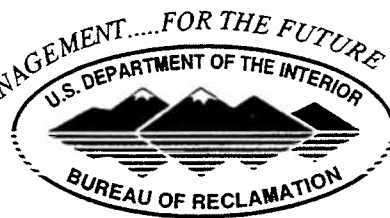


**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
CURTIS L. SMITH**



**BUREAU OF RECLAMATION  
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW**

**CURTIS L. SMITH**

**November 17, 1993  
Sacramento, California**



**STATUS OF INTERVIEW:  
OPEN FOR RESEARCH**



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



**Oral History Program  
Bureau of Reclamation**



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OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW OF  
CURTIS L. SMITH**

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**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW  
CURTIS SMITH  
NOVEMBER 17, 1993**

This is Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing Curtis Smith, Assistant Regional Director of the Mid-Pacific Region, in the Sacramento office of the Bureau of Reclamation, on November 17, 1993, at about 10 o'clock in the morning. This is Tape One.

Storey: Well, Mr. Smith, would you tell me where you were born, and raised, and educated, and how you came to the Bureau of Reclamation, please.

**RETIRED FROM MILITARY IN 1976**

Smith: I was born in Joliet, Illinois, on April 3, 1939. I attended elementary school, as well as junior high and high school, in Joliet, Illinois. After I went into the military service, and I retired from the military in 1976, in October of 1976, I went to work for the Bureau of Reclamation.

Storey: You did? What was your background? What were you educated in?

Smith: Well, while I was in the service, I attended college and started work on an associates



- Smith: My first job at Reclamation, I was a GS-3 Land Records Clerk in the Rio Grande Project in El Paso, Texas.
- Storey: And what does a lands clerk do?
- Smith: A land records clerk?
- Storey: A land records clerk do?
- Smith: We were responsible for maintaining records on all the land that was within the Rio Grande project.
- Storey: The legal descriptions and all that sort of thing?
- Smith: Yes, legal descriptions, and we worked with the county and get microfilm, and we review all sales of land to determine if the ownership had changed within the land that was on Reclamation property. We deal with the water rights, and things of that nature.
- Storey: Well, if ownership could change, that means we just had easements or rights-of-way, or something?
- Smith: No. You had -- what you're really looking at is that that land that was part of Reclamation property that people had water

District each year to do that.

- Storey: Was there a lot of that on the project?
- Smith: Not a great deal, but some portions of it, water rights was on private property. It went with the property.
- Storey: Um-hmm. Was there M&I?<sup>1</sup>
- Smith: Very little. Very little.
- Storey: So this was sort of -- this was rural irrigation and suburban irrigation; am I thinking correctly?
- Smith: Rural irrigation and suburban, because some of the schools had water rights to where they used that land to use the water for the land that the schools were on.
- Storey: Um-hmm; but not residences very much?
- Smith: Some residence, yes.
- Storey: Okay.
- Smith: You paid for it -- if you had a home that

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1. Municipal and industrial water use.

- Smith: You record it. Each time there was a change, you record it. If there was a transfer of water rights, that had to be approved by Reclamation. The request would come into the district, and then it would be sent up to the project office for approval, and you continuously was changing the records.
- Storey: Um-hmm. So, who actually -- are the water rights Reclamation's, are they the State's, are they the irrigation districts'?
- Smith: That's different. That's different depending upon which state you're in. Some states claim ownership of water rights, and then in other places, Reclamation claim[s] ownership of water rights.
- Storey: And what was it on the Rio Grande Project?
- Smith: That we claimed ownership on water rights.
- Storey: So that's why we had to approve each transfer?
- Smith: Yes.
- Storey: Really, what was being transferred was the right to use the water, rather than the ownership of the water right?

entities had water rights on the project when you were doing this?

Smith: No. Not now, I don't.

Storey: Was it a lot?

Smith: Yes.

Storey: (Laughter.)

Smith: Yes.

Storey: Yeah. So, you kept paper records at that time?

Smith: Well, you also had a system that was on the Cyber out of Denver, where we maintained the records on the computer.

Storey: Um-hmm?

Smith: Of course we had manual records also, yes.

Storey: We currently have the LAPS<sup>2</sup> system?

Smith: Yes, yes that's something new. In the days

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2. LAPS is the acronym for "Land Use Inventory and Real Property System" which was a computerized inventory of real property. The The RIS (Resource Information System) replaced LAPS by the summer of 1995.

- Smith: Yes. Right.
- Storey: Did I hear you. . .
- Smith: We were sort of off to ourself, and this was a branch where we needed a supervisor, so that person was our supervisor.
- Storey: Oh. Okay. So he was a branch chief?
- Smith: Yes.
- Storey: And you folks just operated sort of semi-independently of the rest of the branch?
- Smith: Yes.
- Storey: And were you kept busy all the time on this?
- Smith: All the time. We were always behind, yes. Because we had to take it quite often the metes and bounds descriptions would be wrong on the microfilm, and we'd have to take it go do some drafting, plotting. and different things to determine what was wrong and go back down to the county and get it changed, so the deed had to be refiled by the people, if it was incorrect.
- Storey: This is the deed for the property?

was legal, then we'd give approval; it would be filed, and once it was filed with the county clerk, then we made the change to transfer it to wherever it was supposed to go to.

Storey: And what was Reclamation reviewing for when it was approving a water rights transfer?

Smith: Well, you see what type of land that it was going from and going to.

Storey: And so there had to be a beneficial use, or what were the --

Smith: Not necessarily. You had to take and make sure that there wasn't some scheme to transfer a water right for some illegal purpose. And at that time, people were trying to get water rights on the type of land that a water would not provide it, cause it to make -- be of any beneficial use, so you'd question something like that. You might have land that had a lot of sand, or something like that. You can put water out there all day long, but it's really not going to benefit the person, so you wouldn't allow that to go to a land of that type. I can't remember it all, but there's a lot of reasons that you wouldn't allow it to go.

Two years.<sup>4</sup>

- Storey: '76 to '86? That was seven years ago?
- Smith: Seven years ago?
- Storey: Yeah. Were you a GS-3 throughout that period?
- Smith: No. I went in in 1976 as a GS-3. In 1977, I was a GS-4; 1978 I was a GS-5; and I think about 1979, I was about a GS-7; became an Admin Assistant in 1980, I think a GS-9; and then I became the Admin Officer, and I became a GS-11; and I left there in 1986, I was a GS-11 going for a promotion in Amarillo, Texas, at a GS-12.
- Storey: Okay. So you were not in the same position when you were in the Rio Grande office throughout?
- Smith: No.
- Storey: You were there about a year?
- Smith: No. Rio Grande project, I was there ten years.

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4. Clearly interviewee intended to say "ten years," rather than "two years."

kind of things occupied most of your attention?

Smith: Management of property, personnel management issues, acquisitions, construction and contracting; anything that's in the administrative area.

Storey: Okay. Let's start with one of them. The contracting. What kind of contracting were you doing?

Smith: Well, we did small purchases up to, initially, \$10,000, then it would always change to \$25,000. Then we had \$10,000 on small construction contracting, and we had \$50,000 authority on a GSA purchasing.

Storey: Um-hmm. See, one of the things -- one of the reasons I'm doing the oral history interviews is because everybody who does this knows all about it, but people who don't do it, don't know anything about it. So we're trying to get down on the record what goes on in all of these processes. So for instance, could you run us through a contracting -- a typical contracting process, maybe 25, 50 thousand dollar contracting process. What happens? What do you have -- did you have to do in your office there?



- Smith: Would have the specifications attached.
- Storey: Would specify what they wanted?
- Smith: Right.
- Storey: What if it was, say, a contract for services?
- Smith: A contract for services, we do it in the same manner.
- Storey: Um-hmm.
- Smith: The same manner. We'd go out to the people that could provide those services. We had lists for, you know, the different area that our offices were in, in El Paso, and we would send out the request for quotations, and we'd get them back, and then we would make the award.
- Storey: And did I understand you to say that 50,000 was sort of the upper limit of what you could contract for?
- Smith: That's for GSA. See, those contracts are already written by the General Service Administration. All we made was a demand upon that contractor. Let's say that something out there that we needed was already contracted by GSA. We just made

- Smith: Twenty-five thousand, and in later years, earlier years, \$10,000.
- Storey: Okay. Were there any major construction projects while you were there?
- Smith: We had R&B going on. We were lining canals and (Storey:Um-hmm.) things of that nature, were up and down the water distribution system; yes.
- Storey: Now, how did your office, Administrative Office, interact with the Regional Administrative Office in dealing, for instance, with a Rehabilitation and Betterment [project]? That's R&B, right, (Smith: Yes.) contract? Were you involved? Were you cut out of the process? How did that work?
- Smith: Really, we were cut out of the process because that's a big million dollar project, and it has to be issued at the Region or higher. And really, the Contracting Officer's technical representatives were located in the field where the branch managers and the people like that was. That was a different ball game altogether --
- Storey: Um-hmm.

processors that was in Reclamation, and I can't remember the name of it, but it cost us \$15,000, and you can get the same thing nowadays for about \$500.

Storey: Yeah. Who made the decision that your office wanted that?

Smith: Well, over a period of time, we felt that we had the electric typewriters and we said we can accomplish much more if we had a word processor. Then we had to justify it. And it went up to Reclamation into the Department [of the Interior], and finally we got one approved. And after they gave us the go ahead, we purchased it on a GSA contract, and it was \$15,000.

Storey: So the Project Office felt that it ought to have a word processor, and then it had to do the justification for it?

Smith: Yes.

Storey: And that then went to the Region, and that then went, what, to Denver --

Smith: To Washington at that time.

Storey: -- to Washington?

authority to \$50,000. So the GSA contract was already issued. We could buy anything up to \$50,000, but in the case of a piece of equipment like that, you can't just buy it, because it's a special piece of equipment, and at that time you had to get approval. It's just like a copy machine nowadays; you can't go out and buy a copy machine when you want it, you have to send it up through the Bureau, to the Department and get approval to purchase a copy machine off of a GSA contract. (Storey: Laughs.) That still exists.

Storey: I wonder if this is part of what the National Performance Review is concerned with? (Laughter.)

Smith: Yes. It controls the purchases of a copy machine, but my belief is that, you know, if people aren't supposed to purchase them, you should say that; or if you have to have these prerequisites to purchase it, and then if somebody purchases one, to hold them accountable for it --

Storey: Um-hmm.

Smith: -- charge them for the purchases, they did it illegally, rather than to have a bunch of rules and guidelines saying you have to go back

- Storey: So you didn't actually have personnel people at the project?
- Smith: Yes. We had a -- I had one, as Admin Officer, I had a Personnel Assistant GS-5, yes.
- Storey: Okay. But you did not advertise for positions out of the Project Office?
- Smith: No. We would send the paperwork up to Amarillo. They would allow us to advertise for laborers and some employment out of the project.
- Storey: Um-hmm. And then they get the rest?
- Smith: Yes.
- Storey: So the paper would go up to them, they would advertise and send back the lists?
- Smith: Yes, the packages --
- Storey: -- to -- to you all?
- Smith: Yes.
- Storey: And (cough) do I remember correctly, that you said that at that time that Project Office was a couple of hundred people?

you doing their personnel work, also?

Smith: Yes.

Storey: Now, when the -- the two satellite offices, in '79 and '81, were transferred to the water users, did that mean a reduction in the Project Office staff?

Smith: Well, the reduction had already started to occur, because at one time you had a decentralized operation. When I first got there, you had a GM-13 Personnel Officer, you had a Finance Officer, you had, really, everybody in the project; but then they went into a centralized operation, so you were getting a personnel specialist -- that was your reduction, when you take the people out of there.

Storey: And where did those people go?

Smith: Some retired, some had to find jobs elsewhere, some transferred. See, we still had about thirty-some people at our offices in Elephant Butte, at the dam at Elephant, that was the rest of the Project.

Storey: Um-hmm. So the whole Project would be -- after the transfers, would be maybe 60 folks?

(Storey:Um-hmm.) Because you had other appropriated funds that was involved in that, also.

Storey: And were you involved in that? Did you have a budget responsibility. (Smith: Yes.) in the Administrative Office?

Smith: Yes.

Storey: What kind of a responsibility?

Smith: Well, I had a budget analyst, and together we worked on a budget, and we had a budget, I guess, before I left, we had -- it wasn't a great deal, it was only, probably, 3 million, 4 million dollars something like that.

Storey: Um-hmm.

Smith: We had a budget for each one of the districts, we had a budget for power, we had a budget for Mexico because we had to work with the Boundary Commission there in El Paso because we transferred water, through Boundary Commissioners would take you to a point, and then the Boundary Commission delivered water -- our water into Mexico -- the country of Mexico.

your Chief of Water Operations Branch worked with the Boundary Commission. Maybe, once in a while, a Chief of Engineering might work with the Boundary Commission on some project.

Storey: What were the major issues that they would be working with them about, do you happen to know?

Smith: Well, your major issues were the contract with the country of Mexico and the delivery of that water, and your diversion of that water, at what point were you going to get -- having a timetable set up for when you needed a certain amount of water, at a certain point, so it could be delivered into the country of Mexico when they requested it, and keeping records of how much water out of a total amount that they were authorized that they had used as of a given date.

Storey: Um-hmm. Now, let's see. Are we -- there was a treaty that specified how much water --

Smith: Yes.

Storey: -- is that correct?



come to you when they needed supplies, they would come to you if they needed, say, a computer?

Smith: Yes.

Storey: And then your job was (Smith: Support services.) to provide those things to them. Did you take care of the facilities, also?

Smith: Yes. Um-hmm.

Storey: Did you have, for instance, maintenance folks, or how is that handled?

Smith: No. We were in a -- a leased building in the maintenance it was maintained by building management. (Storey: Um-hmm.) and before I left, we had moved into a new Federal building, and that was taken care of by GSA. We were responsible for providing GSA vehicles, for their use, and all of the other administrative support.

Storey: How many vehicles would it take to run an office, at first with four to 500 people in it, and then later on with maybe 60 folks in it?

Smith: Well, it was different. These field office[s] they might have forty or fifty vehicles apiece (Storey: Um-hmm.) in Isleta, and they had

keep track of everything in detail or --

Smith: He knew everything in detail. He had been there a long period of time. He kept his finger on the branch offices, the Project Office. He knew everything that was going on in that project, in the region.

Storey: And was he double-checking on all of it, on all the assignments and that sort of thing?

Smith: Oh, yes; oh, yes; oh, yes.

Storey: Is he the one who actually hired for all of the positions in (Smith: No.) the office, or --

Smith: He hired for the Branch Chief position and maybe some others, but, normally it was down to your branch chiefs making a decision, and then getting his approval, or something like that. He hired for the supervisors, and things of that nature; some of the engineers, maybe.

Storey: But he approved all of the hires?

Smith: Yes. Yes.

Storey: Was this a pro forma approval, or was this a, "I want to meet them and approve them" (Smith: No.) kind of a deal?

Storey: Um-hmm. Very stable work force. People were locals, for the most part?

Smith: Yes.

Storey: And they wanted to stay in the area? Park Service calls this -- refers to this as "homesteading"?

Smith: Yes, we had a lot of homesteaders; (Storey: Laughs) yes.

Storey: You definitely weren't from that area, but you stayed quite awhile?

Smith: Yes. Oh, yes. Yes, I liked El Paso, and then I'd say, well, if I'm going to stay in this business, I might as well go ahead and try to advance. I knew I couldn't stay there and advance, (cough) and so I took my chances. And, here I am.

Storey: Can you tell me about the -- the sort of the thought process that you went through as you decided you wanted to try to move up in the organization?

MOVES AMARILLO REGIONAL OFFICE AS  
REGIONAL EEO OFFICER

Smith: Well, it was accidental, really. I'm going to

in October I was appointed to that position.

Storey: How long were you in Amarillo altogether?

Smith: One year.

Storey: About a year? As the personnel officer for the region?

Smith: The Regional EEO Officer.

Storey: The Regional EEO Officer?

Smith: Yeah.

#### DISCUSSES EEO IN RECLAMATION

Storey: I'm particularly interested in your perspectives on the EEO, if you're willing to talk about it (Smith: Oh yeah.) and your perceptions of whether there's any kind of discrimination within Reclamation.

Smith: Well, let's start off with the discrimination in Reclamation. I don't believe it's just outright discrimination in Reclamation. A lot of it is sometimes people do stupid things, and it results in discrimination.

Storey: Which side of the -- let's see. How should I put this? The person who's doing the

Storey: Do you have any other examples of things?

Smith: Well, you get situations to non-selection, that's one of the big ones, that a person feel that they were better qualified than other person, and once in a while it comes out that the person, maybe they were the best person for the job, and for some reason they weren't selected for it. So that's a -- an example of disparate treatment. Maybe the use of the phone in the office. Something is said to some people about using the phone, and others, it's not. That's discrimination. (Storey: Um-hmm.) So you might end up having discrimination there. You might have a situation to where you have different constraints placed upon people for doing different things. That can be discriminatory. It depends upon the situation and the intent behind it.

Storey: Um-hmm. But I think I'm getting the sense from you that you feel Reclamation does pretty well?

Smith: Yes, I do. Um-hmm.

Storey: And a lot of it is just in --

Smith: Especially if you're in the Mid-Pacific region, yes.

it could be based upon race, color, or religion, or, you know, we could go on and on. Handicapping condition, or sex, for another, a reason that could be--

Storey: Um-hmm. Did you ever feel that you were discriminated against?

Smith: No.

Storey: -- What were the things that were occupying your attention as EEO officer while you were in Amarillo? (Smith: Well--) You know, I'm not asking specific cases, but types of things?

Smith: Well, I think an awareness program really was occupying my mind, and sexual harassment prevention, because that was a big thing at the time, and still [is] a big thing. Trying to educate the work force on sexual harassment, prevention, what it is, what it is not; try to ensure that we were in compliance with that. We didn't have that many EEO cases. We had a couple of major ones that had been around for a long time, but I think throughout that year, we had one -- one complaint.

Storey: So, training was a large part of what you were doing?

programs and activities. So complaints is just a part of it. That's not a major -- you don't have a major effort in discrimination complaints; no.

Storey: Okay.

Smith: There's not that many out there.

Storey: But there are a lot of other activities?

Smith: Oh, yes.

Storey: For instance, special emphasis?

Smith: Yes.

Storey: Tell me what that's all about?

Smith: Well, your special emphasis program, you got a couple of those program [s]. The Federal Women's Program, the Hispanic Employment Program, which are designed to educate people in those areas, women and Hispanics, as to how they need to go about advancing in the work force. You got major efforts in those areas. You got special emphasis coordinators working in those areas, and they also go outside of the agency and work within the community with other organizations. Then you've got -- say, here

work together to take care of problems, that the managers or executives in the Federal sectors are facing.

Storey: Um-hmm. So that sounds to me as if it's largely an educational and cooperative effort?

Smith: Yes, and then you've got affirmative action to where you're out working to improve the makeup of the work force, and that's based upon severe labor force data, because you want to have your work force that looks very similar to the work force that's in the area that you work in. So if your percentages do not match up with the different types of groups, then you should be striving to recruit qualified people, for positions so that a selecting official will have an opportunity to take a select from an unrepresented group, and we've done an outstanding job here in the Mid-Pacific Region. Outstanding.

Storey: I notice you said so that they "will have the opportunity to select from." What kinds of tension do you run into between the support staff? Is it correct to think that the administrative is support staff? -- I don't know whether I'm thinking correctly -- as opposed to line staff?



responsibility in EEO to make sure that we have qualified people from under-representative groups on those certs.<sup>5</sup>

Storey: Um-hmm.

Smith: And if you do, nine times out of ten, you will see a fair share of everybody being selected. It works beautifully, and you get it to work.

Storey: Okay.

Smith: But you have to remove that myth, and it's not like you can say it today, you have to say it on a continual basis, you have to educate the employees on a continual basis; what Affirmative Action is, what Affirmative Action is not; what affirmative employment is, what affirmative employment is not; and the role of the EEO office in all of these areas, you have to continually stress that to the work force.

Storey: I notice that you said, "when you got it to work"?

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5. "Cert" is shortspak for "Certificate of Eligibles" which is defined as "A list of eligibles taken from a register and submitted to an appointing officer for employment consideration."

- Storey: You've got to provide a good example?
- Smith: Yes. Then it will start working for itself. You don't have to worry about it now, it takes care of itself. You don't have to do any preaching.
- Storey: Have there been any studies, for instance, in Reclamation, that you're aware of that have pinpointed areas where the process is not working properly?
- Smith: Well, you know, there's a lot of studies that are conducted. Quite often, the studies say that well, the EEO office is not doing their job, blah, blah, blah, but, see, the EEO office don't do the hiring.
- Storey: Um-hmm.
- Smith: You get the qualified people on the certs. Now, whether they're selected or not, that's up to the selecting official.
- Storey: Yeah. And the question, I guess, I'm trying to ask is, has Reclamation had studies that have identified areas within Reclamation where the hiring is not working out as it (Smith: That's a continuous basis.) perhaps should?

Smith: Outstanding. Outstanding.

Storey: So your percentages are --

Smith: Oh, they're --

Storey: -- similar to?

Smith: And they're steady rising.

Storey: -- the work force?

Smith: They're steady rising; yes. Every quarter we advance, but then you lose people, and then you go back and then you advance some more.

Storey: All right. You know, Commissioner Underwood came to the Denver office, oh, two or three years ago, and held an open meeting with people who are concerned about EEO issues. And because I was interested in trying to understand how EEO works, and so on, I went to listen to that meeting, and see what was going on. And I heard a lot of minority folks complaining that -- about the so-called "glass ceiling" at the GS-12 level.

Smith: Yes.

really going strong, you probably could do it, as far as engineers, or different things like that, but at that level, you're talking about, more than likely, 11s and 12s, maybe a few 13s, you attract. You don't attract that many people that come over as SESs, or anything like that. So it's just -- it takes time.

Storey: Um-hmm.

Smith: And, really, you get to see the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and not a great deal was done from 1964 until the 1980s. Someone said, "Wow, this is not working." Well, you know, hey, it didn't take a genius to figure that one out. But I think strides have been taken, and things will take care of themselves. It's not to say that there's not discrimination out there, there will always be discrimination, as long as people are different.

Storey: Um-hmm.

Smith: But, at the same time, this glass ceiling they're talking about, people get to that point, but there's only so many jobs above that, and it's not necessarily a minority or woman going to be selected for every job, that each time they go on a cert, because there's a limited number of jobs. So it only

- Storey: This is Tape Two of an interview by Brit Allan Storey with Curtis Smith on November the 17th, 1993.
- Storey: [to] the same position here in Sacramento?
- Smith: Yes.
- Storey: But in a much larger region; am I correct in thinking that?
- Smith: Yes, because we had went to probably four or five hundred people in Amarillo. (Storey: Um-hmm.) Amd had about 900 out here, at that time.
- Storey: Was there a change between the two regions in the nature of the job?
- Smith: Well, I knew my way around the Southwest Region. (Storey: Um-hmm.) I'd been there so long, I knew all the people there, a big change for me. It was, you know -- you really had to win the confidence of the regional director, the managers, supervisors, and employees. So it's like starting all over again. (Storey: Um-hmm.) [And I] set out to do that.
- Storey: Well, what about the nature and the emphasis of the activities within the EEO

Storey: Six years. So for a total of seven years, you were EEO office -- an EEO officer at a regional office in Reclamation?

Smith: Yes.

Storey: Did you see the nature of the EEO program change over those seven years?

Smith: Yes.

Storey: And how, and why?

Smith: Well, I think that the emphasis that was placed on it by different administrations caused some change. You went from being aggressive to almost a -- coming to a point to where officials during the Reagan Administration were really negative toward EEO. Very negative. I think that bad message was sent by the administration for those eight years, and then during -- after that particular administration, then the next administration you sort of got back on track again.

Storey: Under Bush?

Smith: Yes.

Storey: So the Bush Administration was sending

Sacramento with your Special Emphasis program, the Affirmative Action programs, Handicap -- did Handicap change?

DISCUSSES ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES OF SECTION  
504 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1978 AND  
RECLAMATION IMPLEMENTATION  
RESPONSIBILITIES AT RECREATION AREAS AND  
WITH WATER USER ORGANIZATIONS

Smith: That became a -- part of the -- the Affirmative Action, before it wasn't, and become part of the affirmative employment in the last two years. And, see, until 1987, Interior had did nothing in the way of accessibility. Then finally they started addressing the issue of accessibility, and I sort of got, hooked into it, here in this region, because I had worked on it in Amarillo, so I became the Accessibility Coordinator, and that was being responsible for Section 504. So I went out to -- gave me an opportunity to go out and review all of the water user organizations, all of the recreation areas, all of the field offices. I've been everywhere in the [Mid-Pacific] Region looking for access.

Storey: Access issues?

the sidewalk, getting to the building; entrance door; everything.

Storey: You mentioned Section 504, I believe it was?

Smith: Yes.

Storey: Of what?

Smith: Rehabilitation Act, 1978.

Storey: Okay. You said something that fascinates me. You said the water users.

Smith: Yes.

Storey: Does that mean we exercise some -- that they're a quasi-federal agency, or that we exercise control over them, or what does that mean?

Smith: In this sense, in the contracts that we have with anyone, we've got certain clauses out there, standard clauses. Accessibility is in there, EEO is in there, all of these things are in there. They've got a responsibility to comply with it.

Storey: Are all of those contracts current enough that they have those clauses? I mean --



- Storey: Um-hmm.
- Smith: So we sent them a letter, saying: "Well, you know, since you have to comply with the ADA, we'll accept that, as far as 504, because, basically, we're the same thing," and [some] of the requirements are more stringent in the ADA than they are in Section 504.
- Storey: So is there a set process for communicating with all of these folks when some new law or regulation comes up?
- Smith: That affects them; yes.
- Storey: So we have a list --
- Smith: Yes.
- Storey: -- and we send letters --
- Smith: Yes.
- Storey: -- or we do it face to face, or what?
- Smith: Well, what I did, when I got the program started here, I took, and once they put the finger on me and say, "You're going to be it," I took and found out all the organizations that fell within those -- under those

of time, what the estimated costs were, things of that nature. And then annually we'd follow up to see where they are with their improvement plan.

Storey: How many people did you have working on this? Just yourself?

Smith: And an EEO specialist.

Storey: Two people?

Smith: Yes.

Storey: And how long did it take to visit all of those groups, write the reports and so on?

Smith: A year.

Storey: Pretty much full-time or part-time?

Smith: Yeah. Very part-time.

Storey: How long would a report be, on the average?

Smith: Well, its dependant upon water users, see, if you were just looking at access to their office. (Storey: Um-hmm.) That's where they would come in, people would come in to pay their bills, get questions answered, attend public meetings, different things of

- Smith: Yes.
- Storey: What kinds of costs were involved for the water users?
- Smith: Well, meeting minimum accessibility. You know, if you went in there and said well, you're going to change -- we're going to change the rule overnight, we knew what results we were getting. We wanted them to meet minimum accessibility standards. And we did more or less, an evaluation which was an assistance visit also, because we provided them information as to -- let's say, a recreation area, a picnic table was too high. They're saying, "We don't have any money." "Well, why don't you take bricks and put under the legs of the picnic table to elevate it, and take, for wheelchair users, just build an extension onto this table, it will meet the requirements." So we gave them the --
- Storey: The big overhang?
- Smith: Yes. And we just told them how they could go about accomplishing it with the work force that they had, they didn't need to, you know --
- Storey: Uh-huh.

- Smith: Some of our recreation areas are run by [National] Park Service, some are run by [U.S.] Forest Service, some of them by different counties; some by Department of Recreation for the State of California, Oregon and Nevada; some by water user organizations; it's just a great deal of entities.
- Storey: Well, let's start with the Federal agencies.
- Smith: Okay.
- Storey: They, of course, have their own affirmative responsibilities under the same laws we do.
- Smith: Yes.
- Storey: Did you have problems with them?
- Smith: Yes, yes, because that was -- they would tell you that, you know, "We have management agreements with them." They say, "Well, this is ours. It don't belong to you." You know, we got the records in there with the management agreements, and it was hard to deal with some of them, especially the Forest Service. And finally, after we went through a couple of years, then we signed agreement where they would be responsible for reporting. But initially, that was hard

a lot in the area of accessibility.

Storey: So they were already moving that direction, you mean?

Smith: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. They had hired a professor from one of the California universities, to conduct a study, develop material, provide training; the whole works, yes.

Storey: Uh-huh.

Smith: The State of California is right up there with the, restrooms, accessible areas, and different things; yes. They're great.

Storey: Wheelchair walks and that sort of thing?

Smith: Yes.

Storey: Fishing access?

Smith: Yes.

Storey: Boating -- I don't know, boating access, is that an issue?

Smith: Yes, it's covered, yes, yes, you had -- you go into everything that possibly could be accessible. You have to make everything

Smith: Yes. You know, it's one of those things that you can spend millions of taxpayer dollars so you can get a person down at different points, and that's not the intent of the regulations.

Storey: Tell me how you react to this: I used to work for an agency called the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. We reviewed preservation projects, and one of the -- one of the complaints was, "Well, we can't get people onto the second floor of this historic building in wheel chairs," and our response was, "Why don't you set up an office downstairs where there is access, where the person could come down and be met and the business could be done." Is that an appropriate alternative --

Smith: Yes.

Storey: -- response, for instance?

Smith: Yes. We've got that in our Tracy office. It's a old ammunition building, or something, and you go in, you go straight down the stairs where you [then] shoot straight up.

Storey: Um-hmm.

- Storey: Yeah.
- Smith: [unintelligible] in the nation.
- Storey: What about where you had a county operating a recreation area?
- Smith: Well, you take and you work with them and give them ideas on how they can meet minimum accessibility requirements. And they mostly -- we never had any problem. Initially, we did, because they were a "Big Brother" telling them what to do, you know.
- Storey: Yeah.
- Smith: But it's just how you -- being tactful and dealing with them and everything, it works out alright.
- Storey: And I suppose it's the same for the irrigation districts -- (Smith: Yes.) or for the water groups?
- Smith: Oh, yeah, we went in, and there was some ornery managers out in some of the districts, and, you know, you have to just tame them down. (Storey: Um-hmm.) Let them figure that they're winning, but you're getting what you want out of them, that's all. That's all I want out of them, go ahead and make an

- Smith: No. Well, you know, you look at the disabled community, and then, they've got expectations. They want to participate and be a part of everything, but they're not out in left field saying that "we want you to go out and spend a billion dollars" because they know that the money is not there. They're saying, do those things that will make it accessible. That, to me, means, "If you can take and put a brick under something and lift it up, go ahead and do that, but allow me to participate. And I have that same experience that anyone else has."
- Storey: Do we have any ties to disabled groups or (Smith: Oh, yeah.) folks around?
- Smith: Yes.
- Storey: Do we do that as an active thing?
- Smith: Yes.
- Storey: Who might those groups be here in this office?
- Smith: Well, we take and work with -- we've got an Equal Access Committee that's here at the -- in this building [Federal Building which Reclamation shares with other agencies on Cottage Way in Sacramento]. We work with



you, and discuss it. We've got TVDs<sup>6</sup> assigned in the Bureau for -- we've got one deaf employee. We've got to provide a TVD for that person. We've got TVD access for -- our correspondence reflects a number for not only where you call a person back, but how you can call them on the TVD, also.

Storey: Um-hmm.

Smith: So we finally got that embedded in the people's mind, [that] we need two [telephone] numbers out there with correspondence.

Storey: Yeah.

Smith: So it's coming along.

Storey: How about issues of sight? How are those dealt with; blindness and that sort of thing?

Smith: Well, you have to deal with it in the same manner. You take, for instance, the sidewalk out there. If you had gratings and different things on there; you'd have to look

---

6. Mr. Smith is probably referring to a TDD or a TTY. TDD is the acronym for Telecommunications Device for the Deaf. TTYs were also formerly provided though they are now generally outmoded - teletypewriters.

- Storey: Yeah.
- Smith: So that normally takes care of that situation.
- Storey: Or maybe the bus?
- Smith: Yeah, or the bus drops them off.
- Storey: That's tough, too.
- Smith: Yeah.
- Storey: I'm trying to think of what other EEO types of things I should be talking to you about before we move on?
- Smith: We've just about covered everything.
- Storey: Okay. Now, you left your EEO position here to become to your current position; is that right?
- Smith: Yes.
- Storey: And that was when?

BECOMES ASSISTANT REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR  
ADMINISTRATION IN MID-PACIFIC REGION

- Smith: October the 3rd.

administration, all management support areas. You're not only talking about EEO -- is just one area --

Storey: Uh-huh.

Smith: -- so you add the personnel on to it, you add the acquisitions on to it, you add information, resources, finance, you're adding supply and services. You [are] providing all the administrative support to the organization.

Storey: Uh-huh. Has personnel changed much since you were doing it down, down in the El Paso office?

Smith: Not a great deal; no.

Storey: Of course, the difference is you're in a different location in the hierarchy (Smith: Yes.) of course, but . . .

Smith: No, it hadn't changed a great deal. You know, it's changed, continually changed, but not -- not that much.

#### REORGANIZATION ISSUES IN ADMINISTRATION

Storey: What kinds of issues are -- Is the

some of the people in the regional office are being moved out to area offices and (Smith: Maybe.) project offices?

Smith: The project offices are the area offices, now.

Storey: Oh, so they're just -- what, they're expanding?

Smith: Well, what has happened, there's a lot of delegation going out to what used to be the project offices. They're now the area offices. And area offices is another concept where you used to say this project office only took care of the project area, that's not necessarily true anymore. You've got a part of the state. Every piece of the state that we're responsible for is covered now, by some area office.

Storey: Uh-huh.

Smith: Up and down California, over into Oregon, over into Nevada.

Storey: Yeah.

Smith: So it's a different ball game altogether.

Storey: So the areas offices are enlargements, in many instances?

**END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO.  
BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO.  
NOVEMBER 17, 1993.**

Storey: . . . making contact with the water user organizations?

Smith: Not unless that project super -- that area manager wants them out there.

Storey: Uh-huh.

Smith: Staff function is going to be staff function; line function is going to be line function.

Storey: I was talking to an acquaintance of mine yesterday who said this is causing some discomfort among some of the (Smith: Probably is.) managers out there.

Smith: Probably is.

Storey: Because they were used to not being responsible for anything (laughter).

Smith: No, they're going to be responsible, and then the people back here [are] going to have to take a hands off [approach], and when a request is made to them to do something, then that's when they'll react. So, yes, it's different roles, change in roles.

- Smith: The regional office, over 400.
- Storey: And so it's reduced fairly substantially since you came here?
- Smith: No, not much.
- Smith: Oh. I thought you said 900. Maybe I misunderstood.
- Smith: Yeah, but that's total region.
- Storey: That's the entire region, then? Okay. What is the entire region now, do you know?
- Smith: Probably 870, 880; they haven't reduced that much.
- Storey: So, there hasn't been a substantial reduction?

CENTRAL VALLEY IMPROVEMENT ACT (P.L. 102-575)

- Smith: No, because, see, we've had to increase staffing in these offices that came about because of legislation, Public Law 102-575, which is -- covered the Central Valley Water Improvement Act.<sup>9</sup> (Storey: Uh-huh.) that

---

9. Public Law 102-575, the Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustments  
(continued...)

fund and money in that restoration fund, and working with providing money to, say, Fish and Wildlife Services to perform part of what we're supposed to be doing. So -- record keeping, as far as what happens to the money that's been allocated for things in those areas. It's more a workload, and, I say financial management.

Storey: Um-hmm. So you're looking at interagency agreements with Fish and Wildlife Service, for instance?

Smith: Oh, yes. We're all involved in it, and they can do the work, or if it's Geological Survey, and they can do the work. That's the way it should go.

Storey: Yeah. Okay.

Smith: Because we got -- you got more control over a contractor, if it's another Federal agency, than you do with the outside contractor, because they can go out there and they can work the employees forever to get the job done when you need it done, and the contractor is going to say "gimme, gimme, gimme," and, you know, the money may not be there for that.

Storey: Yeah.

- Smith: Just about. Virtually.
- Storey: Except the ones who refused.
- Smith: We don't have any that refused.
- Storey: We now have E-mail?
- Smith: Yes.
- Storey: And the LANS,<sup>11</sup> which I thought I was going to hate, and I love.
- Smith: Yeah. It is great.
- Storey: Once you understand what they can do for you in communication, and so on.
- Smith: Yes. A very good communication tool.
- Storey: Do you participate in a budget process for the Region?
- Smith: Yes.

#### BUDGET PROCESS IN THE MID-PACIFIC REGION

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11. Local area networks through which computers near one another communicate with one another.



that office head fights for that budget. I don't have to fight for it.

Storey: You don't have to fight for it?

Smith: They have to come up. The program manager is the one that makes the request, and then as a whole, the Assistant Regional Directors, we take and get together and make a decision as far as how it's going to work out.

Storey: Um-hmm. Well, since you've raised that issue, tell me how this office is organized. Do you have a Regional Director, and, I believe, three Assistant Regional Directors?

Smith: Yes, yes. And you got, Assistant Regional Director that really takes care of planning and design and construction. The Office of Policy Allocation, and then we'll have the Environmental Office, and Safety. Then you've got the --

Storey: And that is?

Smith: Dan Fults.

Storey: Dan Fults.

Smith: And then Frank Dimmick takes care of the

- Storey: Um-hmm.
- Smith: Got the EEO Division setting off to the side. That's about it.
- Storey: And about how many staff in your area of responsibility?
- Smith: About 160.
- Storey: Okay. So Information Resources [Management] is IRM?
- Smith: Yes.
- Storey: So they're the ones who take care of the computer activities (Smith: Yes.) for the Region. Do you have your own computer center?
- Smith: Yes, we have our own computer center; yes.
- Storey: And do you also hook into the Denver computers (Smith: Yes.) or what? I don't understand how all this works.
- Smith: Yeah. We go to the Cyber in Denver. We've got our own operation here in the field, but, two telephone lines we go out to Denver.

- Storey: So you all make the corrections from here --
- Smith: Yes.
- Storey: -- and all of that kind of thing?
- Smith: Um-hmm.
- Storey: Okay. How do you relate to the IRM in Denver, if at all?
- Smith: Well, it's -- we deal with our IRM -- they relate to the IRM in Denver.
- Storey: Okay. Okay. Well, what did I not ask you that I should have asked you?
- Smith: Nothing.
- Storey: Nothing (laughter). I love it. I'm perfect (laughter).
- Smith: You got it all.
- Storey: Well, I certainly appreciate your taking time out from the morning. I know Mr. Patterson was concerned about anybody spending large blocks of time until I had discussed this with him. So (laughter).
- Smith: No problem.

**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM GUIDELINES:  
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION**

Effective Date:                      October 13, 1994

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

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

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

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

### **Obtaining Deed of Gift**

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

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

### **Objective of the Interview**

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

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

### **Beginning the Interview on Tape**

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

Names of interviewer and interviewee.

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

Location

Date

Time

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

### **Conduct of the Interview on Tape**

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

## PREPARATION OF TRANSCRIPTS<sup>14</sup>

### Use of Computers

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

### Objectives

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

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

### The Parts of the Final Transcript

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

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

copies made at Reclamation expense which were only loaned) and/or documents -- if any provided by the interviewee/donor.

- Copies of any photographs and/or documents.
- ◆ Index to the transcript -- use the indexing function of WordPerfect to do this.

### **Page Layout of Transcripts**

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

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

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

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

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



Indicating paragraphs in transcripts should follow the following rules:

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

Watson:        Would you tell me about your  
                  education?

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

                  On the other hand, my  
                  older sister went to grade  
                  school at South Wittburg, and  
                  then attended West Wittburg  
                  Junior High School before

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

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

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

Smith:           There was no indication that we . . .

### **Editorial Conventions**

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

### **Punctuation Conventions**

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

Smith: At that time we were assigned to special duty as concrete inspectors for the construction of the dam. We found that the quantity of ice mixed with the concrete was insufficient to reduce the temperature properly, (Jones: Yes.) and we had to work that issue out with the contractor. That only took a day, but it was rather tense because the contractor had to shut down the [concrete] batch plant while we worked it out. (Jones: Um-hmm.). The contractor was particularly concerned that she wouldn't fall behind schedule, and .

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

FOOTNOTES:

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

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

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

Use of dashes.

Double dashes (--)<sup>15</sup> are used to show an abrupt change of thought in a sentence. For purposes of Reclamation's transcripts each double dash will be preceded and followed by a space. For example:

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

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

---

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

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

Acronyms:

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

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

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

Hyphens:

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

Margins:

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

Justification:

apostrophe unless the term is possessive [as in --  
The 50's autos often had huge tail fins]..

### **Spelling Conventions**

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

### **Table of Contents**

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

### **Indexing**

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

### **Review of Transcript by Interviewee**

After transcription and initial editing, the transcript will be forwarded to the interviewee for review, comment

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

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

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

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

### **SUGGESTED INTERVIEW CITATION FORM FOR RESEARCHERS**

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

Suggested Bibliographic Citation:

Last name, First and middle name or initial  
(of interviewee). ORAL HISTORY

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