ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

J. NEIL STESSMAN

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STATUS OF INTERVIEWS:
OPEN FOR RESEARCH

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

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Denver, Colorado

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OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS OF
J. NEIL STESSMAN

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J. Neil Stessman

INTERVIEWER:_____
Brit Allan Storey

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Signed:_____
Archivist of the United States

Neil J. Stessman
Brief Chronology of Career

1938/1939–Born in Missouri Valley, Iowa

Attended Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa

1961–Graduated from the State University of Iowa in Iowa City with a degree in civil engineering

1961–Began to work for Reclamation at Flaming Gorge and went into the rotation program

1964–Moved to Gunnison to work in contract administration for the office engineer on the Currecanti Project–offices in Sapinero

1965–Moved to the Denver office in the Contract Administration Branch

C. 1969–Entered the Reclamation Manager's Training Program

1971–Becomes assistant center director at the Collbran Job Corps Center in Colorado

1974–Moves to Weber Basin Job Corps Center and becomes assistant center director

1974–Moves to Columbia Basin Job Corps Center in Moses Lake, Washington, as center director

1976-1978–Moves to Idaho Falls, Idaho, to work as claims officer for damage claims after the failure of Teton Dam and then was permanently assigned as the "teton claims manager"

1978-1983–Transferred to regional office in Boise as chief of Water, Lands, and Power

1983-1987–Project manager of the Central Snake Project office in Boise

1987-1989–Project manager at the Missouri-Souris Project Office in Bismarck

1989-1992–Assistant regional director, Great Plains Region

1992-1998–Regional director, Great Plains Region

1998–Director, Technical Service Center, Denver

2000–Retires

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Introduction

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

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

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

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Oral History Interviews
J. Neil Stessman

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, interviewing Neil Stessman, Great Plains regional director, in his offices in the Federal Building in Billings, Montana, on November the 17th, 1994, at about two-thirty in the afternoon. This is tape one.

Mr. Stessman, could you tell me, please, where you were born and raised and educated and how you ended up at the Bureau of Reclamation.

Born in Missouri Valley, Iowa

Stessman: Okay. I was born in Missouri Valley, Iowa, which is on the Missouri River, not very far from Omaha, Nebraska, and I was raised there all the way through high school.

Attended College at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, Before Completing His Degree at the State University of Iowa

Then I went to college at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, and went through several years and then transferred to the State University of Iowa to complete a degree in civil engineering.

Graduated in 1961

I finished school in 1961 at the State University of Iowa, Iowa City, and the Bureau of Reclamation was among the folks who were available to interview with for jobs. Where I came from, there was almost no awareness of the Bureau of Reclamation. I've thought a lot of times about what was my first awareness of the Bureau of Reclamation, and in high school, and I think probably about eleventh grade or possibly twelfth grade, we had a program where they would sometimes have some sort of an actor or entertainment or something that would come visit the school, and we had a film. I can't *imagine* why they did this, but they had a film about the Colorado-Big Thompson Project and the Bureau of Reclamation's construction of the Colorado-Big Thompson Project, and as far as I know that was, even into the college time, the only awareness I had of the Bureau of Reclamation, because my family was not a family that had ventured or traveled much, and I think I had not been west of Lincoln, Nebraska, until I was a sophomore in college, I think, and then only that one time, up until the time I finished college.

Went to Work for Reclamation in 1961

The Bureau of Reclamation came and interviewed. I had other opportunities. Through my course work, I had gotten interested in dams and dam construction and the sort of impressiveness of big structures like that, dam construction, so I had an interest in doing that. I also thought going west was appealing, rather than a big city location or that kind of thing. That's how I happened to come to work for the Bureau of Reclamation in 1961.

Went into the Rotation Training Program at Reclamation

The Bureau had a rotation sort of training program for engineers when we came into the organization. That was also appealing. So that gave me an opportunity to kind of sample different parts of the organization during the first, whatever, couple of years or year and a half, something on that order.

Offered a Job in Construction Inspection at Flaming Gorge Dam in Utah

I was interviewed by the chief of personnel in Denver and was offered a job at Flaming Gorge Dam, which was under construction in Utah.

Storey: That was in '61?

Stessman: 1961.

Storey: Why did you decide to become a civil engineer?

Why Chose to Become an Engineer

Stessman: Well, I think that–well, I had aptitude in math and sciences. I think our background, my parents, my own, our family, was that they wanted me to be in some kind of a, you know, professional field like that. Our family was not a very high income family. We didn't have much, and this looked like a good opportunity, particularly for security, job security.

Storey: Were you raised on a farm, by chance?

Stessman: No. Both my parents had been raised on farms. Both their families had lost their farms during the Depression. So in a way we had a farm background. We went to visit cousins and that kind of thing. Many of them were on farms.

Worked on Farms While in High School and College

I did farm work for income when I was in high school and some through college. A lot of that kind of thing were through people that my father knew. My father worked in a John Deere implement dealership as a parts man, so there would be opportunities I could go and work for such and such a farmer for a couple of days and put up hay or weeding fields, bean fields or whatever, doing farm labor, cleaning out sloughs or whatever. So, I did quite a bit of that kind of work, particularly in summers, when I was in high school and college.

How He Became Interested in Dam Design and Construction

Storey: How did you get interested in dam design and construction, do you remember?

Stessman: We had a kind of visiting professor who was pretty intriguing to me and his experience and the kind of work he did, which was related to particularly the

construction of large dams.

Storey: Do you remember his name?

Stessman: His name was Allen. He was a European fellow. He'd gotten his education in Europe. He spoke with an accent. I'm not sure–Norwegian, possibly. He was a consultant to, I think, several, particularly Federal agencies, and also in the international field. I think he *may very well* have been a consultant for the Bureau. I know he was a consultant for TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority][1] and the Corps of Engineers.

It was kind of like a seminar class we had. It was a lot of examples of what had occurred in a certain situation in the construction of a dam, or if there was a problem, what was the cause of the problem and how was it resolved–and what was done with respect to the design or construction to kind of cure or alleviate or take care of the particular problem.

I remember, I don't think I did particularly well, but I enjoyed the class a lot, and I think that, along with a lot of other things, but that's something I can pull back in my memory, and I remember sitting in that class and finding that fascinating. The size of the facilities, the kind of *permanence* of the structural aspect of building something that's sort of erected and stays there, probably those things more than the purpose. I think I, at that time, wasn't as focused on what's the purpose of it, what's the *benefit* it provides, as much as the sort of *creation* of it or those parts of it.

Interviewing for a Job at Reclamation

Storey: Do you remember anything about the recruitment process that you went through with Reclamation?

Stessman: I remember the person who recruited me was named E. K. Gould. I can kind of remember the interview. It was less detailed than I expected, you know. He didn't have a lot to ask me, I didn't think. He didn't get into a lot of detail about what I knew or that kind of thing. It was almost like he was more interested in having me talk.

I know I wasn't very prepared for interviews at that time and age, so I didn't really *learn* very much about what I might be doing. I think I told him that I was interested in dam construction, probably.

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

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

Storey: Now, was Gould the Denver office personnel person?

Stessman: Yeah, Gould, like G-O-U-L-D, I think.

Storey: Yeah.

Stessman: I think he–well, he was the chief of personnel in Denver. I guess I'm not sure now what organizational responsibility that carried beyond the Denver office. I just don't remember.

Storey: Where did he interview you?

Stessman: At school, at the University of Iowa.

Storey: At the University of Iowa. So he was the person who went out doing the recruiting?

Stessman: Yes, a thing where you get a notice on the bulletin board at school that the Bureau of Reclamation will be available for interviews in Room 317 on Tuesday afternoon, and you fill in the line if you want to be among those interviewed.

Storey: And you just went in?

Stessman: Yeah.

Storey: So he hadn't seen a transcript in advance, for instance, probably?

Stessman: I really couldn't say. We had a placement office and I think we probably had submitted information to go on file in the placement office, so I would rather suspect that he had access to some information in advance.

Storey: Now, did he offer you the job right there?

Stessman: No, it came in writing later, not by telephone. I didn't have any further contact with him, and I received the written offer, you know, to–and it was specific and it was one particular job. It wasn't, "You're offered a position at Glen Canyon Dam in Page, Arizona, or Flaming Gorge Dam in Dutch John, Utah," or any alternatives with that. It was just, "You're offered a position."

Storey: And it didn't tell you where it was or anything?

Stessman: It did. At Flaming Gorge Dam.

Storey: So when did you go to Flaming Gorge, then?

At That Time Reclamation Paid Moving Costs for Initial Hires If They Were Engineers

Stessman: Well, I reported there within, I forget the exact time, but certainly within two weeks of when I graduated from college–which was quite an experience in itself. The Bureau paid the initial moving costs of the engineers, which was kind of bone of contention with other new employees, because they didn't do that for non-engineers.

Moved to Dutch John, Utah, Soon after Graduation

So my wife and I loaded a trailer and car and took off for Dutch John, Utah, not really knowing much about the geography or the towns or what things were like out West, and headed for Dutch John, Utah.

Storey: Dutch Town is it?

Stessman: Dutch John.

Storey: John, J-O-H-N.

Stessman: Uh-huh.

Storey: Two words?

Shopping If You Lived in Dutch John

Stessman: It is, yeah. If I remember my history or the tales from there, before the dam construction project started, the county, which was Daggett County, had a population of I'm sure less than a thousand. I *think* it was 600 or fewer in the county before the dam construction project started, and that started three or four years before we got there. But it was quite a remote place. You sort of had a choice. You could go north to Green River, Utah, for your shopping or you could go south to–you go north to Green River, Wyoming, or south to Vernal, Utah, for shopping, and it was primitive roads and it was 58 miles to Green River, Wyoming, as I recall, which was typically where we would go for our shopping. Dutch John was a company town, a town that was built for the dam construction project. There was a gas station and what now you would probably consider a oversized convenience store for a grocery store, and that was it. So we went to town. We developed a habit of going to town every third Saturday and doing our shopping, and we'd have a big list of the groceries we needed and whatever. We did almost no impulse shopping, because it was a full-day activity to go and get through that list and get the groceries we needed and whatever we had on our minds. We did some shopping by Sears and Roebuck catalog, Montgomery Ward catalog, of course. It was a really exceptionally good opportunity to sort of get started in life out of college, because the expenses were low and we had a couple of years there of this experience of sort of planned shopping rather than a lot of impulse buying.

Living in Government Housing

I recall government housing was available. In fact, I forget the terminology, but basically required that you live in government housing. And there weren't

alternatives. It would have been so far to anything. We paid $13 a pay period rent, and that was withheld from our pay, so it was not considered taxable income. In addition, I think the water and sewer and then either gas or electricity, one of the two of those, was also withheld from our pay, so that was also excluded from our income and not taxable.

Entertainment in Dutch John

So anyway, the expense was very low, and there wasn't even a *bar* in the town. We weren't really bar people anyway, but I think you had to go about approximately twenty miles to a bar. No movie theater. The closest movie theater was, again, twenty-two to twenty-five miles away. We didn't have expensive habits–it was a really inexpensive place to live. It was a really *excellent* place to start sort of married life out of college and begin to get some things accumulated, like furniture and appliances and that sort of thing, without having to go into a lot of debt to do it. It was a neat experience.

Storey: If there was a theater some twenty miles away, was that in a town?

Stessman: Um-hmm.

Storey: What town was that?

Stessman: Manila, Utah.

Storey: But not large enough to do shopping in, I gather.

Stessman: No. I think they had a grocery store in Manila, but it was small. It was like a neighborhood store as opposed to supermarket kind of stores. I don't believe you could buy any, like, furniture or appliances or anything like that. Manila was, I would guess, maybe 175-200 people sort of town. They had a theater, and it was called the Flame Theater, and they showed a movie, to my *knowledge*, on Saturday night.

Storey: And that was it?

Stessman: It could be that they showed it beyond that, but my recollection is that it was Saturday night. Maybe Friday night, too, I'm not sure.

Storey: Do you remember the admission charge, or did you go to the movies?

Stessman: No, I don't remember the admission charge. If we went there, it wasn't over a couple of times, seldom.

Lived in Various Homes in Dutch John

Storey: Tell me about your government-supplied housing in Flaming Gorge at Dutch John.

Stessman: Of course, to our standards, they were pretty nice. When we first got there, we lived in what was called a transa home, T-R-A-N-S-A, transa homes. They were relocatable homes, what now would be probably a good-sized, maybe even double-wide, kind of a relocatable trailer.

The sort of stratum of the government camp was that–and there was a fence in the town around the government camp–and then outside that, in the town, was the contractor's quarters. As you went up the hill and around the circle of the government portion of the town, the camp, at the outer edge at the top were the relocatable, and I think there were also–yeah, I'm sure there were also spaces where, if you had a trailer, you could have it pulled in and parked.

And then down the hill a way, a street or two, there were a couple of blocks or three with two-bedroom, nice wooden homes, and then below that was a couple of blocks of brick homes, which were three-bedroom brick homes. It was kind of a status thing, as you got tenure and places became available, and then you would apply for vacant homes and, as I recall, be selected on the basis of grade and status in the organization and the length of time you'd been there.

We were there, I think, three years, and we started out in the relocatable home and then moved to a wood-frame home and then to a brick home. We lived in a brick home for the last year and a half or something like that.

Storey: How many Reclamation employees do you suppose there were living in the camp?

Stessman: I would think there might be 150, maybe.

Storey: This would be Reclamation employees as opposed to families and employees?

Stessman: Uh-huh. Maybe 150 to 200, I would guess.

Storey: That would be employees, so a substantially larger number with the families added in.

Stessman: For the population of the town?

Storey: Yeah.

Stessman: Yeah. You know, it's a big guess, but I would think the population at the government's part of the camp town was probably 300 or something.

Storey: And then do you have any idea of how many more people would be involved with the contractor or contractors?

Stessman: That would be more in the neighborhood of 1,000 people or 1,100 or something.

Storey: That's the total, not the workers?

Stessman: That would be the workers. They had dormitories, so they had a lot of single men living in dormitories. I don't think they had any permanent homes. I think they just had trailer homes for their other employees, their married employees and their sort of permanent and management employees. They would have a tremendous amount of turnover, and many, many of the workers, craft people, labor people, that kind of thing, non-supervisory people, were rough-cut guys who were there without their families, either single men or ones who had families back in Arkansas or Mississippi or Michigan or wherever and lived in big dormitories.

Project Construction Engineer Also Managed the Town

Storey: Do you remember anything about the way the town of Dutch John was governed, the utilities and all that kind of thing?

Stessman: One thing that made an impression on me, and still is kind of fascinating to me, is that the Bureau of Reclamation project construction engineer was sort of the *lord* of the town and was very involved in things beyond what we would typically think in these days would be the functions of a Bureau of Reclamation office manager getting involved in issues.

I remember once, as an example, in the camp there was a problem of skunks getting in the garbage can near the visitor's center, and I have this recollection of the project construction engineer, who it seemed to me should be involved in engineering and management issues, just kind of stomping up and down and raising his fists and screaming, *"I won't have it, this problem of the skunks getting in the garbage can,"* very animated and worked up over that.

Yeah, I think the thing I would say about the running of the camp is the extent to which that was sort of an official role of the government, and I suppose it's necessary if the government's owning and operating a camp for employees. I suppose that happens in private industry with mining camps, logging camps, and whatever, but it was kind of fascinating.

“So much carried over from the job to the life-in-camp situation. It was sort of the women's status, to some extent, depended on the position of the husband in the organization . . .”

So much carried over from the job to the life-in-camp situation. It was sort of the women's status, to some extent, depended on the position of the husband in the organization, and absolutely at that time, you know, it was a male organization.

“There was a lot of card playing and that kind of thing. . . . and the circle you were in for those kind of activities . . . depended on your level in the organization. . . .”

There was a lot of card playing and that kind of thing. People played bridge and people played canasta, I suppose, and other games, and the circle you were in for those kind of activities sort of depended on your level in the organization.

". . . you soon learned that many of the people had worked with each other on a previous job, so that the culture was that as a construction project was finished in one place key people from the organization would be hired to go to the next construction job in another location . . . they would take people with them. . . ."

Another thing about the culture of that was that you soon learned that many of the people had worked with each other on a previous job, so that the culture was that as a construction project was finished in one place key people from the organization would be hired to go to the next construction job in another location, whether it was a project construction engineer or the field engineer or the office engineer or key persons, as that job would be finished and they would be placed or find a position for themselves on the next construction job, they would take people with them. So it seems to me part of the culture was also that you kind of connected or attached yourself to a certain supervisor who had a promising outlook for the next job. People went with each other, is what I'm saying.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 1. NOVEMBER 17, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1. NOVEMBER 17, 1994.

Storey: You were talking about the culture of how construction camps–people would tend to follow a supervisor as he moved on.

Stessman: Yeah. So there would be almost circles or groups of employees who had worked together on a previous construction project, and in some cases had been together on several projects previously, as they kind of would spend five or six years or ten years, perhaps, on one construction project and then go with another.

It was part of the culture, I think, that you sort of *attached* yourself to certain people in leadership positions. So if you worked well, let's say, as an inspector in construction with the person who was the field engineer or chief inspector on a certain job, when that job was finished and that person went on to another construction job, there was an expectation that you'd have an opportunity to go *with* that individual. This was kind of melded into the culture of the camp and the work situation.

". . . work . . . and . . . life in the camp, were intermixed. They were not a separate thing. . . ."

The work situation and the culture of the camp, the life in the camp, were intermixed. They were not a separate thing. It carried over from work time to leisure time, etcetera.

"There were some problems. Like if you didn't fit in, you knew it, and I'm sure it was uncomfortable. . . ."

But it was very friendly. There were some problems. Like if you didn't fit in, you knew it, and I'm sure it was uncomfortable. But if you *could* kind of find your place in that community, there was an acceptance and people did things

together and would have the town picnic and it had some sports things we did together. On balance, I think it was good. It had a lot of complications to it. I think, again, if you had difficulty fitting in, why, it probably was quite uncomfortable, because there weren't a lot of alternatives then.

"I think probably if you got on someone's list at the office, it could affect things outside the work situation, which would probably be unfortunate, too. . . ."

I think probably if you got on someone's list at the office, it could affect things outside the work situation, which would probably be unfortunate, too.

Sports Activities at Dutch John

Storey: What kind of sports things?

Stessman: Well, we had a tennis court. There was a grade school, and I can't remember whether it went through sixth grade or through eighth grade there. So we had a gymnasium, and we played basketball. We also had a team that went around and played other towns, sometimes a long ways away.

Hunting, Target Practice, Hunting Indian Artifacts, Etc.

A lot of people were hunters, did target practice. They'd have turkey shoots. There was a tremendous amount of game. Deer would be in town, even within the fenced area, really often, at night especially. There was a little airport above town, and you could almost count on, during the wintertime, being able to see elk up there if you went out, especially in the evening. A lot of people hunted artifacts, arrowheads and that kind of thing.

Storey: Did you have any particular friends, you and your wife, when you were at Flaming Gorge?

Friends in Dutch John

Stessman: Yeah, we had a lot of friends. Typically, a dozen or more other rotation engineers who had come in at the same time we did, and then there was like a class of them that came in the year before, and so there were a number of couples and single guys–there weren't any female engineer employees there–that were in a similar situation, just getting out of college, getting established in the household, having children, starting to have families, etcetera. So we had lots of friends.

Storey: How much socializing did you do? Was it a daily thing, weekly thing, monthly thing?

Television Made Available

Stessman: As I recall, we got into the habit of playing cards or something like that at least once a week. We had a little association that brought in television. I think we only

had two stations, as I recall. At that time, people weren't quite as enslaved by television as a lot of people are now, so you did things with other people a lot more in the evening when you got off work and on weekends and so on. We did some card playing and pantomime and parlor games kinds of things with other couples. We've never drunk in our own home, drink alcohol, so there were probably some things that we missed out on that other people did at those kind of parties, but I don't think that was a real big part of the social scene, either, in camp.

Storey: Now, when you say you would play cards, do you mean that you'd have *one* other couple over and play cards or did you have what I would call a card party?

Stessman: They'd have card parties, and other kinds of parties.

Storey: So you'd have maybe several tables?

Stessman: Yeah, that was real typical. That would be once a week, and I think a number of the wives and couples did that numerous times a week.

Storey: Just rotate from house to house?

Stessman: Yeah, and some of those were like organized, a bridge club and so on.

Storey: Who was the project construction engineer when you went there?

Gene R. Walton Was Project Construction Engineer

Stessman: His name is Gene R. Walton.

Storey: Do you still have contact with him?

Stessman: We get a Christmas card from them. He's pushing ninety years old, I think. I hope he's still living. I talked to him about a year and a half ago, and we got a Christmas card, actually from his wife, but from them, last year, and maybe we will again.

Storey: Do you remember where he lives?

Stessman: He lives in Albuquerque.

Storey: What was he like? Did you work directly with him?

At That Time Project Construction Engineers Were Quite Authoritarian

Stessman: Well, some. You know, I was in meetings with him and so on. Not a great deal. Project construction engineers were of a certain cut in those days in Reclamation. They had a lot of authority and they were quite authoritarian type managers, and Gene R. Walton was that way. He was a meticulous person, and my impression was that he had his thumb on most everything that was going on. I think he was probably an extremely capable person. He commanded a lot of respect and was

highly regarded.

". . . the Bureau had a number of people in those jobs who were exceptional individuals, but their style of management I don't think would work very well now. . . ."

From my experience in those times, the Bureau had a number of people in those jobs who were exceptional individuals, but their style of management I don't think would work very well now. But he was an admirable person, but he knew how to raise his voice to get his way.

Storey: Not unused to yelling at folks.

Stessman: Uh-huh, and into lots of detail.

Storey: Very much a micro manager.

Stessman: Um-hmm, and very authoritarian. That would be my impression. In later years, I got to know a lot of construction engineers from that era, and I think that was pretty typical.

Storey: And they were engineers?

Stessman: Oh, yes.

The Jobs of Project Construction Engineer, Office Engineer, and Field Engineer

Storey: You mentioned earlier construction project engineer, office engineer, field engineer. What are those? I've interviewed a man who was an office engineer, for instance, and I said, "Well, what's an office engineer?" and he didn't give me a very good definition.

Stessman: I see. Well, as I try to describe that hierarchy, there would be a project construction engineer. You could have an assistant project construction engineer. And then you would divide the organization between the field activities, which in my experience or my examples would be the construction work at the site, and in the case of a dam or something like that, it would also include the field work taking place, where the materials were being secured, borrow pits, that kind of thing, batch plants for mixing the concrete, etcetera, but all of the, you could say, outdoor field activities would be under a field engineer.

Over on the other side, then, you'd have an office engineer. The office engineer was in charge of the indoor activities, to put it that way, but design activities, the contract administration, the measurement of quantities, the payment for the work, those type of primarily engineering activities. And then you would have I think they were called an administrative officer, which would be involved with property supply, personnel, probably some finance, that kind of thing.

The distinction you were asking about is between the field engineer and the

office engineer. The field engineer had inspectors, surveyors, plant inspectors for the concrete batch plant, geologists, etcetera.

Storey: And there would have been secretarial staff or clerical staff of some sort?

Stessman: Yeah. I don't remember the engineering side of the organization having secretaries. Maybe they did. Probably did.

Storey: Do you remember *any women* at all on Reclamation staff at Flaming Gorge?

Stessman: Secretarial and clerical.

Storey: So there were some, in that sense?

Stessman: Secretarial and clerical, yeah.

Storey: Well, you arrived there, it sounds to me, like sort of early summer, late spring of '61. (Stessman: Um-hmm.) What did they put you to work doing, and who was your supervisor?

First Rotation Was in Contract Administration Working for Jerry Harris

Stessman: I was on rotation, and I worked in the office at first. My supervisor was a guy named Jerry Harris, and I can't remember his title. He was directly under the office engineer. I was mostly involved at that time in like calculation and payment quantities. I did very little design, but contract administration.

Storey: So that would have involved what–figuring quantities of material that had been moved?

Types of Calculations in the Office

Stessman: Yeah. You know, like calculating quantities for concrete placement, where we would make payment in accordance with the payment schedule in the contracts, so much per cubic yard of concrete placed. There were a variety of different schedules, depending on whether this was large concrete placements or–like there would be a different rate for concrete in the walls of the powerplant versus the big mass quantities of concrete in the dam itself, so you'd do calculations to determine those quantities, earth moving and that kind of thing, calculating the quantities of borrow and fill and that sort of thing. For reinforcement steel, you'd have to make–I think from the design drawings and so on–we'd have to make calculations by weight of the reinforcement in the concrete and so on.

"I think we were making payments on a monthly basis. . . ."

I think we were making payments on a monthly basis. A lot of the work I was involved in at that initial stage was in producing the quantities for completed work for payment, for periodic payments, for monthly payments, and so we'd go

through the Inspector's reports of what had been done, and we did quite a lot of coordination with our counterparts in the contractor's organization on what they felt had been done and so on to make the payments.

Storey: So you went to Reclamation's Inspector's reports, (Stessman: Um-hmm.) and he said, "This is what's been done this week," or this day or whatever, and then you made calculations based on that?

Construction Inspector's Reports

Stessman: The Inspector's report would say, "Tonight we placed the concrete in–to simplify it, let's say in Room 786 of the powerplant, the floor. He'd give a report about what took place and what the conditions were and the temperature and the kind of equipment they used and so on, and would say that they placed 28 cubic yards of concrete in the floor and they had so much waste.

"We would pull the drawings on the floor for that room and actually calculate the volume of concrete that it took to place that. We'd actually pay on those quantities as opposed to the inspector's report, but we'd check it to see if it jived. . . ."

We would pull the drawings on the floor for that room and actually calculate the volume of concrete that it took to place that. We'd actually pay on those quantities as opposed to the inspector's report, but we'd check it to see if it jived. So we'd have to keep logs of what work was completed so that then we could make the calculations from the drawings, etcetera.

Storey: Do you know whether or not the office you were in was the only one that was doing those kinds of calculations?

Stessman: I would say we were.

Storey: So how many people were in that office, do you remember?

Stessman: I think we had possibly a dozen to fifteen people in that office doing that kind of work. During the rest of the month or the rest of the periods, we might be involved in some design work or some anticipatory kinds of work.

". . . we would be reviewing kind of on a daily basis what was taking place . . ."

And then we would be reviewing kind of on a daily basis what was taking place or what the Inspector's reports were saying about what was taking place so that we'd be ready when the time came.

"We'd start on the calculations so that we could have them ready . . . because that was always a very pressing time because there were *deadlines* . . . and you'd have to allow time for some discussions. It seems like they would inevitably take place . . ."

We'd start on the calculations so that we could have them ready for when payment time came, because that was always a very pressing time because there were *deadlines* and you had to have things submitted, and you'd have to allow time for some discussions. It seems like they would inevitably take place, where the contractor would say, "No, it should have been this quantity," or, "Our calculations show that it should have been this much." They were always very anxious to have the payments be as large as–you know, larger.

Storey: Large as they felt they ought to be?

Stessman: Yeah. And in some cases, you know, it would be, a lot of times you were making payments for partial completion of work, and so there'd be some judgment as to whether they had done 55 percent of it or 87 percent of it or whatever, so there was always those kind of discussions taking place. It seemed like every time you'd be pressed against the clock and needing the right signatures and so on before you could proceed with the payment vouchers.

"Besides the big and major contract taking place, you had a number of others that would be going on simultaneously. . . ."

Besides the big and major contract taking place, you had a number of others that would be going on simultaneously. It wasn't that they were staged. Everybody was finishing them up at the same time.

Storey: So you would begin making calculations for what you anticipated maybe the next week's or the next month's work was going to be?

Stessman: Yeah. And then you were doing a little bit of design. The field people would want to know if you could change this or change that or could we make these modifications, so we'd have some engineering analysis going on on those type of things, as well.

Discussions with Contractors about Payments

Storey: Now, when you went into discussions with the contractor–this is a long sort of series of questions, I guess,–what was the nature of the discussions? Were they fairly amiable, but, you know, people were trying to make their point? Were they very tense and loud?

Stessman: They were often tense and contentious.

Storey: And how did they generally come out, or do you have a feeling for that? Did it go one way one time and another way another time?

". . . Reclamation, and, ultimately the project construction engineer, would decide, "No, it's this." It would become then a matter of you have to submit the paperwork and go formal with a claim if you disagree. . . ."

Stessman: I'm not sure how I could characterize it. ~~I don't have a feel that=~~ I think, ~~at that time it was a~~ you know, in the end the Bureau of Reclamation decided, and often it was a situation where both sides would try to make their points and in a rational manner reach a decision that they could both live with. But ultimately the Bureau of Reclamation, and ultimately the project construction engineer, would decide, "No, it's this." It would become then a matter of you have to submit the paperwork and go formal with a claim if you disagree.

Storey: Were you involved in the claim process?

Did Rotations Through Field Inspection, then Contract Administration in Denver, and Then the Region in Salt Lake City

Stessman: Later that kind of became my specialty, yes–over time. But I went through a rotation where I did the office work and then field inspection, and then I did a rotation through Denver, and I did a rotation in the regional office in Salt Lake City.

". . . then I kind of became a specialist in contract administration. . . ."

That was over a course of about a year, as I recall, and then I kind of became a specialist in contract administration. Most of the work then was not in making payments, but in settling claims.

Storey: When you were working in the office making the estimates, was Flaming Gorge in full swing, the construction, as it were?

Stessman: Uh-huh.

Storey: So twelve to fifteen people was a full staff for that particular function at that time?

Stessman: I think so, and that would be most of the engineering, in the sense of other than field work, but the office engineering portion of the project would be that size, I think. As I remember, the prime contract was $29 million was the amount of the bid, and as I think back at it, today I'm sure it would be $300 million or something like that if we set out to build a facility like that now.

Storey: It's like the difference between buying a Chevy then and buying one now.

Stessman: Yeah, or a home, I guess, right.

Storey: What was your next rotation then?

First Child Was Born in Dutch John in the Hospital with an "Industrial Doctor"

Stessman: Well, I thought of something else I want to tell you about at this one, and that was, when our first child was born, and what you had in the camp was, you had a sort of industrial doctor. There was a hospital, and it was a contractual requirement that

the contractor had to, I think, build, but also staff, a hospital in the town, which was to be available for government employees, as well as contractor. But I think the basic purpose of it was for the emergency medical treatment for construction workers, but then also for the camp.

It seems kind of novel, but we had a hospital in town and there was a doctor and nurses and so on. So our first son was born there, and my wife was the only patient in the hospital. I think it was probably about a ten-room hospital or something like that, quite modest. But we really had special treatment. In fact, the doctor was supposed to have gotten married in Salt Lake City or somewhere that weekend, and he could see that Judy was going to deliver, so he put off his wedding for a week or so so he could stay and make the delivery.

Storey: In that company hospital, as it were.

Stessman: Yeah, right.

Storey: So now your son lists Dutch John on his–

Stessman: That's his birthplace, yeah.

Storey: Does it exist any longer?

Stessman: Yeah. In fact, I mean, it's still the camp for the operation and maintenance for Flaming Gorge, but I think they've sold off the homes and I think they've more or less privatized the community.

Storey: Where was that town in relationship to the dam itself?

Stessman: It's maybe two or three miles from the dam itself.

Storey: Far enough away that the kids couldn't be under the bulldozer easily, I guess.

The Roads Outside Dutch John Were Dangerous

Stessman: Right. The roads were dangerous, not in town, but when you left town you got on highways that were constructed for dam construction purposes. You had these really big trucks going awfully fast, with gravel and rock trucks and that kind of thing bringing materials to the dam site twenty-four hours a day year round, and it was really hazardous.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 1. NOVEMBER 17, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2. NOVEMBER 17, 1994.

Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey with Neil Stessman on November the 17th, 1994.

Stessman: You were asking where I went from Flaming Gorge.

Storey: I was asking what your second rotation was, I believe.

Stessman: So it was in Flaming Gorge, my second rotation.

Storey: Yeah.

Second Rotation Was Construction Inspection

Stessman: I think that was when I went to work on inspection, and I can't really remember the time frame.

Rotation in Salt Lake City

I think I worked in the office until the following winter, and then I went on a rotation assignment to Salt Lake City. I spent about a month to six weeks learning to use a computer, Bendix G-15 something or other computer, and that was really early days of computer.

Rotation Assignment in Denver in Concrete Dams

Then I went on a rotation assignment to Denver and spent, I think, about three months in Denver, and, as I recall, I was in concrete dams, I think, design work.

Rotation Assignment in Construction Inspection at Flaming Gorge Dam

And then when I came back out to Flaming Gorge again, my next rotation assignment was in inspection, and mostly that was in concrete inspection on the dam and on the powerplant itself.

Learning to Program the Computer in Salt Lake City

Storey: When you went to Salt Lake to learn how to use the computer, what were you learning how to do?

Stessman: I think I was learning how to write programs for use on that computer, and, boy, I can't tell you very much about it. It didn't stick very much. But I think we were developing programs for different kinds of calculations and that kind of thing, and I think it related to quantity determinations and that sort of thing, like you would use for making payment calculations, the kinds of things I was talking about a while ago.

Storey: Did your family go with you?

Stessman: Yes. Our first child was born on December 8th of 1961, and so this was right after the first of the year, right after January 1st, that we went to Salt Lake City.

Storey: So were you on per diem then, or how did that work?

Stessman: I was on per diem, and we stayed in a motel. In fact, we found a place in Salt Lake City that had a kind of a house in the back of a motel, and we rented that for the full term that we were there, which, as I said, I think was about four weeks.

Storey: Did you have to move out of your housing at the dam?

Stessman: No, we retained it.

Storey: And then you went on to Denver.

Stessman: Uh-huh, for about three months.

Storey: Were you working on design or–

Stessman: I think I rotated to several groups in Denver, but I believe I was primarily involved in concrete dam design.

Storey: And once again your family was with you?

Stessman: Yeah.

Storey: You were on per diem?

Stessman: Um-hmm.

Storey: And then you went back to Flaming Gorge?

There Were Other Rotation Engineers from Flaming Gorge in Denver During His Rotation There

Stessman: Yes. And see, this was something that a number of my peers at Flaming Gorge were doing, and some of them were in Denver at the same time I was. It was the kind of thing that, when we first arrived and began to get oriented to the situation, there were other engineers who had come out of school a year before or two years before, and so they'd been through this routine and there was lots of free advice about where you should go and what you wanted to do on your rotation program.

Storey: How much say did you have in your rotation program?

Stessman: I don't know. I don't think I had a lot. I mean, I don't think I sort of dictated my own very much. I think it was what was put in front of me, for the most part.

Doing Concrete Inspection at Flaming Gorge

Storey: Then you went back and did inspection at Flaming Gorge?

Stessman: Right.

Storey: What does concrete inspection involve?

Storey: The concrete inspector is an observer to see that appropriate practices are used in construction so that there aren't sort of latent or inherent weaknesses in what's done.

Inspecting for Consolidation of the Materials

You look to see that the materials are consolidated like they should be by vibration, whatever. It's looking at the work in progress so that you have some assurance that the work is being done appropriately and that the product is going to be competent.

Storey: Making sure the reinforcing steel is where it's supposed to be.

Curing and Forms Inspection

Stessman: And that the concrete is kept damp or moist during the curing period, etcetera. We would look at the forms and attempt to have some confidence that they were going to stay in place.

"We were quite involved in the safety of the employees . . ."

We were quite involved in the safety of the employees, that kind of thing. That was part of our role, I think.

Storey: The safety of the contractor's employees?

Stessman: Yes.

Storey: Making sure that they were protecting them adequately?

Stessman: That they were wearing protective equipment, goggles, eye protection, hearing protection, hard hats, that work sites weren't being left with a lot of loose materials and so on, that people weren't being put in unsafe conditions. That was part of our responsibility.

Storey: Anything else that's sort of subsidiary like that that you were doing?

". . . you'd write reports and sort of document what had taken place. . . ."

Stessman: No. You know, you'd write reports and sort of document what had taken place. It seemed at the time like very responsible work. We took it very seriously.

"Lots of times you would have difficulties with the contractor over issues of safety or issues of whether they had cleaned up the excavation adequately before they started placing the concrete . . . It could be quite contentious. . . ."

Lots of times you would have difficulties with the contractor over issues of safety or issues of whether they had cleaned up the excavation adequately before they

started placing the concrete in it, etcetera. It could be quite contentious. There'd be lots of arguments.

"The contractor's superintendents . . . were under a lot time pressures to make progress and so on, so it was a significant issue to them if you had some reason that you wanted something done a little better or more extensively or more safely or more adequately or whatever. So it was a lot of personal relations . . . insisting that things were done right–involves a lot of judgment. . . ."

The contractor's superintendents, foremen, were under a lot of pressure and they were under a lot time pressures to make progress and so on, so it was a significant issue to them if you had some reason that you wanted something done a little better or more extensively or more safely or more adequately or whatever. So it was a lot of personal relations kind of thing, as well as insisting that things were done right–involves a lot of judgment.

Storey: Were there other concrete inspectors around when you were there working?

Inspection work at flaming gorge was round the clock in three shifts with a chief inspector and five or six inspectors on each shift

Stessman: Yeah, most of the time I would be involved in the dam, and that was an around-the-clock high production activity, and so we had a crew of inspectors and we were on rotating shifts. In other words, you worked the graveyard shift, the day shift, the swing shift, and as I recall, you would be like maybe two weeks on one, two weeks on the other, two weeks on the other, and you just kept rotating through that schedule–graveyard, day shift, swing shift. So we'd have probably somewhere on the order of six people, a chief inspector and five or six or so inspectors.

Storey: This is on each shift?

Stessman: Yes, while they were going heavy. And then if you had some additional things going on, you might have a larger crew of inspectors, depending. So most of the time you had a superior who, if you got into an issue or problem, you could go and get expert advice, or the contractor would raise it to the next person and get him to come in and look at it and decide if you were right that they weren't quite ready to start their placement.

Storey: It must have been pretty tense.

". . . they could need to get into this placement . . . everything, kind of rolling. So, yes, there would be times that you could be holding up a crew of a number of people, because the contractor . . . could have 350 people . . . strung out across that dam . . . doing everything . . ."

Stessman: It could be very tense. You know, they could need to get into this placement and have the expensive equipment and the batch plant, everything, kind of rolling. So, yes, there would be times that you could be holding up a crew of a number of

people, because the contractor, especially during the day shift, could have 350 people, probably, strung out across that dam, you know, doing everything from finishing concrete to placing reinforcement for the next or grout pipe or building forms and whatever, and then you had the batch plant up on the side of the canyon and you had big cables that the concrete buckets came out on and so on.

"So, yeah, you could get in a place where you had a lot of people upset. . . ."

So, yeah, you could get in a place where you had a lot of people upset.

Storey: How far would things deteriorate, in your experience?

Stessman: Well, it could get to some pretty heavy name-calling and people could get pretty angry, you know. It'd sort of escalate, because the foreman in the particular placement, the person in charge of getting that particular thing ready to do that piece of work, could say, "I've got to have this ready, because I'm next on the schedule for the concrete." And you could be saying, "No, this isn't done right. We have to have this grout pipe anchored in better, and the reinforcement's not where it should be," or, "We don't have the spaces you should have or you haven't cleaned up the previous placement well enough that you can put new fresh concrete on this that they'll bond together like they should."

So, yeah, it could get very contentious, and the person would say, "To hell with you. I did the last one this way, and *that* inspector said it was okay," or whatever. He'd say, "I want to talk to your boss," or he'd more typically go and get his boss. His boss would come out and try to talk you into something. Then you'd wind up he'd get your supervisor. So, yeah, it could be quite contentious.

Storey: But it never broke down into fights or anything like that?

Stessman: No, I never saw any fights.

Storey: Not very professional, but one wonders how these things play out.

Stessman: It got so that it was quite unprofessional at times. And, you know, a lot of times, especially the management level of the contractor's people, were part of the culture back in town, as well, and everybody kind of lived in the same town, played softball against each other and stuff.

Storey: Well, you answered one of my questions, which was about whether you worked graveyard and swing shift and so on. What were the differences between the shifts? Do you have any perceptions of that?

Stessman: I guess I don't know what context you mean, the differences in the shifts?

Storey: To you as a person working out there, what did you perceive to be the differences in the shifts? Or did you not perceive any?

The Inspection Crews Rotated Through the Shifts Changing Shifts about Every Two Weeks

Storey: Well, it was a drag to work the shifts on a rotating basis. I think if you were able to get into the regimen of working graveyard shift and did that on somewhat of a continuous basis, you'd probably become accustomed to it, but it was very difficult making the adjustment. And again, I think we worked one pay period in the graveyard shift and then we went to day shift.

I think it was probably intended to have everybody share the burden of having to work the graveyard shift, but it seems to me there could have been a better way to do that than to have to rotate shifts every two weeks.

Concrete Testing During Inspection

Storey: Did you do concrete testing or anything as a part of this concrete inspection responsibility?

Stessman: Not much. Maybe you'd do a slump test in the placement. A slump test is used to, well, mostly to tell whether the concrete is too runny or if it's as stiff as you want it to be, whether it'll stand up in a cone or whether it slumps, and there's kind of a standard test method to do that.

Storey: What is that?

Stessman: You had a certain size cone that you fill up with concrete and you rod it so many times, and then you take the cone away and you see how much it slumps.

Storey: You rod it to compact it?

Stessman: Yeah, to consolidate it.

Storey: And then you just turn it upside down and take the cone off?

". . . the basic thing that determines how strong the concrete is is the water-to-cement ratio, and they have a proclivity for wanting to put a lot of water in it . . . because then you can finish it sooner and you can finish it faster and it's easier to handle . . ."

Stessman: You just pull the cone off then and see how much the concrete slumps, how much it drops, and you measure. You put the cone form down in place next to the concrete, and you measure how much lower the concrete stands than it did when it was inside the cone. That gives you a measure of whether they have put more water in the mix than you would like them to have put, because the basic thing that determines how strong the concrete is is the water-to-cement ratio, and they have a proclivity for wanting to put a lot of water in it and make the mix more soupy, because then you can finish it sooner and you can finish it faster and it's easier to handle, it's easier to get into forms.

The Bureau of Reclamation had now what I think are extremely rigid standards for wanting stiff concrete, a low ratio of water to cement, and so we customarily wanted things a lot stiffer than the foreman or the superintendent for the contractor wanted to use in the placement. So that was one of the typical things that we had a bone of contention over.

Storey: Would that have been a contract spec, the slump test or however that's determined?

Stessman: Probably was, yeah.

Storey: How often did you do a slump test?

Stessman: I can't remember. We had inspectors in the batch plant, and so we'd be in communication with the inspector, or inspectors, whatever, who were up in the batch plant, and they would be monitoring the mix. So I'd say rather more of the testing was actually taking place up there. But it occurred really often that we'd be finding that the concrete in the placement, particularly in walls and floors and that kind of thing in, say, a powerplant or a structure rather than the big structure of the dam.

"The concrete that you'd be putting in the dam itself would be massive quantities that come in an 8-yard bucket and I think have a 6-inch diameter aggregate in it, whereas if you're doing a wall in a plant or something, you might only have like a 2-inch diameter maximum size aggregate. . . ."

The concrete that you'd be putting in the dam itself would be massive quantities that come in an 8-yard bucket and I think have a 6-inch diameter aggregate in it, whereas if you're doing a wall in a plant or something, you might only have like a 2-inch diameter maximum size aggregate.

"With the dam, you just kind of dump it in and vibrate it into place, and you'd be putting it in layers in lifts, so you weren't making a finished floor. . . . because you'd just be two or three days later putting another layer of concrete on top of that in 7½-foot lifts. . . ."

With the dam, you just kind of dump it in and vibrate it into place, and you'd be putting it in layers in lifts, so you weren't making a finished floor. You'd just kind of level it off through the vibration and not actually physically screed or finish off the concrete, because you'd just be two or three days later putting another layer of concrete on top of that in 7½-foot lifts.

"But if you're doing the concrete walls or floor in a powerplant, why they're wanting to get the screeding and the concrete finishing and that kind of thing going, and so they would tend to want to use a soupier mix . . ."

But if you're doing the concrete walls or floor in a powerplant, why they're wanting to get the screeding and the concrete finishing and that kind of thing going, and so they would tend to want to use a soupier mix, so quite routinely we'd be hassling

them about it should be a drier mix.

Storey: Did you inspect both of those kinds of concrete placement?

Stessman: Yeah.

Storey: Did we have a concrete testing plant or a test lab there?

Stessman: Yes.

Storey: You weren't involved in that?

Stessman: No, I never worked in that.

Storey: Did you gather samples for that?

Stessman: I don't remember that we did. I think that was done–I think the lab crew would take their samples. I don't remember doing that. I can't remember. I don't think so.

Storey: How long were you on field inspection?

Next Winter at Flaming Gorge Transferred into the Office and Worked in Contract Administration

Stessman: I think the next winter I went in and worked in contract administration, so I think I did that one summer season and through about half of the winter, so probably nine months.

Storey: Were you at the end of your rotation then?

Stessman: I think so.

Storey: How much choice did you have in where you were assigned?

Why He Moved into Contract Administration

Stessman: I think I had a choice. I think, for example, had I indicated I'd prefer to go and work in Denver or had I indicated I'd prefer to go and work in the regional office or had I said I preferred to stay in the field side or go to the office side, I think I had those kind of choices. I think they *wanted* me to come and work in the contract administration work, and I wanted to do what they wanted me to do. I think I also thought I'd enjoy it, which I did. So I think I could have had some choices.

Storey: So you really sort of chose to go into contract administration.

Stessman: Um-hmm.

Storey: Why was that? Do you remember anything about your thought processes?

Stessman: I think I was kind of fascinated with the sort of quasi-legal, paralegal aspect of interpreting contracts, and then I think I also liked the resolution processes, to some extent the arguments, comparing interpretations, and I think I liked the aspect of sort of putting things together–why our position was this, and the strategy of how we would make a better case than they would if we were right.

How Concrete Inspection Assisted with Contract Administration

Storey: Was your concrete inspection experience useful to you in that position, or your other rotation assignments?

Stessman: I think just because it gave me a kind of a feel for how things were done in the field, so that if something was a bone of contention about whether we did something through our design or through our inspection activities that caused them a problem, whether what they were saying was realistic and so on. Yeah, I think it helped me in that sense. I wasn't somebody who became real knowledgeable or expert about how things should be constructed or how things should be done, but I think just having enough experience that I wasn't naive about how things actually took place on the site and how things affected them.

Storey: What position did you take when you went back to contract administration? This would be under the office engineer again, right?

Stessman: Yeah.

In Contract Administration Worked for Ron Montgomery and They Handled Both Flaming Gorge and Transmission Line Construction

Storey: And your supervisor then was?

Stessman: The guy's name was Ron Montgomery, and the work was fairly specialized in administering claims or items of contention in payment. We had the immediate work at Flaming Gorge, and then in addition we had transmission line work that was taking place, so we were administering contracts for transmission line work, I think over a fairly broad area that included quite a bit of western Colorado and some of Utah on the Colorado River Storage Project transmission facilities for the hydro dams. Then there were different field engineers and inspection crews on those activities that were out on those sites.

Storey: So was this the same office where you started out your first rotation?

Stessman: Right. It was in a different room in the same office where I started out.

Storey: New supervisor?

Stessman: Uh-huh. The same office engineer and sort of parallel or peer, probably, Branch chiefs, one over estimates and analysis or something like that, I think, and the other over contract adjustments or something like that.

Storey: So you were in a separate branch?

Stessman: Right.

Storey: The same division type of thing.

Stessman: Right.

Came to Reclamation as a GS-5 but was Promoted after Six Months

Storey: What grade did you come to Reclamation at, do you remember?

Stessman: I came as a 5, and I think that was like $5,600 a year, which seemed like a whole lot. Then I think that we could be promoted to a 7 after six months, which I was, and then I think after another year I was promoted to a 9.

Storey: Oh, I meant to ask you, back on the concrete inspection, excuse me.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 2. NOVEMBER 17, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 2. NOVEMBER 17, 1994.

Walking Through a Typical Day of Concrete Inspection

Storey: If you could take me through a typical day in concrete inspection. What happened? What did you do?

Stessman: I think we reported to work at the office, so we'd have a van and our chief inspector on our crew would–we kind of rotated as a team, as you might imagine, as we went through the rotation from day shift, swing shift, graveyard shift. My chief inspector, whose name is Donald Duck,[2] and the four or five or possibly six, I think, maybe four or five of us who worked for him on inspection would go to the site. We had some kind of a like a small shed or something that, when we'd get there, the crew coming off would typically be there, and they'd be writing their reports or finishing their reports on the inspection, inspections that they'd done.

Of course, the two supervisors then would be exchanging information about, "This got done today, and this didn't get done. We had a real hassle with such and such a foreman or superintendent today about that problem in Block Number 12 or something, and this is what we did about it. I don't want you to let up on this. This is really important that we hold this position," and so on. You, too, start to learn from the people coming off what had taken place and what you needed to carry on with.

Sometimes, as soon as you'd get there, why, the supervisor would say, "You need to get right away over to so-and-so, because the person you're replacing is in the block and they're 50 percent done with it, and you need to get over there."

2. Donald (Don) J. Duck participated in oral history interviews for the Reclamation history program.

So you'd kind of learn what had gone on and what you needed to carry on, what you needed to know from what they had done the previous shift. A lot of times, when you were just kind of the inspector who typically would be in a placement or down at the work level, because the placements would be ongoing, you'd need to go and replace that person. They'd always be in a hurry to get going because they had their reports to do and they had to get home, so they'd be filling you in on what you needed to know about what was taking place and so on. Often it would be, also, information about, "You need to watch for this," or "We had this particular problem," or "The concrete forms look a little weak to me in that spot, and you might want to keep an eye on that," or "When they get to this, make sure that they get the reinforcement, that they don't bang it with a bucket or whatever," just certain particulars about what you needed to be watchful for.

A lot of times it was about safety considerations, where the ladder is or whether the ladder's adequate or watch them when they do this.

Storey: Then you'd go out to the construction site.

Stessman: Uh-huh, which, you know, was sort of like our trailer. We'd be down there in that parking lot across the street, and the dam might be fifty yards away. You needed to climb the ladders up sometimes 250 feet or so to get to the level where the work was taking place, and you'd kind of be in a hurry because the other individual you were replacing was anxious to get going.

Storey: These ladders are on the outside of the dam?

Stessman: Yeah. Well, yeah, typically they'd be, you know, temporary wooden ladders with a landing every probably fifteen feet or something.

Storey: And this was used by Reclamation employees *and* construction employees?

Stessman: Right.

Storey: A lot of traffic on these?

Stessman: Yeah, coming and going, like ants, sort of. And then you'd have, you know, on a dam there were, I don't know, somewhere in the range of thirty blocks, vertical blocks, as you go across the dam, and as you were constructing those, they alternate between high ones and low ones.

You might be having to replace the fellow who's in the placement way over on the other side of the dam, so you go up the ladders 125 feet or whatever, and then you start across the catwalks, across the low blocks, over to the other side of the dam to replace the person. A lot of times the catwalk wouldn't be in place, so you'd have to go down the ladder into the block and across, and then up the ladder on the other side and continue on. There were a lot of safety hazards.

Storey: You've mentioned reports and the kinds of things you'd be looking for already, but

when were the reports done and how extensive were they? Was there a lot of paper, or was it sort of minimal, or . . .?

There Was a Lot of Paperwork on Construction Inspection

Stessman: I would characterize it as very extensive. I think we carried them with us all the time, and it was something where, if you weren't pretty active with something, you were leaning up against a wall or a form or something and got your book out and worked on your reports.

I think we typically would have our reports done at the end of the shift. As the day went on, you'd become more and more conscious that you wanted to have your reports done by the time the replacements came. You'd carry kind of a metal holder that had the forms in it, the kind that you could pull up the top of it.

Storey: Sort of a metal box?

Stessman: Yes. I think I carried that with me pretty much all the time throughout the day, and if there was a slow time, I'd pull it open and be writing down the things I needed to document.

Storey: What would you typically need to document?

Documented Anomalies, Difficulties, and Anything That Might Later Result in a Claim by the Contractor

Storey: Well, you'd point out any anomalies or any difficulties that you had. You'd tend to make a record of anything that might be an issue, like that you delayed the contractor for forty-five minutes to sandblast this or that before they could start the next placement because you knew that that might be something that they would make a claim over. You'd make a note of two concrete finishers and three laborers and a carpenter were idle or whatever, and what your reasons were and what the contractor said about it. You'd try to document things so that if people needed the facts, you had some of them down so that they could utilize them.

Storey: And you'd note how much concrete went in?

Stessman: Um-hmm.

Storey: Whether or not reinforcing steel was there?

Stessman: Yeah.

Storey: Things like that.

Stessman: Yeah, you'd indicate that.

"Incidentally, there would be check-out forms that would be there at the

placement, and it would have a place for sign-off of the reinforcement, and a sign-off on the cleanup, a sign-off on the forms, and a sign-off on the grout pipe that was to be embedded in the concrete and so on. . . ."

Incidentally, there would be check-out forms that would be there at the placement, and it would have a place for sign-off of the reinforcement, and a sign-off on the cleanup, a sign-off on the forms, and a sign-off on the grout pipe that was to be embedded in the concrete and so on. I forgot about that. Those papers would be in like a pipe or something, I think.

"Typically, the foreman who was in charge of that activity would hunt you down and come and find you and say, 'I need you to come sign off on the rebar inspection,'. . ."

Typically, the foreman who was in charge of that activity would hunt you down and come and find you and say, "I need you to come sign off on the rebar inspection," or "I need you to do the rebar inspection and sign it off for me." Then you'd go, and you'd have the plans. You'd know the spacing limitations and so on, and you'd go and you'd look that over. You'd take your tape measure and your flashlight and whatever tools you needed to do those kind of things, and then you'd either sign it off or you wouldn't. Then you'd make a note in your inspector report that "I inspected the rebar in Block 17 and signed it off as complete," or "I inspected it and found the following deficiencies which need to be corrected before it's signed off."

So then the next person, when that foreman comes to him on the next shift and says, "I need you to sign this off," he's got that information and doesn't miss it. He sees the same kind of things I did, or knows what I found in my inspection.

Storey: So the little clip of reports that you were carrying [around] ~~on~~ goes on to your replacement?

Stessman: Yeah.

Storey: It wasn't *yours*, as it were.

Stessman: No. You'd put them in slots back at the shed at the end of the shift.

Storey: Oh, okay.

Stessman: And we didn't have copy machines. I think we made carbon copies.

Storey: How did they train you to do this work of concrete inspection? Did Donald Duck follow you around and tell you how to do it and show you or what?

Lowell Woods Ran the Inspection Team for Don Duck and He Did a Lot of the Training

Stessman: That's a good question. There was a guy who worked for Donald Duck and was not exactly my supervisor, but was the lead person on our inspection crew, and his name was Lowell Woods, and he was good. He really knew things. He was really an outstanding guy. I hadn't thought about him in years, but he had a lot of advice, and he was a sage and wise person[.] ~~and was not authoritative.~~

~~Storey: You mean not authoritarian?~~

Stessman: Not authoritarian, yeah. He was authoritative, but not authoritarian. And I think that's probably the experience the other engineers had, as well.

"Looking back on it, I think it wasn't really engineering, and it wasn't stuff we learned in college. It was more technician work–that is, inspection was–than engineering. . . ."

Looking back on it, I think it wasn't really engineering, and it wasn't stuff we learned in college. It was more technician work–that is, inspection was–than engineering. But I liked it. I enjoyed it a lot.

Storey: You did?

"I think God didn't intend for me to be an engineer anyway, and I think it had a lot to do with developing working relationships, that I learned a lot of interpersonal relations and that sort of thing that helped me later, negotiations and disagreements and dispute resolution . . ."

Stessman: Um-hmm. I learned a lot from it. I think God didn't intend for me to be an engineer anyway, and I think it had a lot to do with developing working relationships, that I learned a lot of interpersonal relations and that sort of thing that helped me later, negotiations and disagreements and dispute resolution, a lot of that.

Storey: Out there on the dam?

Stessman: Yeah, certainly.

Storey: I take it they didn't send six new rotation engineers in to be concrete inspectors all at once.

". . . there would be maybe one [new rotation engineer] on a crew. Not many engineers wanted to do that work. They wanted to be in the more technical, the design work and so on. . . ."

Stessman: No. Actually, I think it would be more typical that there would be maybe one on a crew. Not many engineers wanted to do that work. They wanted to be in the more technical, the design work and so on. I was finding that I enjoyed contract management, construction management, which I would put this in that category, rather than technical engineering.

Storey: Well, I would like to go on, but we're already ten minutes over the time.

Stessman: Are we really?

Storey: I'd like to ask you now if you're willing for people inside Reclamation and outside Reclamation to use the transcripts and the tapes from this interview.

Stessman: Yes.

Storey: Thank you.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 2. NOVEMBER 17, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 1. NOVEMBER 18, 1994.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, senior historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing Neil Stessman, regional director of the Great Plains Region, in his offices in the Federal Building in Billings, Montana, on November the 18th, 1994, at about nine o'clock in the morning. This is tape one.

Working in Contract Administration at Flaming Gorge Dam

Yesterday we got to discussing your involvement in contract negotiations. First of all, what was going on in that office?

About 1962 When Water Storage Began at Flaming Gorge Became Permanent on the Construction Administration Program

Stessman: I got into contract administration when I was still at Flaming Gorge Dam construction, and by ~~the time of~~ 1964, when I was still there in contract administration, the project was kind of winding down and we were completing construction. We had started storing water ~~in~~ November 1st of 1962. I was in contract administration, as I recall, on a permanent basis beginning about that time in the office, and I found that work very stimulating and very challenging. I enjoyed it a lot.

My supervisor, Ron Montgomery, that I mentioned before, was very helpful. He was quite knowledgeable and he was also a good supervisor in the sense of sort of giving you your way and your opportunity to kind of–somewhat the empowerment thing that we're trying to do now.

As Large Construction Contracts Wind down You Typically Have Substantial Claims Adjustments and Disagreements

Typically, as you finish up large construction activities and large construction contracts, there are a number of, say, substantial issues of claims or adjustments or disagreements in administering the contract, on things that the contractor is negotiating for additional payments very typically, and that was the case then, particularly with respect to the Flaming Gorge activity as opposed to the

transmission line activity, which we were also handling. Those would be smaller and shorter term contracts.

Became the Person Most Familiar with Claims and Had a Lot More Work and Responsibility than a Person at His Grade Would Normally Have

My supervisor became ill with cancer at that time, and then the project construction engineer that I mention, Gene R. Walton, who had a really at least national reputation for construction of large dams and that sort of thing, he retired and took a job. He was, I think, highly sought after by a number of different organizations, but he went to work for the state of California on a large dam construction project out there. Anyway, he left, and so the assistant project construction engineer, a fellow named Frank Dahlen [phonetic], who I think had worked with Gene Walton on several previous projects, in the vein that I mentioned earlier, how people kind of went together to future jobs. He was the acting project construction engineer.

As we got into the claims and the settlements of claims, we were in a position where I was about the only resource there who knew much about the claims, so I got quite a lot more work and responsibility put on me than I might otherwise have had at that time, and I kind of had to learn the work fast. My supervisor, part of the time he was able to come to work, but his health was so poor that he couldn't travel and he was somewhat limited–his energy and so on.

And then with the change from the project construction engineer, the acting constructing engineer was a lot different individual than the sort of authoritarian, having his thumbs on everything sort of project construction engineer that we had. Frank Dahlen was a lot more focused on field engineering activities and that kind of thing than contract administration, so he depended on me to–he sort of empowered me more than in those days was typical.

"So I got some exposure to dealing with the Denver office and the chief engineer's office and more sort of direct higher level discussions with the contractors than I normally would have for the amount of time I had in the organization and the amount of experience I had in the organization. . . ."

So I got some exposure to dealing with the Denver office and the chief engineer's office and more sort of direct higher level discussions with the contractors than I normally would have for the amount of time I had in the organization and the amount of experience I had in the organization. So in a lot of ways, you know, depersonalizing the situation with my supervisor being so ill, it was quite a beneficial situation for me from the standpoint of getting experience and having real sort of challenging and satisfying work.

"The exposure that I got at that time turned out to be quite beneficial to me *later* when I did have the opportunity to go to work in the Denver office and get involved in contract administration at that level in Denver. . . ."

The exposure that I got at that time turned out to be quite beneficial to me *later* when I did have the opportunity to go to work in the Denver office and get involved in contract administration at that level in Denver.

Storey: Do you remember the nature of the claims that you were dealing with? Do you have any specific examples? I sort of had the impression yesterday that things were being paid for as you went along.

In Large Construction Projects Unexpected Conditions and Changed Plans Typically Cause Adjustments in Payments to the Contractor

Stessman: I can't remember the specific nature of the claims, no or the details of them, but it's *very typical* on a large construction project of that type, particularly where you're dealing with geologic conditions, subsurface conditions, and at the time you contract you're projecting activities that are going to take place over a period of, let's say, five years, the term of the contract, that there are unknowns, or that you had to speculate about would be too tenuous a term, but you had to take some knowledge that you have, such as the details of what you found when you drilled a hole in this spot and the details of what you found when you drilled an exploratory drill hole in another spot over here and another one over here, and take that and project that to a forecast of, for example, what kind of conditions the contractor would encounter when the contractor excavated for the foundation for the powerplant, let's say.

You might have, let's say, a 300' by 150' building ~~that~~ whose foundation turns out to be 110 feet below the water surface of where the river was before you started this project, and so maybe you've gone in there with a raft or whatever and put in eight drill holes over that area and drilled them down to whatever depth you needed to to know quite a lot about the geology and what they'd encounter when they de-watered the area and excavated the pit to start the foundation of this building in. Things change, and you get into disagreements about whether the owner, the government, whether *we* had provided them enough information for them to make a responsible bid [to] ~~from~~ which they should be held with no adjustments in payment, or whether, in fact, we put interpretations on that information and designed a building, or a foundation, let's say, that wouldn't *work* in that case. There're just so many complications that can come up that it's almost unprecedented that you don't have issues that you need to resolve by contract adjustments, by in some cases recognizing that, yes, there has been additional costs that legally and responsibly we should bear some of the burden of.

If you do otherwise, if you award the contract–and you probably couldn't legally do this [even] if you chose. But if you endeavored to say that no matter what it costs you, no matter what conditions you encounter, no matter how you interpret what we've given you as advance information, when we ask you to bid, there will be no adjustment in the compensation you're entitled to, you wouldn't get people to offer to do your work, or to agree to do your work, or they would have to put so much contingency in the bid that, in the long run, you'd pay substantially more than you would by having specifications and an agreement that tolerates some

understanding of the fact that there may be changed conditions for which you may have to make additional compensation, or that there may be imperfections in the surveying information we give them, or errors, and if there are, and that causes them to have to excavate more material or use more concrete to backfill an excavation or whatever, then certainly some compensation is in order.

Concerns about How the Contractor Was Placing Concrete in the Lining of the Spillway Tunnel

One instance I remember, we were putting concrete lining in a tunnel, in a spillway tunnel. This spillway tunnel, I don't remember the particulars, but I think it was something like 23 feet in diameter and it was on an incline and it dropped somewhere in the order of 500 to 550 feet on a slope of 45 degrees or perhaps 50 or 60 degrees of slope. So a very large diameter tunnel on a very steep slope, something like probably the slope of a ski jump, where the water would go over a spillway, down through an incline tunnel, and then shoot out back into the river downstream below the dam.

So we were putting the lining in for this tunnel. In other words, you excavate, let's say, a 30-foot diameter hole, and then you put concrete to make basically a pipe, so that you might have, let's say, a 3- to 4- or 5-foot thickness of a concrete wall that forms the barrel of the tunnel. And so you have the full excavation made all the way through, and you start from the bottom and you start to form and place the concrete around the barrel of the spillway lift by lift as you go up, until you finally have the complete barrel formed and the concrete placed. You place the concrete in probably–I think we were probably doing 15-foot vertical lifts of concrete.

It's an amazing thing to be in, because the inspector has to climb through a hole in the form and get down in this sort of black hole with the forms on the inside and the rock on the outside of this circle, with very heavy reinforcement bars spaced at probably 8- to 12-inch spacings, *big* ones, inch and a quarter in diameter, reinforcement bars. The concrete, which is coming from a batch plant up on the top of the canyon, comes down into the placement, which I think you'd call an annular shape of a concrete placement, in about an 18-inch diameter pipe. So at the lower end of the spillway, you've got this concrete that's being put in, say, an 18-inch diameter pipe–I think it would probably be 12 inch, something on that order–400 or 500 feet higher up, and so they had kind of a pump that they'd put the concrete through from the mixed concrete into the pipe. Well, as soon as it hit the slope it would drop, and so the concrete would be probably doing 50-, 60 miles an hour, I suppose, by the time it came out the end of the pipe down in the pour where you were, so it was just shooting down at extremely high velocity.

Concerned about the Homogeneity of the Concrete Placed

I remember being on the shift, and this was one of the first lifts that they started this process. Well, we became very concerned that the material would not be uniform, that when the concrete set up, because of the way the rock was coming

at such high velocity within the mix as it discharged from the end of this pipe, that the rock might all go to one place, and the sand and cement and water of the concrete mix would not be homogenous. So we became very concerned about that, and we got in a big dispute with the contractor about whether this was going to be adequate or whether they'd have to put baffles on the–you called it a slick line, this line that the concrete comes down in, the wet concrete–whether you'd have to put baffles on the slick line or not.[3]

"We wound up deciding that we should let them go ahead and do it their way and then have some cores drilled to see whether the material came out uniform or homogeneous or whether it didn't. . . . Well, it turned out that our concrete experts were satisfied with the results, and so we wound up having to pay the expense of having them make the cores and so on . . ."

We wound up deciding that we should let them go ahead and do it their way and then have some cores drilled to see whether the material came out uniform or homogeneous or whether it didn't. Of course, the contractor had the equipment and the personnel and so on, so they did the core drilling. Well, it turned out that our concrete experts were satisfied with the results, and so we wound up having to pay the expense of having them make the cores and so on, and I think we probably wound up having to make some adjustment to them for the delays and the provisions that we required them to put in place. That's kind of an example of some of the things you can get into. I'm still kind of amazed that that was a process that worked, but the cores indicated, the core holes that were taken, the examination of them indicated that, in fact, it was working to the standards we needed.

Storey: How long did you work in the contract adjustment?

Moved to the Curecanti Unit Where He Worked on Contract Administration/Contract Adjustments

Stessman: Well, I wound up working in contract administration/contract adjustments for that period at Flaming Gorge, which was, I guess, about a year and a half, and then I did that on the Curecanti Unit at Gunnison, Colorado, on Blue Mesa and Morrow Point and those facilities after I transferred down there. And then I later transferred to Denver, and I did that in the Denver office then for an additional period. I guess I got out of that line of work in 1971, so whatever that would be, approximately eight years or so. And if you include the time that I was on inspection, which is really in the same category of work, why, that was, I could say, pretty much what I did for the ten years in the Bureau was construction, construction management, contract administration, contract adjustments.

Storey: How long were you at Flaming Gorge?

Stessman: I was there three years, I think.

3. Note that Donald (Don) J. Duck talked about this issue in his oral history interview also. See pages 60 to 63 of that interview.

Storey: Until '64?

Moved to Gunnison, Colorado, in 1964 to Work on the Curecanti Unit

Stessman: Yes. In 1964 we moved to Gunnison, Colorado, and I worked at the construction office, which was at a place called Sapinero, which was almost like an intersection on the road. We had an office there that had been a big log lodge that a Texas oil person had owned, and it was in the reservoir area for Blue Mesa Dam. The government had acquired that as part of the acquisition for the reservoir, and it was a very large kind of a lodge building and [Reclamation] converted it to an office, which was used then for several years during the construction of Blue Mesa and Morrow Point dams on the Gunnison River.

Storey: Why did you leave Flaming Gorge?

Stessman: It was part of the routine. The work was completed, or being completed, and the process was that you began to see the end of that project. Construction personnel, typically you'd work three to six or eight or ten years at one site and then understand that you moved on to another construction job. So after you're there some time, you begin to get your antenna out for a next site.

As I recall, specifically, I was on a surplus list, and I think they would sort of put you on that, and it was somewhat to your own advantage because you got some level of special consideration for other jobs in the Bureau. I think I was probably on that list that was circulated around the Bureau for three to six months before I had an offer to go to Gunnison on this other job, and both of these offices were within the Upper Colorado Region.

Storey: Did you know anybody at the Sapinero office?

Stessman: Yeah. There were other people. Particularly I remember that one of my associates who was also an engineer in contract administration work had gone over there ahead of me. I can't remember if there were any others, but I remember there was one individual. It was that situation where they were people we had known at Flaming Gorge, and his wife and their children and my wife and my son were acquainted with each other and played cards with each other and so on, and so we had someone over there where we were going who were looking out for us and helped us locate a place to live and helped us through the transition of moving and so on. In that situation, we didn't have a government camp, but generally people lived in either Montrose or Gunnison. They lived in Gunnison, and we rented a home in Gunnison, too.

Storey: Chose the cooler place.

Stessman: We did, yeah. That was really cold. The winters were extreme. But it was a real nice community, and again, a really sort of comfortable, friendly situation, with a fair number of Bureau employees that we socialized with, as well as worked with.

Storey: Who was this person?

Stessman: His name's Merlin Christianson [phonetic]. He had come to Flaming Gorge from another Bureau job in Utah, but had spent most of his career in the Corps of Engineers, Oahe Dam, as I recall. And then when he left, he went back to work for the Corps of Engineers and worked on dams for the Corps of Engineers in the Midwest.

Storey: How many folks do you suppose were in the office there at Sapinero?

Worked with Ray Willms at Both Flaming Gorge and the Curecanti Unit

Stessman: I'd say in the office there were perhaps fifty. The entire project staff was much more than that, because there were also field staff at Morrow Point and at Blue Mesa, and there were also people doing preliminary design and exploration work for Crystal Dam. In addition to that, the project office was responsible for transmission line work in western Colorado. In fact, I think I had met Ray Willms[4] at Flaming Gorge, but I saw more of him, became more acquainted with him, *worked* with him more at the Curecanti Unit. In fact, he lived in Gunnison at least part of the time that I was there.

". . . the Bureau, I think, had a tremendous reputation for having people like that who could manage very large construction jobs. . . ."

We were just in Gunnison for a year. The construction engineer–gosh, I'm having trouble. I can't think of his name. But again, the construction engineer was a physically different person than Gene R. Walton, but very much similar in that he, again, had his thumb on all the details and was a very well known and very expert construction engineer, and the Bureau, I think, had a tremendous reputation for having people like that who could manage very large construction jobs.

Storey: And an authoritarian manager again?

Stessman: That was the style. I think that was probably not just at the Bureau of Reclamation. I think it was the style of the times. I think that was the sort of accepted norm for managers of substantial activities.

Storey: Now, who hired *you* for this project?

Stessman: I think that the office engineer at that office was probably the one who hired me, probably the one who made the decision to offer me a job there. I can't specifically remember talking with him, but I have to think that he was also probably the one who made contact with me and offered me the job.

Storey: Do you remember his name?

4. Ray Willms participated in Reclamation's oral history program.

Stessman: Yeah. His name is Al Martin. He was the office engineer. There was a Dick Cummings who worked for him and was my *immediate* supervisor, although Al Martin was another manager of the type that I described before who was quite authoritarian, and basically all my work would be turned over to him. In other words, he supervised me directly, even though on paper Dick Cummings was my supervisor.

Storey: What was going on there? I'm not following what you're saying to me, I think.

Stessman: You mean, what's going on or what is it I'm saying to you about the individual and the working sit . . .–

END SIDE 1, TAPE 1. NOVEMBER 18, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1. NOVEMBER 18, 1994.

Storey: You made a point that even though you technically reported to one person, you were really reporting to another person. What was going on there?

Stessman: Well, I think the reason I pointed that out is that, to me, in the experience I've had, a lot has to do and a lot is important about the working situation and how things worked and what the *culture* of the organization in the office was where I worked, as I indicated with Ron Montgomery, when I worked for him at Flaming Gorge, and it would also apply when I worked with Jerry Harris before him and to some extent with Lowell Woods, that I mentioned out on the construction, and Donald Duck. There was sort of a enriching situation, where in some organizations you kind of have license, you're franchised, you're empowered, and in others it can be very limiting.

At Curecanti, our office engineer was very much an authoritarian kind of supervisor, and sometimes very difficult to work with. That was that situation. I think it was more typical at that time. I felt in the situations where I was able to take some responsibility and be given some responsibility, if I had situations where people would sort of identify the objectives and then let me try to accomplish them with a considerable amount of license, that I enjoyed the work a lot more and I did good work, and I really *grew* in those situations.

Storey: Did the nature of your contract administration work change between your job at Flaming Gorge and your job down in Sapinero?

During the Later Part of His Work at Flaming Gorge He Had a Lot of Latitude, and That Disappeared at Curecanti

Stessman: Well, I think it was similar. I think I was doing a lot of the same kind of work. I think that it had been a little unique in the latter part of my work at Flaming Gorge because the situation was such that I had a lot more autonomy to do the work. At Curecanti, it was a lot more closely supervised, *probably* in a lot of ways more typical of what I would have expected. At Flaming Gorge, I had some really unique opportunities, and it was a lot more satisfying. But, no, the kind of work

was about the same.

Storey: The situation is what made it different.

Stessman: Uh-huh.

Storey: While you were still at Flaming Gorge, were you ever acting or anything like that?

Stessman: No.

Storey: Somebody else did that when Montgomery was ill?

Stessman: I don't recall that being done on a formal basis. I think that I had the liberty or option of just passing my work, whatever needed approval, on to the next level without there being an acting. It wasn't a real large office, and the office was getting smaller as time went on. But in that particular case, the office engineer had not a sort of detailed interest in the contract administration work, so he didn't supervise it as closely and was a lot more likely to have my work just sort of be endorsed or approved or give me the option of handling it.

Storey: You said you were at Sapinero for about a year.

Stessman: Yes.

Storey: Anything interesting happen in that time period that I should know about, that we should record?

Stessman: No, I don't think so, nothing particularly unique. I got some additional very, I think, pretty beneficial experience working with contractor personnel and that sort of thing on negotiating agreements and sort of working through the disputes and such that came along.

At Flaming Gorge Had Ended up Working a Lot with the Chief Engineer and the Chief Construction Engineer

During the work that I did at Flaming Gorge at the end of the time there, I sort of wound up representing the office in dealing with the issues on our contract claims and so on with the Denver office–in fact, with the chief engineer and the chief construction engineer on a personal basis.

While at Curecanti Ralph Gullett Became Interested in Having Him Move to the Chief Engineer's Office

During the time that I was at Sapinero, a fellow named Ralph Gullett, who was responsible in the Chief Engineer's office for negotiation of claims and that sort of thing bureauwide, was interested in having me come to Denver to be on the staff there, and so as time went on at Sapinero, I kind of began to sort of look at opportunities of transferring to the Denver office.

Storey: How do you spell Mr. Gullett's name?

Stessman: G-U-L-L-E-T-T, Ralph Gullett.

Storey: And ultimately you decided to apply for something there?

Stessman: Yeah, I think I did apply for an advertised position. I think I knew when I applied that I'd be selected. It was the kind of situation where they'd been talking with me about they'd like to have me come in there.

"To some extent, there's always been a sort of a feeling of pride among the project office people that they're where the action is and that's the place to work, as opposed to the Denver office or the regional office. . . ."

To some extent, there's always been a sort of a feeling of pride among the project office people that they're where the action is and that's the place to work, as opposed to the Denver office or the regional office. As I remember, a lot of the rotation engineers would be looking at or trying to make the decision of whether they intended to spend their career working in project offices or the regional office or Denver office.

Concerns about Moving into the Denver Office

I didn't come from a big city background and I didn't especially see myself wanting to live in a big city and work in a big office, in the kind of institutional sense of a big office, and so I had some real trepidation about going to Denver. I can remember having discussions with peers, saying, "Gee, Neil, if you get into that office, you'll *never* get out of it again. You'll spend the *rest* of your career as one of whatever, 1,000- or 2,000 people, in a big office. The project offices are the place to be. This is where the action is. This is where the work is," and so on. But it looked like a good opportunity, and it turned out to be that. I enjoyed it a lot there.

As I recall, I applied for a position and was selected, and I think it involved a promotion from a GS-9 to a GS-11.

Storey: Was there a change in the nature of the work you were doing between Sapinero and the Denver office?

Denver Job Was Negotiating Adjustments to Contracts

Stessman: Well, the work became more exclusively administration of contract adjustments for claims, time extensions, but not involved with making payments or that sort of thing, but negotiating adjustments to the contract.

". . . the project construction engineers worked for the chief engineer in Denver, even though on paper they may have reported to the regional office. . . ."

On the larger contracts, the contracting officer was in Denver and was the

chief engineer, and whether it was this way on paper or not, the project construction engineers worked for the chief engineer in Denver, even though on paper they may have reported to the regional office. It was very much a situation where substantial construction activities in the Bureau, at *any* place in the Bureau of Reclamation, were under the direction of the Denver office, and the chain of authority there was, I think in my earliest recollection, that it was probably called the chief engineer. It might have been the assistant commissioner and chief engineer was the title of the position.

Job Was in the Contract Administration Branch

And then in our hierarchy there, I think the chief construction engineer was the title of the division chief where I was, and then I was in the Contract Administration Branch within that organization.

Grant Bloodgood, Ned Trenam, Ralph Gullett, and Barney Bellport

The chief engineer, when I first went in to Denver, was Grant Bloodgood, and the chief of the Construction Division was Ned [M. E.] Trenam, and his assistant was Ralph Gullett. I think Ned Trenam retired within a year of when I went to Denver, and Ralph Gullett succeeded him, and I think in about the same time frame that Grant Bloodgood also retired, and Barney Bellport succeeded him as the chief engineer.

Storey: So Mr. Bloodgood was the person you had worked with while you were at Sapinero?

Ralph Gullett Wanted Him in Denver

Stessman: No. The individual that, in a sense, I'd come to his attention when I was at Flaming Gorge and continued the contact and interest was Ralph Gullett. He was a real doer. He was a real operator. He was an expert negotiator, and with or without the title, he was sort of the person who made things happen. Both chief engineers, Grant Bloodgood and Barney Bellport, were exceptional individuals in their jobs, too.

Section Chief Leon Thygesen

In the hierarchy from where *I was* in the organization, I was several levels down, but my immediate supervisor was Leon [R.] Thygesen.

Branch Chief Curt Tyler

He was my section chief, and my branch chief was Curt [Curtis L.] Tyler.

Division Chief Ralph Gullett

The chief of the division, then, for most of the time that I was there, was Ralph

Gullett. There were, I think, three branches, three sections in our branch, and the people that I worked for could not have been better at each level.

"Our branch chief was outstanding. . . . both very knowledgeable, but both very empowering, and if you wanted to work hard . . . do well, you really were given the license to produce and given a lot of autonomy, and I was lucky enough to be in that situation. . . ."

I had an outstanding section chief in Leon Thygesen. Our branch chief was outstanding. They were both very knowledgeable, but both very empowering, and if you wanted to work hard, you wanted to really turn out the work, do well, you really were given the license to produce and given a lot of autonomy, and I was lucky enough to be in that situation.

Division Chief Confidence Resulted in Serval Challenging Opportunities

Then I was also in a situation where the chief of the Construction Division, Ralph Gullett, seemed to have a lot of confidence in me, and that also resulted in my being given a number of typically very challenging opportunities.

Given the Opportunity to Work with Construction Offices on Negotiating Strategies with Contractors

At that time, and this was the mid-sixties to late-sixties, I had a lot more opportunity, I think, it seemed to me at least, than typically my peers did to work directly with the construction offices and to be assigned to go out and work with the construction offices to develop the negotiating strategies with contractors on the heavy construction activities.

Storey: Um-hmm. Were there any other examples of opportunities they gave you?

Stessman: I think one of the things I found most satisfying about the job was that I typically had the chance to be involved in most all of the discussions. What I enjoyed most about the work was putting together the strategy for negotiation of claim settlements. In that era, the Bureau had a number of large construction projects going on in every region, and when it came to the matter of the Bureau negotiating a settlement of claims or those kind of adjustments which would involve–*then* it seemed like a very substantial amount of money. I think in this day it would probably be small potatoes, but several million dollars or so on settlement of outstanding claims, particularly at the end of a construction job. It was very satisfying to me that I would be given an opportunity to help develop that strategy.

"So you have to do a very substantial amount of strategizing. Even on items that you feel that you have a pat hand on and shouldn't lose in the negotiations . . ."

In many cases, negotiations would be taking place between, typically Ralph Gullett, as chief negotiator, with the solicitor's staff and our staff taking part and helping develop the rationale and strategy for those discussions. Often when you're

involved in negotiations like that, you have to be prepared to make an offer. What if they offer a settlement on this? What are we prepared to settle on? So you have to do a very substantial amount of strategizing. Even on items that you feel that you have a pat hand on and shouldn't lose in the negotiations, something may come up in the negotiations that their attorney presents or the president of their corporation presents to *your* management, and so you have to be prepared not only on the things that you think they're right on and you are likely to have to give on, but you have to be prepared on other items that you may think you're absolutely right on and they're wrong. Suppose we had to settle? Where could we go to on this item? You'd have to be prepared to give that information to your chief negotiator, maybe a little bit anticipatory, and you might have some things that you kind of have in your own mind if he comes back to me and says, "Through these negotiations, I have to give a little more on this item. What could we do?" The staff people–and that often was me–needed to be ready to produce the information and the rationale.

"I enjoyed that work very much, and I think that I must have been good at it, because I got in those kind of situations a lot and was called upon more and more and was given an opportunity to be at the table a lot more often as time went on. . . ."

I enjoyed that work very much, and I think that I must have been good at it, because I got in those kind of situations a lot and was called upon more and more and was given an opportunity to be at the table a lot more often as time went on. It was just very satisfying and kind of growth kind of work, because the more they seemed to trust me, the more I wanted to do.

Storey: Did you do this more than your colleagues in the office who did the same kind of work, supposedly?

". . . it was a lot more rare to travel, and I think I had a lot more opportunity to do that, and so that gave me a lot more *exposure* to the people in the organizations and the activities in our construction and other offices . . ."

Stessman: I think I was trying to say earlier that times were different. For example, it was a lot more rare to travel, and I think I had a lot more opportunity to do that, and so that gave me a lot more *exposure* to the people in the organizations and the activities in our construction and other offices around the Bureau. So it gave me the opportunity to get acquainted with a lot of the construction human resource of the Bureau, both in Denver and the regions and in the regional offices and in the project offices.

And then I think typically I had, because of the rapport that developed with Ralph Gullett and the solicitor's office, Palmer King was the solicitor at first and then Jack Little, and the chief engineer, Barney Bellport, I think I typically had more opportunity to be involved in direct negotiations with contractors than others.

Storey: Who would the head negotiator be?

Stessman: Almost exclusively it would be Ralph Gullett in that time.

Storey: But you had along people from the solicitor's office for advice?

Stessman: Yes.

Storey: Is that the way it worked?

Stessman: Uh-huh.

Storey: Well, it's almost ten o'clock, and I know you have an appointment at ten. We'll get back together around eleven, okay?

Stessman: Good. Thanks. [Tape recorder turned off.]

People to Who Didn't Fit in at Flaming Gorge

Storey: Before we go on and continue to talk about your experience in the Denver office, I remembered a question I need to ask you about Flaming Gorge. You mentioned that, if people didn't fit in well, that it could have been a problem up there. Were there any specific examples of that occurring, that you recall?

". . . there were a certain number of people who liked that unique kind of community very much, and there were some people who disliked it very, very much. . . ."

Stessman: I can specifically remember there were people who didn't like it there at all. There were people who didn't like the remoteness, and there were people who didn't like the culture of the company town sort of situation, and I can remember situations where the company culture of the town didn't like the individuals, which was kind of a reciprocal sort of thing. So, yeah, there were a certain number of people who liked that unique kind of community very much, and there were some people who disliked it very, very much.

"For the most part, people who didn't like it didn't stay very long, and in those days there were lots and lots of job opportunities in Reclamation and outside Reclamation . . ."

For the most part, people who didn't like it didn't stay very long, and in those days there were lots and lots of job opportunities in Reclamation and outside Reclamation in the construction/engineering field that most of us were involved in, so the engineers had other opportunities, but so did surveyors and inspectors and concrete specialists and contract administrators. There was not a shortage of other places to go to work.

I can remember one individual engineer contemporary of mine who even said the words, "I worked for my education, and now my education's going to work for me," and had a very arrogant attitude about what society owed him now that he

had become an engineer, let's say, which was that individual's case. And so if you were disliked in the work situation, when you got off work, unless you commuted several hours to somewhere else to live, you were still around the people that you didn't enjoy being around during the work hours.

"It was kind of an exaggerated situation, where you don't really get totally away from the office situation when office hours are over. . . . people knew your social life and they knew your habits, and in some situations that caused great difficulty . . ."

It was kind of an exaggerated situation, where you don't really get totally away from the office situation when office hours are over. I mean, a small type community like that, people knew your social life and they knew your habits, and in some situations that caused great difficulty to people.

Storey: Did people who left tend to stay with Reclamation or did they tend to leave Reclamation? Do you have any feeling for that?

Stessman: I don't have a particular feel for it. I think it was some of both, but I don't have a strong inclination that it was leaving the Bureau or staying with the Bureau. A certain number of the people were extremely loyal to the Bureau of Reclamation and essentially limited their consideration to other Bureau of Reclamation jobs, and a lot of those people had contacts with other Bureau of Reclamation people that they'd worked with in other locations, and they would pursue those opportunities through those people. And then there were others–who probably they were in the minority, it seems to me–who would jump from a Corps of Engineers job to a Bureau of Reclamation job, back to a Corps of Engineers or Soil Conservation Service job.

Storey: I could *guess* at some of the things that caused people dissatisfaction, but can you characterize the kinds of things that cause dissatisfaction?

Stessman: Well, I think the kind of thing that I'm alluding to, that would be consistent with what I said before, of that vein, would be that you'd have situations where a person would feel that someone else was given a promotion or someone else was given a job opportunity, an assignment, because the supervisor making the assignment played bridge with the individual that he gave the assignment to, and the other person didn't sort of suck up to the supervisor in the off-work situation, as well as at the office. Or that the supervisor's wife and this individual's wife go to town together shopping and they're well acquainted with each other and like each other, and so the husband/supervisor shows favoritism toward that person's husband on the job rather than to me. The fact that the social environment consisted to a great extent of the same individuals or parties that the work environment did, that attitudes and impression and judgments of people from the social environment–

END SIDE 2, TAPE 1. NOVEMBER 18, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2. NOVEMBER 18, 1994.

Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey with Neil Stessman on November 18, 1994.

Attitudes get carried over from the work environment into the social environment and vice versa.

Stessman: If I have a Saint Bernard dog and it goes and craps in the neighbor's yard every day, then I have a problem with the neighbor. But in that situation, if the neighbor happens to be my supervisor or the supervisor two levels up, and I get passed over for a promotion, I may begin to think that that's because my dog goes and craps in his yard each day rather than the quality of the work I do at the office. So a company town situation is unique and can be very troublesome.

Isolation and Dutch John

Storey: What about isolation as a factor?

Stessman: Well, that's, again, something that can be, and *is*, a problem, or *was* a problem, to some people. You were remote from cultural opportunities. It was difficult for some people to participate in, say, their religion. In our case, we're Catholic, and the priest would come out I think at best every second Sunday, maybe on some cases once a month, and so we'd have a service in the little grade school gymnasium or wherever we could arrange a facility. If you were an individual, as in my case, as many Catholics are, who want to go to mass each day, why, that remoteness gets to be very troublesome.

Culturally, if you were a black–and there were very few there. But if you were black and you lived in that environment, it could be very difficult, particularly in those times. If you were Jewish, you would have little or no opportunity to practice any religious celebrations together with other Jewish people. If you liked plays, or even if you liked movies, the opportunities to go to movies were very limited. But if you happened to enjoy what they were showing at the Flame Theater and it was no trouble to drive over there twenty-some miles on Saturday night to go to that, and I think you were probably limited to one showing or maybe two showings a day. You didn't have lots of choices you could go to at anytime from one o'clock in the afternoon until midnight any of seven days of the week.

Yeah, the remoteness was, to some people, very confining. But if you liked particularly, say, outdoor experiences, hiking and fishing and hunting, but just enjoying nature and whatever, it was there, and those kind of people saw it as very opportune.

It Was an Opportunity to Get Feet on the Ground Financially

As I indicated, in our case we had very little in the way of financial means when we got there, so it was especially opportune for us because we *did* enjoy the outdoors and we *could* do the things we enjoyed doing, at little expense, and it gave us the opportunity to build up some assets, savings and so on.

Took a Long Time for the First Federal Check to Arrive

But I can remember it took so *long* to get your first check when you come on to work for the Federal government. I think it was five weeks or so. I can remember how difficult that was. I can remember having a graduation check from my sister for $10 and sort of holding on to that as long as I could and not cashing it until I absolutely needed to–to make the money last until we got our first paycheck.

Storey: What about lifestyle issues? You mentioned earlier that everybody knew everybody's business and habits and so on. Was that a problem?

Stessman: Well, I think it *was* a problem. I think that the home or off-work situation carried over into the work environment a little too much, and I think there were cases where, you know, too much judgment about people was common. A very small community. The people worked together. If a person was unfaithful to their spouse, I think not only people around the neighborhood knew it, but people at the office knew it to a greater extent, and probably an unhealthy extent. Or if a person had bad habits related to gambling or drinking or whatever, or how loud they yelled at their children or their wife, that could very easily be a topic of discussion at the office and not just in the neighborhood, not just within the home.

I don't know of, I guess, egregious situations, but it's somewhat of a strained culture, and it was difficult for some people.

Storey: Sort of small town, lot of pressure towards conformity.

Stessman: Um-hmm.

Storey: Single folks might be left out?

Stessman: Yes, definitely.

Storey: So that was a problem, also?

Stessman: Um-hmm. There was another difficulty. If you were single, particularly if you were a male single, there were not a lot of female singles anywhere close by to date. Yeah, that was an additional strain on a lot of the young engineers. There were very, very few females in the work force at that time. Of the contractor's, say, 700 to 1,000 or 1,100 employees at that particular job, I don't remember ever seeing a woman on the job.

Storey: Outside the office situation?

Stessman: I'm talking about contractor's employees, like at the site construction people, laborers, carpenters, ironworkers, boiler makers, and any of those trades, riggers. There were, well, practically no minorities and absolutely no females.

Reclamation's Various Offices and Their Perceptions of One Another

Storey: Going back and trying to put yourself back there thirty years ago almost, could you explain to me the way Reclamation employees envisioned the project's role, the region's role, the Denver office role, and the Washington office role in what Reclamation did?

Each Reclamation Office Tends to View Its Office Situation Parochially in Relation to Other Offices

Stessman: I think it's always been an issue in Reclamation, and I think it is to some extent even at the present time, and a bit of a problem that we never really solved, that the degree to which those kinds of offices view their own office and situation somewhat parochially in relation to the other offices.

I've sometimes thought it would be fun to be able to be a cartoon artist, to make a cartoon that showed the Denver office as seen by employees in the project office, or the Washington office as seen by employees in the Denver office, the regional office people as seen by the project office people, the Denver office as seen by the regional office people. You could make a number of different characterizations, and they would mostly involve wherever you are as being where the action is, where the productivity is, where the important mission is, where the people are who get the work done as opposed to those who walk the halls, carry paper, keep up the social contacts, over-control, over-regulate, are two layered, are over-graded, etcetera.

"There's been somewhat of a universal that, where I am, we're under-graded; where they are, they're over-graded. Where I am, we're busy; where they are, they don't really have enough to do and they need to fill their time so they're putting burdensome regulation and control on us, etcetera. . . ."

There's been somewhat of a universal that, where I am, we're under-graded; where they are, they're over-graded. Where I am, we're busy; where they are, they don't really have enough to do and they need to fill their time so they're putting burdensome regulation and control on us, etcetera.

"I've worked in two regional offices and the Denver office and I think it's eight different field offices, so I've seen that at several different levels. . . ."

I've worked in two regional offices and the Denver office and I think it's eight different field offices, so I've seen that at several different levels. It's been an obstacle, and it's stood in the way of effectiveness. I think it probably occurs in other organizations, as well. I don't have the solution to that, but I feel very comfortable in observing that that's what the situation has been, *is* to some extent now, and I think it continues to be something that the management and employees of the organization need to try and improve, try to overcome. We're not there yet. I don't know if we'll get there, but it's something that I think is pretty significant and important.

Storey: Yeah, I've noticed that. That seems to be true of most organizations, in the Federal government at least.

Stessman: I suppose. But it doesn't mean that it can't be diminished or improved upon.

Storey: Back in those days, what responsibilities did the project have that, say, the region didn't have or that the Denver office didn't have and so on? How did they split that up, knowing, of course, it never followed the pattern on the organizational charts, probably?

How Responsibility Was Spread among Reclamation's Offices

Stessman: For the first ten years or so that I was in the Bureau of Reclamation, my experience was pretty much limited to construction, and so I didn't have a high degree of awareness of what operating projects did or what their responsibility was or how they carried it out. My understanding of those other parts of the organization was pretty limited.

It wasn't until in 1971 that I began to have an opportunity to see and get more understanding of what's done in other parts of the organization, what are their functions and how they operate. It was pretty limited to the construction activity. I, of course, felt that construction was where the action was and where the important work was and where the busy people were and where the productive people were and so on, again that characterization. But I think I didn't–obviously that wasn't fair and obviously it was partly because I hadn't really been exposed to the other part of the organization, but obviously also it was parochialism on my part.

Construction Activities Were Centralized in Denver

The construction activities were sort of centralized to a much greater extent. The Denver hierarchy ran the construction program, smaller projects, minor construction not necessarily, but the big development construction activity of the Bureau of Reclamation, certainly the hierarchy in Denver sort of ran the show. The Upper Colorado Region may have had, let's say, construction under way on Glen Canyon Dam, the Curecanti Unit, and Flaming Gorge, and I think some others at one time, and probably on paper the construction engineers worked for the regional director in Salt Lake City, but off paper and in essence they worked for the Chief engineer in Denver. At least from where I had the opportunity of observing that, every appearance was that that's how it operated.

Construction Engineers Were Chosen by the Denver Hierarchy

So the construction engineers were primarily chosen, I think, by the chief engineer and that hierarchy in Denver, not the regional director, even though on paper I think it was the reverse.

"It was very much of a fraternity of construction people, of beavers, so to speak, in the dam construction field. . . ."

It was very much of a fraternity of construction people, of beavers, so to speak, in the dam construction field.

Storey: You mentioned to me earlier off-tape about telephones and that sort of thing and the difference between then and now in the Denver office. Could you talk about that a little bit?

Communication Within Reclamation

Stessman: Yeah. I think, you know, that the communications, the direct communications, particularly the person-to-person communications, were a lot more limited in their earlier times than they are now, and I suppose that if you went back another decade or two to the forties and fifties, they were even more limited. I imagine in those eras, for example, that you traveled by car or by train, as opposed to the sixties you were starting to travel by plane.

Prior Approval of Toll Calls

The approval processes for things like travel were a lot more difficult, a lot more controlled, and my recollection is that even a telephone, if you had to make a telephone call, a toll call, as an employee of the Denver office in the mid-sixties when I worked there, I think we had to get written approval to make a toll call. I can remember having to do that in a couple of cases, but I think it was typical and I think it applied down to some pretty small dollar amounts of toll charges. But, yeah, I remember having to submit paperwork and getting approval in advance of long-distance phone calls with toll charges.

Storey: What about computers in the Denver office at that time? Do you remember anything there?

Stessman: No. I think we were using desk calculators at that time still. I'm not sure. There were probably some special particular instances of the old-style computers with IBM cards or punch cards or that kind of thing, but I'm not aware, I didn't have any involvement with that.

Storey: How long were you in the Denver office?

Stessman: I was there about seven years.

Storey: So that would have been from '63 to '70?

Stessman: I went there in 1965, and I moved away in the fall of 1971. Actually, I was reassigned, I think, in October or November of 1971, and actually moved my family in January or February of '72.

Storey: In those about seven years, were there any promotions?

Accepted to Manager Development Program

Stessman: Yes. Yeah, there were. I went there as a GS-11, and I was promoted to a GS-12 in a year. I was very fortunate. That was a very good situation for me. That was a little faster than typical. I was promoted to a 12 in a year, and then about a year before I left I applied for the Bureau's Manager Development Training Program and was selected for that.

Went to the Job Corps Center at Collbran, Colorado

It was a result of that and the training that I got to have in that program, that I wound up leaving the Denver office, and I went to work in the Job Corps Center for the Bureau.

Storey: Where?

Stessman: Collbran, Colorado, on the west slope in Colorado.

Storey: So you had been with Reclamation a little less than ten years when you applied for the Management Development Program.

Stessman: Yes.

Storey: At some point, did you develop a career plan in those ten years?

Development of a Career Plan

Stessman: I think I had to develop one as part of the application process. I don't think I'd given a lot of thought to it up until then. When I was in Denver, after a couple of years I began to take classes. We had a really good situation in Denver with both the University of Denver, and at that time the University of Colorado, I think, had just begun to set up the Denver Center of the CU. That would be interesting for me to know when that was done, but I think it was a relatively young program when I started taking classes there.

Storey: You were taking engineering classes?

Stessman: No, I wasn't. I was primarily taking business classes–economics, accounting, marketing, business management. I had a really strong feeling that, for us to do the contract administration work well, and it was almost exclusively in the heavy construction contract administration work, in the Bureau it was almost exclusively engineers, I felt that we lacked a lot in the way of understanding of economics, and particularly a business and accounting understanding, and that to be effective in sort of dealing with contractor people who were very profit-oriented, that we needed to stress that. Then I was also interested in business classes. Mostly I took business classes.

Storey: What did your Management Development Program consist of?

Stessman: I think I was beginning to feel as though I didn't want to spend my entire career being a specialist. I didn't want to spend my entire career being the strategist, the analyst for contract claim matters or continue to become more and more expert and more and more limited to Federal procurement regulation, a specialist in those kinds of things, and I began to try to sort out for myself whether I wanted to try to target myself for, say, a Project Construction Engineer position or management position or just what.

Planning to Aim for Project Construction Engineer When He Entered Management Training

I think probably at the time I was applying for the training program, it's very likely that that's the kind of thing that I began to target myself for, as a career objective that I would like to get back into a field office situation and become a Project Construction Engineer. I'm almost certain that's what I probably identified at that time.

Storey: How was the Management Development Program set up, and what did you do as components of that program?

Designing the Management Development Program

Stessman: I think it was a very excellent program. The way it was set up was that over a two-year period you were basically entitled to nine months of temporary assignments in different parts of the organization. I think we had a lot of liberty to choose one of our own discretion. I think if an individual wanted to, they could possibly even have chosen, say, a nine-month assignment in Washington or a nine-month assignment in a regional office, in contracts and repayment or in whatever or design or in a project office. But I think we had a lot of liberty that way.

Then in addition, you could take some academic courses, so I did a mix of those, as I recall. I was able to schedule for myself a detail to the Upper Colorado regional office, where I worked in several different divisions; a detail for myself to the Garrison Diversion Unit Construction Office in Bismarck, North Dakota; approximately three months in ~~the Denver office~~ the Washington office, and again, in that case I worked in several different divisions or parts of the office in Washington during the three months.

Storey: Who did you work with?

Stessman: During those assignments?

Storey: Yes.

Stessman: Well, I needed to kind of sell the office or division chief on giving me the opportunity in those places that I was going to be on detail to, and for the most part, that was easy to do because they got free help, and hopefully I had a good reputation. And they would put you to work when you came in on detail. You

didn't just shadow someone. But from the trainee's standpoint, you were to sort of focus on gaining and broader understanding of what we do in the Bureau–

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BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 2. NOVEMBER 18, 1994.

Storey: So you were looking for a broader perspective on Reclamation. How did you structure that? Did you say, "I want to go to X for two weeks and Y for three weeks, and I want this kind of experience in Washington and this kind of experience at the region"? Or do you remember anything about how you did that?

". . . I wanted to get the most out of it I could, and so I think I programmed the entire nine months for myself, and my management was generous enough to let me do that. . . ."

Stessman: Yeah. You know, I wanted to get the most out of it I could, and so I think I programmed the entire nine months for myself, and my management was generous enough to let me do that. So, as I recall, I scheduled myself for maybe six weeks to two months in the regional office in Salt Lake City; and about, I think, a month, possibly as much as six weeks, at the Garrison Diversion Construction Office in Bismarck; and I think a little less than three months, basically the summer, in Washington, D.C.

O&M Division in Salt Lake City Regional Office

In the regional office, I wanted not to just spend my time in the same kind of work that I had done before, so I did, as I recall, spend some time in the Operation and Maintenance Division, the Water, Lands, and Power, and got some exposure to how Reclamation operates with respect to the repayment and contracting with water users and so on. I think I learned a little about the power function. I learned a little bit about the programs and budget functions, the land acquisition functions, the land management functions, whatever, and I had designed it so that I saw the regional office situation, and I saw the project office situation–even though I had some of that experience before.

Garrison Diversion Unit Construction Office

The Garrison Project was particularly interesting to me, because I was aware of some of the controversies they were running into, and I wanted to see that kind of situation on a close hand, and that was a good opportunity. There were already property owner land acquisition issues and there were environmental issues and there were questions about the economic viability and so on. I thought it was important, if I was going to become a manager in Reclamation, to have some exposure to those things. Up to that point, I'd been almost exclusively involved in construction development.

Washington, D.C., Office

Then in Washington, as I recall, I spent some time in planning and, again, I think in programs.

Storey: Programs, meaning?

Stessman: Securing funds, allocating funds.

Storey: Budget stuff.

Stessman: Budget stuff. Programs is sort of anticipatory, and the budget is the carrying out.

Storey: Anything to do with Congress or the political process while you were there?

Stessman: Not very much. I'd started to do a lot of reading, but I don't think that I ever made it over to the [Capitol] Hill or had an opportunity to see the Congress in action. Certainly I began to learn more about that and those things and appreciate the importance, the interaction between the Congress and the administration and the national political structure and what we did in our work in the Bureau of Reclamation.

Storey: Let's go back to Garrison for a moment. Of course, this would have been about '70, '71, maybe '69?

Stessman: 1971.

Storey: What we can only describe as the infancy of the environmental movement in the United States.

Awareness of the Environmental Movement During Management Training

Stessman: The National Environmental Policy Act passed in 1969. Also, when I was in Washington, that was my first awareness of the term EIS, as I recall, and environmental analysis and so on. I can recall my first awareness of a NEPA compliance document, and I think, incidentally, that it had to do with Teton Dam in Idaho. But I do specifically remember being given a document, with directions to, "Here, review this and tell us what you think about it," and it was a NEPA document on something. I don't recall for sure. I think it must have been Teton, but I'm not positive.

Storey: Was it a great big document?

Stessman: Yeah.

Storey: What kind of environmental issues did you run into at Garrison?

Stessman: I worked at Garrison later in my career as the manager there, so I'm not sure, of the things I know about environmental issues there, what I learned then and what I learned later.

Storey: Let's go on, then. We can talk about that when we get to your career at Garrison, maybe.

Stessman: Okay.

Storey: What was your impression of the way Reclamation was reacting to those new environmental requirements back then? Can you sort that out in your mind, do you think?

"I was developing an environmental conscience. I didn't particularly think we were in the right place. . . ."

Stessman: Yeah. I was developing an environmental conscience. I didn't particularly think we were in the right place. I think I was more focused on construction, you know, more as an isolated thing. I think in those days I almost thought of construction as an end rather than a means.

Storey: Or a beginning.

Concerned That Reclamation Wasn't Asking Whether Something Should Be Done–only How to Do it

Stessman: Yeah. I remember hearing from peers and colleagues, people that I didn't work with, but people that I associated with, and I remember sort of having to address within myself the criticism that, "You folks don't really analyze what you're doing and why you're trying to get done and why you're doing that and whether it's necessary, important, valid, etcetera. Once you get started on something, you just try to figure out how you can engineer this thing to get it done. So if a problem comes up, you don't sort of go to ground zero and say, 'Should we be doing this?' You limit yourself to *how* you should do it, and you don't look at the cost, and you don't look at the benefits, and you don't look at the non-financial costs of it. You limit yourself to the engineering analysis, 'How can I get to where it is I set out to go to? What are the alternative ways that I can go there?'" And they were saying, "You should look more often at where it is you're trying to go and be more open to analyze whether that's where you ought to be going or not.

I can remember my attitude toward the question as it developed from, "That's a dumb thing to assert," to addressing it more as to, "Maybe there's something to that."

I was developing more of a social conscience and I was developing more of an environmental awareness.

"I read Rachel Carson, and I read Aldo Leopold, and etcetera. So, yeah, I was going through some real sort of life decision processes . . ."

I read Rachel Carson, and I read Aldo Leopold, and etcetera. So, yeah, I was going through some real sort of life decision processes on trying to integrate my own

interests and values and my work interests and values.

Storey: Did that cause you problems at Reclamation?

Stessman: Well, I think that Reclamation's always been a place, for me, where I could air my views fairly comfortably. I wasn't running the ship, but on the other hand, I think I could ask questions and get answers and I could have my own view safely. But I think I was somewhat judicious, but, you know, for myself I needed–it really gave me an opportunity to see what our various missions were, and to some extent I think we could have been making better decisions on a lot of things, and I thought that at the time.

Storey: Of course, that was a period of great change for the environmental program, for instance.

Stessman: Yes.

Storey: Do you think Reclamation, as a general rule, was keeping up?

Stessman: No, I think we were slow, too. I think we were beginning to, but, you know, I found some validity to the criticism that, "You don't analyze where you're going as much as you should, and you limit your analysis as to how to get there," and if a problem occurs, then how do we adjust how we get there; and if a bigger problem occurs, how do we engineer around that obstacle to getting where we decided a while ago we're going to go?

It is important to know not just where you're going, but why you're going there and what it is you're attempting to achieve by going there.

Storey: How were other folks who were your contemporaries reacting to all of this, new set of rules and regs, really a new way of thinking? How were they reacting? Do you have an impression of that?

Stessman: Well, it was all over the map, but certainly there were a lot of people that I worked with and friends then and friends now who thought that some of the new requirements on things like environmental analysis were unnecessary and a waste and obstacles in the way of important accomplishments.

Storey: So you had some internal tensions in Reclamation over this, I would imagine.

Stessman: Yeah, lots of discussion, lots of debate around the coffee pot, and so on.

Storey: What caused it to really take hold, then?

Stessman: What caused what to take hold?

Storey: The implementation of a *more* environmentally oriented approach.

Stessman: Well, I'd say that a more environmental approach started to result immediately, but it was something that has developed over a long, long period of time, and certainly in the last three or four years it's still been in the era of change and development.

Decided to Move Away from Construction into Some Other Area of Reclamation

But I would say that to me it seemed like there was a substantial amount of resistance at first, and over time it's changed greatly. But at that point in time, I didn't think that I wanted to devote my career or could dedicate the rest of my career to construction activities, so during the period of my training program, I had my eyes out for other type of work in Reclamation during the course of the training program; whereas in anticipation of the training program I saw myself as probably becoming a project construction engineer, I dropped that agenda during the course of the training. I didn't think that was something that I could dedicate myself to at that point in time. I suppose that means that I didn't see myself as able to bring about the kind of change that I would have personally felt would be important or necessary, nor did I feel that I could commit myself to sort of manage activities that I might strongly disagree with.

Exposure to the Job Corps Program

During the training assignments, I got some exposure to our Job Corps training program and the fact that we operated, at that time, four Job Corps Centers, and I saw that as something that I could be very interested in and could commit myself to, both from the standpoint of kind of a management opportunity, because I was identifying an interest in management that is not necessarily related exclusively to what the mission is, but the management of the accomplishment of the mission. And then my other reason for being interested in it was that it was something that I identified personally as important work.

"What Reclamation was accomplishing . . . through the operation of the Job Corps Centers was something that I could personally buy into and commit myself to. . . ."

What Reclamation was accomplishing, or had the opportunity to accomplish, through the operation of the Job Corps Centers was something that I could personally buy into and commit myself to.

Storey: Tell me about what the Job Corps Centers were.

The Job Corps Program

Stessman: Well, it was part of the poverty program I guess that started under President [Lyndon B.] Johnson in the sixties, so it was a training program. All of Reclamation's centers at that time were for males, and they were basically residential schools. They still are. They were basically residential schools where the students, or Job Corps enrollees, came and lived, and basically we operated a academic, vocational, and to some extent social training program.

The enrollees were from sixteen to twenty-two and a half years old, as I recall. They were recruited through the state employment services in the various states. They were fellows who generally had a poor education. Certain requirements could be waived, but in general they could not be a high school graduate. They had to be unemployed. They were from low-income families sometimes, although not by program intent. They would be essentially referred from the courts, although that was supposed to be prohibited, but we knew in many cases that the individuals were in some trouble with the law, or possibly even in court someone said, "If you enroll in Job Corps, we'll hold this in abeyance until we see if you get your life straight or not." So they were often troubled individuals.

We had very excellent vocational training and pretty effective academic training. The target in those days was generally for them to obtain a general education diploma, I think the words are. The acronym is GED, or high school equivalency, through testing. In the academic program, it was at your individual rate, kind of under the direct supervision of a teacher. The classes weren't operated like conventional classrooms, but everyone was progressing at their own rate, a lot of individual attention, fairly small student-to-teacher ratio, and as I said, really excellent vocational training.

Had Visited the Weber Basin Job Corps Center

During the time that I was on detail in the Salt Lake City regional office, Upper Colorado Region, I had an opportunity to visit the Bureau's Job Corps Center at Weber Basin, which is within an hour's drive of Salt Lake City and part of that region's activities.

Frank Knell and the Job Corps

Storey: That might have been about the time Frank Knell[5] was involved in their activities there?

Stessman: Frank was in personnel in the regional office. One of the reasons that I happened to have several visits there was that one of the other people on the training program was Curt Carpenter, and Curt was at that time the center director at the Collbran Job Corps Center in Colorado, and he had prior to that worked at the Weber Basin Job Corps Center at Ogden, Utah. He was on the Manager Development Training Program and on detail in the Salt Lake City office at the same time I was. So we became acquainted, and he familiarized me with the Job Corps program of the Bureau.

When I had my tour in Washington as part of that training program, I became acquainted with the Youth Programs Office of the Bureau, which at that time was in Washington, and I think spent part of my detail in their office, as well.

Storey: Now, when you went off to the region, to Bismarck, to Washington, did you take

5. Frank Knell has been interviewed for the Bureau of Reclamation's oral history program.

your family with you?

Stessman: Yes. I took my family to Salt Lake City and I took my family to Washington, and my family was with me a small part of the time that I was in Bismarck.

Stessman: Your son would have been maybe nine or so then, I guess.

Stessman: Yeah, and I think I misspoke, because they didn't go with me to Salt Lake City, but they went with me for a part of the time, like over spring vacation, in Bismarck. And then during the summer, when I went to Washington, we were able to exchange homes with another family we knew. The person worked in the Washington office, was on the same Manager Development Training Program, and so he scheduled his tour in Denver at the same time we scheduled our tour in Washington. Several years prior to that, they had lived just two houses away from us. So when they came to Denver, they moved into our home, and when we went to Washington, we moved into their home. So his family lived in my home and my family lived in their home.

Storey: His name?

Stessman: John Anderson.

Storey: Is he still with Reclamation?

Stessman: He retired. I would say he retired two years ago. He was in the Washington office until then, and he retired.

Storey: Well, after you had gone through the Management Program, I presume you were back in the Denver office. What was it like looking for a new position then?

Stessman: There was a pretty substantial opportunity, on the completion of that program, to "pick a job" would be too generous a term, but to get a reassignment.

Interest in Job Corps Surprised the Denver Office

The Bureau used to be very strict about requiring a trip report. Anytime you traveled, you had to send a trip report up through channels when you got back. So if you went somewhere on detail, of course you had to write a trip report. I remember writing a trip report about the time I spent in the Youth Programs, or Job Corps, office, and I put in the trip report that I spent time in the Bureau's Job Corps activity for purposes of determining whether I'd be interested in transferring to a Job Corps facility. I remember that I had to have this trip report, had to put it through the hierarchy above me, and for some reason I had to take it into the chief engineer's office, which was the head of the office in Denver, and the chief engineer's secretary said to me, "It's *unusual* for anybody to be that frank on their trip report about something like this."

Ralph Gullett, who had been, in a lot of ways, a mentor and sponsor for me,

and I'm *sure* that my getting into the training program depended on his support for me to do that. I think he felt almost betrayed that I would take that training program and then sort of be reassigned somewhere else in the organization.

Storey: Rather than staying where you were?

Stessman: Rather than staying where I was. The intention of my managers was for me to get training to continue in the work I was doing there. And he said to me, "Gee, Neil, I don't know why you'd want to leave the Bureau of Reclamation."

I said, "I'm not. The Bureau of Reclamation operates Job Corps Centers, as well. I'm not leaving the Bureau of Reclamation."

But that was the perception, and I think it's part of the perception of the kind of parochialness of, we do construction or we do operation and maintenance or we do planning or we do Job Corps, and it's been hard to integrate that with us as employees that we do *all* of those things and that–

END TAPE 2, SIDE 2. NOVEMBER 18, 1994.
BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 1. NOVEMBER 18, 1994.

Storey: This is tape three of an interview by Brit Storey with Neil Stessman on November the *18th, 1994.

Neil, where did your position actually come from with the Job Corps? Were you just simply reassigned because of that trip report?

How He Got His First Job as Assistant Center Director at Collbran

Stessman: Oh, no. I had made contacts with the chief of the Youth Programs in Washington when I was there and had expressed an interest. They were looking for ambitious people, I guess. So I'd become acquainted with people in the Salt Lake regional office, which was over that Job Corps Center. So, no, I'd made contacts for myself and expressed an interest. I think they even arranged for me to–they had a vacancy as assistant center director at the Collbran Job Corps Center, and they arranged for me to go over there, I think, for a week or two weeks–anyway, a short period of time–to kind of decide if I really was interested in that.

Storey: And you applied for that position then?

Stessman: No, I don't think so. I think that was just a reassignment.

Storey: They came to you and said, "Would you like to go look this position over?"

Stessman: Yeah. I think I had indicated, "Look, if you have a position that I could qualify for, and you'd be willing to consider me for, in a Job Corps Center at or near my grade, I'd be interested." And I think they got a hold of me and said, "We think we'd be willing to transfer you to the assistant center director position at Collbran.

Offered a Detail at the Collbran Job Corps Center

Why don't we send you over there on detail to act in that position for a short time, and then you can let us know if you're interested in going over there permanently."

Storey: Okay, and that would have been in '71?

Stessman: It was in 1971. It was shortly after I returned from Washington, so it was probably in September of 1971.

Storey: Okay, good. Well, I appreciate it, but we're out of time again. I'd like to ask you again whether or not you're willing for the tapes and resulting transcripts from this interview to be used both by people inside Reclamation and outside Reclamation.

Stessman: Are we also going to talk about the time frame?

Storey: We *can* talk about the time frame if you'd like. Would you like to place limitations on when they can be seen?

Stessman: No, I think I'm willing. The answer's yes.

Storey: So available immediately, then?

Stessman: Yes.

Storey: Okay. Thank you.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 3. NOVEMBER 18, 1994.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 1. MARCH 7, 1995.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, senior historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing Neil Stessman, regional director of the Great Plains Region of the Bureau of Reclamation, in his offices, on March the 7th, 1995, at about nine o'clock in the morning. This is tape one.

Mr. Stessman, last time when we talked, we were talking about the ~~departmental~~ managers' training program, and your participation in that. I was wondering if you had any thoughts about how effective the program is, and how it might be improved.

Stessman: The Manager Development Program?

Storey: The Manager Development Program, yeah.

Thoughts on the Manager Development Program

Stessman: I'm not sure I have any sort of well-developed thoughts on that. It depends so much on the individuals, and what they choose to get out of the program. I think a

program, even like the one that I developed and utilized in 1971 under that program, would be helpful today, if the person used the time and the opportunity to learn a little bit about different parts of the organization and gained a perspective about what it is Reclamation does and how it operates. And I suppose I would say that it has been used more to do that than to help people learn to manage.

It Is Important to Broaden Employee Perspectives about What Reclamation Does

If you say it's a Manager Development Training Program, if I were to look at that, it'd be important to identify whether you're trying to teach people, or give the opportunity for people to learn management skills, or whether you're using that opportunity to get people to understand more about the breadth of the organization, and how it does its business. There's a need for both, because from the standpoint of the mission and breadth of the organization, and how government works, so many people come into the organization as engineers, biologists, economists, report writers, or whatever, and sort of get down into a groove, working on their particular issue, and it's kind of a luxury if you get the opportunity to get beyond your own channel, and that's very important that that take place. And that's a perspective that, particularly as communications have improved and the way things have changed in the last twenty years, it's important for more than just managers and the top leadership of the organization that employees get that perspective.

Then the other aspect is to provide the opportunity for people with capability to do so, to take leadership positions, to develop their capability as far as supervising, managing, and leading employees, leading the organization.

Storey: What about the way Reclamation places people out of the program, who go through the program?

Stessman: You know, I really don't have all that much experience or familiarity with it in the last, say, five to ten years. During that time frame, I suppose the thing I would be most aware of is that we sometimes invest that training in people, and we haven't thought out well what comes after. And so I think you'll probably find there have been a fair number of instances where a fairly substantial investment has been made in that kind of training, on people who may not have progressed in the organization to kinds of positions that they might have designed the program for. If there's a culprit in that, I would say most likely it is that the top management has not played an active enough role in the whole process.

Reclamation Should, Perhaps, Reassign Employees More Often

I think one thing that would be an issue with me if I were designing Reclamation for the present and the future is that I think that the Bureau of Reclamation, as an employer, has not generally given itself the kinds of prerogatives that it needs to, that in my experience with we've–as an agency, not done very much of sort of assigning people to positions that involve relocation and that kind of thing, on the basis of what's good for the organization, as much as we have on the employee's prerogative. I think we give employees a pretty substantial

prerogative to stay in one place, even when a pretty substantial interest for the good of the organization might be to have that person relocate somewhere.

For example, I think that it has been and will be important that the managers and leaders in the Bureau have gotten some diverse experience somewhere along the line. In some cases, that means that the Bureau, as an employer, needs to say to an employee who's rising in the organization, "It's necessary. It's for the good of the organization that you take this particular job in Washington, D.C.," or in Denver, or in a regional office, or that type of thing. I think that it's important that we change the perspective somewhat so that the culture of the organization is *more* accepting of that being a prerogative of the company, so to speak.

Storey: Do you see this for all employees, or do you see this for–let's see. My experience over the years has been that people who are going to rise to management positions tend to do so within ten to fifteen years after coming to an agency. So they're sort of being sorted and sifted throughout. Are you talking about just the managers, or are you talking about everybody? The ones you anticipate rising, I mean.

Stessman: Well, I think that I would make it more mandatory, more of a prerequisite for people rising, who expect to rise, in the organization, than for people who are quite resistant to relocation.

"If a person is quite resistant to relocation, and still has career objectives that involve sort of rising to a management or key leadership position in the organization, then there needs to be some reconciliation of that . . . inconsistency. . . ."

If a person is quite resistant to relocation, and still has career objectives that involve sort of rising to a management or key leadership position in the organization, then there needs to be some reconciliation of that dichotomy, of that inconsistency.

As an agency, as an employer, I think that the Bureau has not been forceful at all about kind of seeing that those things are reconciled. Other agencies in land management, or resource management, actually, such as the Forest Service, even the Bureau of Land Management, some of the agencies in the Interior, have done more of that, or have had that type of policy more than Reclamation. And, by contrast, I think we have a lot more cases where the people in project manager, area manager positions have moved up in a narrower channel.

Storey: I remember the last time when we were talking. We talked about your personal goals within Reclamation. When you went off on the departmental managers' program, your objective was to become a construction engineer, and you identified during your training program that that wasn't a proper objective for you. Did you ever have an objective, for instance, of being a regional director, or an assistant commissioner, or something like that? And if so, do you remember when you set that objective for yourself?

". . . I saw myself as a manager, in some sense, rather than a technical specialist,

or an expert in some field. . . ."

Stessman: I don't think I did. Even from the time of college, I saw myself as a manager, in some sense, rather than a technical specialist, or an expert in some field. I never did see myself as necessarily having the attributes to be an expert or specialist in something. On the other hand, I did think that I had capability of being a manager or leader, and I thought I would enjoy that kind of thing. Back then, I thought I would be a good project construction engineer. I think, as I look back at that, that was a position that was management, was leadership, and *was* in something that I was doing, so I saw my opportunity to sort of fulfill my own objectives as being a leader and a manager through that channel of construction that I was working in. I don't think that I saw myself from there, you know, doing something like the job I'm in now.

The only recollection I have of thinking that perhaps I would want to be a regional director was when I was managing the Teton Dam disaster, a claim program, later, several years after I'd been on the Manager Development Program. I can remember having a conversation with some people that I said, "Well, you know, maybe I'd like to do that. Maybe I could be a regional director." I don't remember thinking about whether I'd like it or not. I think I thought I wouldn't. I think I thought it'd be too political. But I remember thinking, you know, maybe that I had the capability of doing it. So that would have been 1977, probably. So I really think that even when I became assistant regional director here, which was in 1990, that I honestly didn't *expect*, or particularly want, to be regional director.

Storey: I want go back one more time, before we get into Collbran and your Job Corps experience. You talked about your job in Denver where you were negotiating claims for the contractors, and you were also involved in that when you were at Flaming Gorge, as I recall. Could you characterize for me the different responsibilities between Denver and the region and the projects, for dealing with claims on contracts?

Responsibility for Large Construction Activity, Including Contract Negotiation and Adjustment Was in Denver

Stessman: The actual responsibility for the large construction activities, and that includes the larger construction contracts, was pretty clearly vested in the Denver office, the chief engineer, in Denver. And to my understanding, even though the project construction engineers, who were in the field performing the construction activities, may have, on paper, reported to the regional directors, the regional office, and been a part of the region, the sort of actual, if not on paper, the organizational, the way it operated, the institutional responsibility, was under Denver. I have, and had, the understanding that even though the regional director may sign the selection paperwork as selecting official, that, in effect, the chief engineer and the chief of the Construction Division in Denver were, in effect, the selecting official on project construction engineer positions. And so it was a kind of a–what's the word–anachronism, or whatever.

For example, there would be times that I can recall that we were negotiating pretty substantial settlements of contract claims, where both the field office and the regional office were quite unsympathetic with a favorable settlement to the contractor; in other words, ~~with the~~ [their] determination [was] that the contractor wasn't entitled to so much money in a settlement. We would be moving ahead with a settlement, even though the project construction engineer was quite opposed to it.

Denver Didn't Consult with the Regions When Settling Contract Disputes

I can remember discussions where it would be perhaps even a substantial amount of money, which, at that time, I think was two or three or four million dollars, in a settlement, and having the concern that, "Well, shouldn't we be talking to the regional office? Because if we reach this settlement, they're going to have to come up with the money, through the appropriation program, and through whatever available funds they have, redirecting construction funding within the region to pay for this, or whatever. So shouldn't we be consulting with them before we make this settlement?" And, typically, no, that wasn't being thought of. They would just have to handle it some way.

You know, I think it was a little bit odd, because that's just where the power was at that time. I think the chief engineer, or I think at a certain period of time it was called the assistant commissioner and chief engineer, but anyway, that position in Denver was pretty paramount in anything involving the construction program. And I think there was not a lot of, certainly, team aspect between the project development, which was primarily a regional issue, and project construction, or, for that matter, from construction to the O&M phase–operation and maintenance phase–after that.

But yeah, I saw situations, you know, like I described, like I attempted to describe there, where I think there was not–well, what we'd now say, a particularly team attitude between the construction responsibility, pretty much focused in Denver, and the regional offices, or regions.

Storey: Was there tension about who ran the organization?

Stessman: Oh, yes.

Storey: Do you remember any specific examples?

Stessman: No, I can't say that I do remember specific examples, or glaring examples, but there was clearly tension about who ran the organization.

Storey: And what were the lines of tension? Between what parts of the organization?

Stessman: Well, there was a–let me say it more basically, that it has been a problem, and it still is, to some extent, in Reclamation. We have never achieved a high level of, what you might say, of unity, in Reclamation. I sometimes thought if I could be a cartoonist and draw a cartoon of the–for example, of the regional office as seen by

the project office, or the Denver office as seen by the regional office, or the Washington office as seen by the Denver office, we haven't always, and we don't yet, necessarily identify ourselves together and pull together as a team. There's a barrier. There's a competitiveness. There's a kind of a discrediting that goes on in a lot of the talk and culture of Reclamation that is not as functional as it should be.

How Offices Within Reclamation View One Another's Work

I would say that one of the typicals is that people in project offices, or, now, area offices, tend to view that, "Okay, this is where the real work of Reclamation is, and we're the folks who really get things done. What we get from the regional office is administrivia, politics, overhead, and they're not busy," etcetera.

And then on the other hand, there's a tendency on the part of, say, regional office people to look at project and area office, and say, "Well, they don't get the big picture. They don't understand so much. They're too close to the situation, and they're in the pocket of the local constituents there," etcetera. That's an attribute, or a characteristic, of Reclamation that hasn't been particularly good. And I'm sure that to some extent, maybe to a big extent, that it exists in other agencies, and even private business. But it seems to be pretty common, and pretty typical, in Reclamation. I've worked in a number of different field offices, and headquarter offices in Reclamation, so I've seen it from a lot of different angles.

Assistant Center Director at Collbran

Storey: Well, good. Let's move on to Collbran, where you were the assistant center director, I think was the title. Tell me about what the Job Corps was doing. This was on a Reclamation project, right? And you were a Reclamation employee?

Stessman: I was, yes.

Storey: Tell me about that whole relationship.

Stessman: When I came off the training and was selected for a position in Job Corps at the Job Corps Center, my supervisor in Denver, or, actually, someone several levels up that I worked closely with, who had been somewhat of a mentor for me, said to me, "Neil, I can't understand why you would leave the Bureau of Reclamation," when, in fact, I wasn't leaving the Bureau of Reclamation. I was only going from construction activity to Job Corps, which is also part of Reclamation.

Let's see, what was your question?

Storey: Tell me about what the Job Corps was doing within Reclamation.

The Job Corps in Reclamation

Stessman: Well, Reclamation, at that time, had four centers, and they were Civilian Conservation centers. They were operated *for* the Department of Labor under

contract. At the inception of Job Corps in the sixties, a number of, you might say, resource management agencies, such as the Fish and Wildlife Service, BLM [Bureau of Land Management], the Forest Service, the Park Service, and including Reclamation, took on the role of managing these sort of rural Job Corps Centers, as opposed to the big urban centers. Generally, the urban centers were contracted out to private industry, such as Xerox, Singer, and whomever.

So Reclamation was in the business of–it had started out earlier with a number of other centers, and they were mostly sort of identified with a project, like the Columbia Basin Job Corps Center, the Weber Basin Job Corps Center. I think probably that they were located partially on the basis of where Reclamation owned property or land or facilities that could be converted from a then-present use to a campus or Job Corps Center.

So, Collbran is a western Colorado town of, as I recall, like, two hundred people. Definitely cowboy country. It was a very good program, very interesting program, a really satisfactory experience for me. I enjoyed it a lot. The program is for primarily vocational training, and it was sort of poverty- and disadvantaged-focused. It was youth. They, at that time, had to be somewhere between age sixteen, as I recall, and twenty-one and a half, I think. Our centers were strictly for males. Now they're coeducational. The trades were sort of more of the construction and that kind of thing, as opposed to urban trades.

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Storey: You were saying that the kinds of trades were carpentry and welding, and so on.

Stessman: Yeah. Construction and, how to characterize, but anyway, not urban office kinds of jobs. The urban centers did teach those.

Storey: But sort of urban-oriented, am I hearing?

Stessman: No, I think not urban-oriented. We taught heavy equipment operation, electrical maintenance, auto repair, masonry, bricklaying, in the centers that we worked in. Many of the enrollees were from low-income. Very, very few had finished high school. The very vast majority were school dropouts, and they were unemployed, and not well-equipped to be employed. So we were working with a pretty difficult segment of the society.

Typically, in a day, they would be in school or in vocational training, and a sort of optimum objective would be that we would be able to get a student through high school equivalency, through the GED examination, and provide them with vocational training, and have them graduate from a vocational side of the program, as well as the academic, and go off into an apprenticeship in either cooking, or food service, or carpentry, or bricklaying, or heavy equipment, or whatever.

"There were some cases of really extraordinary success, people going off and

getting good jobs, or being apprentices . . .”

There were some cases of really extraordinary success, people going off and getting good jobs, or being apprentices on the way to real good jobs in building trades, and that kind of thing.

“On the other hand, we had lots of disciplinary and other problems, and it was quite challenging and unique . . .”

On the other hand, we had lots of disciplinary and other problems, and it was quite challenging and unique, and something that was somewhat of an oddity within Reclamation to be able to be exposed to that kind of program. I identified with it, and I also sort of appreciated the chance that I had to sort of utilize and develop management skills, people skills, that kind of thing, in addition to technical skills.

One little anecdote. The first day I went to work at Collbran was a Monday. I was living in Denver, so I'd gotten up really early–I think one or two o'clock in the morning–and driven to the center at Collbran to be there for the start of work on Monday. So I drove into the parking lot at the center at about, I think, eight o'clock, something. They were just kind of opening the office. The administrative officer saw me pull in and park. Prior to that, I'd been there for like a two-week detail, maybe a month before. He saw me park. He came walking over, and he said, "I suppose you heard what happened in town last night." I said, "No, what was that?" He said, "Well, ten of our enrollees have been charged with raping two girls on the street in Grand Junction." I think the night before. If not the night before, it was Saturday night. And that was my introduction to Job Corps. (laughter) Eventually, I think six of them were convicted of forcible rape. They had basically pulled these two young girls off the street and drug them into an alley, and raped them. Fortunately, that wasn't typical, but it, on the other hand, just kind of introduced me to a different role, or a different function, a different mission, than I would have done up to that time.

Storey: It must have been rather a shocking introduction, actually.

One Issue Is That Reclamation Moves People into Management Based on Technical Skills Rather than People and Management Skills

Stessman: On the other side of it, it was an experience that certainly a person can grow from. And to some extent, you know, I had been professing that, well, gee, what we do in Reclamation is, we move people into management positions on the basis of their technical skill and background, rather than their people skills, or their "management” abilities. Job Corps gave one an opportunity to work on and exhibit and hone people skills and management skills.

“. . . a lot of times for a person to become a good manager or effective manager or leader, they have to give up their hobbies, and they have to give up their technical activities, and recognize that there are other people who can be as

expert, if not a whole lot more expert, in the technical side . . ."

In a way, I was *forced* to get away *from* my technical abilities, my technical skills, and that's beneficial, I think, because a lot of times for a person to become a good manager or effective manager or leader, they have to give up their hobbies, and they have to give up their technical activities, and recognize that there are other people who can be as expert, if not a whole lot more expert, in the technical side, if the manager will *allow* them to, rather than get involved in over-supervising or over-managing them by *imposing* the manager's own technical knowledge or technical background or technical *history* on the project or the subordinate employee.

It's so seldom recognized that most people in this dynamic age, who come to a job with technical skills, are behind the curve within five to ten years, if they're not really concentrating on maintaining that contact with the technical field. And if you're doing that, you're unlikely to be having the opportunity, or able to be honing people skills or management skills. If you go and you put in a management role in something in a field where you don't have technical expertise, then you definitely have the opportunity of putting away your technical habits, and concentrating on people skills in management, and perhaps growing in those ways.

Storey: Yes, you know, it's really obvious in my field, for instance. You get historians who just simply don't want to manage. They'll take the money if you'll give it to them, but they don't want to manage any programs. They want to be historians.

Stessman: Right. Well, the culture in our organizations has been that you have to move up in the organization. Many, many cases where the person started out being motivated to be, let's say, a biologist, and has a lot of the attributes necessary to be a particularly excellent technical expert in biology, they get in an organization, the organization culture is that you have to advance in this organization. You get more pay, and you get more esteem, etcetera, etcetera. So the person moves into management and is trying to hold on to the technical expertise in biology, and in a lot of cases, that person is probably better suited to be a technical expert in some field, and not particularly well-suited to be a leader of people, or good with people skills, etcetera. It's bad for the organization, and it's bad for the individual.

So I think that's something I got out of Job Corps, besides really being–I think I was kind of committed to the mission of Job Corps. I believed in what we were doing, and I felt it was worthwhile. I felt the investment–both the public investment and my own investment–were good investments, and that they were adequately rewarded, and so on. And then the opportunity to do that work, and also to develop. The growth of it, I was interested in, and it worked out well for me.

Storey: I've heard you talk about what it did for you, which is perfectly valid, what it did for society, which is perfectly valid. What did it do for Reclamation?

Stessman: Well, Reclamation needs to do what is in the public interest, and so what Reclamation does that betters the fulfillment of the needs of the public are what's good for Reclamation. Reclamation ought not to have its own internal political

[unclear]. So, what was *good* for Reclamation was that Reclamation has done, through the operation of the Job Corps Centers, an excellent job of fulfilling a public need. Even up to today, Reclamation's Job Corps Centers are very highly regarded for the way they're operated and the success they have.

Storey: But, for instance–I probably didn't phrase my question very well. For instance, are the skills that are taught to the Job Corps enrollees skills that are then used on–do they practice on Reclamation projects and things, or is the Job Corps just sort of an independent part of Reclamation?

Stessman: We haven't utilized Job Corps very much in that way, in the way of accomplishing sort of traditional Reclamation activities. In other words, we haven't used the Job Corps to build canals, or operate and maintain facilities, etcetera, very much–pretty minimally. Some agencies have operated their Job Corps Centers in that way. I think, especially early on, the Forest Service used to use their Job Corps facilities for things like trail maintenance, fence-building, clearing, and whatever. Reclamation hasn't done that, and I think it's probably just as well.

Another thing we haven't done, and maybe this is unfortunate, but we've never really figured out how to, or committed ourselves to, using the Job Corps Program to train future employees of Reclamation. In retrospect, and sometimes even at the time, I recognized, and we recognized, we should have done that. We should be trying to do that. We have not done that. I think not many–a very small number of sort of present productive Reclamation employees got their start by learning a trade in Job Corps, and then coming to work for the Bureau of Reclamation. I think you'd find more of that in some other agencies–Forest Service. We haven't done that.

Storey: How many folks were there on the staff at Collbran?

Staffing at Collbran

Stessman: As I recall, we had maybe 60, 55 to 60. I think the capacity of the center changed while I was there. But I think it was like 180 when I got there. It may have increased to 220, 220 students, or something like that. So it was like 220 enrollees, or 200, plus or minus, and 55 to 60 staff members. And some of the staff members were like employees of the labor unions who taught some of the programs.

Storey: So they weren't actually Reclamation employees then?

Stessman: A small number, maybe 15 percent of the staff, would be employees of the Carpenters Union, the Equipment Operators Union, whatever their name is, the Bricklayers Union, etcetera.

Storey: Do we have a camp, or how did this work for housing, and all that sort of thing?

Stessman: Yeah. It's a residential, a school facility, and so there's housing for the enrollees. School building, vocational training facilities. When I first got there, we had some

housing for staff, but I think all of our centers have done away with staff housing.

Storey: So Collbran, you'd have to commute to somewhere nearby, then?

Stessman: Yeah. We rented a house on a ranch. We were probably not over four or five miles away from the center. Some people located in the small town. A lot of people bought small acreages, or that kind of situation, where they could have a horse, that kind of thing. At Collbran, Grand Junction is approximately an hour away, a fairly large town for western Colorado, so probably somewhere around 30 percent or so of the staff commuted from Grand Junction and surrounding towns down there in that lower valley.

Social Interaction among the Staff at Collbran

Storey: What kind of social interaction was there amongst the staff, do you recall?

Stessman: It didn't make a big impression on me. I don't know. People kind of get lost in the community. There were some who had lots of contact with each other off-center, and, on the other hand, a lot had their own lives and their own friends off-center.

I think I talked earlier about being in a small–well, being in a construction project office, particularly where we had our own camp there, and the kind of social interaction of employees. It was quite a bit different in Job Corps. I certainly had some friends from the staff, who I associated with a lot *off* the job. Maybe there was a tendency to kind of keep those bonds more at Collbran, which was in a cowboy town, which wasn't always the most welcoming to new people coming into that little valley. But certainly when I worked on the other two centers–one near Ogden, Utah, and one in Moses Lake, Washington–you got out into the community for friendships and social activities a lot more.

Relations Between Collbran and the Job Corps Center

Storey: Tell me more about the relations between the community and the camp, in Collbran, though.

Stessman: Sometimes they were really tough. They were very tough in Collbran. As a matter of fact, as I recall, the enrollees were really not welcome to be in town unsupervised. So, like, if I, as a staff member, was in town, or was driving through town, and saw an enrollee in town, that would be strange. If I just saw a corpsman walking along the street, I would definitely check it out. Because of the attitude of the town, we just weren't about to let the enrollees sort of walk to town and do some shopping, or whatever. It was not the best of situations.

Storey: How was the camp located in relation to the town?

Stessman: Well, in essence, we were just beyond the edge of town. We were probably less than a mile from the two-block-long main street of town. We were along the highway, just outside of town.

Storey: That must have put a lot of stress on the center, because it meant that–I would *assume* it meant that you had to provide some sort of social life for the enrollees.

Stessman: Absolutely, yes.

Providing Activities for Enrollees at Collbran

Storey: So what kinds of things did you do, in order to make them feel more at home, as it were?

Stessman: Well, we had some athletic facilities. We had a gymnasium, and we had a place to play softball, other outdoor sports, some. We had–I forget what we called it–but anyway, we had a facility where we had pool tables and music, and then we had other recreational activities, like ping pong. We had arts and crafts, and it would be–you know, it would kind of come and go as an activity, but we would have things like ceramics and woodcarving. We'd try to make opportunities for the young fellows to pursue their interests. If a person had an interest and facility in art, painting, or something like that, why, they could pursue that in arts and crafts. We had things that would just come and go, but we had a band, I think, at times, and some would be into playing guitar or piano. I remember we bought a set of drums at one time. I think the interest in that came and went fairly rapidly. We were always trying to come up with activities for them. Not too many of these people had backgrounds where an interest in reading and that kind of thing had been cultivated, but some of that.

Storey: What about arrangements to go to Grand Junction, and things like that?

Stessman: We had buses, and so we would have supervised trips to Grand Junction. There was quite a lot of accessibility to do that sort of thing on Friday night, and Saturday night, and Sunday night–primarily Friday night and Saturday night. And then on Saturday, typically, a person, if they didn't have any behavior problems at the center, could go on a bus trip to town and have, whatever, five to six hours of time, free time, in town. Then if they wanted to come home before dinner, they could, or if they wanted to stay until–I forget, exactly–but ten or eleven o'clock at night, then they could be in town. And they'd have a gathering point or several points in town where the bus would come by to pick them up. If they didn't show up on time, they might be restricted for future trips for a while, or whatever.

Storey: Did they have any spending money? How did the Job Corps work?

Jobs Corps Provided Medical and Room and Board as Well as Spending Money

Stessman: Yeah. They were given spending money, and so we'd have payday, as I recall, twice a month. Roughly every two weeks was payday, and we'd dispense their pay, in cash. I can't begin to recall the amounts, but they would advance in pay as they went along, based on their accomplishments and their tenure. As I recall, it would be something in the range of just under twenty dollars, for a two-year period, of spending money, up to, say, fifty dollars, or low fifties, maybe. Then in addition to

that, they accumulated savings, and at that time, I think it was in the range of fifty dollars a month, so that if you stayed six months, then you had accumulated savings of three hundred dollars, which, when you left the program, you received that money. It was somewhat of an inducement for them to stay. As I recall, if you didn't stay as long as six months, you didn't accumulate *any* savings. But if you stayed six months or longer, you accumulated fifty dollars for each month that you were in the program. And it also gave them starting money for when they left. It's an ideal that I spoke of before, where a student got a General Education Diploma and a trade, and went out on a job in an apprentice program. Typically, to be that successful, they might have been there two years, twenty-four months, so they would leave with $1,200, plus taxes. They have a fund to start out with. Plus, their expenses were paid, including medical and health, and so on, while they were there, and had some spending money.

Storey: And did we have a placement program of some sort?

Placement from the Job Corps Program

Stessman: Yes, we did. Mostly it was done by the vocational instructors at the center, with assistance from the state employment agencies, the state employment service agencies. And if the enrollee completed a program in one of the union trades, then the understanding was that the union was to obtain a placement for the person as an apprentice in that trade.

Storey: And did they have a choice of the trade that they would study?

Stessman: They did. They were tested, and so on, and they had to meet some different criteria to be in certain trades. But within those limitations, they could choose their trade.

Storey: And so, they would typically–

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Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey with Neil Stessman, on March the 7th, 1995.

I just asked you if they [Job Corps enrollees] typically stayed up to two years.

Retention of Enrollees Was a Big Part of the Challenge

Stessman: Yeah, those were the success stories, and we had a lot of them who–well, retention was a big part of the challenge, because a lot of these people were not people who came in with a high work ethic, or who had, to that point in time, demonstrated an ability to apply themselves to some certain thing and stick with it. As I indicated, they were people who had–virtually every one was a school dropout. So by no means was it average that a person would stay two years. I think at some times our

average retention was as low as six months or something like that.

"It really took not just their own work, it took a real commitment on the part of the staff, and a real measure of success on the part of the staff was the ability to hold them . . . when *they* had their *fill* of it . . . or the ability of the staff and the instructors, and so on, to tolerate them. . . ."

It really took not just their own work, it took a real commitment on the part of the staff, and a real measure of success on the part of the staff was the ability to hold them, was the ability to retain them, either when *they* had their *fill* of it, and wanted more *freedom*, and felt that they either needed to leave, go AWOL, or resign, or whatever, or the ability of the staff and the instructors, and so on, to tolerate them.

"This was a lot of *my* challenge as a manager . . . was to try to convince the staff to work with this person, rather than drive them off, or have them expelled . . ."

This was a lot of *my* challenge as a manager, or whatever, in Job Corps, was to try to convince the staff to work with this person, rather than drive them off, or have them expelled, whatever the term was–terminate them, whatever. There were a lot of behavior problems, and so on, and very, very difficult to work with them on a person-to-person basis when maybe you were an expert carpenter, and you're taking someone who's seventeen years old, who just doesn't have the work ethic that you have, or *expect* that someone should have, who wants to be a carpenter. You're having to work on motivating them, and it's difficult to get their attention and retain it. It's difficult to get them to show up to class, difficult to get them to apply themselves. Lots of them have not been successful, or didn't come in with the attitude that success would be a reward from working hard, or applying themselves. Their experience said that if you work hard, why, you're going to be crapped on. You're not going to get rewards. And, you know, all kinds of other backgrounds. So it wasn't that two years was the average, by any means. Two years would be more like an ideal.

Storey: Did you teach things there like cabinet-making, for instance, or was that too complicated a skill?

Stessman: The general program, let's say, in carpentry, would run more toward framing a building or house, putting up paneling, drywall, etcetera, more so than, say, intricate cabinetry type of carpentry. But, you know, yes, I saw cabinetry taught to some kids. Just like other things, there would be *some* who would just pick it up so fast, and have so much, kind of a natural ability, and in a lot of cases where a youngster *did* do that, the instructors were so pleased to have someone sort of do that well and apply themselves so much, that they did often give them special opportunities and special training. Obviously, it would very fun to see those kind of things happen, and they did, you know, lots of them. By no means not in every case.

A lot of the experience that they would be given as part of their training program would be in building facilities at or for the center. So, typically, if we

needed to replace a dormitory, then the building of the dormitory would be a project that the students would do. It would take ~~sort of~~ much longer than it would to have a contractor come in and do that work. So, as a staff member of the center, you'd have the opportunity to see a lot of that just really taking place, right at the center.

And then we also would have off-center projects where we would be building a building for some mostly public kind of enterprise in the community. We'd build a firehouse in one place. Lots of different facilities for, like, maybe a senior citizens' center, or something for the city, or the county, or the state, or a charity.

Storey: How were the management responsibility split up between the assistant center director and the center director?

Center Director Turned over Center Operations

Stessman: Well, it depended on the individuals and the chemistry, a lot. When I first went into Job Corps at Collbran, the center director, he sort of turned a great deal of things over to me, and was essentially my mentor, and then handled a lot of the sort of off-center politics, so that, to some extent, I ran the center. He had had a very substantial amount of experience in Job Corps, in Forest Service centers and Reclamation centers. So in that case in Collbran, he kind of turned the center operations over to me, and mentored me in that. He handled the external stuff.

Storey: So what did center operations include, besides trying to deal with the instructors and the enrollees?

Stessman: It had mostly to do with dealing with the instructors and the enrollees. We had the vocational department, and we had the school, educational, and we had corpsmen living, which is basically the dorm life and the recreational activities, both on and off the center–the trips and so on, and we had an administrative area. Then, in addition, we had counseling, a small counseling component, and a vocational coordination activity. So a big part of my job was to know and work with the students and to manage those different functions within the organization.

Storey: How long were you at Collbran?

Stessman: I was there about, I think, a little over two years–two and a half years, or something like that.

Storey: From?

Stessman: I went there in the fall of '71, and I think I left there early in '74.

Storey: And you went to?

Moves to Weber Basin Job Corps Center as Assistant Center Director

Stessman: I went to Weber Basin Job Corps Center. I went there as assistant ~~regional~~ [center] director, also. That's near Ogden, Utah, between Salt Lake City and Ogden, Utah. I was there short of a year, as I recall–eight months. And then I went to the Columbia Basin Job Corps Center in Moses Lake, Washington. That was in the summer of '74, and I transferred from there in about December of 1976. So I was there a little over two years. I think I was in the Job Corps program five years–three centers.

Storey: In Weber Basin, you said you were there as assistant ~~regional~~ [center] director, also?

Stessman: Uh-huh.

Storey: So you were headquartered in Salt Lake?

Stessman: No, I was headquartered at the center, which is close to Ogden, Utah.

Storey: You were assistant regional director of what?

Stessman: Oh, wait, I misspoke. I wasn't assistant regional director. I was assistant center director.

Storey: Oh, okay. (laughter) I couldn't figure what was going on.

Stessman: I'm sorry.

Storey: How did the Weber Basin Job Corps Center differ from the Collbran Center, or did it?

Weber Basin Was Larger, Had Better Community Relations, and Was in a More Urban Setting

Stessman: Well, there were differences. There was a lot of similarity. It was closer to a large city, so we had a lot better outlets for off-center activities for the corpsmen. We had a lot better acceptability by the community toward the center. At Ogden, there was an active Community Relations Council within the city that sort of helped the center, in a way, integrate the corpsmen in the city. So the outlets for recreation were much, much better.

There was also a very large urban center within fifteen miles of *our* center. It was operated by private business, and, as I recall, they had like two thousand enrollees, which was very large, compared to us. We had, I think, about three hundred, at Weber Basin. And we were such a good example, compared to them, because they were so large, that it was a lot less personal. And I think something that in these smaller centers that we were able to have was a real personal relationship with the students. That doesn't mean we didn't have any problems, or that we didn't have any problems with our enrollees when they were in town, etcetera; we did. But I think, by comparison, we were better.

And then, also, I think that there was, in that area there in Utah, there was more of an appreciation of the sort of economic benefit to the area of having the Job Corps Centers there. There we kind of benefitted from that urban center, too, because both of them had some meaning to the community, from the standpoint of jobs and payroll and purchasing, and so on.

Storey: Similar size and everything? Similar to Collbran, I mean.

Stessman: Weber Basin was a little larger, I think, maybe 40 percent larger, or something. But, you know, there were mostly similarities. Weber Basin had better facilities. I think Weber Basin had sort of *gotten* a little more favorable treatment by Reclamation over the years in the allocation of resources.

Storey: Where did the enrollees come from? Did they differ between the two centers?

Stessman: They were pretty similar in both of those centers. As I recall, both of those centers– well, we were under the Denver Region of the Department of Labor, and the input tended to be sort of managed by the Department of Labor regional arrangement. Sometimes one region of Labor would take input from another region of Labor. Sometimes that might just be to take care of a wave of input or something. So for the most part, we got enrollees from, as I recall, Kansas, Colorado, Utah, and then we had at both places quite a bit of input from St. Louis, Missouri, I recall, and East St. Louis, Illinois. I think, generally, by states, most of them were Colorado, Utah, Kansas, and a smattering of, like, Wyoming and the Dakotas. I'm not sure exactly why, but we also had quite a number from the St. Louis area, in both our centers. And then we *also* got a substantial number of Navajos and Southwest Native Americans.

Storey: What about the rest of the cultural diversity in the camps?

Stessman: I think that in both of those centers, we probably had somewhere around 50 percent were Anglo-Caucasian, and maybe the other 50 percent would be made up of something like, maybe, 15 percent Native American, and then a split between black and Hispanic.

Storey: Did you run into any problems between the different cultural groups?

Stessman: Oh, definitely, yeah. I probably saw more of that at Moses Lake, at the Columbia Basin Job Corps Center. But, yeah, we did. Sometimes there would be substantial social problems between like the blacks and the whites. Sometimes things would sort of break off in racial blocks. At Columbia Basin Job Corps Center in Moses Lake, Washington, we had virtually all California input. And we had a pretty close to one-third, one-third, one-third split there, where we would have about a third would be black, and a third would be Hispanic, and a third would be Anglo-Caucasian.

The Weber Basin and Collbran Centers Had More of an Emphasis on Native Americans

Storey: So not so many Native Americans at that one?

Native American Issues Were Often Cultural

Stessman: Right, right. There was an emphasis at the first two centers on Native Americans, particularly in heavy equipment and construction trades. A big part of the challenge there was understanding their culture, and then so many of the Native American students we had were very *strongly* family- and tribally-affiliated, so it took some time for us to learn that they absolutely *had* to get home for pow-wows and weddings and certain family and tribal and cultural activities. We were not necessarily equipped for the kind of special treatment that they needed to get home, I recall. Once we found ways to be able to get them home, when they needed to get home, we began to have a lot better success at retaining them in the program.

As a matter of fact, you needed to find ways to be responsive to individual needs. In the case of these Native American kids, individual needs were more like a group need, that it was very common that if you could find some way for the rules and regulations to enable you to facilitate those youngsters getting home when they needed to get home, they would commit themselves to the program, and stay, and stay, and stay, and really get a lot out of it. But when we weren't able to do that, we would lose them, and we'd lose them not just by the fact that they would leave, but by the fact that they would not be committed to the program. They would not invest themselves in the program.

Storey: I'm trying to formulate a question that basically in my mind is saying, was it a two-way street? And let's see if I can articulate it. As instructors and management at the centers began to recognize Native Americans' special needs, and began to try to deal with those, did the Native Americans *also* begin to understand that they had to take special actions in order to have their needs understood, and begin to *deal* with you differently in the way that they tried to get those needs taken care of?

Stessman: Are you saying as a group, rather than as individuals?

Storey: Well, I think as individuals. Maybe as a group, I don't know. You're in the best position to answer that, I think.

Stessman: Well, I just don't know where to go on that. Our retention would be so bad with Native Americans as they would come into the program, if they perceived that the environment was not something that they could adapt to, or that the attitude or environment was such that some of their–to them, critical needs were not going to be met, that, I mean, they would leave. Many of these were not the least bit–the Native American students were not the least bit hesitant to hit the road, to hitchhike, or walk, or whatever. I would almost say if some of these youngsters–if there was a pow-wow back at their home, you know, like, next Tuesday, and it would take them four days to walk there, they'd have to leave then, four or five days before, in case they had to walk all that way. I'm trying to make a point. So the turnover, or the loss rate, would be so great on them that we just weren't developing a relationship

with them. The turnover was so great.

As I recall, at both centers, we'd kind of taken that on as a understood mission: "We have to try to work with these Native Americans. We have to try to *learn* how we can work with them, so that they can get what they need out of this program." It was just was such a difference once we conditioned ourselves to try to understand what their needs were, and then tried to react to that, tried to accommodate those.

Storey: Were they coming in and saying, "Gee, I've got to get back home for the wedding, or the pow-wow," or whatever, or were they just disappearing?

Stessman: Many times they would just disappear, and you'd try to find out why. It was an awareness thing. And the staff had to understand that. With a lot of the other students, it might be that one of the things they needed was a telephone call home, you know, or the ability to talk to mom or talk to their buddy back home, or whatever. But I think that was not typical. In fact, these Native Americans, I think most of them weren't from homes where they even have telephones. That would be kind of one of the differences that, as an effective staff person, you might need to be aware of, that if you encounter somebody who's obviously having a problem, it might be that if that person is a Native American and is not applying himself, and so on, and you engage him in conversation, and get to doing some counseling, that if you really have your ears open, you might learn very quickly that there's a wedding in the family, and he's not going to be able to get home, or doesn't see how he's going to be able to get home, or something. If it's a, whatever, say, a black student from Wichita, it might be that, in talking to him, that he has a real strong need to talk to his mother on the phone. It may be a big part of sort of breaking things loose, to get him going positive, is to dial up his mother, and say, "Here, take the phone. I'll be back in five minutes," or whatever. But with these Native American students we have in the Southwest, it turned out to be really a key factor, this strong affiliation with family, and ties, and so on. We need to try to find the ways to be accommodating for them.

Storey: Why did you move from Collbran to the Weber Basin Center?

Moves from Collbran to Weber Basin

Stessman: Oh, it was kind of a personal thing. The center director had left, and I was acting director for a substantial period of time, like eight months or so. When they selected the center director, I was an applicant. They selected the person who was in a similar position at Weber Basin, as center director. He and I worked together then for perhaps a month or so, and we weren't working out very well together. We had a conversation about maybe I could transfer back into his job, the one he had left in Weber Basin.

I think management above us felt that that would be good experience for me. They spoke with me about, you know, "You could benefit from a little bit of experience in a little larger center, in a more urban situation." And also the center

director at Weber Basin was highly regarded–

END SIDE 1, TAPE 2. MARCH 7, 1995.
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 2. MARCH 7, 1995.

Storey: So you were counseled that working with the center director at Weber Basin would be a good idea also, maybe.

Stessman: Yeah, that's right, yeah.

Supervision of Job Corps Centers

Storey: Who were the managers above the Job Corps Centers? How was that handled in Reclamation?

Stessman: The center directors worked for regional management. That would be the regional director, and, I think, if not on paper, *de facto*, an assistant regional director was typically the supervisor of the center director–assistant regional director over center director.

The operation of Job Corps in Reclamation is a little bit untypical because of the fact that the Job Corps Program is not a sort of traditional function of Reclamation. To some extent, I have always felt that it was not strongly accepted by Reclamation as a role. Typically, to some extent, the management of Reclamation sort of desires that Job Corps in Reclamation is well done, but *doesn't* focus a lot of its own attention on Job Corps, either at the headquarters level or at the regional level.

When I was in Job Corps, the Commissioner's office then had a Youth Programs staff of up to probably seven or eight people. So you had the regional alignment or supervision, and you got some direct supervision from the commissioner's Youth Program staff, and then since it's a program of the Department of Labor, the centers also have a lot of *direct* contact with the Department of Labor, through the regional offices of the Department of Labor. I believe, to some extent, that the hierarchy above the centers is kind of so diffuse that in some ways it gave the center operations and the center management–the center directors, etcetera–an unusual amount of autonomy. I would say more autonomy by far than what's typical in project manager or office manager positions, in other activities of Reclamation, as opposed to Job Corps. In fact, the Job Corps Center directors and staff generally had more autonomy to run things on the center than you would have in those other field offices of Reclamation.

Storey: How did your responsibilities change between Collbran and Weber Basin?

Stessman: They were pretty similar. They were quite similar.

Storey: And then you were there for about eight months?

Stessman: Uh-huh.

Storey: Well, let me ask you a couple of other questions that are lurking in my mind. One of them is, did you have a large LDS contingent in Weber Basin?

Stessman: I think we had a substantial number of staff members who were LDS, and not a very substantial number of enrollees.

Storey: Enrollees. Actually, I guess I should have anticipated that that would be the way it would be. Okay. The other question that I'm sort of hesitant to ask, but think I ought to ask anyway, and you've alluded to it indirectly in your anecdote about the day you arrived at the center. Of course, these are late teen, early twenties young men who are hyper, sexually.

Stessman: Right.

Storey: Did you have any other kinds of problems with that that came up continually, other than trying to find them social outlets, and that kind of thing?

Stessman: Well, trying to find social outlets was a very substantial problem, and it was especially difficult with being able to provide trips, and so on. Of course, lots of times, just like any other situation, when these young men were going to town, they were going to find young women. So that could be pretty imposing in a lot of the environments that were readily accessible to us. That's one of the reasons that in Ogden, you know, our kids could fit in. In Salt Lake City, our kids could fit in, in the community–big cities–a lot more readily than they could in Grand Junction, or one of the reasons they just didn't go to Collbran, even though we were right on the edge of town.

We would have sometimes homosexual activities on the center, in the area of sexual activity, sometimes even forced homosexual activities. Sometimes there would be situations where enrollees would make untoward statements, or gestures, or approaches, to female staff members, and that kind of thing. With respect to our own staff, I don't think that was a huge problem, but it would crop up occasionally. Different people handled it well, and some not so well. I just experienced a couple of instances where a staff [member], a female, would get involved with a student to a higher degree than probably was appropriate. I don't think there were any other cases where there were actually formal charges of rape, or that kind of thing, after the first one, the day I got there.

Storey: Were there disciplinary actions or anything?

Disciplinary Actions and Discharge of Enrollees

Stessman: Oh, yeah. Lots. And we could discharge them for disciplinary purposes, and that could be quite frequent.

Storey: Oh, it occurred frequently?

Stessman: Um-hmm.

Storey: Now, I presume when you say it occurred frequently, you mean as a disciplinary action, not as a disciplinary action necessarily about the question we were talking about, about sexual issues.

Stessman: Oh, no, I mean as a disciplinary action, general. We would have disciplinary discharges probably, I would think, you might have, plus or minus, fifty a year, or so.

Storey: Out of two hundred?

Stessman: Yeah.

Storey: And, of course, with the turnover, maybe three to four hundred enrollees a year.

Stessman: Yeah.

Storey: Okay. Well, my next question was going to be about your move from the Weber Basin Center to the Moses Lake Center. However, we've used up another two hours. (laughter)

Stessman: Wow, that's amazing.

Storey: And I'd like to ask you now whether or not you're willing for the material on these tapes and the resulting transcripts to be used for research by people both inside and outside Reclamation.

Stessman: Yes.

Storey: Good. Thank you.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 2. MARCH 7, 1995
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 1. MARCH 8, 1995.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing Neil Stessman, Great Plains Regional Director of the Bureau of Reclamation, in his offices [in Billings], on March the 8th, 1995, at about nine o'clock in the morning. This is tape one.

Well, Mr. Stessman, yesterday we were talking about the Job Corps, and a couple of different kinds of disciplinary issues had come up. But you did mention that about fifty enrollees a year were asked to leave, as it were. Could you characterize the other kinds of disciplinary problems that you had in the Job Corps camps?

Storey: Well, yeah, I could probably talk about some of them. We had problems of drug use. Occasionally, we would have a problem of some kind of a crime, or theft, or

that kind of thing, off center, that either law enforcement would be involved in, or sometimes we would get reports of thefts, or something that occurred.

I remember one time I happened to be on the center, in the evening, I think in my office, and I saw one of our enrollees hide something in a hole in a ceiling of an outdoor walkway, for example. So I waited until he'd left, and then I went over and I looked up there, and he had put a number of diamond rings in jewelry store cases that a ring comes in. So I left them there, and I checked with our Corpsmen Activities Center, and there had been a group had returned from Spokane, from a outing.

Storey: This was at Moses Lake, then?

Stessman: Yeah, it was. I forget how we learned, but, in fact, there had been a case where apparently this fellow had broken a window in a jewelry store and grabbed a bunch of things, and brought them back. To his misfortune, he thought he wasn't being seen when he hid them. I don't remember the particular circumstances, but I'm sure that boy–I don't recall whether he was actually charged or whether the merchandise was just returned, and they forgot about it. But as I recall, we discharged him. So there were sometimes even criminal activities that occurred, on or off center.

There would always be some cases of fights, and so on, on or off the center. Typically, on payday, which, as I recall, would usually be about a Wednesday or Thursday, we would have problems, or we would have a high incidence of problems that evening and the weekend after, especially, because then there was a tendency for the enrollees to go off somewhere, often without permission, you know, off the center, to buy beer, or there would be drug use, and that kind of thing. So a lot of our discipline problems, or a higher number of them, would tend to occur after payday.

Storey: When you say, "drug use," could you be more specific?

Stessman: Well, sure. There would be quite a bit of use of marijuana, and sometimes there would be incidents of use of other drugs, illegal drugs.

Storey: But it tended to be marijuana, mostly?

Stessman: A lot of marijuana use, yeah. And then an awful lot of alcohol. We *clearly* would have a lot more discipline problems on the center with the enrollees who had too much to drink than we would enrollees who had been using marijuana, for example. It's like alcohol had a lot of more of an anti-social effect–fighting and that kind of thing–with enrollees who had gotten paid and managed to get a good supply of alcohol, either off center or someone brought it back on to the center somewhere, from those than we did from people who kind of abused marijuana as an illegal drug. So, sometimes, you know–well, fairly frequently, you'd find paraphernalia, you take it away from them. Get them in counseling, and so on.

Storey: Was fighting the kind of an issue where you would expel them the first time, or

how did this work?

Stessman: Well, generally not. We recognized that we were working with people who came from situations where a lot of them had built up an inordinate amount of hate. One of their problems was the inability to associate well with other people, without problems. And so we'd try to eliminate or terminate those who were a danger to others, or ones who would sort of threaten the opportunity of others. And it's kind of a difficult line to draw, because you, on one hand, want to provide as much opportunity for them as you possibly can, and recognize that the fellows from those kinds of environments and circumstances weren't perfect to begin with, or they wouldn't be there. So a lot of the effort was in trying to help them improve themselves, and if you tried to discharge everyone who didn't measure up at the beginning, then you were working with the wrong group of people.

Curt Carpenter

Storey: You mentioned yesterday after I'd turn the tape off that there are a couple of people who influenced you regarding the Job Corps. One of them was Frank Knell, and another was Curt Carpenter. Could you talk about them briefly?

Stessman: I met Curt on the Manager Development Training Program, because he was on the program at the same time I was. We were at similar stages in our careers. He was a Job Corps Center director at the time. I think he was a pretty exceptional manager, in my experience, for Reclamation people, and so I learned a lot from him, and he encouraged me to consider working in Job Corps.

Storey: Do you know what kind of experience he did with Job Corps?

Stessman: I think he was a geologist, and he worked for the Bureau on, I think, the Weber Basin Project. He was from Utah. My impression is, after he had about maybe ten years or so in with Reclamation, mostly on construction activities, I think, they were establishing the Job Corps Center at that project, and there was an opportunity for Bureau people who were interested to kind of transfer into that activity. Curt was just very interested in youth, and training, and some of those kind of things. He was into scouting–Boy Scouts–and real heavy into outdoor experiences, like Upward Bound, I think it's called, and winter camping, and challenging outdoor experiences. He was kind of motivated by the opportunity to kind of mix those things with personal development, and that was kind of a fit with Job Corps, I think, not necessarily the extreme outdoor challenging things, but the growth of people through experience and opportunity.

Frank Knell

And the other one was Frank Knell. Frank was approximately the same vintage as Curt and I, as far as age and experience. He was a pretty bright and contemporary-thinking individual, and was in personnel in Salt Lake City, in the regional office. I think he had had in his job in personnel, partly through his own interest, had quite a lot of involvement with the Job Corps Centers in that region.

Storey: And how did you meet him?

Stessman: One of my assignments on the Manager Development Training Program was in the regional office in Salt Lake City. So I kind of did a rotation there, on about a three-month detail, in 1971, I think, and became acquainted with Frank there. He had a lot of interest in Job Corps, and saw a lot of opportunity, and development opportunity, for Reclamation employees in the program, and I think also identified pretty substantially with what the mission of Job Corps was, and Reclamation's involvement in it.

Storey: Who was the head of the Weber Basin Job Corps Center, do you remember?

Stessman: Yes. When I was on the Manager Development Training Program, Curt Carpenter was the manager of the Collbran Job Corps Center, and the name of the Weber Basin Center director, I don't recall. By the time I'd completed the program, Manager Development Training Program, and came into the Job Corps Program, Curt Carpenter had transferred on a lateral from the Collbran Job Corps Center, as center director, to the Weber Center as center director. The person who had been the assistant center director at Weber Basin, named Paul Evans, was the center director at Collbran. So when I came to work in Job Corps at Collbran, Paul Evans was the center director, and he had not been there very long. Curt Carpenter was the center director of Weber Basin. Then, sometime later, when I transferred to Weber Basin from Collbran, Curt Carpenter was the center director, and I was his assistant.

Storey: And that was for about nine months, I think you said? Eight or nine months?

Stessman: Right.

Storey: And then why did you decide to move on to Moses Lake? What happened?

Moved to the Columbia Basin Job Corps Center at Moses Lake to Become Center Director

Stessman: It was the opportunity to be a center director, to manage a center.

Columbia Basin Job Corps Center Had Been Closed Due to Substantial Problems That Had Not Been Corrected

What had happened was that the Columbia Basin Job Corps Center at Moses Lake had been closed, and it was closed rather suddenly. They had apparently a poor performance history, and they had some substantial problems that they had not been able to correct. And so the Department of Labor made a decision that that center would be closed. As I recall, all the enrollees were reassigned, and the Reclamation operating staff were probably about 75 percent dispersed–laid off, reassigned, transferred, whatever.

Politics Caused Reopening of the Job Corps Center

When a decision was made to reverse the Department of Labor decision– local and national politics got the decision reversed, as I recall. Both Senator [Warren] Magnuson and [Henry (Scoop)] Jackson, from Washington State, had a lot of tenure, were both very influential. I don't remember which for sure, maybe both, coerced or persuaded the [Richard M.] Nixon Administration to reverse its decision, and reopen the center.

So the Bureau and Department of Labor were in the process of getting it started up again. The center director there had been reassigned to the regional office of the Bureau in Boise, and so that position was vacant. They advertised, and I applied, and was selected.

Some Facilities Had to Be Refurbished for the Reopening of the Job Corps Center

So when I went there, the center was still closed, and part of the process of reopening it was to refurbish a number of the facilities– dormitories, and so on. One of the judgments that had been made as part of the closure was that the facilities were not very amenable, and needed to be [refurbished]. So the decision to reopen it included a necessity to invest a substantial amount in improving the facilities.

So when I got there, I think around the end of June of that year–1974, I think–it was closed. There was a skeleton staff, and mostly the staff was involved in the refurbishing work. Most of it was being done by our own forces, and there were no enrollees. I think we began to take enrollees, it was in the fall, I'd say, October, November, and so in a lot of ways, it was a unique opportunity, because I think I had the opportunity of hiring probably well over 50 percent of the staff, or we had the opportunity of hiring them, because most of those who were there had been dispersed.

Storey: So what was Moses Lake like then, once you got the group in?

Stessman: Well, it was kind of a unique opportunity, because I did have a substantial opportunity to kind of form a staff, both by hiring and being able to spend some time with the people who were there from carry-over, and sort of coach ourselves about what we needed to do to succeed. It was an opportunity to make a change and to make changes, not just in the decor of the dorms and so on, but in how we operated.

Storey: The curriculum was similar to the other two camps?

Stessman: Yes.

Storey: Similar kinds of issues?

Stessman: Pretty similar, yeah.

Storey: How far away were you from Spokane?

Stessman: I think it's about 90 miles–90 to 110. And Moses Lake is a reasonably good-sized city. I think it was about 10,000 people, or something like that.

Storey: So you didn't have so many problems?

Sending Enrollees to Moses Lake, Yakima, Spokane, and the Tri-Cities

Stessman: We were somewhere in the middle between my Collbran experience and my Weber Basin experience, as far as the acceptability of our students in the town. Moses Lake had a fairly good number of minority population, fairly substantial Hispanic population, and, you know, a moderate number, but some blacks. So for that and the size, and somewhat based on the formation of a community council, and so on, the acceptability of the students in Moses Lake was generally quite a bit better–a lot better–than Collbran, and approaching the Ogden-Salt Lake City situation. But then again, it was small enough that you couldn't send, say, 100 kids to town.

So we had quite a lot of bus activity to Spokane, Yakima, and then fairly frequent opportunity for them to go to Seattle, and sometimes even Portland. We would have, as I recall, you know, on a weekend, it wouldn't be unusual that a person could get a day bus trip to either Spokane, Yakima, or the Tri-Cities–Pasco, Kennewick, and Richmond–which had a fairly substantial population. Or even a overnight trip to Seattle, or overnight to Spokane.

Storey: And you were there about two years?

Stessman: Uh-huh.

Storey: How did your responsibilities change between being an assistant center director and being a center director?

Being Center Director Gave the Opportunity to Form Policies at the Center

Stessman: Well, I think that thing that I would identify would be that I had a lot more opportunity to form the policies at the center. I had a greater opportunity to sort of lead the center, and that would be the biggest thing, you know, to try to coach and lead the staff and the management of the center in focusing on what's important and what's not, and in identifying what we should be striving to accomplish.

Storey: And then why did you decide to leave?

Applied to and Was Selected to Be the Youth Programs Director for Reclamation in Washington, D.C.

Stessman: Well, I think to some extent, there's a clock that works in people, myself included, that you can do a certain job for a certain length of time, or for a period of time, and then the clock starts telling you that you need to stretch out, and perhaps it's telling

you that you need new challenges, etcetera I think that was happening with me.

I applied for the position of Youth Programs director for the Bureau, which is a job located in Washington, D.C. I think I kind of thought that I was effective in the program, and was doing fairly well, and that perhaps the thing for me to do would be to move up in that organization and sort of spread it out farther if I had something to offer.

Asked to Go to D.C. on a Two Week Detail to Overlap with the Outgoing Director

I applied for the Youth Programs director job and I was notified that I was selected, but that the person leaving, the incumbent, they had just found out was going to leave sooner than they expected, and they wanted me to come back on, as I recall, a two week detail, to the job in Washington, so that I could have some overlap with him. His name was Val Carter. And so, sure enough, "Yes, I'll do that, and incidentally, that'll also give me an opportunity to start locating schools and neighborhoods, and get a fix on the housing market, and so on."

So I went back, and I was there for about two weeks, and had the opportunity to look around quite a lot for neighborhood, school, etcetera.

"And at the end of the two weeks, I decided I didn't want to go to Washington, D.C. . . ."

And at the end of the two weeks, I decided I didn't want to go to Washington, D.C. As I resolved it in my mind, there were two reasons for that. One was personal, with respect to my family and my oldest son being somewhere around the time of about to start high school. And my thoughts were that having had him in more small-town environments all the time up until then, that it would pretty tough and traumatic for him to go into high schools of 2,500 to 4,000 students, like I found back there.

Decided the Success of Job Corps Centers Lay More with the Centers than the Central Office in Washington, D.C.

From the more job-related and professional standpoint, which was the other factor, I concluded for myself, it's kind of a critical thing to say, but, that the success of the Job Corps Program in Reclamation is very much related to the effectiveness of the people in the centers, and not very much related to the effectiveness, or lack of effectiveness, of the job that I would be going into. So I identified that I *didn't* think it would be a good career move for *me* to go into that position where I wouldn't enjoy the satisfaction of the cause and effect that I was doing things that I could see the result of, and that the quality of the results depended on the quality of the effort I put into it.

I also was kind of making the judgment that I didn't think that I could be effective enough in that environment, as Youth Program director in Washington, to make the sort of macro, as opposed to micro, changes then that could make that

position offer to the effectiveness of the Job Corps Program in Reclamation what I thought it should have. I didn't see that I had the qualities to make that change.

So at the end of the time, I talked to the assistant commissioner, who was over the job that I had applied for, Assistant Commissioner Ed Sullivan. I told him that I'd changed my mind, and I offered to pay my expenses that they had paid for me to come back there. (laughter) I said, "But I really don't want this job," and he was very understanding. So I said things like, "I hope this doesn't affect my future in Reclamation, but I respectfully decline." He offered that if I would do the job for a year at that grade, he would have me upgraded again after a year. But again, I declined.

Storey: Tell me about grades, before you go on.

Stessman: Grades?

Storey: Yeah. As an assistant director, center director.

Stessman: An assistant center director is a Grade 12, and a center director, at least then, was 13. The Youth Programs director *was* a 14 position. And so what he said was that if I did it for a year, that he would have the position raised to a 15 after a year.

Storey: So I guess then you had to go back to Moses Lake. I mean, you went back.

Stessman: I went back to Moses Lake. In my mind, the time sequence is kind of interesting, because–

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BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1. MARCH 8, 1995.

Storey: So then you went back to Moses Lake?

Asked to Go and Work on Emergency Work Resulting from the Failure of Teton Dam

Stessman: And, almost immediately, I think almost to the day, the Teton Dam failure occurred. That got to be a kind of key thing in my future, because I wound up being asked to go and work on the emergency activity in the Teton Dam failure.

Storey: Moses Lake was headquartered out of Boise then?

Stessman: Right. That's where the regional office was.

Storey: Tell me about how that happened, that you asked to participate in the emergency work. And also tell me how the region reacted to the failure.

Stessman: Got your interest up on another subject.

Storey: Pardon me?

Stessman: I've got your interest up on another subject now.

Storey: No, I thought we were progressing into it.

Stessman: Yeah, we are.

Storey: Okay. (laughter) I don't want to cut off anything else.

Stessman: I don't remember volunteering myself. I think that the people in the regional office who were dealing with the aftermath of the dam failure were trying to identify people within our staff, within the Bureau staff within the region, and outside, I think, who could possibly have something to offer, you know, work on what turned out to be a claim program, because people were being detailed from all over the Bureau.

On the day of the dam failure, someone from the regional office had contacted me at home, as I remember, maybe even a couple of times, trying to locate Rod Vissia, the regional director, and did I know where he was. You know, "Why?" "Well, because we understand that he's somewhere in that area this weekend, and there's a problem with Teton Dam." So that was part of my news of the day as I then began to hear on the news flashes that the Bureau of Reclamation had a dam in eastern Idaho, named Teton, that was either about to fail or had failed. Anyway, I *didn't* know where the regional director was, but that was some of my first awareness of the problem at Teton Dam, was the calls I got from Boise.

Shortly after that, I think almost immediately, we had planned and took annual leave, and made a trip back to Iowa, visiting relatives. So some three or four or five days after the dam failure, the chief of personnel in Boise reached me at my brother's home in Des Moines, Iowa, and told me that they had looked a little bit at my experience and so on, and wondered if I would be willing to accept a detail appointment to go and work on the recovery activities, you might say. And I told them that, you know, I was willing to do whatever they needed me to do.

Was Stationed in Idaho Falls, Idaho

So I got on a bus. My wife and children were over near Omaha, and I took a bus right away--within hours, I think. And then we were able to get our flights changed. I can't remember exactly whether I might have gone home, gone back to Moses Lake early, before my family did, to begin to get ready. But I went back to Moses Lake, and I think within probably thirty-six hours or so of when they called me, I was driving. I took my own car from Moses Lake to Idaho Falls, because they told me that I could be there for a substantial amount of time, and that vehicles were in short supply, and it would be advisable that I took my own car if I could.

Worked in the Claims Office Managing Payment of Damages Resulting from the Failure of Teton

So I think it was something like seven to ten days or so after the dam failure that I got there. My assignment–I had stopped in Boise to be filled in. This was en route from Moses Lake to Idaho Falls. I had stopped at Boise to be filled in on what I was to do. The arrangement was that anticipating special legislation which would provide compensation to the flood victims, we would set up an organization that had a chief claims officer, a fellow named Lloyd Erickson [phonetic], and a claims officer–in other words, this would be like an office head–at Rexburg,, Idaho Falls, and Blackfoot.

Chief Claims Officer Was Lloyd Erickson

Stessman Would Be Claims Officer in Idaho Falls and Assistant to Erickson, with Some Responsibility over the Offices in Rexburg and Blackfoot

The chief claims officer, Lloyd Erickson, would be in Idaho Falls, and I would be the claims officer in Idaho Falls, and I would act as his assistant, with some responsibility over the other two offices.

Storey: So we rented an office facility or something, I guess?

Stessman: Right. We rented an office in Idaho Falls and an office in–I think we first made arrangements with Rick's College for office space in Rexburg. Rexburg was pretty badly hit by the flood, so it was really affected. Idaho Falls–the damage within the city was slight. I mean, it didn't affect the office areas or community that much. Then we rented some space in Blackfoot, as I recall–those three places. And we had a combined office for the chief claims officer and the claims officer, and the staff in Idaho Falls. The headquarters for the activity was there in Idaho Falls.

"There was a separate activity going on, on repair of facilities, which was more of an engineering and construction activity. That was managed separately, and our activity was the relief of the sort of private and public entities which had been damaged by the flood. . . ."

There was a separate activity going on, on repair of facilities, which was more of an engineering and construction activity. That was managed separately, and our activity was the relief of the sort of private and public entities which had been damaged by the flood. To hopefully clarify that, the other crews were involved in like the repair of water supply activities, possibly some work with public highways, and that kind of thing, but I think it was mostly concentrated on trying to restore irrigation water supplies which had been damaged by the flood.

Storey: Which was July, I believe.

Stessman: The dam failure was June–either June 5th or June 6th, 1976.

Storey: Okay. A little earlier than I thought, then. Well, what happened in the office there? Let's talk about forms, first. Did somebody have a form they pulled out of a

desk drawer, or how did this work?

"My understanding is that with respect to dams that are authorized for flood control and built by the Bureau of Reclamation, that the United States is immune from suit for damages arising out of flood control operations or flooding. . . ."

Stessman: Well, I think I'd have to start it differently, and maybe before that, because, see, there was really no provision to reimburse or compensate victims of a flood from the failure of a Bureau of Reclamation dam. My understanding is that with respect to dams that are authorized for flood control and built by the Bureau of Reclamation, that the United States is immune from suit for damages arising out of flood control operations or flooding.

". . . Congress was in session, and was considering and working on special authorization for compensation which ultimately was a grant program, even though we called it claims, rather than a sort of legal reimbursement. . . ."

So the Congress was in session, and was considering and working on special authorization for compensation which ultimately was a grant program, even though we called it claims, rather than a sort of legal reimbursement. Congress then passed special legislation that provided grants to the victims of the flood, those who were damaged.

There Was a Lot of Uncertainty in Reclamation While the Congress Worked out What it Wanted to Do to Compensate Losses from the Failure of Teton Dam

So during the first week or so, possibly a couple of weeks, we weren't sure what was going to happen, or what capability we would have to be responsive for the financial assistance, etcetera. It was kind of a difficult time, because while we anticipated that this was going to happen, that Congress was going to pass something, it wasn't a certainty. And yet we were meeting with the public and trying to give them some reassurance, some indication of the administration and the agency's intention to do the right thing.

But before long, I mean, within days or weeks, I think, Congress first passed some kind of a preliminary authority, and then later, I think within weeks, passed a more specific authority for this claim program. During those days and few short weeks, we had begun to formulate how things would be handled, and that included, you know, the development of forms for listing damages. There was a lot of confusion and uncertainty, both within ourselves and in working with the public, and uncertainty among the public as to what would happen. We were committed, but we didn't always know how well we'd be able to back it up, but we were committed to be very responsive and to sort of demonstrate to the people who had been damaged that we intended to deal with them forthrightly, and so on.

Reclamation Had to Developed Regulations to Implement How the Law Would Be Implemented

As I recall, we developed the regulations under the law. You have the law which gets passed, the act which enables you to do it, and then you need regulations, which will more specifically describe how things will be handled. The Bureau and the Department and the solicitor's office began developing the regulations. I think it was probably maybe the first of September or so before everything had been accomplished in the way of the authority from Congress, the regulations drafted, and published in the *Federal Register*, and adopted, and the forms completed and printed, and all of our processes laid out, and the instructions and training that we needed and that all of the people involved in administering the program needed.

At the same time, we were meeting with the public, and, I believe, beginning to also instruct them on how the process would work from their side. It was hectic. In the end, it was a very positive experience. It was very challenging, but hectic. In a lot of ways, everyone there was doing something new that they had not ~~been~~ done before. And so we were able to sort of be involved in the formation of something, not just the carrying on of something, but the formation of it. The need was so great and the time was so short that it was one of those cases where if you're inclined to pitch in and want to play a part, we did have an opportunity of being a player and being given responsibility.

"The *whole* experience was very positive in the sense in that the people who were there . . . were, for the most part, quite committed and quite enthused and quite challenged . . . And so it was . . . one of the neatest things that's happened to me in my career, both for myself and what I saw in other people. . . ."

The *whole* experience was very positive in the sense in that the people who were there, the Bureau and other people who were assigned to do the work, were, for the most part, quite committed and quite enthused and quite challenged by the fact that, you know, wherever I was last month or last week, and whether I was being given responsibility, or people listened to me then, or I had a chance to really actualize myself, it's happening now. And so it was a neat individual and collective experience, and one of the neatest things that's happened to me in my career, both for myself and what I saw in other people.

Storey: I would think, though, with a three-month period before things got in place, really, that there were a lot of tensions with the community. Could you talk about that?

Stessman: Well, yeah, we had, you know, public meetings, especially the chief claims officer and myself, and the other claims officers, the few people in leadership positions. But also the other employees, I think mostly all Reclamation people, who were sort of out in the community, and trying to be responsive. The blame for the thing–you were from the agency that built this dam that didn't stand up, and it ruined my life, washed away my home, put us out of work, destroyed our field or barn or farm or business, or whatever–there was some of that. A kind of a specter of that was always around, and I suppose, I think, at all times, there were people who were expressing that, but it was not the prevailing thing.

I think, you know, for the most part, we did not take the approach that our job was to defend the agency's reputation or to change people's mind about what they thought, because of what had happened, and so on, as much as to try to be responsive, to try to find a way to sort of reassure people, and take their criticism if that's what they needed to give, and give them guidance if we had something to give them, and inform them about what was taking place and the progress of the actions of Congress and of the availability of help from other agencies, like FEMA. I think at that time it was called the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration, F-D-A-A. Now it's called FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Administration. They were there, and they have programs that they're able to put into place immediately.

The F-D-A-A, the Farmers Home Administration, and the S-B-A, the Small Business Administration, have programs that they're able to implement, so we kind of tried to join hands with them and assist in their activities, and begin to establish relationships with them that could be symbiotic, or compatible, with the expectation that our program would be in place, and so on. Lots of times we would be in public meetings with the Corps of Engineers, the S-B-A, the F-D-A-A, the Farmers Home Administration, even before the Reclamation claim program was available.

We knew, certainly from the time I got there, with some degree of confidence, more or less, that we expected to have some assistance program, a program available to us, and as I said earlier, there was the presence and the challenge of some people having very strong feelings and wanting to deal with sort of blame, rather than, "What do we do about it?" But it was surprising, [unclear], I'd say.

Storey: If somebody walked into your office and wanted to file a claim, after you finally got the forms in place and everything, what was the process?

Counseling People on Filing Claims for Compensation

Stessman: Well, they were encouraged to file, to use their own head to file. In other words, we gave them guidance, but they had the option of filing for whatever they wanted to. In other words, we might say to them, "You won't be eligible to be compensated for the cost of preparing a claim. Like, if you want to hire a consultant to help you file a claim, we won't pay you for that. Or if you use seven rolls of film to document your damages, we won't pay you for the cost of the films, or whatever. We'll only pay you for the damages from the claim. But when it comes right down to it, you file for whatever you think you're entitled to." That would be part of the instruction that we would always give the claimants. "It's up to you what you think your damages are."

We'd go over our rules and guidelines, and so on, and we'd suggest that they develop some records. "Are you talking about things that you can look at and itemize, or is it gone, and do you have to try to recall what was in your house? What was in this room of your house? What was in the dresser within that room of your house?" And so we'd suggest to them, "If it's gone, check your memory. Put it down, come back later. Think more about what was in that dresser, what was in

that closet, etcetera. Several of you do it." Things like that. And we would also suggest to them that they think about who else would be aware that they had that property, say, for a television set or something, "Who knows that you had that television set besides you? If we checked with the store where you bought it, would they recall? Could we check with them? Do you have receipts? Do you have photographs? If your garage, within which you had this property that you're claiming, was bulldozed over, did somebody see it before it was? Could the operator verify that there was a refrigerator in that destroyed garage building, when it was bulldozed away, into the landfill, or whatever?" So we would try to counsel them about what kind of process they need to use to identify things.

We were building a staff who could do the personal contact thing, and we were training them, and they were training themselves, to handle those kind of personal contacts. We were developing a process. We had forms and we had processes for advancement of those forms within our review process. We developed a records system, as I recall, on a computer, where we could check on the status of claims.

Storey: So the forms they turned in, some of them must have been pretty lengthy.

Stessman: (laughter) Yes, they were. I think some of them would probably have been at least– some of the biggest ones were probably a couple of hundred pages, or more. It was an amazing exercise.

Storey: Yeah. Were they able to claim things like lost wages?

Stessman: I think so. Say, for example, if you were a business, and your clothing store was damaged by the flood, you could be compensated for the loss of income, for the damages that your business suffered, including the loss of business and the loss of income. We had to make some judgment of how long that should be before they were back in business. They obviously had to do due diligence to get back into operation. As far as an employee, I think that the employee had to collect whatever unemployment or other provisions they may be eligible for, as an offset. But I think if you lost wages–say your salary was $250 a week, and during the time–

END SIDE 2, TAPE 1. MARCH 8, 1995.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2. MARCH 8, 1995.

Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey, with Neil Stessman, on March the 8th, 1995.

You were talking about people having to do due diligence and collect unemployment, and so on.

Stessman: So you would be entitled from us, I think, to the difference between what you collected, or could collect, from unemployment, and what you would have made, for a reasonable period of time.

One aspect of the claim program was that people were entitled to the replacement cost of any item that was lost. So if you think that through, it means the replacement cost of anything of your property that, let's say, was in your home–destroyed. So in many cases, that meant every item of clothing that you could identify, including clothing that was in a box, in a closet, or in the basement, that you hadn't worn for some time. So it was a *really, really* comprehensive amount of inventory of things.

Sometimes people had sort of a moral dilemma, ethical dilemma, of whether they wanted to claim and be reimbursed for something that was obsolete, but in fact, they may, in fact, have been entitled to compensation for that. It wasn't unusual that you'd encounter people who were kind of going through that moral dilemma. "Well, I had this baseball glove, but I hadn't used it, or the children hadn't used it, for fifteen years. In fact, they've grown up, and I just happened to have had this baseball glove on a shelf in the basement. As I understand your program, I could go down to the sporting goods store, and find the value of a comparable baseball glove–thirty dollars–and you would pay me that thirty dollars for that. I could put it on my claim, and you'd approve it, even though that was an obsolete baseball glove. They don't even make them like that anymore," or whatever. But, in fact, it was replacement cost of any item of property.

Checks and Balances in the System

Storey: This leads us up to something that you sort of touched on, but haven't discussed, and that is, bureaucracies like to have checks and balances. What kinds of checks did Reclamation do on claims?

Stessman: Well, for the most part, we had Small Business Administration and Farmers Home Administration people. I think all of them had experience with disaster work, who worked for us as claim verifiers. Those people, for each claim, they would submit that to us, and we'd do a certain amount of processing and office work that we could do, and then assign them to claim verifiers. They would typically go and talk to the people, and make spot checks. They used their guidelines or by some independent means, determined a value. It wasn't uncommon for there to be an exchange of used, instead of strictly new, then the value would be for the replacement for a used one. So, for example, if the item is a dress shirt–well, most people don't buy used dress shirts, so I wouldn't take your claim for a dress shirt and say, "Well, you can go down to the St. Vincent de Paul, and buy a dress shirt for $1.25, so that's what we'll give you." You would base it on a new dress shirt. On the other hand, if it was a piece of machinery–say, a tractor–that was seven years old, then the claim verifier would need to sort of identify, "Well, do they sell used tractors like that? And if so, for one in comparable condition, how much would it cost? Are they, in fact, available?"

So they did a huge amount of work not just finding out the value, but finding out if those were actually available. And so part of the verifier's process, then, would be to say, or find out, or determine, what's going to be likely to be the cost of replacing that seven-year-old John Deere tractor, of such and such a power,

or model, or whatever capability. And are there, in fact, some available? Same way with automobiles and a number of items. I'm sure that in many cases, even though, say, I might have had a seven-year-old John Deere tractor destroyed, and perhaps it's worth–or it would cost $13,000 to replace it, I'd put in the claim, I'd claim a certain amount and be compensated at that level. I didn't necessarily have to go and buy a seven-year-old John Deere tractor to replace it. I could decide not to replace it, or I could decide to take that, and some additional money, and buy a newer one, or whatever. There was no *requirement* that they have spent that money, or required to spend the money for that purpose. It was compensation for the asset they lost.

So anyway, the claim verifiers would do some spot checks of other people–references, or whoever–maybe a neighbor. If the item was suspicious or illogical or for any reason raised a question, they would do more verification, or checking, probably than other cases. And in many cases, I'm sure, they said, well, in their own judgment, that, yes, it would be illogical that this person would have fifteen dress shirts, if that's how many they claimed. They'd kind of do a thing of, "Well, what sort of work did the person do, and therefore, what accouterments, etcetera, would I expect they might have?"

Storey: I'd presume there'd be a lot of things that might be considered discrepancies and that sort of thing, as you go through a process like this. Did you ever run into a situation where what you were dealing with was not that kind of thing, but just outright attempt to defraud the government?

"**. . . we even had some cases where people were prosecuted for false claims . . .**"

Stessman: Oh, absolutely. Yeah,, and so on, and, I believe, convicted. So we had all kinds. We had a lot of personal contact, great amount of personal contact, not just by in writing, but by personal contact with them. It was a really unique experience to work with people, both directly and indirectly. I had many unusual experiences with people who, on this moral dilemma thing, would be entitled to something, but just didn't feel right about it in their own heart, and so wouldn't, in effect, accept the money by claiming it.

Storey: Did you, for instance, have any claims where you felt as if they were under-claiming?

There Were Instances When People Underclaimed Their Damages

Stessman: Absolutely.

Storey: Maybe an older person who was sort of fuzzy, or something like that.

Stessman: Very, very many people, yeah.

Storey: What did Reclamation do in those situations?

Stessman: We tried to help people understand what the intention of the program was and what their entitlement was. I can recall having conversations with people where I tried to point out that they needed to get in touch with what they were doing by their own discretion, and what they were doing by their own naivete, if that seemed to be the case.

Storey: How many people were in the office there in Idaho Falls–wasn't it?–that were working for you?

There Were as Many as Three Hundred Employees in the Program at its Height

Stessman: That's really hard for me to pull back. I think we got to the place, at the peak, probably in the fall of that year, when we had maybe three hundred or so people involved, and that would be in the whole program. The acting chief claims officer, Lloyd Erickson, was more in and out. The other two claims officers and myself were there at location almost straight through, and so I did have, in fact, more responsibility for the whole thing, than just the Idaho Falls office, fairly quickly.

Had 100 to 120 People in the Claims Office in Idaho Falls

But to try to answer your question in Idaho Falls itself, I think we probably had maybe 100-, 120 people at one time. The office itself, the people who worked in the office, was probably in the range of thirty, plus or minus. And then the office itself at Rexburg was probably more like thirty to forty, or twenty-five to forty, something like that. And then Blackfoot was more like eight to ten, or so, in the office. Probably the biggest activity, direct activity, was out of the Rexburg office.

There Were Many People in the Field Verifying Claims

Then, whatever that amounts to, there would be a very large number of people who are the ones who were then out in the field, verifying claims.

Storey: So there was a fairly substantial effort for verification?

Stessman: Oh, yes. Yeah, I would think we maybe had as many as–whatever it would be–125 to 150 people, at the peak, out verifying claims.

Storey: Okay. So the claim would come in, and you'd sort of work through it with the claimant, and then it would go through a verification process. Then what happened to the claim?

Processing Claims

Stessman: The verifier would send the claim forms back with recommendations, and often, probably most of the time, the verifier would have had some contact with the office people during his or her processing of the claim, during the verification. It came back, I think underwent a tally and somewhat of a check, and then it went to a–I forget what we call these people, but we had a small team of people that were sort

of an appraiser type.

Let me try to describe it. The verified claim would come into the office, and someone would go through it all then, and do a check–"Do I agree with this?" etcetera–and then try to reconcile with the verifier, or perhaps with the claimant, things that don't jive, or they're not typical. And then submit it with some general recommendations to the "appraiser committee." They would do an oversight of the more significant issues and of things that had not been resolved to that point. That team then would submit it to the Claims officer, and the claims officer is the level that I mentioned about claims officer in Rexburg, and in Idaho Falls, and one in Blackfoot.

The claims officer would do whatever–somewhat cursory review they needed to do. In cases where the decision would likely be unacceptable, or controversial, or difficult, or a problem, the claims officer would meet with the claimant. That could be anything from, "We think you falsified this claim" to "Perhaps you don't understand that–" or whatever. A lot of those were very productive meetings. They were not typically big problems. The very vast majority of the people were very cooperative, and wanted to do the right thing. And so you'd have those meetings and point out some difference or problem with what they'd claimed, and hope they would understand, and it would be acceptable.

Final Approval of Claims Lay with Representatives of the Solicitor's Office

But the final approving person, or authority, was someone from the solicitor's office of the Department. They were also detail-assigned to that location, so we had, as I recall, I think we had four solicitors at one time. Mostly, I think, then it went back to three, and reduced as the work load reduced. But they were actually the final signatory authority for the approval of the claim. Of course, they were there, and very accessible to us, and available for resolution of both individual issues and general issues–sort of, I'd say, policy issues. "These kind of cases are problems, and we need some policy on that so we can apply it generally," and they were available to us to work those things out, as well.

Storey: And then once the claim had been approved by the Solicitor, what happened to it?

Stessman: Then, as I recall, I think we had some kind of a form for acceptance by the claimant, and an appeal process. So, if they accepted it, however, then we were poised to complete payment in a very short time. We had special arrangements with the Treasury for printing of checks, and so on. I just can't recall the particulars. We set records for the shortness of time with which we'd have an actual check available to give them.

Payment after Approval of a Claim

Storey: And how did you deliver the check?

Stessman: During the time that we were processing huge numbers of claims in a day, and

therefore making payments, huge numbers in a day, we had people set up in banks and we got space from the banks to enable people to go to the bank, be handed their check, surname their check, and deposit it, or cash it, or whatever they were doing. We would complete that process at a bank. We'd tell the claimant, as I recall, that, "Your check will be available tomorrow." So the people from the Rexburg area, I think, were set up in a certain bank in Rexburg. People would come in and they were given a check. Similarly, in Idaho Falls, and Blackfoot.

Storey: Do you have an idea of the range of how long it took to process a claim?

Stessman: Well, it would be from everything from a few days–I think, if you had the records and could go through them, you'd probably find that some were processed from submittal, verification, approval by the solicitor within, I would venture to say, three days–to more than a year. Some of the extreme cases, where there was falsification, or some sort of difficulty, I think some of those would probably be over a year. And we had some with pretty substantial legal issues. Sometimes it would be delayed by the necessity of finding out what sort of compensation they were entitled to otherwise.

We did, after a time, develop a process where we could make partial payments, in cases where there were things we could agree on but [also] things we could not agree on. So we did have the ability and discretion to kind of get them some funds so they could get started. You could do that fairly readily, too, particularly if there was something substantial. And lots of times they were trying to get up-front money to start construction of a new home, or a new garage, or a new barn, or whatever. So we did have that ability.

Some of the Complexities in the Compensation Process

One of the complexities was that since this was a grant program and not an entitlement to compensation, the authority provided that the grant would only be their damages *beyond* which they had legal entitlement to compensation. So if an individual had flood insurance, then their first recovery needed to be on the flood insurance. That, unfortunately, could also delay the process, because you needed to have some understanding of how much they were going to receive from the insurance company, or from some other kind of compensation program, before you could make settlement. But, say you had a grand piano, and it was covered under insurance, with a deductible, and let's say the insurance company would pay the replacement cost, after a $500 deductible. We would compensate them the $500 for the deductible.

Storey: How long did the claims process take, from the dam failure, until we were pretty much done? Or were you there that long?

Appointed Teton Claims Manager

Stessman: I was on detail for about five months. I think I, by the way, got home three weekends during that time. And for the most part, we worked at least six days a

week, and well beyond eight hours a day. After I'd been on detail, I then was permanently assigned as the "teton claims manager." So then my family and I moved to Idaho Falls to do that. I was there until the spring of 1978. So, I moved my family, as I recall, in January or February of 1977.

Storey: '76, or '77?

Stessman: I went there on detail and stayed in a motel, basically, all the time, until sometime in November of 1976. Then I returned to Moses Lake for a few weeks to a month, and was reassigned to go over there as a permanent situation, and I reported over there about the first of January of 1977. I moved my family over there within a month or two, in 1977.

I was reassigned to Boise in about May of 1978. So I was involved for close to two years, at the site. The numbers that come to me are that we processed–that, in total, there were something like between 7,500 and 8,000 claims, and that we were probably within, say, within–all but maybe 500 of those had been processed and completed by the time I left there, I think, in 1978. I think probably that the numbers would be something like that three to five thousand of them were processed within six months to nine months, maybe. We were very proud, and I think quite successful. We were very proud of the speed that we processed claims, particularly in the initial period, when people were sort of needing to get some funds with which to begin to start up their lives again, replacing homes and automobiles and businesses, and so on. Farms.

Moved to the Region in Boise to Be Chief of the Water, Lands, and Power Division

Storey: And, what did you move to Boise to do?

Stessman: I moved to Boise to be the chief of Water, Lands, and Power [Division], which is a division-level position, on the regional director's staff, for operations and maintenance within the region.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 2. MARCH 8, 1995.
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 2. MARCH 8, 1995.

Storey: Unfortunately, our time is up, and I know there are other pressures on your time. I'd like to ask you again if you're willing for the tapes and transcripts from this interview to be used by researchers, both inside and outside Reclamation.

Stessman: Yes.

Storey: Thank you.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 2. MARCH 8, 1995.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 1. JANUARY 16, 1996.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation,

interviewing Neil Stessman, the Regional director of the Great Plains Region of the Bureau of Reclamation, on January the 16th, 1996, at about 11:45 in the morning. This is tape one.

Frank Dimick Was in the Rexburg Claims Office

Stessman: You were asking about the place Frank Dimick[6] was in the Teton claims organization. The way it was initially for the first several months, maybe five to six, was that Lloyd Erickson, who was in charge of realty and lands or whatever in the regional office in Boise, was the acting chief claims officer. At that time there were three others, claim offices, set up and one was at Rexburg and that was headed by Frank Dimick. There were two; Frank Dimick in Rexburg, and then I was in Idaho Falls, and I was over both the Idaho Falls and Blackfoot offices. I was also the sort of acting chief claims officer at any time that Lloyd Erickson would be gone.

Became Chief Claims Officer in Idaho Falls

When we converted to a semi-permanent arrangement and I moved there on a duty station–Dale made that my permanent job–then I was the chief claims officer.

Frank Dimick in Rexburg

I can't remember whether Frank Dimick overlapped and stayed in Rexburg for a while. I think he didn't. I think he went home from the detail assignment, and we hired a guy named Bill Shaeffer [phonetic] to be the claims officer in Rexburg.

Lloyd Erickson

Storey: What was Lloyd Erickson like?

Stessman: He had a good relationship, working relationship, in the area, because, as I recall, his wife was from St. Anthony, which is in that area, so they were somewhat acquainted. I remember being in a public meeting with him, in fact, it was *very* soon after I got there, maybe the first night or second night I was there we attended a public meeting in Sugar City, as I recall, in the flood area. This was within not too many days after the flood had occurred, and the people were quite concerned and so on. This was an area that had a very high percentage of LDS, Mormon people, perhaps in the nineties, a very, very strong predominance of LDS people. One of the sort of introductory things that Lloyd said in the public meeting–I think it was probably in response to a question from the floor or maybe one of the local leaders, "How do we know that these people who review our claims will understand some of the cultural things about us that affect the size of our claims and the type of things we'll be claiming, including the fact that we would have, I believe at that time, a year's supply of food in storage in our home, etcetera? Will they understand

6. Reclamation's oral history program includes Frank Dimick as a participant.

that?" and so on.

And Lloyd's response was, "Well, I think maybe you need to understand that I had to get a release from the bishopric in Boise to come over here and do this job." That brought a huge round of applause, in fact, even maybe standing applause. So he had a sort of a intro that gave him a lot of credibility in the area from the fact that his wife was from the area, and that also he had the affiliation that most of the people there had.

He was a pretty regimented kind of person. His background was in realty and appraisal, and he was a sort of a by-the-book kind of person. He was the type of person who you could find lecturing you both about the facts and circumstances and details of things or about the ethics of things. He was good for the job. Things had to kind of be put in a certain order for him, and that was appropriate. It was helpful having the credibility that he had, and yet the work was so much over such a short period of time that we needed a certain sense of order, which he gave. But on the other hand, people also had the liberty and the ability to make decisions because no one person, including Lloyd, could sort of keep his hands and fingers on all of it at once.

So there was a need for order, but there was also a really strong need, in fact, one of the reasons that I believe the Bureau would get pretty high marks for how that program was administered, one of the most important reasons that we were successful was that people were able to make decisions, that there was a very substantial amount of delegation of authority and delegation to make decisions, and there was really a strong need for that, both for the government to sort of get it taken care of and get on with things and from the customer or public standpoint, from the standpoint of they needed not bureaucratic bureaucracy, deferred decisions, long processes, and so on, they needed a responsive government, and I think that it was responsive.

Reclamation Reactions to the Failure of Teton Dam

Storey: When the dam failed, do you remember how people in Reclamation reacted to that? Did you have any sense of that away from the disaster, as it were?

Stessman: Um-hmm. Well, yeah. I think people around the Bureau sort of felt their own guilt about it or their own association with it. That was pretty unique. The sort of Reclamation culture was such a tight culture that people, in those days, we all associated ourselves very strongly and affinatively with the Bureau of Reclamation. I think there was that, and another aspect of it was a lot of people were concerned that it might affect the sort of license or franchise of the Bureau of Reclamation to do other work like that and so on. This could affect all of us in what franchise the Bureau of Reclamation has for work on water projects in the West.

Storey: The aftermath of the failure, did you see any effects of the aftermath on Reclamation?

The Dam Failure Affected Reclamation Pride

Stessman: Yeah, I think there have been effects. I think there were effects immediately, that a bit of the pride was gone. And some of the pride needed to go. Some of it was pride that we could do things better than anyone else, or maybe we were the only ones who could do these sort of things. I think there was a realization that there was a chink, sort of, in our armor a little bit.

I think there was kind of a haughty attitude prior to that in the Bureau, and the occurrence of that kind of helped break that down a little bit, some of the things where the agency had sort of a corporate pride, and a lot of times that pride prevented scrutiny or analysis or alternative investigations or exploration kinds of things that should have been occurring. I think that the Bureau has moved. It helped the Bureau move somewhat away from that. We're somewhat more open to outside ideas, somewhat removed from the attitude that, "Well, we're already perfect, so what could anybody teach us?" sort of thing. Yeah, I think that.

". . . it was amazing, the number of people around the Bureau who were willing and interested in coming and making themselves available to detail into that area to work either on claims or reconstruction activities that the Bureau was involved in. . . ."

I want to comment, too, that it was amazing, the number of people around the Bureau who were willing and interested in coming and making themselves available to detail into that area to work either on claims or reconstruction activities that the Bureau was involved in. That was a kind of a rally-around-the-flag attitude among a lot of people. Some people saw it as an opportunity to sort of experience or experiment with a different role, so some people did it for growth purposes. But there were a lot of people who did that because they felt sort of an allegiance–almost in a way like people volunteered for the draft when the Second World War broke out sort of thing. Sort of, "I'm a piece of this agency and therefore I'm willing to be on detail away from home for several months at a time." In a lot of cases, people who did that didn't get home very much for quite a while.

Storey: I think we discussed the size of the office that you headed in Idaho Falls and all that sort of thing. I've forgotten how long that lasted, however. How long did it take us to close down claims, do you remember?

The Claims Office Pretty Much Closed by the End of 1978

Stessman: The temporary operation went on for five and a half to six months or something like that, I think, the people on detail. And then we staffed a fair number of positions on a permanent basis–I think maybe thirty, plus or minus. So that was in the beginning of 1997.

Storey: '77.

Stessman: 1977. Well, I think we pretty much closed the office by the end of '78. By the

summer of '77, in other words, a year from the incident, we had processed, I would guess, well over 80, maybe even 90 percent of all the claims that were processed. It was getting into the thorny ones and then some of the public entities like local governments and that kind of thing, their claims that we were working on after that time.

Storey: Did local governments present special problems?

Stessman: We did have some of those that were thorny. Boy, I'm losing the details, but I remember we had one with the State of Idaho Fish and Game Department, Idaho Game and Fish Department, whatever it's called. I don't remember how we finally came out. I remember delivering a check to the agency head about in 1978 or '79, so I know we finally reached a pretty substantial settlement with them, several hundred thousand dollars, as I recall.

Dealing with Cities and Counties Was Fairly Difficult

It seems to me they had damages with respect to their facilities, and then there were claims with respect to wildlife. I remember we were taking the position that they didn't have a proprietary ownership of wildlife and weren't entitled for so much compensation for each deer that was killed and each skunk and coyote and fox or whatever. But I don't remember how that was settled. We had some issues with them, and then counties and with respect to roads and so on. Yeah, the cities and counties were fairly difficult.

Part of it was sorting out what they'd already received assistance for. In other words, if they received, say, assistance from FEMA, [Federal] Emergency Management ~~Agency~~ [Administration], or the Department of Transportation or whomever, any other agency state or Federal, then they wouldn't be entitled to compensation or an adjustment from the Federal Government under this claim program. So I think a lot of it had to do with sorting out those kind of things.

Storey: So you were there a couple of years, 'til spring of '78?

Stessman: That's correct.

Storey: And then you were offered a job of some sort in Boise, I guess.

Stessman: Yeah.

Storey: What was your new life like then? What was it?

Took a Lateral Assignment to move over to Head the Water, Power, and Lands Division in the Regional Office in Boise

Stessman: Well, I was lateraled into a position in the regional office called the Regional Supervisor, Water, Power, and Lands [Division], which is basically the regional operations and maintenance chief. I was fortunate to be able to make that sort of a

transition. For the first period of time, maybe a year, I carried responsibility for the claim program into that position.

Storey: Finishing up?

Stessman: Yeah.

Storey: Was this a new position? An old position?

Stessman: No, it's an old and very traditional position. Well, in the regional offices and in the regions in those days, you had sort of three principal technical positions under the regional director in the regional office. One was design and construction, and one was planning, and the other was operations and maintenance. This is the operations and maintenance arm of the region.

Storey: Somebody had moved on or retired or something?

Stessman: Retired. Getting the experience that I got in that job has a lot to do with where I am now, subsequently becoming an area manager or project manager and then assistant regional director and regional director.

Storey: What kinds of issues was that region facing? That would have been Region One then, right?

Stessman: Um-hmm.

Storey: In O&M. Or is it all routine stuff?

"The Pacific Northwest Region has a huge amount of the infrastructure of the Bureau . . ."

Stessman: No, it's not. No, it's not. The Pacific Northwest Region has a huge amount of the infrastructure of the Bureau–is in the Columbia Basin drainage there.

Rehabilitation and Betterment Loan Program Active in the Region

Lots of developed irrigation projects. Some of the things we had going, we still had a very active rehabilitation and betterment loan program, so we were processing applications for and funding rehab projects on older irrigation projects.

Large Numbers of Powerplants and Dams in the Region

The Bureau operates a large number of powerplants and a large number of dams in that region, and then also there are an additional significant amount of facilities, including dams, that are transferred to irrigation districts and entities for operation and maintenance. So that's really a pretty active job.

Jimmy Carter's "Hit List"

We were beginning to get into–well, that was an interesting piece of history, because at that time it was part of the [Jimmy] Carter Administration. In the Carter Administration, the Secretary of the Interior was Cecil Andrus, who prior to that and subsequent to that was the Governor of Idaho. That was a kind of a environmental conservation administration. The Andrus/Carter Administration had been the one who had had the hit list on water projects.

"The water users thought they were seeing a big shift in Reclamation. . . . So they were already seeing us as having become too environmental, too regulatory, etcetera. . . ."

The water users thought they were seeing a big shift in Reclamation. I think it was probably during that time frame that I first started hearing the words that, "The Bureau used to be our friends and we used to be able to count on the Bureau, and now you've let us down, betrayed us," etcetera. So they were already seeing us as having become too environmental, too regulatory, etcetera.

"Then, of course, in 1980 Ronald Reagan was elected and was inaugurated in 1981, and the sort of watchword of that time was lower budgets and more cost recovery. So I think those two administrations were the beginning of tougher relations for the Bureau with its traditional constituents. . . ."

Then, of course, in 1980 Ronald Reagan was elected and was inaugurated in 1981, and the sort of watchword of that time was lower budgets and more cost recovery. So I think those two administrations were the beginning of tougher relations for the Bureau with its traditional constituents.

Storey: It's interesting Westerners always consider Reagan, you know, one of them, but he never really supported any big water projects after that.

Stessman: Yeah. That's really true, I think. I think in a lot of ways that fiscal conservatism came on, and some of the policies on cost-sharing for studies, more aggressive cost recovery, and contracts and repayment negotiations with water users, more difficult, more stringent budget justification.

To me, the Reagan Administration, their highest priority was defense, and I think a close scrutiny of the budgets and so on would identify a higher percentage starting to go into defense programs and less into the discretionary kind of investment spending that Reclamation is involved in, water resources.

Storey: Were there any particular projects that stood out up there for you while you were in Water, Power and Lands?

Region Was Trying to Encourage Water Conservation and Better Water Management

Stessman: One of the things I remember was that we were already trying to start to encourage

water conservation and better water management. We had a program–I forget the name of it–to promote water management on irrigation districts, water scheduling, and that kind of thing.

"It would be quite successful and would show good results, but we'd have difficulty getting the local entities to fund that sort of thing themselves. . . . there wasn't the conviction or commitment on the part of the districts to fund it themselves. . . ."

It would be quite successful and would show good results, but we'd have difficulty getting the local entities to fund that sort of thing themselves. So that you could characterize that we were welcome to be there as long as we brought the money to do the water conservation, the water management, or the improvements, but that if we had to pull the program out, which we finally did, in total, there wasn't enough inertia to keep it going because there wasn't the conviction or commitment on the part of the districts to fund it themselves.

Region First Identified the Amount of "Waterspreading" That Was Going on

It was while I was in that job as regional supervisor of Water, Power and Lands that the Pacific Northwest Region first made a sort of an itemization and listing of the amount of unauthorized use of water that we had in the region. I believe it was in like 1982 or 1983 that we produced a report on the amount of "waterspreading" or unauthorized use of water that was going on. That's still a very *major* issue, and that list or that letter that we produced at that time came up to a real prominence all around the Bureau in probably 1993 in the present administration. And it's an unresolved problem as yet.[7]

Cost-sharing and Safety of Dams Repairs

I was there, I think it was in that time frame that the safety-of-dams legislation was passed, and we were getting very active in safety-of-dams repair and getting appropriations for repairing dams which had safety problems. And it was in that era that they first came up with the requirement that water users had to cost-share in the repair of dams, and so we're still working with that issue. Even now in 1996 as we involve ourselves in dam repair, it's very often a very troublesome issue to convince the districts or water users that they need to cost-share.

Reclamation Reform Act

Reclamation Reform Act kind of came big on the scene during that time. It was during that time that the legislation passed to go from the old 160-acre limitation to, generally speaking, the 960-acre limitation. I was in that job when we first were drafting the regulations under the–I believe it's the Reclamation Reform

7. See Bureau of Reclamation oral histories of commissioner John W. Keys III and Daniel Beard regarding the issue of waterspreading. In brief, waterspreading is providing water to locations outside a Reclamation authorized project boundary or outside the provisions of a Reclamation contract.

Act of 1982.[8] So I remember having public meetings and a lot of the internal sort of machinations that were going on in putting together the rules and regulations under the '82 act.

Mt. St. Helens Eruption Affected Some Reclamation Facilities

It was in 1980, which is in this time frame, that the Mount St. Helens blew, and that affected a lot of our facilities, particularly in Washington State, the Yakima Project and the Columbia Basin Project.

Reclamation Was Affected by Entities Wanting to Add Powerplants to Our Facilities

It was in that time frame that there was a real energy crunch, and things were getting very active and they *were* very active during that time frame of outside entities seeking and obtaining licenses to put hydropower facilities on Reclamation facilities.

So I can remember a number of situations where we were dealing with those kind of matters, how to protect our interests, and first even issues about whether the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission had the authority to grant licenses on Reclamation facilities, and then with the awareness that they did, a lot of the water users or traditional Reclamation constituents, well, in some cases being sort of covetous that someone else could come in and put a powerplant on the dam for which they were at least partly a repaying entity.

". . . generally speaking, we were not able to get provisions that required the powerplant licensee to participate in the cost of operation and maintenance of the facilities. . . ."

And then generally speaking, we were not able to get provisions that required the powerplant licensee to participate in the cost of operation and maintenance of the facilities. That was a troublesome issue.

Storey: Those are the highlights.

Stessman: Yeah.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 1. JANUARY 16, 1996.
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1. JANUARY 16, 1996.

Storey: I was asking whether RRA [Reclamation Reform Act] and waterspreading related to one another up in Boise at that time and, if so, how?

How Waterspreading and RRA Might Relate to One Another

Stessman: I can remember some discussions we had during the development of the regulations

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

about dealing with waterspreading. There was some consideration that you could legitimize waterspreading, irrigation on more acres than had previously been recognized or authorized by the contracts or the law, if you chose to write the regulations around the Reclamation Reform Act to assure that all of the acreage that got water paid for the right to get water from a Reclamation project.

"Through the reporting process you receive at least what's represented to be full disclosure of the lands that are being irrigated. . . . you are possessed with the information and the ability to determine whether the lands that are being irrigated are the lands that are entitled to be irrigated. . . ."

I think through the Reclamation Reform Act Reclamation has become more familiar with just where the water is going, and so that the biggest connection between the Reclamation Reform Act and waterspreading is that the Reclamation Reform Act and the administration of the Reclamation Reform Act has brought a sharper focus to the Bureau on where the water is actually being applied to the land. Through the reporting process you receive at least what's represented to be full disclosure of the lands that are being irrigated. And when you know the lands that are being irrigated, you are possessed with the information and the ability to determine whether the lands that are being irrigated are the lands that are entitled to be irrigated.

Why Reclamation Was Looking at the Waterspreading Issue

Storey: What was the region planning to do with its report on waterspreading? Why was it done? I imagine it took quite an effort.

Stessman: It did take quite an effort. I recall that the expectation was that we were going to address the waterspreading issue. We had already identified in certain areas, for example, the Umatilla Basin, that there's a shortage of water, that we were already beginning to look for ways to assist the Indian tribes with restoration and other interests with the restoration of the salmon and steelhead runs on, for example, the Umatilla River.

So if you have a situation where there's a certain potentially reserved right of the Indian tribes for a fishery and for water in the stream, if the water that the Federal Government has helped develop and make available is being applied to lands beyond those that are legitimately entitled to receive ~~land~~ [water], then presumably you have some water that could be left in the stream. I believe those are still unresolved issues. But we did have that situation. In fact, in about the same time that we produced the report of the unauthorized acres, unauthorized lands, Reclamation had already begun a study in the Umatilla Basin because the salmon issue was coming to the fore.

Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act of 1980

I forget the year of passage of the Northwest Power and Planning Act. I

think it was 1980.[9] It was interesting, because at that time I remember having discussions with people in my own division and other *peers* and that in the region that we should keep trying to get the front office of the region to be aware of the implications of the Northwest Planning Act and the Power and Planning Act and the salmon issues. I remember also trying to sort of craft or devise opportunities to make our Washington office aware of the Northwest Power Planning Act and what was brewing and what was developing with respect to Indian water rights and the salmon issues in the Columbia drainage. But that was difficult to do. I felt that we were not very successful in either getting our front office or the Washington office to take an awareness of it, and it was really some years later when the problem grew and the issues heightened before that really occurred.

Storey: Let's see. Rod Vissia would have been regional director for a little while, I guess.

Regional Directors Rod Vissia and Bill Lloyd

Stessman: Rod Vissia was the regional director, I'm going to say until about 1980, and then Bill Lloyd[10] was the regional director.

Storey: And then Bill Lloyd came in for six years.

Stessman: Yeah.

Storey: Did you work for the Regional Director or an A-R-D [assistant regional director], or how did that work?

Stessman: I pretty much worked for the regional director. There was an Assistant regional director named Harry Stivers [phonetic] most of that time period. John Keys came there as Bill Lloyd's assistant, maybe like '83 or '82-'83, I'd say. Maybe '82. And prior to that, it was Harry Stivers was the assistant. But particularly Bill Lloyd involved himself in quite a bit of detail, so he tended to work directly with the division chiefs, which I was, and with the project managers.

Storey: What was Rod Vissia like as a regional director?

". . . he was the best regional director I think I've ever been around. . . ."

Stessman: Well, he was the best regional director I think I've ever been around. He was very management-focused. He worked very well with people, I think, both internally and externally. He was one of the first people in the Bureau, certainly with that kind of position in the Bureau, who gave a considerable amount of attention to sort of management as a skill or management as a role. I think he is the kind of person who could manage almost any kind of operation, whether it was water resources or manufacturing or whatever. He empowered people and delegated. He was into conflict resolution. A pretty rare breed for a Bureau of Reclamation executive

9. The Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act of December 5, 1980. (Public Law 96-501; 94 Stat. 2697)
10. Reclamation's oral history program has interviewed Lester W. Lloyd, commonly known as Bill Lloyd.

manager at that time.

Bill Lloyd Was Frustrated Because Reclamation Was No Longer in Development Mode

I remember Bill Lloyd when he came as regional director. It was quite frustrating to him that we were starting to get into the era that there was not development taking place. Bill's perspective was, "Why don't we have entities coming to us asking [us] ~~them~~ to build [them] water projects?" That kind of thing was not a frustration to Rod Vissia. He sort of saw his role as *managing* whatever the role of the agency was. And Bill's tended to be, "I want to do water resource development." They were sort of on the cusp of a cultural change, of a mission change, in the agency.

It's a little unique that Rod preceded Bill, but prior to that era, people in high positions in Reclamation who were involved in construction saw their role as construction. They *identified* themselves with construction. Oftentimes they couldn't separate their technical skill and their technical sort of personal commitment to construction development from a role of managing. So certainly in the years prior to that, people with the highest technical skills and abilities tended to go to management positions managing the technical skill that they came up through the organization in–construction operation and maintenance, design, power, some sort of a association like that.

So Rod Vissia was quite unusual in that his perspective was more of a management perspective. I really hadn't experienced that before him in Reclamation.

Storey: Let's see how I should ask this question. Vissia, of course, was the regional director when Teton failed.

Stessman: Yes.

Storey: And he stayed in that position for about another three and a half, four, years, and then he, in effect, became the chief engineer, though they had changed the name of the position and the responsibilities somewhat. I might have expected that he would have been part of the witch hunt that went on, looking for somebody to blame. Do you have any perspective on that?

Stessman: On the blame for the Teton Dam failure?

Storey: I think my question really is how did it affect him or *not* affect him and why.

Failure of Teton Dam Responsibility Was with the Assistant Commissioner in Denver

Stessman: Because the regional management didn't really carry the responsibility for project construction activities. They may have been there on paper, and in some cases they

were there on paper, I think. But the division of responsibility was very clearly and very strongly that the chief engineer or assistant commissioner and chief engineer, whatever the title was in Denver, was the head of construction, and the regional director and the region were just not part of that role.

I believe that if the regional director was the supervisor of the project construction engineer, which probably was the case on the books, that *de facto*, or in effect, the person who made the selection or designated who was going to be the project construction engineer was actually the chief engineer in Denver rather than the regional director. And I think that probably carried over to performance evaluation, etcetera. I think that there was a clear distinction that the regional director was involved in planning, and the regional directors and the regional office were responsible for *support* to the construction offices, but that the real work of regional director and regional office was more in project planning and project operations and maintenance, and the design and construction activities at the regional office level were more related to design data collection and support to the project construction office and then responsibility for minor construction activities.

But the line of responsibility from the design and construction activity for something like Teton Dam went more directly from Denver to the project construction engineer's office at the dam than through the regional director or the regional chief of design and construction.

Storey: So the failure then just sort of naturally didn't adversely affect the region. Is that what I'm hearing?

Stessman: It didn't affect the regional director or the regional chief of design and construction. They were not on the line of responsibility. So the design could change, the construction could change, and those activities could be changed, I would say, with or without the regional director's involvement by Denver. So the line of authority, and somebody would have to look to see how it was on paper, but no matter how it was on paper, the line of responsibility went from the project construction engineer to the Denver office.

Regional Director Bill Lloyd

Storey: What about Bill Lloyd? What was he like as a manager? More detail oriented, I think you said.

Stessman: Tended to be detail oriented. I think he was a very good regional director. He was really a super person to work for. Could be frustrating because he often would want more details and more information. He was very, very attentive to the needs of customer relations and that sort of thing.

Irrigations Districts Were Beginning to Use Consultants to Design Rehabilitation and Betterment Work

I remember in that era that we were making the change with the rehabilitation and betterment projects that we had going on, and we had a pretty

significant amount of those, especially in the Yakima area, that whereas in the past the Bureau had always done, or tended to almost always do, the design and construction of the rehabilitation, that the irrigation districts were beginning to use consultants for that work. So that we were approving the loan, getting the appropriations, and making the funds available for the irrigation district to do a rehabilitation and betterment project using consultants for the design and construction activities and all of that–that had traditionally been a Bureau of Reclamation role, and that was a troublesome thing, I remember, to build because it affected the role of the Bureau.

"Already at that time in the early eighties, it's an issue . . . How do we maintain the technical expertise we've traditionally had if we're just a conduit of the funds for . . . consultants rather than the Bureau [to do the technical work]?

Already at that time in the early eighties, it's an issue that prevails even today. How do we maintain the technical expertise we've traditionally had if we're just a conduit of the funds for somebody else to do that work and for the engineering construction expertise, etcetera, to be provided by consultants rather than the Bureau? That was an issue that he [Bill Lloyd] was trying to deal with at that time. Of course, once the consultants got that work, then it was very difficult if you were trying to preserve it or retain it in the Bureau, because they lobby fairly effectively.

Storey: Another side of that, I would think, is their being our facilities. Even those the water users don't look at it that way, they're technically owned by us. Did that cause problems also?

Issues Regarding Ownership of Facilities and Operation and Maintenance

Stessman: Well, they were almost always doing that on distribution and drainage facilities. Not much of that work was related to like dam–

Storey: It wasn't really our stuff, then?

Stessman: Well, it's *ours*. It was ours and most of it *still* is ours, but they have the beneficial use and they're operating and maintaining them. So it's true on paper that its Reclamation ownership. I mean, you could say it's "ours." But, in *fact*, I mean, it's almost like *de facto* they own it, because Reclamation is seldom physically there. They operate and maintain it themselves. So I'm not sure that was a big factor.

Effects of the Eruption of Mt. St. Helens on Reclamation

Storey: Okay, good. Tell me more about the Mount St. Helens eruption and how it affected Reclamation. I suppose there was a lot of ash, but I'm wondering if there's anything else.

Stessman: Yeah. I know that it looked like it could have tremendous effects on the irrigators, the farmers, and the delivery of water. It occurred in May, I think maybe May 18,

1980. There was quite a lot of alarm at first about whether they'd be able to make water deliveries. We had emergency work on our own facilities, as I recall. I believe we wound up making some deferments of payments and that kind of thing to districts due to the high cost that they had in cleaning out and cleaning up and restoring operations and that kind of thing. We also provided people to assist with emergency operations in other agencies, as I recall. But I don't really remember the details of how much was involved with, let's say, shutting down pumping plants and powerplants and that sort of thing, to clean them up before you could resume operations and so on.

"My overall recollection is that our first concerns were exaggerated over what the actual problems turned out to be . . ."

My overall recollection is that our first concerns were exaggerated over what the actual problems turned out to be, that there was a tremendous amount of support offered. It was sort of a calamitous, "everybody knew about it" sort of thing and everybody felt that all the aid and assistance that was needed should be provided. You know, there were a lot of things like details about having to change out equipment on vehicles, even pickups and that sort of thing, the air filters and so on.

Storey: All that sort of thing.

Stessman: Yeah. But in general I think it was–I don't know, we either exaggerated the problem when we first got into it, or else it was just well managed. There was a lot of responsiveness, I think. I think Bill Lloyd had just come to the region within months before that in 1980, probably.

Small Hydro Projects on Reclamation

Storey: What about the small hydro or the hydro applications on Reclamation projects? Do you remember any of those specifically and the issues that came up around them?

". . . districts on the Columbia Basin Project . . . were quite aggressive about putting hydro facilities onto the delivery system, and I think they've been quite successful in developing those projects. . . ."

Stessman: I remember that the Columbia Basin districts on the Columbia Basin Project in Washington State were quite aggressive about putting hydro facilities onto the delivery system, and I think they've been quite successful in developing those projects.

Reclamation Was Concerned about How the Small Hydro Projects Might Affect Pumping Operations at Grand Coulee Dam

I remember one of the big concerns that Reclamation had at the time was that they would be induced to call for more water on the system, because the more water that came into the system, the more water delivery that was made at the initial

delivery point, which required pumping out of Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt Lake], out of Grand Coulee. The more they demanded and the more we pumped up to Banks Lake, the more water they could potentially run through their hydro plants. So there was a lot of concern at the time as to whether we'd be in a position of spending energy to get water out so they could create energy.

Russ Smith Attacked Reclamation as Uncooperative in the Development of the Small Hydro Projects on the Columbia Basin Project

We were seen as being quite obstructionist. I remember going to the dedication of, I think, the first plant that the Columbia Basin districts put on line, and the regional director was unable to go and sent me to represent him at the ceremony. I was really amazed at the bitter attitude that was expressed toward the Bureau in that formal ceremony by a person named Russ Smith, who *had been* the manager of the South District of the Columbia Basin Project for the irrigators. When they developed the power development entity among the districts, then he became the manager of the power entities. His speech at the dedication ceremony was quite vitriolic about the Bureau and that the Bureau had obstructed the licensing process and made it difficult for them to get to the point they were, you know, on this celebration, rather than being cooperative or supportive or a partner.

Boise Project Put a Powerplant on Lucky Peak Dam

I know that some of those cases, I think, have worked out to be quite fortunate and quite profitable essentially for the districts. The Boise Project people, irrigators that we worked with on the Boise Project, they put a powerplant onto Lucky Peak Dam, right above Boise. That happens to be a Corps of Engineers facility, but the Bureau of Reclamation markets water out of Lucky Peak. So it's kind of integrated with the Bureau dams and facilities there.

One of the directors of that power entity, which is really a portion of the irrigation districts, spoke to me at the NWRA meeting, National Water Resources Association meeting, this last fall about how fortunate and profitable that plant has been to them and has enabled them to fund a lot of things, improvements and that, that they would not be able to make otherwise.

The Owyhee Project Put a Hydro Plant on Owyhee Dam

The people in the Owyhee Project in Idaho and Oregon put a hydro plant on Owyhee Dam, which is an old and high head Reclamation dam that was built a long time ago and doesn't have a Federally developed hydropower, and the districts have put hydropow–

END SIDE 2, TAPE 1. JANUARY 16, 1996.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2. JANUARY 16, 1996.

Storey: This is tape two of an interview by Brit Storey with Neil Stessman on January the 16th, 1996 at the Denver Federal Center.

You were talking about Owyhee and the irrigators put on a powerplant there.

Stessman: Yeah. And I don't know how profitable that's been for them, but I know they completed the development.

In the Early 1980s the Pacific Northwest Expected There to Be Power Deficits

So I don't know the number. There were a significant number, though, that were completed or under way when I left the Pacific Northwest Region. Well, I think the whole perspective on power has turned around in the Pacific Northwest Region so much, the Columbia Basin, but in the early '80s there was, you know, huge sort of deficits in power availability were forecast, and that was the time period when the whoops [W-P-P-S-S–pronounced "whoops"] plants–are you familiar with those

Washington Public Power Supply System Went Bankrupt

Storey: W-P-P-S?[11]

Stessman: Yeah. The big–

Storey: Washington Public Power Service, I think, or something like that.

Stessman: Yeah. Which was a consortium, I think, and it even included some Bonneville Power Administration [BPA] participation. They were building several nuclear plants, as I recall, and they basically went bankrupt.

Pacific Northwest Put a Lot of Energy Conservation in Place

But there's been a lot of energy conservation was put into place, partly through the Northwest Power Planning Act, which provided authority for B-P-A to do a lot of that energy conservation, which, incidentally, would be a tremendous model for water conservation, sort of seeing water conservation as an investment.

Third Powerplant at Grand Coulee

Storey: One of the facilities that I think would have been completed by this time is the third powerplant. Of course, there was a lot of controversy about the third powerplant, because the generating units were so large in comparison to anything we'd ever done before. I know, for instance, according to Ted Mermel, Barney Bellport was not going to support that when he was chief engineer, but they finally went ahead. Were there any particular O&M issues that arose out of the third powerhouse that you recall?

Bank Instability on the Columbia River below Grand Coulee Required

11. Washington Public Power Supply System (WPPSS).

Modification of Third Powerplant Operations

Stessman: The issue I recall related to the third powerplant while I was there was that–I think when I got there the plant had been completed, and they were unable to operate it the way that was intended because there was instability in the river bank, as I recall, on the right side below the dam.

"The huge amount of capacity in the plant . . . was intended to be used peaking, which involves very drastic and somewhat sudden changes in the amount of discharge from the plant . . . you have *huge* fluctuations in the river level in the channel downstream of the dam . . ."

The huge amount of capacity in the plant, as I understand, was intended to be used peaking, which involves very drastic and somewhat sudden changes in the amount of discharge from the plant, the water discharge. So when that occurs, you have *huge* fluctuations in the river level in the channel downstream of the dam, and I think *many* feet within hours.

So the problem that evidenced itself once they started operating was that the river bank was unstable. If you had a really high release associated with peak demands in operation of the plant at maximum capacity and then a sudden reduction when the demand went away to lower the generation and lower the discharge, then the river level drops perhaps several tens of feet, and you have saturated soil from the river being at a high level and you drop that out and you have instability. And the soil situation was such that they had a tremendous amount of instability. And so they were, for a number of years, unable to operate in the way that the design was based on operating, and were involved in a very expensive and very complicated stabilization project. That was more in the design and construction area than in my own particular area of responsibility.

Bank Instability Required That Reclamation Acquire Lands and Easements

However, we were also involved in acquiring lands and easements, and partly because of that instability situation we had to acquire some–I recall a trailer court that we had to acquire. There were some difficult situations that were controversial with respect to the land acquisitions. And in many times we were acquiring land or property from our own employees because the principal employer in that area is the Bureau of Reclamation at the Grand Coulee Dam and Powerplant.

Storey: Did that make it more complicated?

Stessman: Oh, sure. Yeah. I remember one of the people we had an extremely difficult issue with was the secretary of the project manager. So, yeah, those things are difficult, and they involved hard feelings on the part of the people whose land was being acquired or whose trailer was being acquired and so on. When you're acquiring from employees, sometimes they have access to information about settlements and particular issues that probably wouldn't be information they would know if it was just the general public.

Storey: One of the things that I was impressed with were those huge shafts on the turbines at Grand Coulee. The day I was in there looking at them, there was a *lot* of oil everywhere. First time I've ever seen that much oil at a generating unit. Do you happen to know anything about that?

Stessman: No, I don't. It doesn't bring back any recollection at all. I was just very impressed with the size of the generators and the amount of metal pieces that are rotating when the generator goes around like–

Storey: Those are huge units.

Stessman: Seventy-five feet in diameter or something like that, as I recall. And then one time I was down in the scrollcase, and they were awesome size.

There Were Difficulties Getting the Inclined Elevator to Work at the Third Powerhouse

The other recollection I have is the amount of difficulty they had getting the inclined elevator to work. I don't know whether they ever got those to be reliable operators or not. Did you ever see the inclined elevators?

Storey: I guess I didn't notice them if I did. Are they in the powerhouse there?

Stessman: No, they're external. They kind of operate almost like a almost vertical tram off the wall of the canyon.

Storey: No, I don't think I saw those.

Stessman: I'm not sure if they ever got them to work according to design. I know for a number of years after they were supposedly completed, they were not really operable on a reliable basis.

Storey: Did you have any major personnel issues while you were in Boise running Water, Power and Lands Division?

Stessman: No, I don't think so. Not anything too unordinary.

Storey: When did you leave there?

Transferred to the Central Snake Project as Project Manager in 1983

Stessman: In 1983, I was able to transfer to the Central Snake Project as the project manager. So I was reassigned from the regional supervisor of water, power and land to the project manager or project superintendent.

Storey: Where is the Central Snake Project?

Stessman: The headquarters is also in Boise.

Storey: That's in the old Reclamation building for dam construction.

Stessman: Right. Right. The office is on Broadway. And that gave me an opportunity to have experience in operation, a closer operation and maintenance capacity. Good experience. I worked there about five years.

Storey: Was this something you chose to do? Something somebody else wanted you to do?

Stessman: No, I sought it. I asked the regional director to consider me for the position and I thought I'd be getting some beneficial experience.

Storey: This was part of your career plan?

"I think I saw it as a career plan to get a little more out of the office environment and a little closer to the actual customers and the facilities and the operation and maintenance of them. . . . "

Stessman: Yeah, I think so. I think I wanted to. Yeah. I think I saw it as a career plan to get a little more out of the office environment and a little closer to the actual customers and the facilities and the operation and maintenance of them.

In that job we had facilities in ~~eastern Idaho and western Oregon~~ [western Idaho and eastern Oregon], all the way up to the Washington line in Oregon. We had a significant number of facilities we operated ourselves, including powerplants and then a number of others that were operated by irrigation districts. So, yeah, it was good exposure and good experience. I was still trying to expand my experience at the time.

Storey: UM-hmm. And it did that, I take it.

Stessman: I think so. I think I had really good experience.

Storey: What were the major issues with the Central Snake Project Office?

Central Issues Were Balancing Irrigators' Needs, Power Development, and Satisfying Publics Other than Reclamation's Traditional Customers

Stessman: Trying to satisfy irrigation water users and at the same time meeting our commitments for power development and kind of trying to keep or put ourselves in a position of beginning to do a better job of satisfying other publics as well, Indian tribes especially on the Umatilla and Duck Valley Reservations, and then fisheries. I had an interest in trying to build better relations with the people in addition to our traditional customers.

Storey: Did that upset the traditional customers, though?

". . . you had to be judicious to walk that line and you had . . . to find ways to be creative about protecting the interests of the traditional customers . . . while

being more attentive to the new customers. . . ."

Stessman: Yeah, sometimes. I think you had to be judicious to walk that line and you had to find ways to be creative about protecting the interests of the traditional customers or not eroding the benefits of the traditional customers, while being more attentive to the new customers.

Storey: Do you remember a specific example, by chance?

Worked with Water Users to Develop Better Instream Flows for Fisheries on the Boise River

Stessman: I remember we worked out a deal on the Boise River–I don't know if I'd be able to recall the facts and circumstances–where we were able to convince the traditional water users to cooperate with better guaranteed flows on the Boise River, which is a very significant fishery and a beautiful river through the city of Boise, a pretty unique situation to have a river of that quality with even fly fishing within the city limits of Boise, etcetera, and a heightening awareness on the part of the city of Boise of the attribute, the asset they had with the Boise River, where we were able to reach an agreement with the water users and the fishery people, the Game and Fish and fly fishers associations and that sort of thing, to effect an understanding where there would be give-and-take on both sides, and the amount of minimum flows in the river could be higher and could be sort of *assured* for a longer period of time in low water years or drought situations.

Worked on a Number of Environmental and Fish and Game Initiatives

We did some things at Montour at Black Canyon Dam and Reservoir on the Payette River where we acquired the lands above the reservoir and where the old town of Montour had been, and we were initiating some things there on that project with goose habitat and we were working with people on food plots and that sort of thing, particularly for pheasants and quail and that kind of thing. We were having some successes, I think, with those programs, and there was beginning to be a significant amount of use of different publics on those lands, pheasant hunting and that kind of thing.

The regional environmental officer was a guy named Dick Woodworth, and he had previously been the head of the Idaho Game and Fish Department before he came to work for the Bureau of Reclamation. Then prior to that, he had been the head of, I think, the state fisheries agency in Hawaii. He was a good friend of mine, and we kind of worked with each other on trying to develop better relations with Fish and Wildlife Service and the N-G-Os, the non-government organizations, wildlife, and so on and the State Game and Fish Department.

Began Meetings with State Agencies, Water Users, and Indians in the Umatilla Basin

In Oregon, especially in the Umatilla Basin, again I think I related earlier in

discussing the unauthorized use situation [waterspreading], we established, and I was involved in establishing, sort of a committee that involved the irrigation district managers in the Umatilla Basin meeting *with* the representatives of the Umatilla tribes, the tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, and the State Game and Fish people from Oregon, and the Fish and Wildlife Service, and salmon consultants to the tribes, where we would have, I think at least monthly coordinating meetings. Those were pretty interesting, especially in the beginning where the irrigation district managers' small local districts who had not a very cooperative relationship or attitude toward either the Indian tribes or the fisheries as an issue on the river.

Hopefully, now, after all this time, they would maybe not seem that progressive at the time, but they were very progressive at the time and it was, I think, quite surprising and beneficial that we were able to get those parties to meet and have civil discussions about trying to arrange for flows or trying to cooperate on the other side to meet the minimum needs of the districts.

"And we did have some situations where districts changed their operating plans in order to facilitate fishery flows. . . ."

And we did have some situations where districts changed their operating plans in order to facilitate fishery flows.

"Three Mile Dam, which is a diversion dam in the Umatilla River three miles up from the Columbia . . . basically that would shut off the flows from the dam down to the Columbia River during a good part of the irrigation season . . ."

I remember the tribes had planted fingerlings, whatever, Chinook salmon, as I recall, to get them restored to the Umatilla River. Basically virtually all of the salmon and steelhead runs had been eliminated by the construction of Three Mile Dam, which is a diversion dam in the Umatilla River three miles up from the Columbia, above the mouth of the Umatilla, this Three Mile Diversion Dam. And basically that would shut off the flows from the dam down to the Columbia River during a good part of the irrigation season each year.

So when that was built, probably in the twenties, it tended to dry up the river, that three-mile section, and eliminated the fishery. That and the difficulties of when there *was* a flow, getting fish to pass up above the dam. They really never were, up to that time, able to get fish passage facilities to work effectively.

". . . we were trying to experiment with flows and ways to try to improve the fish passage situation. . . ."

So during that time that we were having these coordination meetings with the districts and the tribes and the fishery people, we were trying to experiment with flows and ways to try to improve the fish passage situation. That was in the early to mid-eighties.

Storey: What kind of adjustments would you have to make going from a region to a project

office? How are the responsibilities different, divided, if you will?

Regions Were More Powerful in Those Days

Stessman: Well, back in those days, the regional office, things were more centralized than I think they are right now today in a region, so that the regional directors and the division chiefs in the regional office and sort of special assignment people in the regional office had a bigger role and more involvement in decisions at the project level. At that time, they had substantially more role than they do now. So it was just primarily a matter of sort of like branch section–region project.

"Regional office you had a bigger geographic area and hopefully a broader, less parochial perspective relative to a project. And on a project you were very focused on the needs of these particular customers, these irrigation districts, this powerplant. A difference there is that at the project office you have the craft people. . . ."

Regional office you had a bigger geographic area and hopefully a broader, less parochial perspective relative to a project. And on a project you were very focused on the needs of these particular customers, these irrigation districts, this powerplant. A difference there is that at the project office you have the craft people. You're dealing with, well, unionized, organized employees and they're craft people, electricians, powerplant operators, mechanics, boiler makers, whatever.

"So the project is more hands-on and you're more focused on your particular budget and operations and program, water deliveries, power generation, water supply, how much snow pack there is, working with the local entities. . . ."

So the project is more hands-on and you're more focused on your particular budget and operations and program, water deliveries, power generation, water supply, how much snow pack there is, working with the local entities. If you're in a high-water flooding situation or whatever, there's more involvement with the press, more involvement with the local officials, officials of irrigation districts, cities, counties, etcetera. You're more able to kind of run things. That's a nice perspective at a project or area office. You're working directly with the customers and, like people say, you're where the rubber meets the road.

Storey: Everybody wants to build fences around you, though. How were the fences erected? For instance, in dealing with water users, when did the region become involved? When was it an area or a project office responsibility? How did you figure that out?

"Well, you try to get all the customers to deal with you directly and not go to the regional office with an issue, because the districts and the customers would sometimes tend to shop around for the best answer from their perspective. . . ."

Stessman: Well, you try to get all the customers to deal with you directly and not go to the

regional office with an issue, because the districts and the customers would sometimes tend to shop around for the best answer from their perspective. Maybe they thought that, "Gee, I might as well go to the top and get an answer instead of work through these people at the project level." So you try to get them to work with you directly, rather than go around you. To do that, you have to be accessible, and you have to be knowledgeable, and you have to have a customer-service attitude.

"I often thought it would be advantageous to manage a project farther away from the regional office. . . ."

But particularly with the Central Snake Project, which is located in Boise with the regional office, you were a lot more susceptible to having the regional office involved in your business on a direct basis, and you had more situations where, let's say, regional office people went recreating on the reservoirs that you managed or maybe even had cabins on the reservoir that you manage. I often thought it would be advantageous to manage a project farther away from the regional office.

Storey: But what I think I'm hearing you say is that the water users–the primary responsibility is with the project office.

Stessman: Yeah.

Storey: Or what we now call the area office.

Stessman: I'm sure the customers' direct relationship is almost always with, and *should* almost always be with, the project or area office, because they're the ones who are delivering the service.

Water Contract Renewals

Storey: I don't know whether you were ever in a situation where a water contract was coming up for renewal. Is that still a project office responsibility? How does that work?

Stessman: Well, I think it's *more* of a project or area office responsibility now, at least in my region, than it used to be, because we've tried to decentralize to the area offices. And back in former times in Reclamation, the regional office would tend–

END SIDE 1, TAPE 2. JANUARY 16, 1996.
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 2. JANUARY 16, 1996.

Storey: Were there any other major issues that we ought to consider next time about your time at the Central Snake Project Office?

Stessman: No, I think probably not. I think you might want to get into the–I don't know if we've talked about the Garrison Project before, have we?

Storey: Just briefly.

Stessman: That's probably what we ought to get to.

Storey: Okay. Well, I think our time is up for today. So let me ask you if you're willing for the information on these tapes and resulting transcripts to be used by researchers.

Stessman: I am.

Storey: Good. Thank you.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 2. JANUARY 16, 1996.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 1. SEPTEMBER 17, 1996.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, senior historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing Regional Director Neil Stessman in his office in Billings, Montana, on September the 18th, 1996, at about two o'clock in the afternoon. This is tape one.

Since we talked last time, Mr. Stessman, I have interviewed Rod Vissia, and I asked him about the possibility that the water users who would have benefitted from Teton Dam might have wanted the project rebuilt, and he talked about that briefly. But he said, "Talk to Neil Stessman about that. I think he'll be able to enlighten you." Could you tell me what you remember about that?

Stessman: He seems to think my recollection would be more vivid than it seems to be. So that throws me a little bit.

Storey: Do you remember anything about it?

After the Failure of Teton Dam the Local Water Users Expressed Interest in Having the Dam Rebuilt

Stessman: I remember that shortly after the dam failure, there was an expression by the local interests, in confidence, that the dam could still be built and, in fact, I think, should be rebuilt. My recollection is that the local interests, irrigation interests, etcetera, who were to be the beneficiaries of the Teton Dam and Reservoir water supply, in spite of the fact that they have generally, I believe, a very adequate supply of water for their uses at the present time, were in favor of the dam being rebuilt.

The Water Users May Have Sued Reclamation to Compel Delivery of a Project Called for in the Repayment Contract on Teton Dam

In fact, I'm thinking that they even sued the government or tried to sue the government for the failure to deliver on what amounted to a contract between the United States and the district.

Storey: A repayment contract?

Stessman: Yeah. (Storey: Oh, okay.) My recollection is that they made a run legally at trying to require the United States to meet its obligation to deliver a water storage facility, a dam and reservoir. I don't remember specifically what happened to that, although the United States must have successfully defended itself against being required to do that. It would be very expensive, and that would be very difficult politically, also, to put together. The public reaction would be pretty monumental, I think.

Flooding Issues in the Central Snake Project Office

Storey: I think last time we talked, the last thing we were getting ready to talk about was when you were the Central Snake Project manager, and evidently there was some flooding at that time. That was beginning about 1983, I think, and the flooding was the next topic that I had written down to go into.

Stessman: Yeah. Yeah, I've forgotten our last discussion, but we did have one really high-water year there while I was the project manager. You know, I don't remember the facts and numbers. I remember that Dirk Kempthorne, who is now in a leadership position in the Senate, in the United States Senate, senator from Idaho–at that time he was the Mayor of Boise–and there was a considerable public reaction to the water levels in the flood management situation. We had a lot of water in storage in the facilities above Boise and were running a lot of water down through the city of Boise in order to manage the high runoff, spring runoff.

"So as with a lot of cities below major reservoirs . . . As the public experiences a number of years of maybe less than normal snow pack and runoff, and experiences the benefit of reservoir operations, they tend to sort of develop the impression that this is no longer a flood plain . . ."

So as with a lot of cities below major reservoirs, there is a tremendous amount of encroachment of mostly private property development within the flood plain. As the public experiences a number of years of maybe less than normal snow pack and runoff, and experiences the benefit of reservoir operations, they tend to sort of develop the impression that this is no longer a flood plain, and start developing in closer and closer to the river. So there is a significant amount of impact on property owners and infrastructure through the city of Boise and below as you go down the Boise River, below the Bureau facilities. So we had a pretty substantial amount of public reaction. Of course, the Mayor was concerned and others, congressional delegation.

Held Well-attended Press Conference to Explain the Flooding Situation in Relation to Management Needs for the System

I remember holding a press conference in one of the hotels in Boise, and that was quite largely attended–several hundred people, as I recall. Seems like one of those situations where since there's a problem, then there must have been fault. So what we did was go back through the operations, backing up to probably where we were in managing water the previous year and how much snow pack came on the mountains and the timing of that and the extent to which as a reservoir operator

you have to be projecting all the time, not knowing what's going to happen with precipitation or even weather, because it isn't *just* precipitation that affects how much water you get and when. Sometimes you might have a fairly, like normal or average snow pack situation, but if the weather warms up and becomes unseasonably warm before spring is there, a lot of times you'll get really high runoff rapidly earlier than you expected. And so you can get in sort of a management situation, not just by snow pack or precipitation, but sometimes by other weather phenomenon.

But as I recall, once we sort of laid our cards out on the table as to what was dealt and how we played it, we had a pretty positive reaction from the press and the public and the Mayor and so on.

"If you can get them to stand still long enough to listen and you've played your cards straight up, why, a lot of times you do get the opportunity to be heard and understood. . . ."

If you can get them to stand still long enough to listen and you've played your cards straight up, why, a lot of times you do get the opportunity to be heard and understood.

Storey: Well, does Reclamation have any responsibilities for flood damages? How does that work?

"The Bureau of Reclamation has very little legal liability for flood damage . . . There's a certain amount of immunity provided by law that applies to both the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation as it carries out its sort of authorized duties for flood control. . . ."

Stessman: The Bureau of Reclamation has very little legal liability for flood damage, damage that results from the operation of flood control facilities. There's a certain amount of immunity provided by law that applies to both the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation as it carries out its sort of authorized duties for flood control. In other words, the Congress has provided, as a companion with the authority and the benefits for development of flood control infrastructure, primarily dams and reservoirs, as a companion to that, an immunity from damages for those operations.

So as we may have discussed before, even in association with the Teton Dam failure, which in a traditional court sense the Bureau of Reclamation, or the United States, might legally have been liable for damages, there is an immunity from that damage provided by law, as I understand it. So there's not, generally speaking, a legal liability. However, there is, of course, a political liability and public liability, etcetera.

Storey: Did you have any of that political fallout as a result of the flooding here while you were at the Central Snake Project Office?

Stessman: Well, again, I'm not sure. I've had a lot of situations like that over the years since then, so I'm not sure I recall the specific facts. But typically, yes, you have the politicians are frequently sort of inclined to look for a scapegoat or look for fault somewhere. Not always. Not all of them. Some of them are more understanding, more appreciative of the complexity of operating these kind of facilities, and the ramifications of doing that.

It's pretty easy to find fault or find what appears to be fault if an agency has the reputation and *claims* the reputation and ability and expertise to operate these significant facilities for public service and public benefit, gets in a position of where the product it's delivering is not most beneficial to everybody downstream. In other words, it's high water, and a lot of times when it's high water, it's because the security of the facility itself dictates that you better evacuate some water and you better evacuate a significant amount of it.

So in those situations, a lot of times for a politician it's just pretty easy off the cuff to say, "Somebody must have screwed up, and it must be those people who operate that dam."

Storey: I would think it's sort of a delicate balancing act, because, on the one hand, I know Reclamation wants to protect the people downstream, yet on the other hand, we want to conserve the water also and make it available for the water users.

There Is a Balancing Act Between Conserving Water and Flood Control Operations

Storey: Yeah. In most situations, there's a side of it that's apparent to most anybody, and in that kind of situation the ones it's apparent to are the ones who see that the river is high and that there's flooding occurring or that there are impacts occurring downstream.

"So a lot of times it's a dichotomy where there are considerations on both sides and only one side or part of it is in the public's awareness. . . ."

And there's another kind of side to it usually silent for the public ear, where there are other advocates who are advocating for, "Let's keep as much water as we can in the reservoir. Last year we ran out of water and didn't have enough water for the last irrigation on our corn or on our crops or whatever, and we don't want *that* to occur again. So we'd better capture this water while we can and keep as much of it up there as you can." So a lot of times it's a dichotomy where there are considerations on both sides and only one side or part of it is in the public's awareness.

Storey: I saw that at Friant this spring, as a matter of fact. I was out with the assistant project manager. He was letting, I think it was, 200 CFS. It might have been 2,000 CFS. I'm not too clear. As we were riding around, he got a call on his cell phone about why was he releasing all that water. But he was approaching his maximum pool. (laughter)

Stessman: Yeah. Right.

Storey: And worried about flooding, also. You have already talked about the things that you had to adjust to when you changed from the region to the project. What about personnel issues, though? How many people were there, and did that begin to consume more and more time? How does that work for you? How *did* that work for you?

Stessman: Let's see. What I hear you asking me is as a manager or supervisor, did I feel the disproportionate requirement for administrivia and requirements for things like performance evaluations and dealing with employee issues?

Storey: Yeah, those kinds of things.

"I think more that the role of management is to step away from the technical side of the house and deal with the bigger picture, and a big part of that is leadership of employees, supervision of employees, the sort of mentoring, leading, coaching, etcetera, that a good organization needs. . . ."

Stessman: I hear a lot about that. That's not an issue with me. I don't necessarily subscribe to what I hear a lot of people say about there are too many demands on them to handle those kind of things and they don't have time to do their job. I'm not very sympathetic with that. I think more that the role of management is to step away from the technical side of the house and deal with the bigger picture, and a big part of that is leadership of employees, supervision of employees, the sort of mentoring, leading, coaching, etcetera, that a good organization needs. So from my personal standpoint, I like that part of the job. So I've tried as a manager to sort of rely on the technical knowledge and decision-making even of subordinate employees and sort of given up the semblance of technical expertise myself.

So as I went to what's now the equivalent of an area manager position, I sort of took on more of a role of management leadership supervision, and I saw that as what I needed and where I needed to put my priorities, at least a substantial amount of them.

Storey: And you did that consciously, did you, or did you just do it naturally?

Stessman: Well, I had a lot of my own thoughts as I was coming up in the organization about how, as a technical agency, that we put too much emphasis on promoting technical people into management and leadership position. So I think I *did* have a consciousness from working from a lower perspective in the organization on the need for managers and supervisors to sort of leave the technical decisionmaking to the technical people in the organization. So I think that's something that I've had to work at. But on the other hand, I do think from my having spent a number of years in the organization below the supervisor or management level, that I recognized the difference and wanted to operate differently.

Storey: Did you have any trouble transitioning personally?

Stessman: I've been amazed in the Bureau of Reclamation, the opportunity that I've been given and that I see that people are given to try things and go their own way. I know I hear people say differently than my read on this, and I've tried to figure out why this is, because it seems a little bit contradictory.

Storey: Contrary to what *you* perceive?

"I have to give our organization an awful lot of credit, I think, for, . . . just my own opinion, for tolerance, for letting people do it their way. . . ."

Stessman: Yeah. And what criticisms I have of our organization and how we operate, when I stop and think about it, I have to give our organization an awful lot of credit, I think, for, I believe, just my own opinion, for tolerance, for letting people do it their way. And I know that would probably elicit an argument from a lot of people. But, in good faith, I think it's that way.

I've found a lot of times in my history in the organization that I had a different opinion than what I thought was the popular opinion in the agency about things, and yet to the real credit of the agency, I feel like almost, without fail, my whole career that I've always had the opportunity to speak up, be heard, give my opinion, without bad effects on my career, etcetera, and that when I was willing, or other people I saw were willing, to take on responsibility to try to get a certain job done, that the organization typically is just glad enough to have somebody take on responsibility and get something done, that the organization very typically has been very tolerant of letting people do things their way.

So, no, I think when I was a manager, that I was given the opportunity by my supervisors, who wouldn't necessarily have used the same style I did, to let me use my style, and I also saw that to a very great extent from employees. I think it has to do with us being typically a very busy agency, that we have a lot of business, a lot going on, a lot of work, and people can be very, very busy in this agency.

"Management has a lot of need to be able to have the work get accomplished and is just sort of gratified, appreciative, of people who do that and, therefore, maybe there's more license. . . ."

Management has a lot of need to be able to have the work get accomplished and is just sort of gratified, appreciative, of people who do that and, therefore, maybe there's more license.

Storey: I can think of about three different ways I want to go now. One of the ways I want to go is, did you have any issues come up in transitioning to managing people? For instance, I can think that if it were me, I would miss the deadlines for the performance appraisals or something like that. How do you deal with those kinds of issues?

Stessman: Well, I'm not necessarily good at them myself. I'm thinking [about] work a lot. I carry a note pad with me almost all the time, weekends and travel. So I keep lists

and make lists.

Storey: And mark things off the list?

Stessman: And try to be aware of things that are coming a week ahead and two weeks ahead and a few days ahead. I certainly miss deadlines, but I try to keep an awareness. Seems like I've always had a lot of good help.

Another thing that we have in Reclamation, and I see other agencies and I'm just pretty sure Reclamation's fortunate or better or something about, and that is that clerical people and secretarial people, we have some really amazing ones who really know how to keep the show going. And, again, I'm not sure, but I think again it's that we're mission oriented, we have a lot on our plate, and everybody's largely busy. So there's an atmosphere where clerical and secretarial people who are productive recognize what needs to be done, are given the room and opportunity to do them.

Storey: One of the other things I'd like to talk about is this moving away from the technical side to the management side. My impression is that it would be very nerve-fraying, maybe, to do that kind of thing, because there *are* people, let's put it that way, who are insecure about that kind of thing. They're insecure that somebody's going to make an *error*. And nobody's perfect, so everybody makes errors. How do you deal with those kinds of issues in such a way that Reclamation isn't damaged by the errors that are made? Or do I have the wrong impression? Maybe we don't make errors because of the way the system is set up or something.

There will always be errors and screw ups, but you can't have them because of "bad ethics, or inappropriate intent, or deceit, or those sort of things. . . ."

Stessman: No, we make errors. I think it's not possible to either be a person or an entity that doesn't screw up or make errors. And I think with that recognition, you're at least a third of the way there in dealing with the fact that you can have errors and you will have errors and you will have screw-ups and you will have times when you have to lay that out and acknowledge it.

What you can't have is you can't have it be because of bad ethics, or inappropriate intent, or deceit, or those sort of things. You can't explain those. It's hard to get forgiveness or acceptance of those. But if it's plausible and if it's clear that what you're doing or what your organization is doing or did was well intended, seemed right at the time, it's a *problem* because you took a calculated risk, not an imprudent risk, a calculated risk, people want you to do that. People don't want you to waste money, doubling and tripling and quadrupling the padlock, the security.

I think if the agency and the entity and the individuals are willing to stand up, "Yeah, this is what we did. This is why." We've kind of had that, I think, on the Boise River operations that we talked about before, on the high water. I think it was clear to people, once we explained, that given the circumstances and the fact that ultimately you *have* to make a decision, I mean, you come to a fork in the road,

you have to choose one, you can't *not* decide, that people accept that.

We had an example here either the last year or the year before when a group of our employees went to a public meeting down in Wyoming and were–I think what had happened was–

END SIDE 1, TAPE 1. SEPTEMBER 18, 1996.
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1. SEPTEMBER 18, 1996.

Stessman: I think the situation that was being dealt with was that the Big Horn River was low and the Yellowtail Reservoir was low, so there were impacts to recreation, probably other things, in the lower river and the upper part of the reservoir in Wyoming. So some of the people involved from Reclamation in the operation of the reservoirs, and it's a system, were there and were explaining, and they were going through kind of like I described on the Boise River how the snow pack had been the previous year and operations and how certain information was available–this is the weather and precipitation we've had to date and this is the amount of water that we've got in the system to date and what normally happens. And so they have to make a decision on a continuing and current basis of this is what we'll do today and the next day this is what we'll to do today and so on.

Anyway, all those things put together, and the operation had resulted in low river, low reservoir, impacts below the expectations and desires of the local people economically and recreationally affected, and the Bureau people explaining the operations were getting–you know, it was a critical situation, but it worked out well through the dialogue that took place.

But at one place in the meeting, one of the citizens stood up and was getting extremely strong in his criticism and so on. One of our employees, a hydrologist who's involved in river and reservoir operations, Tim Felchle, had the stage at the podium. The person from the audience is saying, "Well, I know you don't make these decisions, and these decisions are probably made by some bureaucrat way off in Washington, D.C., or somewhere above you, and they would never never send that person out here to listen to us, etcetera. I know that you're not the one."

Tim says, "Wait a minute." He said, "No, *I'm* the one. I made the decision. These are the reasons I made this decision. But the decision was mine. I made it."

I wasn't there, but I understand it really rebuffed the individual and really deflated some of the reaction of the audience to have to understand and recognize that a person does make these decisions, you know. It is a person who's *here* at this level, wears blue jeans and a cotton shirt to work, sort of like us, who has to take immediate information, data, etcetera, and make a decision based on that, to the best of his or her ability.

". . . it illustrates that a lot of times if you're given a chance to be personal with people, they see you, you see them, and have an opportunity to explain the circumstances, that people appreciate and understand that. I think Reclamation's

generally been quite good at that. . . ."

I think that speaks a little bit to the issue of can an agency be wrong or make a mistake. To my knowledge, that didn't involve a mistake, but it illustrates that a lot of times if you're given a chance to be personal with people, they see you, you see them, and have an opportunity to explain the circumstances, that people appreciate and understand that. I think Reclamation's generally been quite good at that.

Storey: Really?

Stessman: Um-hmm.

Storey: In your experience.

Stessman: I do. Um-hmm.

Storey: How long were you at the Central Snake Project Office as manager?

Stessman: I was there for four years, I think.

Storey: So about '83 to '87?

Stessman: Right. That's it.

Area Managed by the Central Snake Project Office

Storey: The Central Snake Project, if I've got my geography correct, would include Owyhee, Boise, Minidoka, maybe American Falls.

Stessman: At that time it didn't include Minidoka and American Falls. There was a separate project office in Burley at that time. *Now* they're consolidated. It did include, however, the Umatilla Basin in Oregon and the Baker Project in Oregon, several other projects in eastern Oregon. Not all of those now are in the Central Snake area. Some are under what used to be the Yakima Project.

Storey: These are all–not all of them, but many of them are older projects. In their own way they're classic Reclamation engineering projects from a historical point of view. I've been fortunate to be able to tour Arrowrock and Owyhee. Did the fact that they were older Reclamation projects present you with any special issues that you had to deal with or that the project office had to deal with at that time while you were manager?

". . . some of the older facilities . . . had . . . maintenance issues, and I think that especially applies to ones that have been transferred to local irrigation districts for operation and maintenance. A lot of those . . . are not maintained in the best condition. . . ."

Stessman: Well, the thing that comes to mind is that some of the older facilities now at forty, fifty, sixty years of age or older had maintenance problems, maintenance issues, and I think that especially applies to ones that have been transferred to local irrigation districts for operation and maintenance. A lot of those, especially from districts that have fairly borderline irrigation economies, are not maintained in the best condition. The districts tend to operate on low budgets and have difficulty assessing the water users for high enough annual water rates to do major maintenance.

So the Owyhee Dam that you mentioned, and for that matter–well, the Owyhee Dam that you mentioned is operated by an irrigation district in Oregon out at Nyssa, and it's a fairly prosperous district. It was while I was there. They were quite progressive, and they, as I recall, did a good job of maintenance on Owyhee.

We operated Arrowrock ourselves, and it was beginning to have some maintenance problems and maintenance issues and looking at some fairly expensive maintenance measures. But generally speaking, the beneficiaries in Boise Valley there, who were the repaying and O&M participating entities for Arrowrock, were fairly prosperous, so we could generally get the funding we needed.

Some of those in Oregon are pretty borderline districts. I'm thinking especially of Cold Springs Dam and the Hermiston Irrigation District over near Pendleton, Oregon, and even McKay Reservoir and the other districts there that got water out of McKay on the Umatilla system. Hermiston is the prime example. Really small plots, low productivity, some pasture, forage, a little bit of hay, very little high value crops, and a reservoir that was in really rather poor condition. Low-paid manager, district manager. Difficult to get him to go to his board for the money to do significant rehab or maintenance work on the dam.

Yeah, it's a big part of the job. It's a frustrating part of the job, because sometimes, especially in that case, it's difficult to get the beneficiaries to accept the responsibility to maintain the infrastructure that is the source of the benefit they depend on. A lot of times, in those kinds of situations where it's a–well, the people elected to the boards of directors many times are people who are sort of elected on a slate of, "I'm going to keep the rates low. I'm going to keep the water charges low." Sometimes they're people who operate small farms and have never had a mechanical problem that they couldn't solve with baling wire and an easy fix, an inexpensive fix. So they tend to hire managers at low wages and do what they can to keep the rates from going up. And so in those kinds of situations, preventative maintenance isn't emphasized.

Storey: Well, doesn't that cause Reclamation some dilemmas about dealing with the district? It is our property. At least in a technical sense it's our property.

Stessman: Yeah. And there's a provision usually in the contract that says that if we tell them to repair something on the dam and they don't do it, then we can do the work ourselves and collect the money for that. But it's difficult to do. I think probably the legal part of it is the easiest. We do have the legal right to do that. The contract

provides it. But the political is difficult.

Once we turn over a facility, we don't want it *back*. We shouldn't be trying to take it back. We've got to expend a lot of energy trying to jawbone them into taking responsibility and to them understanding the ramifications and the need for them to do it themselves. So if you take it back to do something, you take the risk of them giving you the keys to the whole place.

Storey: Which you don't want.

Stessman: You don't want. And it's not really a Federal role. We've identified that as part of this devolution to local government that it should be done by locals, if possible.

Storey: What kind of oversight did a project office at that time exercise?

Stessman: Generally you're talking about where the operations and maintenance have been transferred?

Storey: Yeah. How did we assure protection of the Federal investment, as it were?

Stessman: Well, we did periodic inspections, and we did follow-up from previous and current inspections, and we maintained a contact and relationship. We had water operations people who maintained an awareness of the water operations, and we would make suggestions to them on water operations, flood control, etcetera. We maintained a prerogative of more or less *telling* them what they had to do. On mechanical maintenance and that sort of thing, we do inspections and we'd go and visit with them.

Generally speaking, they wanted us to do that, appreciated it, and valued it. Sometimes a manager would sort of *know* that he or the district needed to do a certain thing, but would ask us to come for the leverage that it would provide with his board, because it may be a situation where he *knew* that if he went to the board and said, "This gate needs to be fixed and it will cost us $50,000 to do it," that the board wouldn't necessarily make the money available to do the work, but if the Bureau of Reclamation gave him direction or advice that he needed to do that and it would cost $50,000, sometimes they'd sort of leverage the board in that way.

Storey: "I've been told we have to do this."

Stessman: Yeah.

Issues on Urbanized Project Lands at Boise

Storey: One of the other things that I think was an issue up there on the Boise Project, at least, was urbanization, what Dan Beard liked to refer to as hobby farms. But in the case of Boise, it's even more than that. I think a lot of the land has been subdivided and houses put on it. The homeowners are now paying the irrigation assessments, if I understand it.

Stessman: Right.

Storey: But they're not receiving any water. Did that present any issues for the project office while you were there, that you recall?

Stessman: Well, we'd get congressionals and we'd get individual letters and comments and complaints.

Storey: Because they were having to pay the tax, you mean?

Stessman: From and about people who were having to pay water charges but not receiving water. It's unfortunate, but it's kind of the way the system is. It's the way the system works. It's how these projects generally operate under state laws of the states where there are Reclamation irrigation projects, that when the Federal Government *made* the investment in constructing the dams, it was important to tie in the lands that were benefitting, to define what those lands were, and to have those lands obligated, required under law, to make certain payments.

It was subsidized very substantially. But to the extent that those beneficiaries are required to repay or pay both for capital costs and for the sustaining costs of operating and maintaining the facilities, it's necessary to have a legal obligation *rest* somewhere, and the logical way–I don't know, maybe there were alternatives, but the way it was done with the combination of Federal and state and local laws was that the obligation rests on the lands, rests on the owners of the lands.

When the owners of those lands chose to convert the use of the lands from growing onions to growing families and children in subdivided neighborhoods, and if the payment obligations had not been fully met, then those obligations, legally and maybe necessarily, had to continue on the part of that ownership.

So you had a lot of situations in Boise and, I presume, a lot of other urbanized areas, where someone's living in a house on Elm Street in the middle of what twenty-five or thirty years ago was an orchard, a cherry orchard, and they don't know that. They're not even aware that Elm Street used to be a cherry orchard. They can't see any evidence of it any longer, and they weren't there at the time it was. But at some time between that thirty years ago and the present time, a conversion was made and an obligation still rested with the land and passed from one owner's obligation to the subsequent owner's obligation.

Thirty years ago, it was Mr. Smith who owned the orchard, and now it happens to be seventy-five individuals who own half-acre lots with houses on them, but Mr. Smith's obligation or the obligation of those lands still applies proportionately to each of those lots. There's no evidence any longer of the orchard or the canal or the pipelines, and there's no way that you could practically deliver water to those people if, in fact, they wanted it or needed it from the system.

Storey: What about the issue that Farmer Smith is no longer in production, so the water isn't

needed, so the water is going to move somewhere else? Does that raise issues for Reclamation?

Stessman: Yeah. Yeah, it sure does, and it raises some good questions about whether additional remuneration ought to be due to the United States or whether it should change the contract. We haven't always been able to deal with those.

Many times what happens in the situation you describe is that the water supply becomes more secure for the lands that continue to irrigate. In other words, there's a more generous supply of water for the lands that are irrigating. What may also have happened, and I'm sure probably has in some cases, is that those who retained irrigation on a smaller acreage may have expanded their usage, in other words, applied it to increased acreage. Of course, that's what has been referred to as waterspreading.

Storey: Because it's outside the project?

Stessman: Um-hmm.

Storey: Did that, in particular, raise any issues for you while you were in Boise at the Central Snake Project Office?

Stessman: I don't think so. Maybe it should have. I think we had some awareness that some of that may be taking place. Generally speaking, we didn't have the capability or the number of people or the program or opportunity to apply a lot of effort, resource, and expense to doing the studies and analysis that it would take to do that, to come up with those situations.

Reclamation's Contracts with Water Users

Storey: Let's talk about the nature of the relationship between Reclamation and the water users and those contracts. I hear about the contracts all the time, but I don't quite understand what's conveyed in those contracts, and I also don't understand whether they're fairly uniform or whether they vary a lot and all that kind of stuff. But, say, on the Boise Project, formerly, I guess, the Boise-Payette Project, is Reclamation saying, "We'll provide X amount of *water* to you, we'll provide you the use of the facilities, and you get the water that results," how does that work?

Stessman: Well, it's the latter. I think it's very untypical that a Reclamation contract provides that a person will receive so much water at a given place at a given time. But there is a lot of variety in the contracts. There's some standardization. There're some commonalities. But, generally speaking, each and every project was authorized by a specific set of legislation that contained some specific unique direction in relation to that project.

This means that it's necessary to know the legislative history and the particulars of the law with respect to the project you're speaking of. I've never thought about the number, but there have been at least several hundred pieces of

individual legislation that authorize projects. Maybe it's more than 500, I don't know. It's a lot. So they tend to be unique. Some define service to very specifically described acreages, and some are a lot more loose than that and provide for a lot of liberty to identify the acres that are served. How the issue or problem is dealt with depends on the specifics of what was authorized and what the contract says.

But writing of contracts, there were some things that tended to be common on ones that were written in the Mid-Pacific Region, some where it was individualized just a little bit differently in the Pacific Northwest Region. And then you throw on to that the fact that water laws vary. They're a little different in Oregon than they are in Idaho. State regulations are a little different. The statutes on districts or conservancy districts or irrigation districts and how they're formed and how they operate is different from one state to another, and then you have a different law, Federal law, that authorized the project in one case versus another. And you have a different contract was written under this law than would or was written under another law.

So there are some things that are pretty common and traditional, but there's a tremendous amount of variety that requires that you look at the individual case, the individual contract, the individual authorization.

Storey: Whose responsibility would this have been, first of all, to write the contract; second of all, to administer the contract? How does that fall out in Reclamation?

Stessman: Well, it's Reclamation's responsibility, and it's something that the Bureau of Reclamation is accountable to the Congress and the public for doing that.

Storey: But was it the project office?

Stessman: Within the Bureau of Reclamation, it's varied at different times in the history of the agency. I think, though, you have to say it's a project office responsibility under the direction of a region, under the direction of headquarters. Back in the more development days, we had a very significant amount of people in headquarters, regional office involved in contracting and contract interpretation. Sometimes in some cases the project office got a lot of direction from the regional office, and the regional office got a lot of direction from the contracts office in headquarters.

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BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2. SEPTEMBER 18, 1996.

Storey: [This is tape two] of an interview with Brit Storey with Neil Stessman on September the 17th, 1996.

You're saying Denver was even involved.

Stessman: Yeah, and even involved in that sort of line of responsibility. At the present time, I think there's more than ever before delegated to the area office, project office.

Storey: That's because of the recent reorganization?

Stessman: Right.

Issues Related to Surface Drainage Water Getting into Reclamation Canals

Storey: One of the issues I hear about occasionally, and I *think* that I've heard about in the case of Boise, is the issue of drainage water getting into our canals and causing problems. Am I correct in thinking that was an issue in Boise?

Stessman: It is. I've heard probably as much about it since I left there as I did when I was there. I know that we had become aware of the problem when I was there. I think they must have had a lot more impact with the huge amount of development that's occurred and growth that's occurred in Boise from the time I left there in 1987 until the present time. They've experienced a tremendous amount of growth in that valley, and I think that the impacts of urban drainage into the canals and pipelines, laterals, whatever, of the Bureau system must have grown tremendously, the impacts of those things. I know we had some concern about it, and we would attempt to police that sort of thing to the extent we were aware of it in the time I was there. I remember some involvement in that with developers and subdividers and so on.

Storey: What kind of impacts are we talking about?

Stessman: Well, in short, as development occurs, particularly things that involve parking lots, paving, buildings, that sort of thing, where a significant amount of the ground is covered with asphalt, you get accentuated runoff situations. You don't get much water soaking into the ground, so a lot of water comes off in sheets almost immediately when you get precipitation. So you have a lot more runoff to deal with.

What the developer or property owner wants to do is get the water off as rapidly as possible, so they want to sort of direct it to the edge of the property as quickly as they can. So a lot of times the most convenient and cheapest way for them to do that is to collect it in a corner or side of the property, get it in a pipe or a ditch or channel, and move it to some sort of a water course. Typically we're operating in places where arid, semi-arid areas, and so there are more canals and laterals than there are natural drainages.

"So they want to put the runoff into our lateral, our canal, or our drain ditch, and they tend to overcharge them more. It has adverse affects on our ability to operate those facilities. . . ."

So they want to put the runoff into our lateral, our canal, or our drain ditch, and they tend to overcharge them more. It has adverse affects on our ability to operate those facilities.

Storey: Overcharge? Fill it too full?

Stessman: Yeah.

Storey: Then that causes erosion and things?

Stessman: Um-hmm. Water management problems.

Contamination Issues in Dealing with Runoff

Storey: What about contamination issues?

Stessman: It's a problem, yeah. It's not something we know a lot about. I think I said "a problem," it's a concern, and we don't know the extent of the impacts. You have to think there are probably some impacts, though, particularly, as we've said, with asphalt-covered land, why, a lot of times you're talking about airports, runways. You may be talking about–well, there's just opportunity for industrial pollutants, oil, gasoline, dry-cleaning.

Storey: Fluids, that kind of thing.

Stessman: Um-hmm.

Storey: I'm trying to figure out what I else I should ask you about the Central Snake Project Office. Are there any other issues that stand out in your memory? Who was the regional director then? Was it Rod Vissia who appointed you?

Stessman: No, it was Bill Lloyd. Bill Lloyd was the regional director for several years. I was appointed in the regional office when Rod Vissia was regional director. Rod Vissia left that position in perhaps 1980, '81, '82, somewhere in there.

Storey: And became the chief engineer.

Stessman: Yeah. He moved to Denver. Bill Lloyd was reassigned from the regional director here in Billings to the regional director in Boise. Then he left, I'd say, about in 1986, and John Keys became the Regional Director. John Keys was the Regional Director when I *left* there in 1987.

Storey: What were these three folks like as regional directors?

Rod Vissia as Regional Director

Stessman: Rod Vissia was possibly the best manager that I've ever worked under anyplace in Reclamation, and he was very focused on management. I think he was remarkable in that sense, as far as managers that I've worked under in the Bureau of Reclamation.

Bill Lloyd and John Keys as Regional Director

Bill Lloyd and John Keys were a little more traditional engineers, both very

involved in the technical and details of operations. Both were really exceptional individuals and good people, solid and all that. Just different style.

Storey: What caused you to change jobs in '87 or so?

Moves to Missouri-Souris Project Office to with Longstanding Interest in the Garrison Project

Stessman: I had an interest in the Garrison Project in North Dakota, and when I left the Central Snake Project Office I went to North Dakota as the project manager for what's called the Missouri-Souris Project Office. Missouri-Souris is an early name for the Garrison Project that we hadn't changed at that time.

Saw More Independence Away from the Regional Office

So I was interested in that project. It was a promotion. The Central Snake Project, I saw a preference for kind of the independence, the room for greater autonomy in a project office that wasn't located within a shadow of the regional office like the Boise Project was. I think it's disadvantageous to a manager to operate a project, an area office, that's in the same city as the regional office because of the sort of opportunity for over-involvement of the regional people, regional office people, regional director and other managers in the regional office. Opportunity; greater autonomy; promotion.

Storey: Promotion to?

Stessman: It was a grade-level increase.

Storey: From what grade level to what grade level?

Stessman: A 14 to 15. And a challenge. The Garrison Project had some invigorating challenges. A long history. There had been new legislation in 1986 that made really significant changes in the direction of the Garrison Project.

Storey: How did you get the job? In other words, did you see a vacancy announcement and you applied? Did somebody come to you and said, "We *want* you to apply"? How did that work this time?

Stessman: I was looking for a change. I had been offered by the regional director a reassignment to the Flathead Indian Irrigation Project in western Montana, and I'd looked at that, and decided for personal reasons *and* professional reasons I didn't want the job.

But I was looking for a change for myself for some of the reasons I mentioned before. You know, just from my knowledge of who was where and what's happening, I had identified some other positions that I would be interested in. For example, I'd looked into the North Platte Project located in Casper, and I was kind of watching that as far as where the Manager is and whether he's going to

leave or not. I knew the Manager at the Garrison Project, the Missouri-Souris Project Office in Bismarck. I knew he was thinking of leaving. So I talked with him, and I think I told him that if he left, I'd have an interest. No, you know what, it wasn't that way. His assistant, his deputy, who was a 14, was transferring to Denver, I think. Dennis Schroeder.[12]

Storey: Yeah, he did transfer to Denver.

Stessman: To Denver, yeah. And so I knew the project manager and I talked with him, and I kind of had a feel that the project manager would probably leave, himself, before too long. So I talked with him about that I might be interested in being considered to replace Dennis Schroeder as his deputy on a lateral. In talking with him, I found out that he was going to leave, himself, and create a vacancy. So I'd inquired about that and was aware when the vacancy occurred and they advertised it. By that time I knew people in every region in the Bureau, and so I had some contacts in management here in Billings, which is the headquarters that was do[ing] the hiring on the manager position in Bismarck.

Meetings among Managers in the Pacific Northwest Region

Storey: While you were Project Manager at the Central Snake Office, what kinds of meetings were there that you were attending? For instance, did all the project managers get together and meet, and, if so, what did they talk about and how often and all those kinds of things?

Stessman: I don't know what we called it, but we had something like a regional manager's meeting periodically. So this was more or less all of the managers from the Pacific Northwest Region, field offices, and managers from the regional office. That would be, without counting, I would imagine something in the neighborhood of twenty or twenty-five people. And off the top I would say we probably met three or four times a year, more or less depending on who was the regional director. Rod Vissia tended to use those kind of meetings and the collaboration of those kind of meetings more than others.

So we would deal with common issues, new policies, problems. We would deal with conflicts, conflict resolution, that sort of thing. A lot of times it would be issues from a project perspective with a regional office. Rod Vissia particularly was an advocate for organizational development, transactional analysis, interaction and so on, so he used the regional training officer to facilitate the meetings, and they would be designed to deal with issues and problems, deal toward resolution, and to be very participative and interactive–excellent. We had those kind of meetings with the subsequent regional directors, Bill Lloyd and John Keys, as well, although they took on a little bit different character.

One of the things that made Rod Vissia exceptional as a manager was the

12. The Reclamation history program conducted oral history interviews with Dennis Schroeder who later retired as the manager of the Phoenix Area Office–as construction work on the Central Arizona Project wound down.

time and energy he would put into identifying organizational interpersonal conflicts and sort of move people toward dealing with those and resolving them.

Storey: What about budget issues? Did they come up at those meetings?

Stessman: They did and they would. At that particular time in the agency, I would say, from my perspective, that there was a lot more authority placed in the regional program office than there is now. Now I think we involve the area managers and the program and budget people in the area offices to a much greater extent and give them a much greater role in making program and budget decisions than we did at that time.

So it was quite a bit more top-down from the standpoint of the regional program officer sort of making program and budget decisions affecting project operations, but we still did have discussions, meetings about budget matters. I mean, you could protest and you could object. I think at this particular time we involve them up front in their part of the decision process generally to a much greater extent than then.

Storey: Since you've raised that issue, is it an improved process?

Evolution of the Budget Process in Reclamation

Stessman: I think so. I mean, in some ways it's cleaner and less troublesome if somebody at a high level is given the authority to make decisions and says, "This is the decision. Lump it. You know, live by it. Here's how much money you get for this." I mean, in some ways that's cleaner and things move along more rapidly than the way we do it. But I think it's probably a lot better in the results.

Storey: Well, I got the impression under the old program sessions that's what was done, but it was done with the regional directors. And now I see a process where you have maybe one regional director, one higher manager–I guess you would call him a higher manager–a couple of area people, making decisions that affect your region.

Storey: Well, there's more to it than that. I mean, like right now we're putting out budget guidance for the fiscal year 1999 process, and *that* information is being given to people in the project offices and I would say lower-level people than we did twenty years ago. Whether we're doing it well enough, probably not. But here goes guidance. This is what top management in the organization sees as the general direction that you need as far as expectations of what the president will ultimately put in his budget for fiscal year 1999, which the President is not going to do until January or February of '98, a year and a half from now.

So the process for a substantial amount of time now, six months or so, will be at a lower level which will create something that comes up from that level in the organization to a regional budget, proposed budget, and from there to the BRC, this team of area manager, regional director, whatever composition it winds up having. And, no, I think it has a lot of benefit that this is not so top-down anymore but more

bottom-up to a decision level.

Now, it burns a lot of energy, and there's a lot of gnashing of the teeth and turmoil that's created, and a lot of frustration with the amount of work that it takes to go through all of these processes, and maybe even afterward you're going to get a lot of feedback that, "You didn't listen to us anyway," and maybe that occurs in some cases. But I think, generally speaking, I give the process a lot more credit than that.

Storey: Good. What about meetings beyond the region of the project managers? Do you remember anything?

"At the time that I was project manager, the project manager meetings were somewhat out of vogue. . . ."

Stessman: I attended a few. Maybe only one. I kind of have to think about my history here. At the time that I was project manager, the project manager meetings were somewhat out of vogue.

There was sort of a calamitous project manager meeting in the early eighties, probably about 1983 or before, that I think caused top management to decide that it maybe wasn't a good idea to have project manager meetings. I don't know if you've ever heard of it.

Storey: No.

Stessman: But there was a meeting in Washington.

Storey: D.C., I take it.

Stessman: Yeah. I think it was in Washington, D.C. That was very acrimonious. I wasn't there. That was before I became a project manager. So they were not too much in vogue at that time. So we're talking about sort of super regional meetings, right?

Storey: Yes. I was wondering if there was anything else going on.

"Up until the very late seventies, it was a tradition to have an annual operation and maintenance meeting . . . the headquarters, Denver, and regional operations and maintenance people met on an annual basis. That was a meeting that involved, I think, a very large number of people . . ."

Stessman: Here's what, in my history of Reclamation, I'm aware of. Up until the very late seventies, it was a tradition to have an annual operation and maintenance meeting where not so much the project office people, but the headquarters, Denver, and regional operations and maintenance people met on an annual basis. That was a meeting that involved, I think, a very large number of people, maybe 200 people, 150 to 200 people, and dealt with operations and maintenance issues. It was like a big annual conference. I think there may have been meetings of that type in other

areas such as planning, etcetera, but those meetings would be three or four days long, and they'd be in different locations each year, and annual conference notes were produced and so on. I don't know if you've seen them, but I'm sure they're a part of the library of records of Reclamation.

"Subsequent to that, there was a movement to have project manager meetings instead, and these very large O&M meetings went out the door. . . ."

Subsequent to that, there was a movement to have project manager meetings instead, and these very large O&M meetings went out the door. The project manager meetings were tried. The one that I mentioned with all the acrimony set people back for a while. So I think it was several years before any more were tried.

I attended one in about '85, '86. At the time we had an acting commissioner. His name is Bob Olson, That meeting was held in Arizona, as I recall, Phoenix area, maybe Carefree. Part of the process of that meeting was a kind of a brainstorming with feedback to management, and that didn't go very well either. That was poorly received. So then, I think, project managers weren't revived again until about 1988 or 1989.

Storey: What kinds of issues did they talk about when they got together nationwide like that or westwide like that?

Stessman: Project manager meetings?

Storey: Yeah.

Stessman: I don't remember. I could come up with the meeting minutes or notes or reports from some of those past meetings. But I think policy, new policy, changes in policy, contracting, water operations, things like we've talked about here. What do you do about urbanization? Things that headquarters wanted to teach or instruct project management about, on the one hand, and on the other hand things that project managers wanted to find out what others were doing about and bring issues or problems.

Storey: Do you recall any special assignments while you the project manager at Central Snake? Pulled off to go to Washington to defend the project from this, or brought in for a personnel thing or anything like that?

While Project Manager at the Central Snake Project Office, Served on a Committee to Review the Organization of the Lower Missouri Region in Denver and the Upper Missouri Region in Billings

Stessman: I think it was during the time that I was the project manager there that I was on a team that reviewed, more or less, the organizational structure in what used to be the Lower Missouri Region, headquartered in Denver. And also right about that same time I was on a team that did a similar thing with respect to the Upper Missouri Region, headquartered in Billings. Both of those assignments would have been in

like the 1982 to 1985 time frame, I think.

Storey: That would have been when Lower Missouri was abolished, I guess, soon after that.

Stessman: Yeah. It seems to me that it was several years, two or so years before–

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Storey: A couple of years before the region was consolidated.

Stessman: I think it was a couple of years before the Lower Missouri Region was consolidated in with Upper Missouri.

Storey: What kinds of conclusions and issues were your teams looking at?

Stessman: When I was on the team, which was about three to five people, that reviewed the Upper Missouri Region here, a couple of the substantial issues that were referred to us were the potential closure of the Oahe construction office. This is what at one time was a very large office located here in South Dakota. And another was the planning function, as I recall, that was located in the Missouri-Souris Project Office in Bismarck.

Joe Marcotte as Regional Director in Denver

At the time, there was an acting regional director here in Billings for the Upper Missouri Region. His name is Joe Marcotte, and he had been the acting regional director for maybe as long as year, quite a while, and was trying to deal with the question of whether to retain or close the Oahe construction office here in South Dakota.

Review Team Recommended Closing the Oahe Construction Office

I think he knew that it was time to give up the ship and close the office, but I think it was important to have a recommendation from the team. I was part of the team and we did an evaluation, and it was quite apparent that it was time to close the office. So we did recommend that, and that action was subsequently taken.

Review Team Recommended Moving Planning from the Bismarck Project Office to the Region

Relating to the Bismarck office, to my best recollection, I think we recommended consolidating the planning function into the regional office from the Bismarck office. I think those were the most significant recommendations we made. We had other recommendations, as I recall, produced a report related to the way the regional office operated. I think we had recommendations relative to the Pierre office in South Dakota. There were probably others. That's what I remember off the top of my head.

Major Issue in the Lower Missouri Region Was Whether to Consolidate the Fryingpan-Arkansas Project Office with the Colorado-Big Thompson Project Office in Loveland

On the Lower Missouri Region, the major questions, that I recall, were should the Pueblo field office, which was the office for the Fryingpan-Arkansas, be consolidated with the Colorado-Big Thompson Project Office in Loveland? As I recall, we *didn't* recommend that. If we did, we recommended that it be done over the course of time. I think it was at that time that they did decide to consolidate the Pueblo office into the Loveland office. In other words, Fryingpan-Arkansas was consolidated in with the Colorado-Big Thompson Project.

The other major thing I recall was that we were charged with assessing whether the dams and reservoirs which were being operated by the Bureau of Reclamation headquartered out of McCook or Grand Island, I think McCook, whether those reservoirs should be turned over to the irrigation districts for operation and maintenance. We assessed that situation and we didn't recommend that they be turned over. We recommended that they'd be retained in operation and maintenance by Reclamation.

Storey: What would have influenced you to make that recommendation?

Stessman: Well, there's a report and probably reflects our thinking. As I recall, it had to do with multipurpose considerations–flood control, recreation, and other considerations–and I think where we came down was with the belief that the sort of public interest in those other benefits would be better protected if the Bureau of Reclamation continued to operate the facilities themselves rather than turn them over to either an organization of irrigation districts or to the districts, I guess. The regional director, I think, was inclined to think they should be turned over.

Storey: That would have been Bill Martin, maybe?

Stessman: Right.

Storey: Do you recall anything about the kinds of training that you were taking while you were in Boise as the project manager?

Attended OPM Training at the University of California-Berkeley

Stessman: Yeah, I do. I tried to avail myself of training that was available. I had a couple of exceptional opportunities, I think. One was that I attended a course that the Office of Personnel Management, OPM, used to operate in Berkeley, California, at the University of California. It was a two-week program. It was operated at a hotel right on the campus, and it was management and policy kind of orientation. The program director, course director, had a series of impressive people from government and private industry, academia, etcetera, that would make presentations about some policy issues or resource issues, whatever, and then we'd have a healthy amount of time for interaction with the speaker and among ourselves, those kind of

things, and people from many different agencies.

Resource Management Training by Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon

The other most exceptional one, one of the most imprinting affecting kind of training that I ever had an opportunity for, was a program that was done by Lewis and Clark College in Portland. Do you want to know more about the programs? Is that where your interest is?

Storey: Sure. Please. Please tell me about them.

Stessman: Okay. This had a resource management orientation to it. The instructor, the professor, if you will, was a person who was retired from the Forest Service, had been what I think would be the equivalent of a regional director, had been forest supervisor on at least one national forest in the West, and had been at headquarters high-level positions in the Forest Service. So he knew a lot of people, had dealt with a lot of issues, and had an understanding of significant resource management issues in government, and also had a lot of connections, knew a lot of people. Can't think of his name right now. I've got a lot of notes in my file. I still refer to them once in a while.

It was a seminar-type thing, and it involved three separate seminars over a period of a significant number of months, like nine months maybe. So each seminar concentrated on a particular resource management issue in government that had more or less been dealt with and come to fruition, and then dissected the thing and went over like all the considerations and issues that were dealt with in the development, evolution, sort of resolution of that resource management issue. And, again, the approach was to bring in players and give a presentation to the class and then have the class have a very plentiful opportunity for dialogue interaction with the player and among themselves, among the class.

So there were something like ten to thirteen students in the program, and for the most part all ten to thirteen of us were in the entire class of three seminars. The seminars were like eight days in duration. So we'd gather on Sunday, Saturday night, I think, and then we were together through the following Saturday.

The first one was somewhere in the Flathead area in western Montana, and the resource issue had to do with a proposed thermal coal-fired powerplant that was to be built in Canada on Cabin Creek, which is a tributary to the North Fork of the Flathead, that being the western boundary of Glacier National Park. So a lot of issues about endangered species, wolves, bear, whatever impacts, potential impacts on National Forests, Glacier National Park, boundary waters, waters flowing into the United States from Canada, air quality, acid rain, the Salish and Kootenai tribes of the Flathead Indian Reservation, etcetera, legislation. So it was pretty comprehensive and interesting–a lot of really significant resource issues.

Incidentally, I really came to see where Reclamation, especially as we've recognized ourselves as a resource management agency, particularly in the last

three or four years, where Reclamation has so much parallel to and with other resource management agencies in the Federal government–the Bureau of Land Management, the Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Forest Service, whoever, that are involved in resource issues–ours happens to be water. Theirs happens to be timber, mining, grazing, oil and gas, whatever. But we're not so much different than them. We're really involved in resource management issues like they are.

I'd like to see us as an agency recognize that a little more. I'd even like to see a little more interaction between ourselves and those other agencies or even trading managers, because I think it would be healthy for the organization to understand the extent to which we're really involved in resource management, just like these other Federal agencies are–the Bureau of Land Management, the National Forest Service, etcetera. The participants in the class, the classmates, were people from state and Federal, some private resource management people. It was really neat, really neat, the best thing I've really had an opportunity to be involved in from the standpoint of training in Reclamation.

In short, the other two seminars were on coal leasing in the Upper Great Plains, and we had that session up here, and it dealt with the Powder River Basin.

Storey: In Billings, you mean?

Stessman: Yeah. We had it in Billings. And then the third was on the boundary waters area in Minnesota, canoeing, wilderness area kind of thing. I don't know if you meant for me to be that lengthy, but those two especially stand out as exceptional training opportunities.

Storey: At this stage in your career, what were your career plans, do you remember?

Stessman: We're talking about the stage when I was project manager in Boise and going to Bismarck?

Storey: In Boise transitioning to Bismarck.

While at the Missouri-Souris Project Office Thought He Would Stay in Project Management

Stessman: I thought that I wanted to stay at the project management level. It wasn't my intention to like become a regional director.

Storey: So you weren't really looking at the SES [Senior Executive Service] at that time, maybe.

"Project manager, area manager jobs are wonderful jobs. There's a lot of satisfaction in doing that job well as an area manager. . . ."

Stessman: I wasn't, no. No, I thought I would be satisfied to–and those are wonderful jobs.

Project manager, area manager jobs are wonderful jobs. There's a lot of satisfaction in doing that job well as an area manager.

Storey: Well, I'd like to keep going, but I've used up my two hours again. I appreciate it.

Stessman: It doesn't seem possible.

Storey: I'd like to ask you whether you're willing to let researchers use the information on these tapes and the resulting transcripts.

Stessman: Yes.

Storey: Thank you very much.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 2. SEPTEMBER 17, 1996.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 1. SEPTEMBER 18, 1996.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing Regional Director Neil Stessman, in his office in Billings, Montana, on September 18, 1996, at about two o'clock in the afternoon. This is tape one.

Yesterday you were just starting to talk, I think, about how you wanted to be a project manager and that was sort of your goal at that time, and you had just sort of peripherally touched on a topic that a *lot* of other folks have brought up, and that is that you thought the project manager job was the best job in Reclamation. Could I get you to talk about that a little more, please?

"I think it has the attribute of being somewhat autonomous and somewhat of an opportunity to be the captain of a ship, and it is sort of at the point of delivery of the service of Reclamation . . ."

Stessman: I will. Yeah, I think those are really good jobs. I think it has the attribute of being somewhat autonomous and somewhat of an opportunity to be the captain of a ship, and it is sort of at the point of delivery of the service of Reclamation, should be what we're all about, providing those services, whether it's delivering water to irrigators or a thermal powerplant or generating power and putting it on the transmission line or restoring a wetland or regulating flows to the advantage somewhat of a fishery in a river, etcetera, showing visitors around. It's good, and I like the autonomy aspect of it.

"I think Reclamation is *fairly* good at giving its field managers the reins and the opportunity to sort of use their own style . . . a fair amount of liberty to be a problem-solver rather than somebody who's closely regulated and highly regimented under a set of rules. . . ."

I think Reclamation is *fairly* good at giving its field managers the reins and the opportunity to sort of use their own style under certain regimen of laws and contracts and policy and rules and so on, but a fair amount of liberty to be a

problem-solver rather than somebody who's closely regulated and highly regimented under a set of rules.

Typically the organizations are significant enough, large enough that you get an opportunity to exercise and practice some management and management skills. Generally speaking, we have very skilled and competent people in a lot of our area offices and project offices. We have people who are extremely *dedicated* to whatever purpose their job is about. We tend to have a low turnover [of] employees, so we have a lot of employees who have a lot of institutional knowledge, project knowledge, customer knowledge, situation knowledge. That's pretty fascinating and pretty impressive. Project offices, you have *more* situations where you can see the product of your efforts, more real time.

Storey: Of course, you were in the project offices when they were project offices rather than area offices.

Stessman: Um-hmm.

Storey: Things have changed lately, and my impression is most of the area offices now have more autonomy.

Stessman: They do.

Storey: And in what ways would you have been constrained back when you were in that position that you wouldn't be nowadays?

Regional Division Chiefs Had More Authority to Run Programs in the Old Project Manager Days

Stessman: I know our region better than I know the other regions, but one of the differences is that in the old project manager days, there was more responsibility, more authority given to the division chiefs in the regional office to run programs, to be a program manager for the region, and to make decisions, program decisions at the regional office level that were then to be carried out at the project offices.

In this region, we do very little of that at the present time. We have very, very few cases where a *person* in the regional office is responsible for the program that's being done in an area office. The regional office is much more of a service office, which is intended to assist the area offices in carrying out their missions.

Before Reorganization, Great Plains Region Had Thirteen Managers–it Now Has Two

For example, we had something like thirteen people in the regional office that you would call managers–the major divisions of the Design and Construction, which we used to call the 200 Division, the Operation and Maintenance Division, which we called the 400 Division; the Planning, which was the 700 Division; and Office of Environment or whatever, we called 150. Each of those–there's four

managers right there–had a pretty substantial amount of authority with respect to what program decisions were made out at the project offices. Those are four of, like I said, about thirteen different managers that we used to have in the regional office.

In this regional office, we now have two managers. We have one manager over the technical side of the organization, we call it Resource Management Services Group, and one manager over the administrative side of the organization. They both understand their jobs to be service to the carrying out of the Reclamation function at the area offices. The administrative side is called the Support Services Group. We've eliminated those numerous manager positions, and I think it's made a tremendous difference in what the relationship is between a project–now it's area office–and the regional office.

Changing Relationship Between Region and Field Offices

What I used to hear a *lot* early on when I was regional director was references to the regional office as my office. I'm the regional director. I'm located here where the regional office is. The area office or project office people would say, "I'm having a problem with your office." Well, my reaction is, "You're my office. Wyoming Area Office is my office. Dakotas is my area office. Montana Area Office is my office. Not just the regional office is my office."

That's because the old model was that the regional director *ran* the region through the regional office managers. It was kind of a struggle ongoing between area managers to try to run their own programs, and on the other hand the extent to which the regional director or someone was trying to run things from the regional office. I think we've changed that very, very substantially toward an autonomous situation for the area offices and the area manager, still accountable to the Regional director. What we say in this region is that the area manager *shares* responsibility for the program with the regional director.

Storey: That's quite a change, I think.

Stessman: I think it is. Yeah, I think a still shot from about 1992 or 1990 or that, of, if you could, how this organization, the Great Plains Region and its area offices, how we operated then and how we operate now, if it were possible to look at two still photographs, it would be a different family picture.

So as part of that concept, I try to promote the concept that we have seven offices and a directorate in this region. The directorate is myself and the deputy and, to some extent, this front office we have here, this suite with the native american affairs special assistant, the deputy regional director, and the secretarial/clerical people here, and seven offices. The seven offices are six area offices and *one* regional service office, which is the regional office. When I first worked in regional offices, which I did to some extent in Upper Colorado, and I did in PN [Pacific Northwest], we ran things out of the regional office much more.

You know, we still need to work on this relationship thing between the different segments of the organization, from area office to regional office to Denver Reclamation Service Center and Washington. I think it's perhaps less of a problem than it was most of the rest of the thirty-some years that I've been in Reclamation, but it still needs work, the sort of corporate attitude. We have a tendency to think that where we happen to be is the most vital and important part of the organization rather than seeing the whole corporate structure and that we're a compatible partnering *piece* of something that's a corporate one. I think that has been in the history of Reclamation a very significant problem over the years, but I think it's better now than it's ever been, and I think it still needs quite a bit of work and attention. But it's substantially better.

Storey: One of the things I'm always interested in is who's responsible for what at what time, and there's a lot of fuzziness in that, and it's a very interesting organizational topic, I think.

Stessman: Yeah. And to people who come in and look at it, they can be dubious about it, the way it is today. Right now we're just on the closing end of a review of our safety-of-dams program by an outside group of experts, and one of their perceptions is that it's not clear who's responsible. To me, it's clear. To me, the area manager has ultimate responsibility for the dams in that area. I'm not saying that it's stupid of them to think that it's not clear, because it's a conceptual thing that's quite a bit different from a lot of organizations, and it's so much different than it used to be in Reclamation. But I think at the present time, my own view is that there's so much more traceable accountability in this organization *now* than there was years ago.

On this particular point, I can remember when I was in the PN Region and I was the 400 Division Chief. In other words, I was the regional operations and maintenance person. When we would have an issue come up over a safety-of-dams problem, we had at least three division chiefs who had a piece of the responsibility for safety of dams. When you have several responsible, then no one is fully accountable or responsible. We used to have the structure which involved confusion as to what's the role of Denver, generally, and what's the role of Washington, and then if Denver has responsibility, then how much responsibility have they that the regional director in the region doesn't have? There were so many layers that you had to go through for approval and acceptance of things.

Under the recent reorganization ". . . it's a lot of responsibility for area managers. So it's a lot more of the job of the regional director to try to support the needs of the area managers and to coach and mentor area managers, because they're in a new realm of fairly substantial and independent responsibility for things. . . . "

I think it's a lot clearer now this way, but it's a lot of responsibility for area managers. So it's a lot more of the job of the regional director to try to support the needs of the area managers and to coach and mentor area managers, because they're in a new realm of fairly substantial and independent responsibility for things. They're a lot less able to say, "Don't look at me. I'm just getting orders from up above." The example I gave you about one of our hydrologists being out in a public

meeting and saying, "No, it isn't somebody else. It's me. I'm responsible," our area managers have to say that a lot more, "It isn't some faceless hidden bureaucrat two thousand miles away who's making this decision. It's me. I'm making the decision. I'm responsible."

"We've made a lot of headway, I think, as an organization in getting area managers to [take responsibility and make decisions] . . . It's not exclusive, and they get overturned, and things come up where an area manager makes a decision and maybe the regional director reverses it or it gets reversed at headquarters by the commissioner or someone. I get frustrated with that kind of thing myself . . ."

We've made a lot of headway, I think, as an organization in getting area managers to the place where they do that. It's not exclusive, and they get overturned, and things come up where an area manager makes a decision and maybe the regional director reverses it or it gets reversed at headquarters by the commissioner or someone. I get frustrated with that kind of thing myself, but I really think we've made a lot of progress as an organization.

Storey: Let's go back to when you were project manager at the Missouri-Souris Project Office. That's Bismarck?

Stessman: Yeah.

Storey: Where were we in the Garrison Project at that point? You went there in '87, I believe you said.

Reformulation of the Garrison Project in 1986

Stessman: The project had been reformulated in 1986,[13] and that legislation was very radical. It had scaled down the irrigation component of the project tremendously, and introduced some other initiatives.

Reformulation of the Garrison Project Also Introduced Rural Water Systems Where Reclamation Would Transfer Funds to the State to Design and Construct the Systems

One of those was to do rural water systems. Actually, they're called municipal, rural, and industrial water systems, *with* the state of North Dakota on a grant program.

The revised legislation provided authority for 200 million dollars of funds over time to be transferred basically to the state of North Dakota, unlike most of Reclamation history, where Reclamation has done the engineering, construction, and even some retaining ownership and being involved in operations and maintenance. These systems were to be done differently, and the law and the

13. The Garrison Diversion Unit Reformulation Act of 1986 of May 12, 1986, Public Law 99-294, 100 Stat. 418.

congressional history spoke about that, that it was meant to be done differently, that it would be transfer of funds, and others would do the bulk of the engineering, design, and construction.

Storey: And ownership?

Stessman: And ownership is not with the United States.

Garrison Project Reformulation Directed That Wildlife Mitigate Be Kept Up-to-date

Another significant aspect was the wildlife program, which was really quite unprecedented in the direction that we got to go back and bring the mitigation up to date, to become concurrent with construction activities and the impacts that occurred. Very strong direction that we were not to perform additional construction work without mitigating for the impacts on a concurrent basis.

At that time, we were substantially behind. In other words, the ledger was way behind from the standpoint of mitigating for the impacts of the construction that had occurred. It had some unique requirements for the purchase of lands for a national wildlife refuge, eliminating some reservoir sites, conversion of the Lone Tree Dam and Reservoir area, for which about over 30,000 acres of land had been acquired for a reservoir–for the conversion of that to a wildlife management area, and then the establishment of the North Dakota Wetland Trust which I think Reclamation had to get appropriations of 12 million dollars over succeeding years for transfer to the North Dakota Wetland Trust. There were more details, but, anyway, that legislation.

Culinary Water for Indian Reservations

Another really significant part of it, I don't want to forget to say, was for us to work with three of the Indian reservations in North Dakota on culinary water systems and 20 million dollars, a little over 20 million dollars of authority was provided for those systems on Fort Totten, Fort Berthold and the Standing Rock Sioux Reservations. That particular piece of it put us in a position of needing to work with Indian tribes on developing water systems for the reservations, pretty significant new activity that's had a big effect on us ever since.

Garrison Diversion Commission Established

Anyway, that legislation had occurred in 1986, and it followed some really tumultuous times where there were court cases and a lot of difficulty with environmental concerns, concerns about the economics of the project, and so on. A national level commission had been required by legislation to be set up by the secretary, and there was a process where that commission in 1984 held hearings in the state and in Washington[, D.C.,] and took testimony and comment and produced a set of recommendations for the project. This was the Garrison Diversion Commission, their report of 1984, which became generally the basis for the restructuring of the project in the amendment to the legislation, the legislative

action that took place in 1986.

So all of that time, from 1984, when the commission was first established, until two years later when the legislation finally passed, was a reformulation time for the project.

Lone Tree Dam and Reservoir under Construction

In the meantime, construction of Lone Tree Dam and Reservoir, which is right in the middle of the state and a real *key* part of the project, was suspended. Reclamation was well under way with the construction of the dam, had acquired virtually all the land.

Construction Stopped on Lone Tree Dam and Reservoir

I think we terminated a construction contractor. We had spent, I think, over 20 million dollars on construction of the dam, and we suspended the contractor and sort of mothballed things, pending a decision about what's to happen with the project. This is pre-1984.

Then you go to the commission process. The commission holds all these public hearings, lots of press, and all this time the construction is being suspended. We've got a Reclamation staff in Bismarck and several other places around the state somewhat in suspense, waiting for direction about how to complete the project. That goes on until the mandatory legislation in 1986.

I was picked as project manager and went in there around the first of August of 1987. The previous ~~area~~ [project] manager who had been there maybe, I think, approaching nine or ten years had retired earlier in the year and left. The assistant area manager had transferred to Denver. So those two positions were vacant, and one of the assistant regional directors from Billings here had been the acting manager for several months when I got there. It had taken that long, from '86 until then, but it was at a time where we were ready to really kind of get rolling with the new direction of the project.

Storey: So what did that involve for you then?

Garrison Diversion Project Changed in the Late 1980s

Stessman: Extremely interesting. It was a very challenging time. The charge, or direction, of Reclamation was certainly different than what it had been before, and it was an opportunity for us to show that we could be a contemporary agency meeting current needs. In some ways it was fortunate that we had the direction we did from Congress through the commission report and through the congressional action, because whereas it had always been understood that you needed to mitigate for wetlands that you destroyed or damaged or were losing as a result of a development activity, as was indicated by the fact that on that project we were very substantially *behind* in the amount of mitigation we had done, those things tended to be

sometimes given less priority than advancing the construction of the project, and the direction of Congress was, "Absolutely not. You do those concurrently. Bureau of Reclamation, you need to get current on wildlife and wetland and other kinds of mitigation." So the direction was there, the support was there, the mandate was there, and it was kind of invigorating, actually, to sort of have the opportunity to be involved with a change of direction.

Storey: Were you past the point of having to deal with the supporters and the defenders and the detractors of the project?

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BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1. SEPTEMBER 18, 1996.

Storey: ... or was that still an issue?

Stessman: I'd say it was still an issue. Even to this day, there are advocates for the way the project was going before. There are advocates who would say that ~~we~~ [they] got a raw deal from the commission, ~~we~~ [they] got a raw deal from the legislation, that what ~~we~~ [they] should have is what ~~we~~ [they] believe ~~we~~ [they] were promised way back in the forties and fifties when the Pick-Sloan Project was first authorized–dealt with. There was a commitment made at that time, [these] people say. There was a commitment made at that time that the state of North Dakota should get Federal development of a million-acre irrigation project, and the '86 authorization reduced the acreage to 130,000, roughly, acres. Some of that was on Indian reservations. I think 17,000 of that was on Indian reservations. So ~~we're~~ [they're] not getting what ~~we~~ [they] were promised.

Sykeston Canal

So, no, the days of advocacy were not gone. In fact, part of the '86 legislation was direction to the secretary that the Lone Tree Reservoir was to be replaced as a project feature with the Sykeston Canal as an alternative connection between the McClusky Canal, which is bringing water from the Missouri River over to the divide. The Sykeston Canal then was to be the connecting facility to take that water over to the New Rockford Canal and facilities that could deliver into the James River Basin and even to the Red River Basin.

Between the time of the reformulation legislation in May of 1986 until even after I got there, there were people in sort of management positions with the conservancy district and the state of North Dakota who were still trying to advocate for the reservoir, even though the legislation had made it clear that the Sykeston Canal was to be a substitute for the reservoir. That particular push by project advocates even carried over, I'd say, at least into the early nineties.

Storey: Did that advocacy have any effect on your work?

"There was the feeling on the part of a lot of people that the Bureau of Reclamation was betraying people and entities that we had associated ourselves

with for many years, and there's a kind of disloyalty, a traitorism, a betrayal in that. . . .”

Stessman: Well, it had a lot of effect on my work, yeah, and the work of our employees. This is a tremendous change of direction. There was the feeling on the part of a lot of people that the Bureau of Reclamation was betraying people and entities that we had associated ourselves with for many years, and there's a kind of disloyalty, a traitorism, a betrayal in that. So, yeah, that affects your work a lot. It makes work very interesting, largely because of the change.

You know, a lot of that challenge is [found] internally. We've always had employees who were very committed to what they were doing and were not just involved because they have to get a paycheck or for the skill they delivered, but because people generally believed in what they were doing and were committed to the ends and objectives that Reclamation project authorizations were intended to deliver. So that's extremely challenging to be involved in a change of direction.

To a very great extent, our mandate became as much to develop and restore wetlands, ~~as it was,~~ as it *is* to develop a canal, irrigation, other sort of missions that were very traditional with us. So there's a sort of conversion that needs to take place. That takes some selling to convince the employees that that's what we need to apply our best efforts to, and those kind of changes take time. But in this case, it was quite abrupt.

There Were Starts and Stops in the Garrison Diversion Project

A lot of the employees had been through just year after year of turmoil where the project would begin to go and then it would stop. Some administration would not be supportive of it. Maybe there would be an election. Like, I think, the [Jimmy] Carter Administration, I think, put the Garrison Project on the Hit List. It was one of them. So employees, to some extent, get up one day and their job is in jeopardy. All of a sudden, the headquarters in Washington or the Secretary's office or the President or someone has put the project that you're on on a Hit List for non-funding. So over the years, I think a lot of the employees who stayed, who stuck with it, were those most committed to it.

Storey: Well, this brings us to a topic that I guess we can cover here as well here as anywhere else that you mentioned earlier, before we started taping today, and that's this issue of the *balancing* act that has to be done out in the area offices. How do you fulfill your responsibilities to the public and, in doing that, not become sort of the sponsor or the left-hand guy/person, for the water districts? I think within Reclamation there has been in the past, at least, considerable perception that the project offices were fulfilling that. They were out there *sponsoring* the irrigation districts' *projects*, and not necessarily looking at the good of Reclamation as a whole and the public good. What are your perceptions of that over the years, of that issue?

In Reclamation's Early Years the Local Staff Were Project Proponents

Stessman: I think when the agency was first chartered, if you will, in 1902, that the role of the agency was to promote development, and it meant this for a number of decades after 1902, not just in 1902 to 1905 or some really early phase of it. I believe, my perception of what history was, that Reclamation's job was to not only respond to local initiatives, but more or less sponsor local initiatives and sort of teach and guide, and mentor the locals in what needed to be done to conceive, develop, implement and operate a project.

So it was our very activity, I think, that Reclamation, with the direction or mandate to promote the development of these local irrigated agriculture communities, had much more of a local perspective and less of a national perspective. In other words, I think the perspective was to focus in on the project area, the local economy, and to invest and encourage development of the project for what it would do with the local economy in many cases, without looking at the regional or national economics of that particular move.

The concept, to some extent, being that if it's good locally and if it's good in a *lot* of localities all around the West where Reclamation is building, then an aggregate, it will be great for the West as a whole and good for the nation, and it was and it is. But there's that time in there when the job began to be accomplished, or close to being accomplished, that Reclamation was mandated to do in 1902, when this begins to be called into question and it begins to be a little more confusing and a little less certain as to how we're suppose to do this, how is the agency to operate and do its job and what's it to do.

In the early times, I think you'd find where Reclamation was part of publishing brochures to sell people to come to the Columbia Basin Project and be part of this new and invigorating thing that's going to be good for the local economy and you personally and the nation, to change from that to having to recognize that we in Reclamation as public servants are responsible to the whole nation, the greater public, and not just to a single constituency in a particular location.

"I guess what I'm trying to describe is an era of turmoil and change that was taking place and *needs* to take place to get from the earlier times and mandate of Reclamation to the year 2000 and modern times . . ."

I guess what I'm trying to describe is an era of turmoil and change that was taking place and *needs* to take place to get from the earlier times and mandate of Reclamation to the year 2000 and modern times, when it's much more clear that we're to look at the national economics, we're to represent the nation as its public servants, rather than *just* being responsive to a narrow and single constituency in a local place.

In North Dakota on the Garrison Project, 1987 certainly was still in that era of the shading between when it was clear one way and now when it's pretty clear the other way. So I don't know. I'm *glad* I was a piece of it. I'm glad I was a part of it. It was a tremendous piece of experience, but it was very difficult and very

trying and very challenging and very stressful.

Storey: How did it work out, though?

Stessman: Well, I think it's worked out well so far.

Storey: Were you able, for instance, to begin to shift money into wildlife mitigation?

Stessman: I think we've been very successful in following the mandates of the '86 act and coming into line with the direction that the agency was given through the commission report and the Reformulation Act of 1986. You know, there are still some unsettled things, and the local project advocates are still quite unsatisfied with the results and with the products to date. They don't have an irrigation project.

Task Group Report on the Garrison Diversion Project

In 1990, the [George H. W.] Bush Administration wound up taking a very strong position, and it's been called a task group, a task group that was formed in 1990, and produced a report in the late 1990s called the Task Group Report. That report takes a pretty substantial adverse position to the expenditures by the Federal Government for some of the facilities, for the construction of some of the facilities, and it does it mostly on an economics basis.

"If economic feasibility is a requirement, and so far it looks like it is, then it's going to be very difficult to satisfy the sort of local demands for the project. . . ."

An Inspector General report was done about in that same time frame, I think, a little while before, that really questioned a lot of the economics and economic justification for development of a lot of the project features. So we are in a situation now where progress with water delivery facilities has been at a standstill for a number of years, and they're going to be hard to resolve. If economic feasibility is a requirement, and so far it looks like it is, then it's going to be very difficult to satisfy the sort of local demands for the project.

Storey: This is for irrigation water, we're talking about?

The 1986 Garrison Reformulation Act Requires Delivery of Missouri River Water into the Red River Basin for M&I Purposes

Stessman: Primarily irrigation water, yeah. There's also a requirement in the law in 1986 for the delivery of Missouri River water into the Red River Basin to supply basically a municipal and industrial water supply for–well, augmenting the industrial and municipal water supply for the Red River Valley. The Red River Valley is probably at least 40 percent of the population of the state, even though it's probably 15 percent or 20 percent of the area of the state, but it includes the cities of Fargo and Grand Forks and some other significant, but by standards of other states would be small towns, but for North Dakota fairly significant towns in the 5,000 to 15,000- 20,000 population range.

Delivery of Water into the Red River Basin Is Complicated by Canada's Concerns about Introducing Missouri River Biota to the Hudson Bay Drainage

Anyway, the '86 legislation calls for the delivery of 100 cubic feet per second of water in the Red River at Fargo, and there are some real substantial complications with that. One is the acceptability of Canada, and so far they've not been very accepting of the concept of Missouri River water being put into the Red River; a requirement for treatment of the water in order to satisfy Canada, which would be an extremely costly proposition; and then the necessity to construct a substantial amount more of very expensive facilities in order to get the water in a position where you can deliver it from the Missouri River to the Red River. The economic feasibility, in other words, the comparison of economic benefits to the economic costs for that are pretty questionable.

Study Underway to Determine Current and Projected Water Needs in the Red River Basin

We're doing a study right now in the Red River Basin and trying to do a detailed analysis of the needs. In other words, with the population and the *use* and the industrial development that's there now and that's projectable for the next, say, fifty years in the future, is there enough water in the basin to satisfy those needs? And if not, how much more would be needed? We're within maybe two months of completing our needs assessment on that, and it looks like it's going to show that there's nowhere near that kind of need for additional or augmented water supply in the basin. In fact, the indications so far are that the needs can be met pretty substantially.

"Some shortages in the most extreme droughts on record, but generally speaking, particularly with better water management, and there's the opportunity area, we think, for Reclamation for applying our efforts to assisting the locals with improved water management, better efficiency. . . ."

Some shortages in the most extreme droughts on record, but generally speaking, particularly with better water management, and there's the opportunity area, we think, for Reclamation for applying our efforts to assisting the locals with improved water management, better efficiency.

Storey: This is mostly M&I?

Stessman: Yes. In the Red River. Yeah. No irrigation at all.

Storey: Canada is concerned about–

Stessman: Canada has concerns about biota. The Red River flows from the United States north into Canada, into the Hudson Bay ultimately. In Manitoba there are substantial commercial fisheries in the Red River system. So Canada has concerns about the introduction of fish and other species that are in the Missouri River into the Hudson Bay drainage, into the Red River, and their concerns primarily are that

there could be species introduced that could affect the quality of their water and the fisheries in Canada, etcetera.

Storey: So they don't much care for that idea, I guess.

Stessman: No. We had discussions. Well, we've been having discussions under way with Canada for many years about it, even to this day.

Storey: Was the project office doing that?

Stessman: Discussions with Canada?

Storey: Yeah. Who does that?

The International Joint Commission and its Board–the International Souris-Red River Engineering Board of which Stessman is United States Chair

Stessman: Well, actually, I'm involved. There are two different committees or boards that the Bureau of Reclamation is involved in, that the United States is involved in, related to these water-quality considerations with Canada.

One is the International Joint Commission, which is a commission of three people in Canada and three in the United States, [which deals] ~~deal~~ with transboundary water issues for the whole boundary between Canada and the United States. The United States has three presidential appointees. Then the International Joint Commission has, under it, boards for certain area along the border. The one that applies in this case is called the International Souris-Red River Engineering Board, and I'm the United States Chairman of that board. That board is comprised of four members from the United States and four members from Canada.

Storey: How often do you meet and what do you talk about?

International Souris-Red River Engineering Board Reports Twice Annually to the International Joint Commission

Stessman: We produce two reports for the International Joint Commission per year. The mandate of the board is broader than just the Red River or the Garrison Project, but that's within the sort of scope of the things we report to them on. We usually have two meetings a year. Of late, the International Joint Commission has required that we have at least one *public* meeting, and we alternate having meetings in Canada and the United States.

Canada Became Concerned about the Garrison Diversion Project in the 1970s

We talk about pretty much all the identifiable transboundary water issues in those river basins, the Souris and Red River. From the ‘70s, the Canadians began to be concerned about the Garrison Project, specifically. I think it started with concerns in Winnipeg and in Manitoba about impacts on the Red River and impacts

on the fishery in Lake Winnipeg, which is where a lot of the commercial fishery is based, and then public reaction to maybe the perception in Canada that the United States was going to quite adversely affect the water as it comes into Canada.

So the Canadian Government at the diplomatic level in the seventies began to express concerns to the United States Government. Sometime in that time frame–this is apart from the International Joint Commission–the two governments have, through the Foreign Affairs in Canada and the State Department, have sort of established and maintained discussions between the two governments on the Garrison Project.

Chairs the International Join Technical Committee on Garrison

So I also am the chairperson of a committee, it's called the International Joint Technical Committee on Garrison. That committee consists of a counterpart to myself in Canada, a person from the federal agency called Environment Canada. Each side has three members additional, I think, and we meet as needed. Sometimes we meet as much as five or six times a year, and sometimes once a year or twice a year. That committee meets to look at, from a technical standpoint, the concerns of Canada relative to the Garrison Project and also kind of keeps Canada informed about what's happening with the project, particularly on matters that could affect the waters especially across the border.

Storey: All of these commissions and so on, is there staff that goes with them?

The Commissions Are Staffed by the Agencies of Members

Stessman: No, we're just staffed by our agencies. Like the International Souris-Red River Engineering Board, there's a member from the U.S. Geological Survey and the Corps of Engineers. Any staff needs I have to supply from Reclamation or they have to supply from their agencies.

Storey: So when you say they did reports, the board literally did the reports?

Stessman: Oh, yeah.

Storey: You've mentioned a couple of reports that were–

Stessman: Oh, yeah.

Storey: Okay. Does it look like there's a resolution?

Stessman: With Canada?

Storey: Yeah.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 1. SEPTEMBER 18, 1996.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2. SEPTEMBER 18, 1996.

Storey: This is Brit Storey with Neil Stessman on September the 18th, 1996.

Stessman: Yes, there's a resolution, I think. It's an evolving thing. For example, we have some cases where there are municipal, and some of these municipal, rural and industrial water projects in North Dakota that involve taking water from the Missouri River in North Dakota and delivering it outside the Missouri River Basin in an area that drains into Canada. Canada requires under the treaty of 1909 to know about that. Actually, the treaty says that neither side will pollute the waters going into the other, but, in essence, that means we'll consult with them and try to satisfy their concerns so that we don't break the treaty.

The boards that I'm on, the committee, it's our function to look at those things from a technical standpoint, not a diplomatic standpoint, but a technical standpoint, and try to determine how the proposed activity or project can be built and satisfy Canada's concerns, in other words, to do so without polluting the waters, and that might be treatment or whatever. In one case, the project developers wound up using groundwater rather than surface water, partly so as not to risk the concerns of Canada.

Northwest Area Water Supply System Is Planned to Deliver Water to Minot, North Dakota

Right now we're working on discussions on a very large municipal project called the Northwest Area Water Supply System. I think it's about a 100-million-dollar project that would take water from the Missouri River and deliver water to the city of Minot for treatment for municipal water supply, municipal and industrial water supply. What the project sponsors want to do is to do the basic water treatment after the water is delivered in Minot at the treatment plant. Well, that involved a pipeline full of Missouri River water for maybe fifty to seventy miles outside the Missouri River drainage. In other words, a substantial part of the pipeline is in a river basin that drains into Canada.

"So Canada is concerned about provisions to prevent rupture of the pipe or escape . . . of the water into a natural drainage which would result in the water flowing into Canada. . . ."

So Canada is concerned about provisions to prevent rupture of the pipe or escape or delivery of the water into a natural drainage which would result in the water flowing into Canada.

"What we're talking with project sponsors and Canada about is . . . a pretreatment process that is kind of in the middle. . . ."

What we're talking with project sponsors and Canada about is kind of a pretreatment process that is kind of in the middle. You have some pretreatment that maybe inoculates the water so you don't have the risk of the ~~pathogens~~ [biota], and yet you don't have to build a new treatment plant at the intake end of the water line. You could still do the primary water treatment in Minot. That's moving along.

In those sort of things, it's slow progress and you have to kind of deal with issue after issue, but we're getting there. They're just generally very good to deal with, but they have their concerns and they need to be dealt with.

Indian Water Systems and Effects on Reclamation's Programs

Storey: Earlier you mentioned the Indian water systems, and you mentioned that they had very far-reaching effects on Reclamation, but you didn't talk about what the effects were and how they occurred. Could you explore that for me, please?

Stessman: Yeah. Somehow in the period between the commission report and the reformulation of the Garrison Project in 1986, the Indian advocates who feel that the Indian tribes were very adversely affected by the construction of the big reservoirs on the Missouri River, part of the Pick-Sloan Project, and were not adequately compensated or their needs were not certainly adequately met, were successful in getting into the legislation provisions for these water systems.

". . . these [Indian] systems . . . were to be financed 100 percent from Federal funds without a cost-share . . . or a cost repayment requirement. . . . they are to be maintained in perpetuity . . . . at Federal expense and free to the users. . . ."

The charge that Reclamation had under the act was to determine the needs on those reservations, Fort Totten and Fort Berthold and Standing Rock. Authority was granted for funding up to about twenty and a half million dollars, and these systems to be built with the twenty and a half million dollars were to be financed 100 percent from Federal funds without a cost-share requirement or a cost repayment requirement. Beyond that, they are to be maintained in perpetuity. In other words, the operation and maintenance of the systems is also, by legislation, at Federal expense and free to the users.

Part of the needs-assessment process and the direction from Congress is that Congress basically said to the Bureau of Reclamation, "This twenty and a half million dollars we do not view as sufficient to meet the total water supply needs of these three reservations, so we expect the Secretary to perform the studies of assessing the needs, and if more than twenty and a half million dollars is needed to meet the needs of these reservations, then come back for additional authorization or additional ceiling."

"I think this is one of the first times that Reclamation has found itself developing a working relationship with Indian tribes for the development of municipal water supplies like these and rural water supplies like these, and I think we've found that the needs are really substantial. . . ."

I think this is one of the first times that Reclamation has found itself developing a working relationship with Indian tribes for the development of municipal water supplies like these and rural water supplies like these, and I think we've found that the needs are really substantial. This is a really critical need on many of the Indian reservations.

". . . we have not been generally viewed as an agency with a great deal of appreciation by Indian tribes in the West, because . . . In some cases, we've actually utilized a water supply that the tribes felt that under the treaty rights that they had a right to the water. . . ."

As a new activity for Reclamation, it's interesting, because we have not been generally viewed as an agency with a great deal of appreciation by Indian tribes in the West, because many times in the process of developing the traditional irrigation projects that we've developed, the Indian tribes have not been supportive of it. In some cases, we've actually utilized a water supply that the tribes felt that under the treaty rights that they had a right to the water.

So we have not necessarily been a very popular agency with Indian tribes over the years as we've developed the irrigation projects we've developed. So this gave an opportunity for Reclamation to work with at least the tribes on these three reservations in a somewhat different vein, very cooperative vein, and it's working quite successfully. They've been able in our Dakotas Area Office to work extremely well with Indian tribes.

Mni Wiconi Project in South Dakota

Subsequently, there has been authorization for the Mni Wiconi Project in South Dakota, and that project involves non-Indian and Indian service as well, but it's a rural water project in South Dakota, and it's a very large one. It involves water service to the Pine Ridge Reservation, the Oglalla Sioux tribe, and it also involves service to the Rosebud and the Lower Brule Reservations.

As a result of what we've gotten into with working with the Indian tribes on the Garrison Project, I think that it's sort of significant in the genesis of where we are today, where Reclamation is working with Indian tribes not just in this region, but throughout the West, on water resource matters on Indian reservations and a very cooperative basis.

Storey: So we designed and built these and then turned them over to the tribes for O&M?

". . . we have an oversight role. . . . The tribes do the systems, the tribes have consultants, the tribes operate and maintain the systems, and we're a funding partner with oversight responsibility, to some extent . . ."

Stessman: No, actually we fund them and we have an oversight role. But it's kind of like I was saying with the North Dakota rural water systems, MR&I projects in North Dakota. The tribes do the systems, the tribes have consultants, the tribes operate and maintain the systems, and we're a funding partner with oversight responsibility, to some extent carrying out the trust responsibility of the United States.

Storey: I think I was on the Rosebud once. They could use a water supply for sure. So it must have quite an effect on the communities that are involved.

Stessman: It certainly does and will. Like Rosebud, we're barely started. We had the ground-breaking on the Rosebud in July, I think. I had the good fortune of being there and being part of turning the first dirt, more or less, at He Dog, South Dakota, on the Rosebud Reservation. It's very satisfying work for the people, for our people who are involved in it, because, as you say, the needs are so great.

Storey: Is this the Mni Wiconi Project?

Stessman: The Mni Wiconi Project is the one that will serve the Pine Ridge, Rosebud, and Lower Brule reservations in South Dakota, as well as some non-Indian areas, very significant non-Indian areas, as well.

Storey: Is it one integrated system, or is it a series of systems?

". . . the main supply system will go from the Missouri River at Pierre, below Oahe Dam, west for several hundred miles and then have delivery systems off it to . . . areas, which are non-Indian, and then also delivery systems to the Rosebud and Lower Brule and to the Pine Ridge Reservation. . . ."

Stessman: There will be a very large main supply system. There are some areas that will be supplied from groundwater, and that will be part of the project that will be *not* supplied from the main supply system. But the main supply system will go from the Missouri River at Pierre, below Oahe Dam, west for several hundred miles and then have delivery systems off it to the Lyman, Jones, and West River areas, which are non-Indian, and then also delivery systems to the Rosebud and Lower Brule and to the Pine Ridge Reservation.

That particular legislation makes this main system an Indian system. In other words, it's the Ogalalla Sioux tribe system. And they will have a responsibility to operate and maintain that main supply system. So they are, as it were, the, more or less, owners and operators, will be the operators and owners, of a system that will deliver water to a very extensive area of off-reservation lands in South Dakota, towns and communities and rural systems.

Storey: We've already talked some about the wildlife mitigation, balancing that with the construction. As project manager, how do you effect those kinds of changes? At that time, I *think* the budget was still controlled out of the region ultimately, but you made budget proposals and so on?

Billy Martin Assured Him That the Wildlife Program Was to Be Emphasized

Stessman: The regional director, when I was hired, made it clear to me that was the direction we were to go. In fact, I remember asking the regional director, Billy Martin, "Now, is it your intent that I emphasize the wildlife program with the same level of priority as I do the traditional development of the project?" And he said, "Yes, it is." It was the law. But I needed to check in spirit, is this what's intended. Not just the letter, but in spirit. I was assured that that was my charge.

The assistant regional director, who I worked for and worked really closely with at that time, was Don Glaser, and that was clearly the direction that he was giving me, too. So it wasn't a problem of concern about us being supported from the regional office.

Storey: So then you proceeded to implementation, and I'd like to ask you about those. However, I think we're getting close enough to the time that we ought to quit.

Stessman: Okay.

Storey: Maybe we better do that today. So I'd like to ask you again whether you're willing for the information on these tapes and the resulting transcripts to be used by researchers.

Stessman: I am.

Storey: Good. Thank you.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 2. SEPTEMBER 18, 1996.
END OF INTERVIEWS.

Unpaginated Supplementary Materials Including: Reflections on Great Plains Leadership with Some Biographical Information, Speech Given in Brasilia in December 1997, and Documents Related to Retirement

NOTES FROM NEIL

Reflections On Past Regional Leaders

Neil Stessman

About a year ago I received a letter from former Regional Director Ken Vernon. Ken was assistant regional director in 1946 and 1947 and then served as regional director from 1947 to 1954. I later visited with him on the phone and enjoyed sharing experiences. He was quite curious about all the changes taking place in Reclamation and was amazed at the huge geographic area we now manage.

Ken's service was, of course, very early in the history of the region. In fact, he was the second assistant R.D. for Bureau of Reclamation Region 6, formed in 1943 to manage project development in the entire Missouri River Basin. The first regional director was Harold Comstock. His first assistant R.D. was W.G. Sloan, co-author of the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Plan.

When Ken became regional director, his assistant R.D. was William E. Rawlings, father of Jim Rawlings, currently the GP Region's special assistant for Native American affairs. They worked together for six years. The elder Mr. Rawlings died in 1973.

Because of the size of the basin, a few years after it was formed, the region was divided into upper and lower portions. The new Region 7 was headquartered in Denver. In 1972 the numerical designations for Reclamation's regions were changed to geographic names to avoid confusion with the standard federal regions. We became known as the Upper Missouri Region.

After Ken Vernon left in 1954, Frank Clinton served as regional director for 6 years, followed by Bruce Johnson for four years. Between 1964 and 1973 the regional director was Harold Aldrich, father of Rich Aldrich, currently Department of Interior Field Solicitor in Billings.

Robert McPhail, L.W. Lloyd and Joe Marcotte served over the next 12-year period as Upper Missouri regional directors. In 1985 the Upper and Lower Missouri regions were consolidated back into the Missouri Basin Region. Lower Missouri Regional Director Bill Martin came to Billings to head up the "new" expanded region. In the fall of 1988 the region was further expanded to include all or parts of three more states which had previously been managed out of the Southwest Regional Office in Amarillo, Texas. The name was changed to Great Plains Region at that time.

When Bill was reassigned as Assistant Commissioner, Resources Management in Denver in November 1988, Assistant Regional Director Roger Patterson was named acting regional director. In July 1989 he was named regional director. Roger served in the position until August 1991 when he was reassigned as regional director of the Mid-Pacific Region in Sacramento.

When Roger left for Sacramento, I was named acting regional director. The following May I was named Regional Director.

The regional office has been in existence for over 50 years and there have been 11 regional directors for Region 6, and the Upper Missouri, Missouri Basin and Great Plains regions. Of those 11, five, including Ken Vernon and myself, had previously worked as assistant R.D.'s. I am proud to be one of the folks tapped to serve a leadership role in this great region.

Note: Thanks goes to retired regional employee Gene Wilde for much of the information for this column. Mr. Wilde, who collected this data several years ago, now resides in a convalescent home in Billings.

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTED
FEB 21 1978

ROBERT L. McPhail

Robert L. McPhail has been Regional Director of the Bureau of Reclamation's Upper Missouri Region, headquartered in Billings, Montana, since November 1973. As Regional Director he is responsible for the administration of the Bureau's Power and Water and Land programs in the four states of Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, and South Dakota. The Power Marketing and Transmission Program in the Upper Missouri Region encompasses the Eastern Division of the Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Power Program and includes 7,180 miles of transmission lines and 90 substations, serving 250 preference customers in seven states. In 1976 the Eastern Division generated $102 million in revenue. This Region contains almost half of the Bureau's total power marketing and transmission system. In addition to the large power program, the Region's Water and Land Operations include construction of major projects in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota, and an extensive rehabilitation program in Wyoming. Total appropriations for the Upper Missouri Region for FY 1977 were $104.7 million. Total employees in the Upper Missouri Region under Mr. McPhail's supervision number 1,081. In recognition of his managerial skill, he was named by the Commissioner of Reclamation as the Project Leader charged with pulling together the power systems scattered over 14 western states to create a complete and functional power agency for transfer to the Department of Energy. His managerial philosophy reflects a dedicated interest in maintaining a balanced effort between environmental concerns and development.

From May 1971 until November 1973, Mr. McPhail served as Staff Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water and Power Resources. In this capacity he was a staff engineering advisor on water, power, and environmental matters. In May 1972, he was appointed Director of the Department's Southwest Energy Study. His responsibilities included supervising and coordinating the efforts of approximately 300 interdisciplinary high-level professionals from 21 Federal and 7 State agencies. The study was to determine the cultural, social, economic, and environmental impacts of the development of coal-fired electrical generating plants in the southwestern United States.

After the successful completion of the Southwest Energy Study, Mr. McPhail was designated Study Manager of the Northern Great Plains Resource Program in May 1973. This was a massive interagency State-Federal effort established to assemble a comprehensive information base to assist State and Federal officials with decisions on coal development in the Northern Great Plains area. He supervised and directed the efforts of approximately 200 interdisciplinary high-level professionals from the Departments of Interior, Agriculture, Commerce and the Environmental Protection Agency. His activities required close coordination with the Governors of Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Nebraska.

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From September 1967 until May 1971, McPhail held the position of Assistant Center Director of the Bureau of Reclamation's Job Corps Center at Moses Lake, Washington. In this position he served as the principal assistant to the Center Director and was responsible for coordinating, supervising and reviewing the programs of the Administrative Services, Counseling, Edcuation, Corpsmen Supervision, and Work Programs Divisions. His responsibility included the internal operation and management of the 200-man Job Corps Center as well as health and safety of the Corpsmen.

He joined the Bureau's Job Corps Program in 1966 as Deputy Director for Works Programs at the Moses Lake Center where he planned, coordinated, supervised, and reviewed a variety of work programs geared to provide on-the-job vocational training to underprivileged youths from urban poverty areas. He also served as program administrator, planner, project construction engineer, and safety engineer for the Works Programs Division. The work projects were related to conservation and recreational developments such as parks, campgrounds, boat ramps, etc. In August of 1967 he was promoted to Assistant Center Director.

McPhail's service with the Bureau of Reclamation began in June 1963 as a civil engineer in Lewiston, California. During this time, he planned, supervised and assisted in the collection and development of hydrographic, hydrologic and subsurface field data required for use on assigned projects. He made site selections for streamflow recorders, staff gauges, ground water observation wells and piezometer installations. He also made field permeability tests for drainage studies, performed seepage studies and prepared reconnaissance, feasibility and definite plan reports.

McPhail holds a Master of Science Degree in Geological Engineering and a Bachelors of Science Degree in Geology from the University of Mississippi. He is a graduate of the Department of the Interior's Managerial Training Program and is a trained facilitator and instructor in the Managerial Grid Program. He has also completed post-graduate work from the USDA Graduate School, George Washington University, and Brigham Young University.

McPhail received a Unit Citation from the Secretary of the Interior for work on the Southwest Energy Study in 1971. In 1969, he was the Bureau of Reclamation's top candidate for the 20th Annual William A. Jump Award for outstanding leadership, ingenuity and competence in administrative responsibilities. In 1970, he was the receipient of a Quality Increase Recognition Award from the Bureau of Reclamation for valuable contribution to the efficient and effective accomplishment of the Bureau's program in 1970.

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTED
FEB 21 1978

A veteran, McPhail joined the U.S. Air Force in 1952 and served both in the United States and Germany before being honorably discharged in 1956.

McPhail is a Registered Professional Engineer in the State of Montana and holds membership in the American Society of Civil Engineers, the ICID and APWA. He is also a member of Rotary International and Toastmasters Internationa, and held the office of President of the latter in 1971. He is President of the Billings Federal Executive Council for current year.

McPhail is married and resides at 802 Eagle Ridge Drive in Billings, Montana, with wife JoAnne, a son and 2 daughters. He is a member of the Trinity Baptist Church, Lockwood Lions Club and the Cub Scout Council.

McPhail was born November 18, 1935, in Calhoun City, Mississippi. As a boy he worked in the Mississippi cotton fields with his parents who were share-croppers. He was a high school drop-out at sixteen. After four years in the Air Force, he went back to high school, then on to college with the aid of the GI Bill, a part time job, and a wonderful working wife. He currently has completed 18 years of Federal service with duty stations in California, Nevada, Montana, Wyoming, Washington, Nebraska, Colorado, Texas, and Washington, D.C.

ROBERT L. McPHAIL

Robert L. McPhail became Acting Administrator of the Western Area Power Administration in October 1977. WAPA, part of the newly created Department of Energy, came into being when all power marketing and transmission functions of the Bureau of Reclamation were transferred to DOE under the Energy Organization Act. This organization brought under one head the power marketing and transmission facilities in a 15-state area covering mid and western America.

Western Area Power Administration is administratively organized into 5 area offices, 8 district offices, and 1 operations office. The system has almost 16,000 miles of transmission lines, 256 substations, and serves 426 preference customers who in turn provide electric power to about 7 million people.

Prior to this appointment, McPhail was Regional Director of the Bureau of Reclamation's Upper Missouri Region, headquartered in Billings, Montana. The Upper Missouri Region comprises that portion of Montana east of the Continental Divide, northern Wyoming, and all of North and South Dakota.

McPhail's service with the Bureau of Reclamation began in June 1963 as a civil engineer in Lewiston, California. He joined the Bureau's Job Corps program in 1966 as Deputy Director for Works Programs at the Moses Lake Center. In August 1967 he was promoted to Assistant Center Director, a position he held until May 1971 when he became Staff Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Water and Power Resources. In May 1972, he was appointed Director of the Department's Southwest Energy Study. His responsibilities included coordinating the efforts of approximately 300 interdisciplinary high-level professionals from 21 Federal and 7 State agencies in a study to determine the cultural, social, economic, and environmental impacts of the development of coal-fired electrical generating plants in the southwestern United States. After the successful completion of the Southwest Energy Study, McPhail was designated Study Manager of the Northern Great Plains Resource Program in May 1973, serving in that post until becoming Regional Director of the Upper Missouri Region in November of that year.

McPhail holds a Master of Science Degree in Geological Engineering and a Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Mississippi. He is a graduate of the Department of the Interior's Managerial Training Program and has completed post-graduate work from the USDA Graduate School, George Washington University and Brigham Young University.

For his work on the Southwest Energy Study, McPhail received a Unit Citation from the Secretary of the Interior in 1971. In 1969, he was the Bureau of Reclamation's top candidate for the 20th Annual William A. Jump Award for outstanding leadership, ingenuity, and competence in administrative responsibilities, and he received a Quality Increase Award from the Bureau of Reclamation in 1970.

# # # # #

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF RECLAMATION
Regional Office, Region 6
Billings, Montana

George J. Cheney, a native of Ohio, and a civil engineering graduate of Ohio State University, is a registered professional engineer. His career with the Bureau started in the Chief Engineer's Office at Denver, Colorado, in 1933, where he completed assignments in both the design and construction phases of engineering. Cheney has also completed engineering assignments at Barlett Dam in Arizona and Parker Dam in California.

From 1941 through 1947 Cheney served in the U. S. Navy Civil Engineering Corps. He entered Navy service as a Lieutenant in 1941 and attained the rank of Commander by 1946 when he was released from active duty.

On his return to the Bureau of Reclamation, Cheney was assigned as Chief of Investigations in the Region 6 Field Office, Minot, North Dakota. In August 1955 he was assigned to Huron, South Dakota, as Project Manager of the Missouri-Oahe Projects Office. In May 1961 Cheney was promoted to Regional Engineer for the Bureau's Region 6 at Billings.

In his present assignment as Assistant Regional Director, Cheney assists in directing a water resource development program in Region 6 of the Missouri River Basin Project. This covers construction of dams and reservoirs providing water supplies for the irrigation of more than a half-million acres of Missouri River Basin land in Northern Wyoming, Montana, North and South Dakota; the administration of nearly 4,600 miles of high-voltage transmission line; municipal and industrial water supplies to serve Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota towns, and the administration and planning of multi-activities including recreation on Reclamation lakes, flood control, river regulation and the supervision of engineers, technicians and administrative personnel involved in a water resource development program.

JAMES A. BRADLEY

James A. Bradley, Regional Supervisor of Power in Region 5 of the Bureau of Reclamation since April 27, 1961, has been appointed Assistant Regional Director, Region 6. He has been with the Bureau of Reclamation since 1948, and with the Region 5 office since June 1956. He has had 20 years experience in the operation, maintenance, and administrative phases of the Bureau's power program.

Mr. Bradley replaces George J. Cheney, present Assistant Regional Director who is retiring December 31, 1968.

Born on a farm near Greeley, Colorado, January 24, 1922, Mr. Bradley is a graduate of the University of Colorado, with a B.S. degree in electrical engineering.

Following completion of high school, he entered the U. S. Navy in active duty status on December 10, 1941. He subsequently volunteered for and was accepted in the submarine branch of the Navy participating in the South Pacific operations. In November 1943, he was selected as an officer candidate and transferred to the Officer Training V-12 program at the University of Colorado. He remained there until December 1945, when he became eligible for discharge from the military service. Following his discharge from the military service he completed his studies leading to a degree in electrical engineering and subsequently obtained a reserve commission in the U. S. Navy. He began his professional career in January 1948, as a field engineer on the Colorado-Big Thompson Project. He remained on that project until June 1956, during which period most of the major project features were constructed and placed in operation. In this position he gained wide experience in installation, operation, and maintenance of hydroelectric and power transmission system facilities. In his present position, he is largely responsible for effectuating the regional power program. He is a registered professional engineer in the State of Texas, a member of the United States Committee on Large Dams, and a member of the North American Power Systems Interconnection Committee.

Mrs. Bradley is the former Marion King of Arlington, Virginia. She attended University of Colorado, majoring in social work; was a member of Chi Omega Sorority, and currently is active in numerous organizations in the Amarillo area. Mr. Bradley has two daughters, Marilyn K., a senior student at Texas Technological College in Lubbock, Texas, majoring in home economics; and Linda Lee, age 16, a junior in high school.

GEORGE J. CHENEY RETIRING

George J. Cheney, who has been Assistant Regional Director, Region 6, since June 1963, is retiring December 31, 1968, after a career of more than thirty-eight years in Government service. He received a B.S. Degree in Civil Engineering from Ohio State University. After short periods of employment with the Geological Survey and Interstate Commerce Commission, he began his career with the Bureau of Reclamation in September 1933, in the Denver Office as a Junior Engineer. In 1937, he transferred to the Salt River Project, Bartlett Dam, Phoenix, Arizona, and in August 1939, to Parker Dam, California, where he worked until entering the U. S. Navy in August 1941.

After his discharge in February 1946, he began his career in Region 6, in the Area Planning Office at Minot, North Dakota. While there, he served as Chief of the Minot Investigations Field Office. In August 1955, he was appointed Project Manager of the Missouri-Oahe Projects Office at Huron, South Dakota. He served in that position until May 1961, at which time he transferred to the Regional Office in Billings as Regional Engineer. In June 1963, he was appointed Assistant Regional Director, which position he held until his retirement.

A retirement party was held on November 14, at the Yellowstone Country Club. Mr. Cheney received a set of golf clubs and a memory book containing letters from his friends and working associates. Our best wishes for many happy years of retirement are extended to the Cheneys. Their address is: 735 Park Lane, Billings, Montana 59102.

RONALD W. KRUEGER

Born in Hebron, North Dakota.
Graduated from Dickinson State College, Dickinson, North Dakota.
Taught school at Meeteese, Wyoming; Kalispell, Montana; and Fairbanks, Alaska.
Employed by Job Corps at Moses Lake, Washington, for 3 years as Administrative Officer; Civil Service Commission for 4 years as personnel management advisor.
Currently Assistant to the Regional Director and Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, Bureau of Reclamation, Billings.

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WYO. | S.D.

WATER and POWER RESOURCES SERVICE
Upper Missouri Region

NEWS RELEASE

FOR RELEASE

CONTACT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR P.O. BOX 2553 BILLINGS, MONTANA 59103

Water and Power Resources Service
Upper Missouri Region
Billings, Montana

Joseph B. Marcotte, Jr., became Assistant Regional Director of the Water and Power Resources Service, Upper Missouri Region, in November 1978. He has served as Acting Regional Director since February 1980 when former Regional Director L.W. Lloyd, Jr., transferred to the Service's Pacific Northwest Region in Boise, Idaho.

Prior to his assignment to the Upper Missouri Region, Marcotte was Chief of the Engineering-Operations Division of the Service's Fryingpan-Arkansas Project in Colorado headquartered in Pueblo.

Marcotte graduated with a B.S. degree in Civil Engineering in 1960 from the University of Oklahoma and began his career with Water and Power that year. He has served in various capacities in construction and operation and maintenance of projects involving dams, tunnels, powerplants, and water supply systems at San Angelo, Texas; Norman, Oklahoma; Sante Fe, New Mexico; Fresno, California; and Klamath Falls, Oregon. In addition, he was a Repayment Specialist in the Mid-Pacific Regional Office at Sacramento, California. He participated in the Service's Executive Development Program and the Department of Interior's Manager Development Program.

Mr. Marcotte is a Registered Professional Engineer, a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, and the Colorado Society of Civil Engineers.

September 1985

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

JOSEPH B. MARCOTTE, JR.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR, UPPER MISSOURI REGION

Joseph B. Marcotte, Jr., was appointed as the Regional Director of the Bureau of Reclamation's Upper Missouri Regional Office on January 20, 1982. In November 1978, Mr. Marcotte came to the Upper Missouri Region as Assistant Regional Director; in February 1980, he was appointed as Acting Regional Director and served in that capacity until January 1982.

Mr. Marcotte began his Federal career in 1960 and spent the entire 25 years since with the Bureau of Reclamation. During these 25 years, he has served in various capacities involving construction and operation and maintenance of projects including dams, tunnels, powerplants, and water supply systems at San Angelo, Texas; Norman, Oklahoma; Santa Fe, New Mexico; Fresno, California; Klamath Falls, Oregon; and Pueblo, Colorado. In addition to this experience, he served for a time as a repayment specialist in the Mid-Pacific Regional Office in Sacramento, California.

Mr. Marcotte graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1960, with a B.S. Degree in civil engineering.

In addition to being a Registered Professional Engineer, he is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Colorado Society of Civil Engineers, the Montana Engineers Society, and the International Committee on Irrigation and Drainage.

James A. Bradley
Assistant Regional Director
Bureau of Reclamation
Department of the Interior

James A. Bradley has served with the Bureau of Reclamation for 22 years. He is Assistant Regional Director of the Bureau of Reclamation's Region 6 with headquarters at Billings, Montana. As Assistant Director, he has large responsibilities for effectuating the regional power program. He is a registered professional engineer in the State of Texas, a member of the United States Committee on Large Dams, a member of the National Water Resources Association and a past member of the North American Power Systems Interconnection Committee.

Mr. Bradley was born on a farm near Greeley, Colorado. Following completion of high school, he entered the U. S. Navy in active duty status on December 10, 1941. He was discharged in December 1945 and obtained a reserve commission in 1948. Following his discharge from military service, he completed his studies and is a graduate of the University of Colorado with a B.S. degree in electrical engineering. He began his professional career in January 1948 as a field engineer on the Colorado-Big Thompson Project. He remained on that project until June 1956, gaining wide experience in installation, operation, and maintenance of hydroelectric and power transmission facilities. In June 1956 Mr. Bradley transferred to the Bureau's Region 5 office at Amarillo, Texas, becoming Regional Supervisor of Power in that region in 1961, a position he held until transferring to his present position in December 1968.

Mr. Bradley is married and has two daughters.

January 1973

Harold E. Aldrich
Regional Director
Bureau of Reclamation
Upper Missouri Region

Harold E. Aldrich has served with the Bureau of Reclamation for 35 years. He is Regional Director of the Bureau of Reclamation's Upper Missouri Region with headquarters at Billings, Montana. As director of this region, Mr. Aldrich has the responsibility for project development, construction, power marketing and operation and maintenance of the Missouri River Basin developments in the region, which comprises Montana, North and South Dakota, and northern Wyoming.

Regional Director Aldrich previously served from March 1960 until April 20, 1964, as Regional Supervisor of Irrigation in the Bureau's Region 5 office at Amarillo, Texas. He first came to the Upper Missouri Region in May 1946, when he was selected as assistant to the Project Development Supervisor in Billings, continuing that activity until November 1947, when he became Project Manager of the Upper Missouri Projects Office in Great Falls, Montana. He served in that position until March 1960.

Born in Decatur, Nebraska, January 17, 1914, Mr. Aldrich is a graduate of the University of Nebraska, with a B.S. degree in civil engineering. He also did postgraduate work at the University of Colorado. He is a registered professional engineer in Montana, a member of the National Societies of Professional Enginers, American Society for Public Administration, United States Committee on Large Dams, and U.S. National Committee, International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage, International Committee on Large Dams, and National Electrical Reliability Council Executive Board.

Mr. Aldrich began his professional career with the Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation in July 1935, continuing in that position until May 1938, when he became employed with the Corps of Engineers, Rock Island, Illinois. He remained with the Corps of Engineers until April 1939. Mr. Aldrich joined the Bureau of Reclamation in April 1939 and served until February 1945 as an engineer in the Canals Branch of the Bureau's Denver office. He served as Assistant Liaison Representative in Washington, D.C., in 1945 and 1946.

November 1973

Martin H. Oleson, Jr.
Assistant Regional Director
Bureau of Reclamation
Upper Missouri Region

Martin H. Oleson, Jr., has served with the Bureau of Reclamation for 26 years. He has served as Assistant Regional Director of the Bureau of Reclamation's Upper Missouri Region with headquarters in Billings, Montana, since October 1970. As Assistant Director, he helps carry out the responsibilities in directing the project development, construction, power marketing, and operation and maintenance activities of Missouri River Basin development in the region. This area comprises Montana east of the Continental Divide, North and South Dakota, and northern Wyoming.

Prior to his current position, Mr. Oleson served as Project Manager of the Missouri-Oahe Projects Office at Huron, South Dakota, and prior to that served as Chief of the Irrigation Division in that office. He worked for the Wyoming Extension Service in 1939 - 1940, and served in the U. S. Army from 1941-1946, joining the staff of the Bureau of Reclamation in 1947 in South Dakota.

Mr. Oleson was born in Greybull, Wyoming, and was reared on a farm located about 12 miles west of Greybull. Elementary education was in a country school. He graduated from the University of Wyoming in 1939 with a BS degree in Agronomy.

He and his wife, Muriel, have two children--a son and daughter.

BIO-DATA SHEET FOR DAN LAUVER

Dan Lauver is Assistant Regional Director for the Bureau of Reclamation, Great Plains Regional Office, in Billings, Montana. Dan began his career with the Bureau of Reclamation in 1969 in Great Falls as a Civil Engineer. In 1976 he became a Program Analyst and was promoted to Program Coordination Officer in 1978. In 1983 he was named Financial Manager, a position in which he directed financial management of 50 water resource programs in 9 states. Dan worked in this position until 1988, at which time he became Assistant Regional Director.

In addition to working for the Bureau, Dan is the owner of MicroASSIST (a family business) that provides management consulting and custom database programming services.

Dan has a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Wyoming, and is a Registered Professional Engineer in the State of Montana.

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BUREAU of RECLAMATION

NEWS LETTER

Upper Missouri Region

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR P.O. BOX 2553 BILLINGS, MONTANA 59103 July 1982

WILLIAM A. SETH TO BECOME BUREAU OF RECLAMATION ASSISTANT REGIONAL DIRECTOR

William A. Seth will transfer from Amarillo, Texas, to become Assistant Regional Director of the Upper Missouri Region. Seth's appointment was announced by Regional Director Joseph B. Marcotte, Jr. He will fill a vacancy created when Marcotte became Regional Director in January.

A 21-year veteran with the Bureau, Seth began his career in 1961 with a 1-year tour of duty in the Amarillo office before transferring to the Canadian River Project. He returned to Amarillo in 1967 where he held various engineering positions in the Division of Planning and served for 2 years as the Regional Supervisor of Water, Land and Power. He has been Regional Planning Officer of the Southwest Region since 1979.

Seth graduated from Amarillo High School and received a B.S. degree in civil engineering from Texas Tech University. He is a registered professional engineer in the state of Texas. In addition, he is a graduate of the Department of Interior Departmental Manager Development Program. The 10-month program includes various work assignments within the Department and other federal agencies in the Washington, D.C., area and formal training at various universities.

Seth will report to the Billings office in early August.

Marcotte said Seth's appointment is one of several reassignments of key Reclamation personnel. Eugene Hinds has been named Regional Director of the Southwest Region. His most recent assignment was Assistant Commissioner - Planning and Operations in Washington, D.C. Hinds will replace Darrell W. Webber who is being reassigned to the Bureau's Engineering and Research Center in Denver as Assistant Commissioner - Engineering and Research.

* * * * *

SAFETY

RECLAMATION PRESENTS SAFETY AWARD TO MORNING STAR ENTERPRISES, INC.

The Bureau of Reclamation has awarded a construction safety award to Morning Star Enterprises, Inc., of Lame Deer, Montana, upon completion of modifications to Gibson Dam.

Criteria justifying receipt of the award include the following: completion of a contract whose value exceeds the $100,000

Oct 82

Left to right: Kenneth Pedde, Asst. Regional Director, Regional Director Joe Marcotte, and Asst. Secretary Garrey Carruthers.

The President will soon announce approximately ten new construction starts for the Bureau of Reclamation, he said, and that announcement will have positive affects for the UM Region. In addition, he painted a bright future for the Bureau because of expanding needs for food and fiber for our own use and for export to other countries and because of the continuing and growing demands for water for energy and municipal and industrial use.

* * * * *

KENNETH PEDDE SELECTED
ASSISTANT REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Joseph B. Marcotte has selected Kenneth R. Pedde, 39, of El Paso, Texas, as Assistant Regional Director.

Pedde was superintendent of the Bureau's Rio Grande Project, a post he has held since 1980. From 1972-1980, Pedde served as a civil engineer on the Rio Grande Project. He completed the Department of Interior's Manager Development program in 1980. The 10-month program is designed to provide candidates for top level career management positions.

Pedde began his career with the Bureau of Reclamation in 1966 as a rotation engineer on the Fryingpan-Arkansas Project in Colorado. Beginning in 1967, he served a 3-year tour of duty with the U.S. Army in Germany. He returned to the Colorado Project and remained there until moving to El Paso in 1972.

Pedde, a Michigan native, received a Bachelor of Science Degree in civil engineering from Michigan Technological University and has done graduate studies at the University of Texas at El Paso.

Pedde and his wife, Susan, have three children, Sara, 12; Rachel, 9; and Will, 7.

# # # # # #

YELLOWTAIL RESURVEY COMPLETED

The Regional Hydrology Branch recently completed an extensive resurvey of Bighorn Lake (Yellowtail Reservoir) to determine the amount of sediment which has accumulated in the reservoir since Yellowtail Dam was completed in 1965. Main emphasis was on the Horseshoe Bend area where sediment buildup is greatest due to reservoir configuration.

It was estimated that in the 86-year life of the reservoir, 315,000 acre-feet of space would be lost to sediment accumulation. This is appoximately 3700 acre-feet per year. The sediment is carried into the reservoir from the Bighorn and Shoshone Rivers. Very little sediment is contributed to the reservoir area by other side drainages.

LOWER MISSOURI
RegionNews

July-August 1982 Number 42

Wendler appointed Assistant Regional Director

Gordon M. Wendler was selected assistant regional director for the Lower Missouri Region June 11.

Wendler is a native of Valentine, Nebraska. He graduated from the University of Nebraska with a B.S. in civil engineering in 1950. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1944 to 1946 and joined the Bureau of Reclamation in 1948 as a student trainee at McCook, Nebraska.

He served in various capacities in Nebraska with the Bureau from 1948 to 1962. In 1962 he transferred to the regional office in the Engineering Programs Division. He became Regional Programs Officer in 1971 and held that position until becoming Assistant Regional Director.

Martin said Wendler brings years of excellent experience to his new role and will be a valuable asset in carrying out the program of the Bureau of Reclamation in the four-state region that includes all of Nebraska, northern Kansas, eastern Colorado, and southern Wyoming.

Wendler received the Meritorious Service Award from the Department of the Interior in 1980. He received it for exceptional performance in the area of program management. This is the second highest award given by the Department.

Wendler and his wife Elaine reside in Golden, Colorado, and are the parents of three children; a daughter Susan who is married and lives in Indiana; a daughter Patricia who lives in Seattle, Washington; and a son Jim who is married and lives in Longmont, Colorado.

Wendler

Casper purchases Kendrick Project water

Casper is assured of up to an additional 7,000 acre-feet of water annually to meet the demands of anticipated growth after contract-signing ceremonies in the Wyoming city. Present at the ceremonies were officials of the city, the Casper-Alcova Irrigation District and the Bureau of Reclamation.

Regional Director Bill Martin said, "this event culminates months of hard work by members of all three entities. A spirit of cooperation and creativity prevailed and resulted in a contract to meet the challenge of the future."

The irrigation district will make water available to the city without reducing its own water supply or placing additional demands on the nearby Kendrick reclamation project. The District is planning a system improvement program which, through conservation measures, should save more than 7,000 acre-feet needed each year by the city. The improvement program will be funded by the city in exchange for the water service.

The contract extends the time period for the district to repay its obligation under existing contracts with the Federal government.

Water at the Kendrick Project is stored in the Seminoe and Alcova Reservoirs southwest of Casper. In addition to providing water for irrigation and municipal and industrial use, the project generates significant amounts of hydroelectric power.

Lower Missouri Region News is published for employees and retired employees of the region. Stories, photos and comments should be sent to LM Regional Office, Bureau of Reclamation, Attn: Code LM 140, P.O. Box 25247, Denver, CO 80225

LOWER MISSOURI REGION
Employee's Newsletter
BLDG. 20, D.F.C. DENVER, CO 80225

Newsletter No. 19
August 1978

NEW ASSISTANT REGIONAL DIRECTOR NAMED

Eugene Hinds of Washington, D.C. has been named Assistant Regional Director of the Lower Missouri Region, according to Commissioner R. Keith Higginson. Hinds, 49, will report to his new assignment August 27.

He succeeds N. W. "Bill" Plummer, who recently was named Regional Director of the Upper Colorado Region in Salt Lake City.

As Assistant Regional Director, Hinds will participate in all Reclamation activities including technical and administrative management and the development of program policies and procedures.

A long-time resident of New Mexico, Hinds began his career with the Bureau in 1961 as an agricultural economist with the Central Arizona Project in Phoenix. He also worked at the Southern California Development Office in San Bernadino, California, and at the Lower Colorado Regional Office in Boulder City.

In July 1975, Hinds became Assistant Chief of the Division of Water and Land in Washington, D.C. He was promoted to Chief of that division in September 1976.

The new Assistant Regional Director graduated from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces in 1951 with a bachelors degree in agronomy. He and his wife Ann have three daughters.

Plummer, 39, reported to his assignment as Regional Director June 26. He served as Assistant Regional Director for the Lower Missouri Region since 1974 and succeeded D. L. Crandall, who retired in December.

Plummer will be in charge of all Reclamation activities in a region including Utah, western Colorado, southwestern Wyoming, and portions of New Mexico, Arizona, and Idaho.

J. Neil Stessman
Regional Director, Great Plains Region

Neil Stessman was named Regional Director for the Great Plains Region in Billings, Montana, in May 1992, after 31 years with Reclamation. He served as Assistant Regional Director from 1989-1992, and was Manager of the Garrison Project from 1987-1989. Stessman managed claims processing following the Teton Dam disaster and held several other management positions in the Pacific Northwest Region, including Manager of the Central Snake River Project Office from 1983-1987; and that Region's Supervisor of Water, Lands, and Power from 1978-1983. Earlier, he held various management and engineering positions in Reclamation's Job Corps training centers and construction projects.

Stessman graduated from the University of Iowa with a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering, with additional work at Denver University, Colorado University, Loras College, and Lewis and Clark College.

The Great Plains Region extends from the Mexican border to the Canadian border, including all or part of nine states.

Neil Stessman
Regional Director
Bureau of Reclamation, Great Plains Region
U.S. Department of the Interior
316 North 26th Street
Billings, Montana 59101

Brasília
1-3 Dec 97

It is a distinct honor for me to be invited to your country for this important seminar. You are discussing issues of importance relating to irrigation, and it is a pleasure for me to share with you the experience of the United States in irrigation development, which has taken place over nearly 100 years.

The Bureau of Reclamation is an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Secretary of the Interior, Bruce Babbitt, is one of the top fourteen officers (called the Cabinet) who report to the President of the United States. The Interior Department is the agency responsible for most of America's nationally owned public lands and natural and cultural resources including water. The agency also has a major trust responsibility toward Native American or Indian people and lands.

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is "to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public." Our area of responsibility lies within the seventeen western states from roughly the 100th meridian west to the Pacific Ocean. Shortly, I will explain why we manage projects and programs only in the western portion of the United States.

Administratively, Reclamation is divided into five regions. The boundaries for the regions generally follow the geographic boundaries of one or more river basins. The Great Plains Region, for which I am responsible, covers all or parts of the nine states east of the Rocky Mountains and west of the 100th Meridian, so we have responsibility for several major river basins.

In the year 2002, five years from this month, the Bureau of Reclamation will celebrate its 100th anniversary. The history of Reclamation and the history of irrigation development and settlement of the western United States are closely interrelated. In order for you to fully understand why and how irrigation was developed through heavy involvement by the federal government, I need to explain some of the history of our agency and irrigation development in general.

Demands for a federal irrigation program in the western part of the United States arose during the latter part of the 19th century. The area of the United States from the 100th Meridian west is very arid. In the eastern portion of the country, weather patterns bring frequent spring and summer rains. Widespread irrigation is not necessary. In the

West, on the other hand, rain is not as frequent nor widespread. For comparison purposes, consider that the average annual rainfall in the southwestern part of the United States is 178 to 254 millimeters. In the southeastern part of the country it ranges from 1016 to 1270 millimeters. More than 83 percent of the irrigated farmland in the United States is in the 17 western states.

In the late 1800's the West was sparsely populated. Much of the land remained in federal ownership. In an attempt to generate a more rapid westward movement and hopefully greater economic development, the federal government implemented two major land programs.

Beginning in the late 1860's and until the turn of the century, the government granted more than 74 million hectares of land to railroad companies to encourage them to build lines westward. Since the government deeded them lands on either side of the railroad route, the railroad companies went all over the eastern United States and even into Europe publicizing the availability of land for farming. At about the same time, Congress passed the Homestead Act, which offered up to 65 hectares of free land to anyone willing to settle and cultivate it for three years. There was a great boom in westward migration as many from the more densely populated East responded to the offer.

For some settlers this lifelong dream of owning their own land and developing a farming operation turned into a nightmare. What the programs did not seem to recognize was that land alone did not make a successful farm. In the west, water became a controlling force in the lives of homesteaders. There was either too much of it all at one time or not enough to finish their crops. Because of this there were many in public and private life who said it was a mistake to try to tame the arid areas of the West, who said a good quality of life could never be sustained there.

Because homesteaders were struggling to survive on land where water was the controlling force and the lack of it would destroy the operation, Congress in 1894 passed the Carey Act which provided that western states could be granted up 405,000 hectares of federally owned land in return for promoting the settling, cultivation and irrigation of these lands. The idea was to continue to encourage development of western lands, but also to help with the development of irrigation to make it easier for the settlers to survive. The program was designed so that states would contract with private construction firms to build irrigation works. The firms, in turn, would sell the water rights to return their investment.

This effort failed, first, because most people were not willing to invest in unproven irrigation development and, second, because the states were unable or unwilling to administer such a complex program.

Ultimately, the concept of federal development of irrigation projects began to take

hold. There were some visionaries in the history of the West who saw beyond some of these early problems. One was famed scientist and explorer John Wesley Powell; another was the colorful and sometimes flamboyant Buffalo Bill Cody. Both understood that the arid West could sustain economic development if the finite supplies of water in the West could be diverted and then stored for future use and if the federal government would step in and help accomplish what small farmers, groups of farmers, and even state governments could not accomplish on their own.

President Theodore Roosevelt, who had traveled extensively in the West and had seen the large rivers, believed that this supply of water should be conserved, that is used. He said in a speech that if those waters "which run to waste" were used for irrigation, the western half of the United States would sustain a population greater than that of the whole country. In 1902 President Roosevelt signed the Reclamation Act, which authorized the Secretary of the Interior to create what was then called the Reclamation Service.

In the 95 years the agency has been in existence, Federal investment in completed projects having irrigation as a purpose has been about $22 billion. At current dollar values that would amount to about $70 billion. About 55 percent of that was for multiple-purpose facilities.

Today, Reclamation is the largest wholesale supplier of water in the United States. One out of five farmers in the western United States receives Reclamation water. Water from our projects is delivered to 4.1 million hectares of farmland, which grows 60 percent of the vegetables and 25 percent of the fruit, and nuts which the United States produces. Reclamation constitutes the country's sixth largest electric power generator. Our facilities produce 42 billion kilowatt-hours each year. Our facilities also provide drinking water to about 31 million people each year. Facilities in operation include:

355 storage projects
254 diversion dams
249 pumping plants of over 1,000 horsepower capacity
25,836 kilometers of canals
2,430 kilometers of tunnels
59, 881 kilometers of laterals
27,373 kilometers of drains
58 hydroelectric powerplants

Almost as soon as there was a government agency in place to facilitate irrigation development, there were groups, organizations and states eager to get involved and benefit from the federal program. Some members of the U.S. Congress who represented western states did not at first support the concept of a government

irrigation development program. However, after the Reclamation Act of 1902 was enacted and the Reclamation Service created, these same individuals were very quick to begin to support projects within their own states. Every project that has been built by the Bureau of Reclamation has had its unique collection of supporters, from real estate developers, landowners, bankers, chambers of commerce, and newspaper editors, to state and national political officials.

At the very start, Reclamation projects were approved by the Secretary of the Interior and, under terms of the Reclamation Act, were to be financed by a Reclamation Fund which was to be replenished by payments from benefiting farmers and by revenue from the sale of public lands in the West, then paid back gradually through the sale of water. Later this fund was augmented by a percentage of the royalties from oil and gas leases on lands owned by the federal government.

The first development projects were approved within months after the agency was created. During the agency's first five years of existence, a total of 25 projects were approved and were in various stages of development. Among the first projects built was a major development located within the area for which I now have administrative responsibility.

I mentioned earlier that Buffalo Bill Cody had started working on the concept of irrigation development around his home of Cody, Wyoming. By the time the Reclamation agency was created in 1902, Cody and a group of investors had secured water rights on part of the flow of the Shoshone River and had constructed an irrigation project which quickly failed. They realized they needed a structure to store spring runoff from the river for irrigation later in the year, but they were unable to raise sufficient capital to do it. With the support of the State of Wyoming and members of Congress from the state, Cody and his partners were eventually able to secure federal help through the newly formed Reclamation Service. Engineers soon recommended building a dam on the Shoshone River in a deep canyon near the town of Cody.

Construction on Buffalo Bill Dam was started in 1904. Engineers were faced with seemingly insurmountable physical challenges. Among them were the deep granite canyon and the remote location which made it difficult to move equipment and supplies and to secure and keep construction workers. To excavate the dam abutments along the canyon walls, workers had to be suspended from lines hung from a cable which stretched across the canyon. Another constant challenge was that flows in the Shoshone River and severe weather in the canyon often did not cooperate with the schedule for construction work proceeding on the dam. At one time heavy spring flows cascaded over the top of the unfinished dam at a depth of 5 meters.

Another challenge of these early projects was that the federal project manager had to assume a huge amount of responsibility. In addition to actually building the

dams, canals, and other structures, the managers were responsible for developing the infrastructure needed to support the construction project itself. They often had to build and staff work camps in remote and unsettled locations like at Buffalo Bill Dam. In many cases access to the work site had to be provided on trucks or even via railroads which were built as part of the project construction.

Managers also built self-contained communities for workers and their families and they were often responsible for providing the necessary public works for the communities like water, sewer systems, and electricity. There were often government-owned stores and recreation centers.

The 99-meter-high Buffalo Bill Dam was competed in 1910. The primary goal of the Shoshone Project was irrigation. There had been a dream to irrigate as much as 60,704 hectares of farmland, but eventually just 36,400 hectares were developed.

But there have been many other benefits; about 100 million-kilowatt hours of power is generated each year by three generating units on the project. And soon after construction was completed, Buffalo Bill Dam and Reservoir became a popular stopping place for recreationists on the way to the newly created Yellowstone National Park. Six towns and several rural areas in two counties downriver receive water from the reservoir. And the dam offers incidental flood control to areas downstream.

Area residents formed four water user associations to contract with the government of the United States to repay the cost of the Shoshone Project and to operate and maintain it. The boards of the associations were local people, usually farmers.

From the outset, the Reclamation Service promoted the formation of strong water user organizations, often called irrigation districts, to enable settlers to collect the funds needed to repay the federal government and to manage the distribution of water. In the West irrigation--unlike other public works--was the fundamental factor in creating and sustaining homes and farms. So people whose livelihoods depended on the water provided by the system had a direct interest in ensuring the system was maintained and functioned properly.

Reclamation personnel drafted model water user association agreements and pressed for state legislation that would give these organizations taxing power as well as authority to collect Federal construction repayments. Today, sophisticated irrigation organizations have broad financial, planning, management and operational responsibilities. The irrigation districts usually consist of a board of directors that govern their operation and a professional staff to perform day-to-day operations.

Most of the early projects were started solely for irrigation purposes. The added benefits, like those that evolved on the Shoshone Project in Wyoming, were usually

incidental to the original project purposes and often developed later after the irrigation system was functioning. As the irrigation purposes of Reclamation projects were fulfilled, other needs developed and the Reclamation program began to change. Ironically, it was the troubled economic times of America's Great Depression of the late 20's and early 30's that allowed Reclamation to expand its program and incorporate true multiple use planning. It was at this time that the funding source for Reclamation projects also changed somewhat.

As I said earlier, a Reclamation fund had been established to help finance irrigation development, at least to provide up-front funding until project beneficiaries paid a share of the cost. Project repayment often lagged and was sometimes deferred or even forgiven. Consequently, the Reclamation Fund was not sufficient to keep up with the expense of new projects being developed. Legislation authorizing Hoover Dam provided that construction would be financed out of the General Fund of the U.S. Treasury rather than the Reclamation Fund. While the Reclamation Fund still exists and is used to finance Reclamation projects and programs, after Hoover Dam most of the major multiple-purpose water development was accomplished with funds appropriated directly from the U.S. Treasury.

Planning and construction on Hoover Dam also set the pattern for future water development projects that incorporated a full complement of project purposes including hydroelectric power, flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife protection and enhancement.

Hoover Dam is one of the Bureau of Reclamation's largest single producers of electrical power. Alone it provides enough power to serve 1.3 million people in Nevada, Arizona, and California. It also provides water for nearly 400,000 hectares of farmland, and Lake Meade, the reservoir behind the 221 meter-high dam, is a very popular recreation area.

Because of the economic conditions during the Depression, crop production declined, commodity prices hit bottom, and repayment on already-completed projects almost stopped. In 1931 the Bureau of Reclamation was actually forced to borrow money from the Federal Treasury to keep operating. But the federal government's so-called New Deal Program during the Administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt infused new money into the Reclamation program. In 1934 alone the agency received a construction allotment of more than $103 million. Translated into current values, that amount would be about 50 percent greater than our agency's budget for this year.

These public works projects were used to combat unemployment and help promote economic recovery. The success of the Hoover Dam project in providing work for thousands of people and in infusing large amounts of money into a troubled economy provided a tremendous psychological and emotional boost to a nation reeling

from the devastation of the Great Depression.

The Reclamation Project Act of 1939 formally incorporated multiple purpose planning into the Reclamation program and assured a more sound fiscal footing for development once the special government public works programs ceased. That law put project repayment on a more sure footing by requiring the project costs be allocated among project beneficiaries according to their proportionate benefits.

I have spoken of how local organizations, or irrigation districts, were formed to operate the projects and collect funds from the farmers who benefited from the projects. Let me briefly explain the repayment process.

Under Reclamation law, a portion of the capital costs for multiple-purpose facilities must be repaid by the beneficiaries. Many different methods for allocating costs to project functions were advocated and tried in the early history of irrigation development. In the 1950's a method of allocating costs called "separable cost-remaining benefits" was adopted. This process takes into account capital costs, annual costs, annual benefits, and other factors. The idea is to achieve an equitable distribution of costs based on relative benefits. This establishes, for purposes of reimbursement to the government, the cost base from which repayment schedules are developed.

Once costs are allocated, laws and policies governing reimbursement are applied. Some costs, which can be assigned to a specific function and specific beneficiaries, must be repaid to the government by those who benefit. Projects which provide water for cities and industry have narrowly defined beneficiaries so their capital costs have been designated as "reimbursable," meaning the beneficiaries have to pay their share to the federal government, including interest which accrues during the repayment period.

Flood control and navigation, on the other hand, are considered under law to be for the general public good because their benefits are widely dispersed. Consequently, the costs assigned to those functions are designated "non-reimbursable," meaning they do not have to be repaid to the government. These costs are assumed by the taxpayers in general. Recreation and enhancements for fish and wildlife have somewhat more localized benefits so they are considered partially reimbursable.

Irrigation development in the western United States has long been considered of general public benefit, because it provides food for the populace, but irrigation also provides direct benefits to one segment of the population, farmers, as well. Consequently, irrigation is considered reimbursable to the Federal Treasury. Under Reclamation law, the costs allocated to irrigation are fully repaid, without interest, over a period not to exceed 40 years. However, newly developed lands were permitted a

development period of up to 10 years before the 40-year repayment period started. Specific legislation passed by the U.S. Congress could allow repayment periods longer than 40 years.

Since soon after the Reclamation program was created, revenue from hydroelectric power generation was available to help fund irrigation development. Later this power aid to irrigation was expanded. Revenue from power generation was used to pay the costs allocated to irrigators which exceeded their calculated ability to pay. Over the life of the Reclamation program, the irrigators' ability to pay has amounted to less than half of the cost of projects allocated to them. Of the $22 billion investment in water projects, about 78 percent or $16.9 billion has been determined to be reimbursable. Of that $16.9 billion, $7.1 billion was allocated to irrigators. However, $3.4 billion, or about half of that obligation has been shifted to power revenues. For many projects in the West, power aid to irrigation has covered nearly all of the project cost.

Some who do not support the Reclamation concept in the United States have long believed that these special benefits to irrigators -- a 40-year, interest-free contract period and the requirement to repay only up to their financial ability -- constituted an inappropriate federal subsidy for farmers.

However, American society long held, and still does to some extent, that the farming way of life is important to our culture so it was logical for the public to assume a major share of the development cost in the name of national interest. But the significance of the small farm way of life has diminished greatly over the years. In 1900 four in ten workers were engaged in farming. Today it is more like three in one hundred.

Another of the large water developments in the western United States which was started during the Great Depression was the Columbia Basin Project. The main project feature, Grand Coulee Dam, is another structure familiar to many people around the world.

While started as an irrigation project, construction around the start of World War II was centered totally on the project's power generating capabilities. Full-scale irrigation development did not occur until after the war. Three large irrigation districts were formed to operate the facilities of the project and to carry out repayment.

Grand Coulee Dam is 167.6 meters high and over 1592 meters long at its crest. The project now provides irrigation water to more than 200,000 hectares of farmland. Principal crops are sweet corn, potatoes, dry beans, fruit, sugar beets and grapes.

The Columbia Basin Project was among the first projects which utilized the

concept of planning for multiple purposes rather than just irrigation. Multiple-purpose project planning expanded in the early 1940's as the concept of basinwide studies was incorporated. By then projects were becoming more and more expensive and it became more difficult to meet economic feasibility requirements. By looking at development opportunities throughout a river basin, Reclamation was able to identify how to derive income from various revenue-producing features to fund projects which might not be justified based on irrigation development alone.

Another project in my own region and one which illustrates the complexities of project development, was the Missouri River Basin Project, authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1944. It was one of the most comprehensive, basinwide, multiple-purpose water management plans ever initiated. People often speak of the immensity of the Columbia or Colorado River Basins, but the Missouri Basin is larger than both combined.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which has responsibility for navigation and flood control on America's waterways, had been looking at ways to provide protection from floods that periodically devastated the basin. Severe flooding in 1943 brought the issue to the forefront. At about the same time, the Bureau of Reclamation was looking at irrigation development, in part to help provide opportunities for veterans returning from World War II. The two agency studies complemented one another and Congress asked them to come up with a compromise plan. The result was what eventually became known as Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program, named after the two men who had spearheaded the planning efforts for the two agencies.

The Pick-Sloan Program envisioned providing irrigation water to over two million hectares of farmland in seven states. But only about ten percent of that land has ever received irrigation water. The reasons are numerous. It was determined that much of the land which was identified earlier as being suitable for irrigation development was not. And the cost of getting water to some of the lands which were suitable for irrigation outweighed the benefits. There were also a number of environmental concerns.

Nonetheless the dams and reservoirs which were built under the Pick-Sloan Program have still provided water to about 200,000 hectares of land which have produced an abundance of crops for many years. The projects have also provided billions of dollars in flood benefits. In fact, the value of flood protection from just the six main dams on the Missouri River has already amounted to more than three times the cost of construction of the dams. Power generating capability is also more than twice what was anticipated, and the 42 reservoirs created under the program by the two agencies have provided recreation to millions of people.

The Pick-Sloan Program is an interesting study in the two-step legislative process through which water development projects must pass. Projects must first be

authorized by Congress and then receive the needed appropriations each year until the project is done. A large number of individual Pick-Sloan projects were authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1944, but many were never built because funds were never appropriated by Congress.

Generally speaking, there were three important players in getting a federal irrigation project approved. They are:

1. Private-sector interest groups
2. Sympathetic supporters in the Congress
3. A federal agency with an affirmative mission, such as the Bureau of Reclamation

All three sides of this triangle had to be in place and supportive or a project could not make it through the authorization and appropriation process.

Every water development project started as a seed of an idea in someone's mind. That idea would eventually have to get translated into some kind of proposal, a proposal that would provide benefits to a wide array of people. Then those who came up with the idea, whatever their motive, needed the support of many others including members of that state's own congressional delegation. Once authorizing legislation was introduced in Congress, it was necessary to garner the support of legislators from other states so the legislation could be passed. Often this was not easy because legislators from the East and Midwest, where there was an abundance of rainfall, did not always think it wise to spend federal dollars in the barren West. They also viewed with suspicion allocating federal dollars to western farmers who could be growing crops in direct competition with the grain belt area of the central states or with farmers in the East.

Once legislation was passed and signed by the President of the United States, the next hurdle was securing the funds needed to carry out the work. As with the Flood Control Act of 1944, authorizing legislation, while giving the go ahead to build a project, did not actually provide funds. Each year it was necessary to secure appropriations to actually get the project built. Some projects, as I mentioned, were authorized but never received appropriations from Congress. This effectively killed the project. Other projects were authorized and then proponents experienced a difficult time getting the funding necessary each year to keep the project moving. As a result, construction on some projects stretched out for decades.

One of the more massive and complicated projects, and one, which has a long legislative, and development history, is the Central Valley Project in California. The component parts of the project were developed over several decades. Today the project serves 35 counties in the state of California and has made the valley America's

greatest agricultural region.

The Central Valley Project is an extensive system of reservoirs, powerplants, pumping plants, and canals with a combined storage capacity of about 15 billion cubic meters, which accounts for approximately 25 percent of California's developed surface water supply. The project irrigates approximately 1.2 million hectares of farmland. The valley contains one-sixth of all the irrigated land in the United States. Farm production in the valley in one year exceeds the total value of all the gold mined in California since 1848. The project also provides water to more than 2 million urban residents as well as to wildlife refuges.

The original law which created the Reclamation program in 1902 limited delivery of Bureau of Reclamation water to farms up to 65 hectares or 130 hectares if a farm was jointly owned by a husband and wife. The concept was to encourage the development of family farms. There was, however, no limit to the amount of land that could be leased and still receive lower-cost Reclamation water. When the Reclamation program first started, nobody could likely foresee the kind of large-scale agricultural operations that would evolve as farming practices improved. The availability of large and advanced machinery and chemicals that reduced labor and improved irrigation practices such as drip and sprinkler irrigation began to change the family farm. In California's Central Valley especially, huge farms operated by corporate owners became very common. And in many cases they received, on a larger scale, the same benefits from Reclamation programs as did the small family farmer for which the program was originally developed.

In 1982 Congress passed the Reclamation Reform Act which shifted the acreage limitation from an ownership concept to an operational concept. At that time holdings up to 389 hectares, whether owned or leased, could receive low-cost Reclamation water.

Full cost was to be charged for water delivered to leased lands in excess of 389 hectares. This still protected the family farmer, many of whom had operations considerably larger than 65 or even 130 hectares. The original law never recognized that a farmer could do very well on 65 hectares in California Central Valley, but might be able only to eke out an existence on a 65-hectare farm in parts of Wyoming or Montana.

Another of the large and more complicated projects in the Reclamation system, and one which is also located within the area which I manage, is the Colorado-Big Thompson Project in Colorado. This project is one of the most complex projects undertaken by the Bureau of Reclamation. It includes over 100 water and power facilities which store, regulate and divert water from the west slope of the Rocky Mountains. Water is transported under the Continental Divide through a tunnel just

over eight kilometers long. Then the water falls in elevation about 915 meters through a series of tunnels, canals, powerplants and regulating reservoirs. It is then distributed to 125 water user organizations on the east slope of the Rockies. The project provides water to almost 256,000 hectares of farmland which produce nearly half a billion dollars worth of crops each year. The project also provides water to nearly half a million people in the growing communities of the South Platte River Basin.

A trans-basin diversion such as Colorado-Big Thompson changes the economic and environmental balance in interesting ways. While the Bureau of Reclamation built an extra reservoir on the west slope to replace water diverted to use on the east slope, natural flows in the Colorado River were altered, it was later learned to the detriment of endangered fish species. At the same time, flows in the South Platte River Basin were augmented, much to the benefit of irrigators, recreationists, and endangered species.

As I have mentioned, water is a valuable commodity in the western United States. Even within a state, water is preciously guarded between regions. Federal water development projects have always been careful to respect and operate within the water rights laws of individual states. Because water is so valuable in the western part of the United States, those who homesteaded and attempted to farm learned very quickly that a sizable investment had to be made in canals, ponds and eventually dams and reservoirs. The common practice was essentially that the first person to use the water owned the water. This practice eventually evolved into state water law called the "prior appropriation" system.

The principle is also called "first-in-time, first-in-right." The first user, or senior user, is entitled to his or her full amount before junior water rights holders receive their share. This system of water law evolved to reward and protect those who risked the effort and invested financial resources to develop dry lands.

In and around the Colorado-Big Thompson Project, water which has been used for generations for agriculture has in recent years taken on greater value for other uses, primarily to serve the urban water needs in one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the United States. Many farmers have sold their water right to cities. In some cases, they have been able to stay on the land and farm, renting back the water from the city who owns it, while the city holds the right for future use as needed. Many people fear that this movement of water from a lower to higher value, from agricultural to municipal use, could forever change the economic and cultural landscape of some of the affected areas. They fear we will lose the locally important farm culture which has been important in the growth of the West.

There have been other social, economic, institutional, and political factors, which have affected and in some cases caused challenges for the Reclamation program. For example, many more Reclamation projects were envisioned than were ever developed. As I mentioned with the Pick-Sloan Program in the Missouri River Basin, this was partly

because there were not unlimited funds available for irrigation development and partly because it was determined that some ill-conceived and poorly planned projects posed hazards to the environment. In addition, some of the projects, especially in less productive areas of the West, were just not economically feasible.

Unfortunately, some projects in less productive areas were pushed through the congressional authorization and appropriation process. Because the farming income has not been strong in these areas, the irrigation districts have had a difficult time meeting repayment obligations and are not financially able to carry out much-needed rehabilitation work as their facilities age. In some of these cases, the federal government has had to come in with help to accomplish the needed rehabilitation.

Another inherent problem with the Reclamation program is that it did not encourage water conservation. Today, more aggressive conservation of water is itself recognized as a major source of supply in lieu of building new facilities.

Because of the "first-in-time" water right structure in most of the western United States, water users have generally felt compelled to use all water available to them for fear they could lose their right, or part of it, if their water was not fully used. In addition, water had traditionally been marketed on a cost-per-hectare basis rather than on a price-per-quantity basis. This means that the charge to farmers is based on how many hectares are irrigated, not on the amount of water they use. There was no incentive to use less because the charge is the same no matter how much they use. Finally, repayment costs to districts in many cases were so low that there was little financial savings available by conserving water.

As water supplies in the western United States became more and more scarce, primarily because of explosive population growth and commercial and industrial development, the American public began to look more closely at the Reclamation program. They began to question the low cost for water and other subsidies afforded to irrigators. They criticized the lack of emphasis on conservation and they became concerned about the long-term environmental impacts of project development.

These changes in the views toward and uses of water have affected the way in which our agency operates. Over the past 95 years, the Reclamation program has emphasized development of safe and dependable water supplies and hydropower to foster settlement and economic growth in the West. Today, while maintaining its historic mission, Reclamation's contemporary responsibilities have changed greatly. Our work now includes such broad activities as providing assistance in interstate compact administration; providing environmental restoration and multi-species conservation efforts; promoting efficient conjunctive and basinwide use of surface water and groundwater; increasing water supplies through reclamation and wastewater reuse; meeting growing municipal and industrial, domestic, and agricultural water demands,

and improving watershed yields; fulfilling trust and other obligations to Federally recognized Indian Tribes; finding nontraditional approaches for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of project operations; improving hydropower efficiency and capability; conserving available water and energy supplies; enhancing recreation, fish, wildlife and environmental values; and providing better use of science and technology in managing resources.

Another area of focus for us in recent years has been exploring the opportunity to fully transfer title to project facilities from federal to private ownership. We have long recognized that some Reclamation facilities may be best operated by the federal government where a significant public interest or a major constraint against transferring ownership is involved. However, there are many facilities that would be more appropriately and efficiently managed by local entities. A great deal of serious thought and effort went into formulating what is called the Framework for Title Transfer. In it we tried to identify issues that would be of concern to the public and to Congress and outline a way of addressing them so there would be an opportunity for success. One of the undergirding principles of the title transfer effort is that the process is designed for simple, single-use projects, not complicated, multi-purpose projects. There has been interest expressed, at one time or another, in transfers for about one-third of the Reclamation projects. However, because of the complexity of the issues, particularly the value of the facilities, very few actual title transfers have taken place. However, we believe the concept makes sense where the water users are interested and willing to pursue it. It would reduce the federal liability, save federal taxpayers money, and place operational and maintenance costs in the locality in which they belong. We will continue to move in this direction on transfer proposals where the situation presents itself.

An understanding is emerging in the West that the scarcity of adequate water supplies is a potential impediment to continued food production, ecosystem health, social stability, and progressive cooperation between multiple water users and public institutions. The West is the fastest developing region in the nation. This growing and increasingly urban and suburban population is placing greater demands on the finite water resources. More water of higher quality for urban and industrial development is being demanded by the public at the same time the public has a growing concern for the health of aquatic ecosystems and the environment. These demands --taken together with the public concern for future generations, complex legal mandates, existing institutional arrangements, greater knowledge of how to manage water resources on a sustainable basis, and increasing technological advances --impose significant challenges and provide professional opportunities for all those with water resource responsibilities in the West including Reclamation.

If you ask, "Has the Reclamation program been a success," the answer is yes. Millions of hectares of farmland have been developed in the American West and an

extensive agriculture-related infrastructure has been put in place. The program has provided benefits to millions of non-farmers as well. But if we ask if it is time to address concerns about water development in the West, the answer is also yes.

As we approach the end of the century, the policies, institutions, and strategic planning processes affecting water resources in the West are being reassessed and, as necessary, modified to meet the challenges ahead. Evaluating sometimes-conflicting mandates, multiple institutions, and public processes is an integral part of this reassessment. The challenge of charting a sustainable course for water management and use in the western United States is real.

Again, I express my appreciation for the invitation to speak to you today. It has been a pleasure to visit your country and to participate in this significant conference. Thank you.

ON BEHALF OF RECLAMATION COMMISSIONER ELUID MARTINEZ AND RESEARCH DIRECTOR STANLEY PONCE, CHUCK HENNIG PRESENTS LISA HENTHORNE WITH INTERIOR'S SUPERIOR SERVICE AWARD.

LISA HENTHORNE RECEIVES INTERIOR'S SUPERIOR SERVICE AWARD

Lisa R. Henthorne, formerly the Research and Technology Transfer (R&TT) Coordinator in the Denver Office, recently received the Department of the Interior's Superior Service Award. Lisa is an internationally recognized expert in the field of desalination and was recognized for providing excellent leadership and direction to Reclamation's Research and Technology Transfer Program. Her exceptional and established background in water and water-related research and development enabled her to excel and make significant contributions at the highest levels of this program.

Before becoming the R&TT Coordinator, Lisa conducted extensive desalination research and, under her guidance, the program was expanded and enhanced. She developed new processes and technologies that resulted in numerous patents and inventions.

WITH 37 YEARS, LINDA SCHURMAN RETIRES FROM THE GOVERNMENT

Linda Schurman recently retired from Reclamation after serving the Federal Government for 37 years. During those years, Linda worked for the Bureau of Public Roads, Reclamation's Region 7 (later known as the Lower Missouri Region), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Boulder, Bureau of Land Management in Sacramento, and finally with Reclamation's Diversity and Human Resources Office in Denver.

After retirement, Linda will continue to pursue outdoor activities, including golfing, hiking, roller blading, biking, and her first love, downhill skiing. As a result of their love of mountain activities, Linda and her husband have purchased and remodeled with their own hands several mountain properties. They are currently remodeling what will become their permanent retirement residence in Colorado's high country.

Linda will be spending a lot more time on the slopes, including plans for volunteer work with guest services in a high country community. She and her husband also intend to try some beach activities while vacationing at a southern California beach a month or two out of the year.

Recent trips to several countries abroad has instilled Linda's and her husband's taste for lots more of the same. Her travels will include visiting her son and daughter-in-law, both engineers, who have an avid interest in dogsled racing.

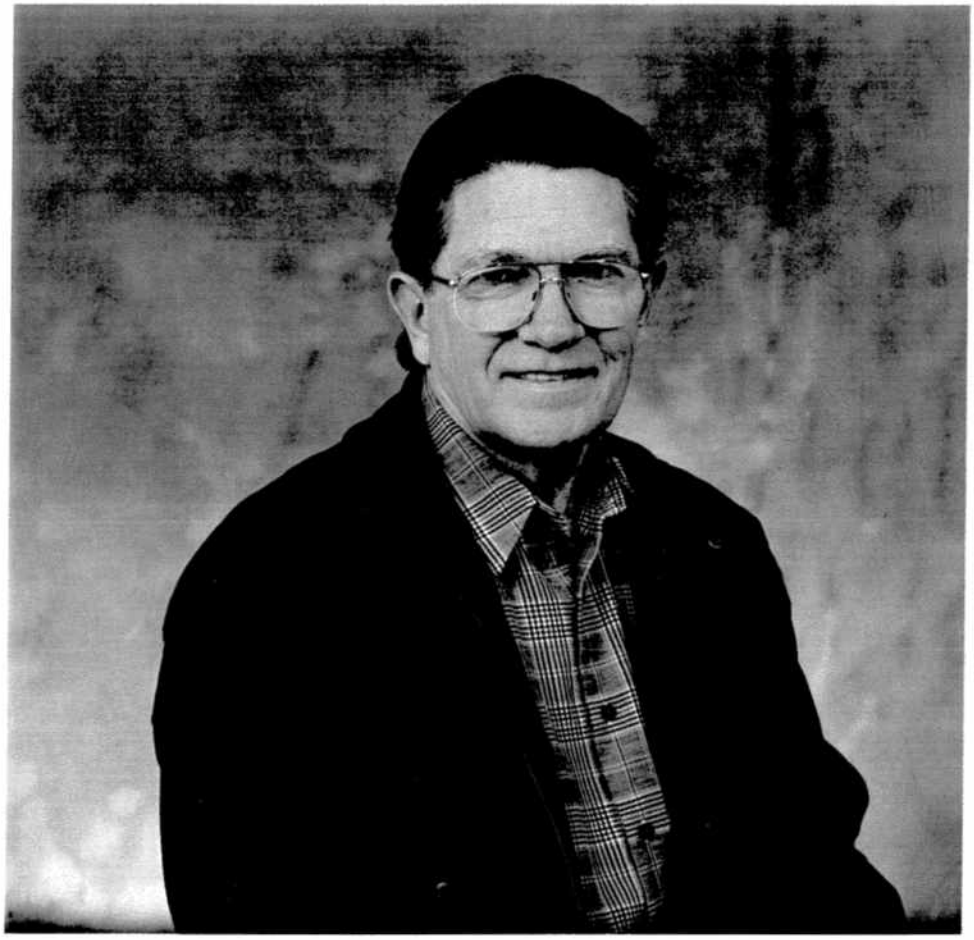
NEIL STESSMAN RETIRES FROM GOVERNMENT SERVICE AFTER 38 YEARS

Neil Stessman recently retired from the Government after serving 38 years. Stessman most recently held the position of Reclamation Service Center Director.

A native of Missouri Valley, Iowa, Stessman received his education in civil engineering at the University of Iowa. Throughout the years, he also attended Loras College, Denver University, University of Colorado, and Lewis and Clark College. Stessman is affiliated with the Senior Executives Association and the U.S. Committee on Irrigation and Drainage.

Stessman and his wife Judy have four grown sons, Aaron, Chad, Casey, and Haven. He enjoys being with his family and friends and looks forward to traveling and participating in volunteer work. During his leisure time, he enjoys being out in nature, running, bicycling, and sports activities.

He believes that "virtually every person means well and will perform well in their job if given the opportunity and support." He says he has "been the recipient of both" and wishes everyone the same.



After 38 years of Federal service with the Bureau of Reclamation, Neil Stessman, Reclamation Service Center Director since January 1998, is retiring on February 26. There will be a farewell reception in his honor, and we invite you to come by and wish Neil well as he embarks into the next stage of his life.

DATE: February 25
TIME: 10 to 11:30 a.m.
PLACE: Building 67, Rio Grande Room

THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE WAS RECEIVED BY D-7900 FROM THE COMMISSIONER FOR DISTRIBUTION TO ALL RECLAMATION EMPLOYEES ON January 14, 2000.

Attention Supervisors: Please ensure that employees not utilizing the LAN system receive this information.

Distributed by LAN on January 14, 2000

W-1000

MEMORANDUM

To: **All Employees**

From: **Eluid L. Martinez /s/ Eluid L. Martinez**
Commissioner

Subject: **Senior Management Changes**

First let me thank each of you again for the excellent work you are doing.

Over the past four years of my tenure, we have had several retirements which have changed our senior SES Management Team. Larry Hancock, Austin Burke, Jim Malila, Felix Cook, Roger Patterson, and John Keys left us and Maryanne Bach, Lester Snow, David Montoya, Bob Wolf, Liz Harrison and Michael Roluti have joined our SES Team. Recently, I reassigned Steve Magnussen from his position as Director, Operations to a newly created position as Deputy Director, Operations-West to carry out the responsibilities of that new position. I asked Neil Stessman to assume the duties of Director, Operations here in Washington, D.C. and he initially accepted. Upon reconsideration, Neil advised me that he would prefer to remain in Denver in his current position, a decision which I respect.

Accordingly, I intend to assign another manager to be the Acting Director, Operations to carry out the responsibilities of that position in Washington, D.C., while the position of Director, Operations is advertised and an individual is selected to fill the position on a permanent basis.

Your continued support of our Management Team is appreciated.

W-1000

January 27, 2000

MEMORANDUM

To: WBR Staff

From: Eluid L. Martinez
Commissioner

Subject: Announcement of Retirement and Temporary Assignment of Duties

Neil Stessman has announced his intent to retire from Federal service at the end of February 2000. It is with mixed feelings that I accept his announcement. Reclamation will be without one of its most technical and humanistic leaders. However, Neil is embarking on another phase where family and a well-earned retirement take precedence.

I thank Neil for his service to Reclamation and his personal support. We will miss him.

Kathy Gordon will serve in an acting director capacity upon Neil's retirement until further notice.

Again, thank you for your excellent work.

From: D-1000

To: All Reclamation Service Center Employees
All Denver-based Commissioner's Office Employees

Please REPLY to: No reply necessary

Attention Supervisors: Please ensure that employees not utilizing the LAN system receive this information.

Distributed by LAN on January 25, 2000

INFORMATION BULLETIN

Subject: Retirement

I want to let you all know that I have decided to retire at the end of next month. My last day on duty will be February 25, exactly one month from today.

I have had an extremely satisfying career of almost 39 years with the Bureau of Reclamation and it has been especially gratifying to be the Director of the Reclamation Service Center for the past two years. It's been an honor having this assignment and I am full of appreciation for the relationships I have had with all of you.

Nevertheless, the future does call and right now it is calling me to personal pursuits and to avail myself of the opportunity of spending more time with my wife and my family. Commissioner Martinez will no doubt make an announcement of his intention for filling the position of Director within a few days.

I am very confident of the ability of the Reclamation Service Center to continue to be successful in the future. You have my deepest appreciation, respect, and best wishes for the future.

Sincerely,

/s/ Neil Stessman

Neil Stessman

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