the districts and the managers and worked with them very closely. And, Tom Donnelly was his deputy doing the congressional work at that time. Tom was a Vietnam veteran who had

worked on the Hill. Donnelly was appointed to be the executive director of NWRA when Pat left. His approaches to things were a lot different than Pat, and for the most part we got along with Tom. There were some times when we felt that he should have been closer to some problems. I mentioned my experience when I was nominated to be commissioner. He's a good man, and he's got some *really good* young folks working for him. Chris Polly is as good as there is that's working for him. Dan Keppen is the executive director of Family Farm Alliance. Dan was the director of the Klamath Water Users Association when we were doing most of the work there in the early part of the administration. He's a good young man, good to work with. ACWA, Association of California Water Users Agencies has Steve Hall and David Reynolds working for them. Steve handles the organization in California and David handles the activities in Washington, D.C.. Steve is a great young man who's actually fighting a terminal disease himself. He has Lou Gehrig's Disease. I had an experience at St. Louis with him. We were there for the President's Cooperative Conservation Conference and Fran Mainella had made arrangements for us to go up into the arch in St. Louis. Every one of us had two places. Well, Mark Limbaugh had Cindy, his wife, and other folks had their wives there, and I was walking around there and I happened to see Steve. And I said, "Steve, come on and go with me," and he did, and I got to know him very well. And, he's just a great young man. I didn't know that he was sick at the time. We found that out later. But, great young man, good ideas, good management skills, and he has been good for ACWA.

The one organization that's kind of a paradox at times is the Colorado River Water Users Association. Got along, I always got along really well with them, but *doggone* they had some different ideas. They didn't want us having side meetings during their meetings. And, you know, the last thing I think some of the managers want to do is go down there and sit through some boring talks, but boy they were very strong on that. It was almost like they were born, and bred, and reared by Reclamation, and they didn't want to recognize that. They put out their seventy-fifth anniversary DVD, and there were *three words* remarkably missing from the whole DVD—"Bureau of Reclamation". I mean, there were some credits on the spool at the end but they never said those three words, and I had a problem with that. And, I was working very closely with Randy Kirkpatrick, the new president, when I left, to try to do something about that so that we were closer to them. We worked very closely with all of the *state* water resources agencies and the organizations. And we worked with the state water users associations. There are some great district managers out there that I worked really closely with, Ted Diehl from Northside Canal Company in Idaho, Vince Alberdi from Twin Falls Canal Company in Idaho, Jim Trull from Sunnyside in the Yakima Basin. Dick Erickson and Shannon McDaniels from the Columbia basin Project. Dick's from the East Columbia Irrigation District and Shannon's from the South. Some of them in California, Ernie Schanks from TCID, Truckee Carson Irrigation District. Some here in Utah. There are *great* water people out there, just great water people. So, those are some of the names that always come to . . .

Storey: What about CREDA?⁷⁴

Keys: CREDA? Oh yeah. Leslie James is the executive director. When I was regional director Cliff Barrett was Executive Director of CREDA. We worked with him closely. Worked closely with Leslie. At times they are more interested in money than we are, and they were trying to save money here and save money there. But, they're a good outfit to work with on the power side.

Unless you've got something else, what I was going to end up with is just some of the stuff around my retirement and what I'm doing after the retirement?

Storey: Okay. That's what I was going to ask next.

Keys: Okay.

Storey: Good.

Retirement Activities as Commissioner of Reclamation

Keys: They call it a "victory lap," and I don't know where that came from, but every Bureau head, when they retire, does a *victory* lap around their Bureau. My victory lap was the five regional offices and Denver. People were calling and asking "what could they give me for retirement?" And the rule that I set was that they couldn't collect money and *buy* anything. It had to be something "Bureau." That worked out really well except that I ended up with a bunch of stuff in this house that I don't have a place to put (Laugh) to show somebody. I'm working on it. I had a new set of bookcases built downstairs, but I don't have everything out yet. I went to Billings and got to see a lot of old friends, some retirees were there. Went into Boise, the same thing, into Salt Lake City, and the Job Corps actually were there in force at Salt Lake City, because I did a lot of stuff with Collbran and Weber Basin. And, into Boulder City. Bob Johnson and his people were just the *best* of friends that I ever had. And, into Sacramento. I did a thing with the employees, and then we had a thing with the water users that night, which was really nice. And then into Denver, and I don't know whether you were at the one at Denver or not. (Storey: Um-hmm.) But, it was a good time. Maryanne Bach, bless her heart, I don't know how she did it, but when I went back to be commissioner—well, let me back up.

All of the early days that I was ever in D.C., I'd walk into the commissioner's office and there's this big painting on the wall of Lake Powell, of, "Breakfast in the Morning at Lake Powell" or something like that.⁷⁵ I loved that picture. When Dan Beard became commissioner, he had it taken down. And, Eluid, instead of putting it back, he had a buffalo herd hanging up there in its place. Well, the first thing I did when I became commissioner was go into

74. Colorado River Energy Development Association.

75. The painting by Dean Faussett is titled "Campsite at Dawn—Lake Powell."

the office and say, "I want the picture back." And, Henk Willms had it hanging in his office and he was glad to give it up. So, we put it back in there. I always wanted a print of that picture. There were no prints, and they tried making pictures to make prints. It didn't work. Well, Maryanne found a print of that picture, and that's what they gave me in Denver. I don't know where she found it, but boy it's just exactly what I wanted. So, it was great to go around and see people. I tell you, retirement, I don't miss the thirteen-, fourteen-hour days. I don't miss the red-eye flights back to D.C. from California, or all the travel or whatever. I don't miss the work. I don't miss the travel. I don't miss all the pressure of having to do this, and that, and the other. But *God* I miss the people. I think back and around Reclamation I probably had a personal relationship with about half the people. In other words know somebody either by their name, or by what they had done, or something they had done for me or something. Probably half of the people in Reclamation, maybe even more than half. And, I treasure that. I have a hard time putting it in words how much that meant to me, but it was one of the reasons I went back to work for Reclamation out of retirement. It's just something that I treasured, and I really thought a lot of the people. So, that's retirement.

Activities after Retirement

After retirement, my home's here in Moab. Moab's not a retirement community, which I'm sure you've seen since you've been here. *Taxes are awful*. The price of gasoline is awful because it's a tourist town. In the summertime there's too many people for the facilities. It's a great place in the wintertime (Storey: Um-hmm.) because there is nobody here. A lot of the businesses shut down. The core people are *really* good people here, and we like living here. I am back into aviation, *almost* as much as I was before. I'm flying part-time for Red Tail Aviation. I fly two or three days a week for them. I am back flying for Angel Flight. I had a mission a week ago last Saturday for them. I'm back on the rolls for Light Hawk, and I'm back with search and rescue for the sheriff. We haven't had a mission since I've been back, but I'm their pilot and I'm back. So, aviation-wise things are happening. The National Academy of Sciences called and asked me to be on a review panel, reviewing a report that they're doing on the Colorado River, and I agreed to do that. And, they asked, would I be available for work with them later? And, I told them "Yes." I am *over the hill* for officiating football, but the Big Sky Conference has hired me to be the observer of football officials at Flagstaff, at Northern Arizona University, which means five or six trips down to Flagstaff this fall to observe the officials and then turn in a report. That's been done forever, but I'll be doing that for them. My wife and I still volunteer in Arches National Park. Try to get out there once a week or so. So, you know, I'm enjoying things. Still busy. Still doing a lot of stuff but in a different way. Enjoying it.

Storey: How about consulting? You told me when your retired before you didn't like people who did consulting?

Keys: Well, you know, consultants have a place in the world, but my aversion has been, when I was regional director and when I was commissioner, seeing all of the previous regional directors and commissioners going around doing consulting work for the districts. I swore I'd never do it. I did not do it after I was regional director, and I won't do it after as commissioner. There is a water board here in the county and I was a member of its board of directors before. You have to be elected to it now, and I'm probably not going to do that, but before they came and asked if I'd sit on their board, and I did for about a year and a half. And I did some good. If there are opportunities there I might do that, but I won't do consulting work. I've been approached many times since I was commissioner to do some work for other folks, back with Reclamation or with the Congress. I won't do that. (Storey: Um-hmm.) I just don't think it's right *for me*. It might be right for somebody else but it's not right for me.

Storey: Anything else we ought to talk about?

Keys: Brit, I don't think so. Just to kind of wrap it up, I ended up with, service-wise, *thirty-nine years*. I think I'm a week short of thirty-nine years.

Storey: And that includes being commissioner?

Keys: Yes. When they recomputed my retirement I got credit for forty years and seven months because of sick leave before. That's thirty-nine years plus almost two years of sick leave. That's a good retirement. I'm still proud of Reclamation. I'm proud of the *jobs* that I did in Reclamation. In another era I would have liked to have thought that as commissioner I would have gotten some other things done. In this era I think we got done what we needed to do as commissioner. So, I'm not ashamed of anything I did. I'm proud of what we did. I'm proud of Reclamation. There are some things I'd still like to see Reclamation get done, but that's neither here nor there.

Storey: I've thought of another question now.

Keys: Okay.

Storey: Somebody told me that your service as commissioner wouldn't count toward retirement. Was that accurate, inaccurate?

Recomputation of Retirement Benefits upon Leaving Washington, D.C.

Keys: You know, while I was commissioner I *could not add* to my civil service retirement credits, but then when I got done they recomputed it with the additional years of service. What it meant is it's based on the salary levels that I had before and *not* the salary level that I had as commissioner. Now, that's *good* because as commissioner I made less than *every* SESer that we had, except for Mike Ryan. That was because Mike came in as a one on the SES scale for his first year, and he'll probably make more than the commissioner by the time we get a new commissioner. My impression when I went in there is

that I'd go back to my previous retirement. Well, they *did* give me credit for the years of service but I couldn't add into the retirement system.

Storey: So, you weren't having to contribute to the retirement system?

Keys: No. I was not. I was paying social security, and they have a thing called "offset." And, I don't know the details of it Brit, but they offset that retirement to the social security system somehow.

Storey: Uh huh.

Keys: Like I said, I don't completely understand. I didn't understand that they were going to recompute it when I took the job, but they do, because it is federal service. (Storey: Uh huh.) So, hey, I'll take it. Forty years and seven months is a good retirement.

Storey: Yeah.

Keys: Good retirement.

Storey: Okay. Nothing else though?

Keys: I don't think so.

Storey: Let me ask you again whether you're willing for the tapes and the resulting transcripts to be used a year after you left Reclamation?

Keys: Yes.

Storey: Okay. Good. Thank you.

END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 6. AUGUST 16, 2006.
END OF INTERVIEWS.