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OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW OF
Warren Dickman

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Date: 8/28/03

Signed: Warren Dickman

Warren Dickman

INTERVIEWER: James M. Bailey

James M. Bailey

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Oral History Interview of
Warren Dickman

Bailey: This is an oral history of Mr. Warren Dickman, on August 28, 2003. And, Mr. Dickman, thank you for joining me today. Could you please state your name for the record for me?

Dickman: Warren Dickman.

Bailey: Could you tell me where you were born, and where were you raised?

Dickman: I was born on the old family homestead, in my great-granddad's homestead out of Angelas, Kansas. And, moved to Oregon at an early age, and back to Kansas, back to Idaho. Graduated from high school in Idaho. And then back to Oregon.

Bailey: Which high school did you graduate from in Idaho?

Dickman: Nampa.

Bailey: Then "back to Oregon," you said?

Dickman: Yes. After the North Unit came online, I had intended to buy a farm there around the Madras country, then the war came along and stopped construction on the North Unit canal. And, we wound up back in Kansas, ran out of gas coupons, and stayed there for three year, or four years.

Bailey: So, this is during World War II?

Dickman: World War II. Yes.

Bailey: When did you come out to the Yakima project?

Dickman: August of 1975.

Bailey: What did you do in between the time you were in between World War II and August of 1975?

Dickman: Oh, I farmed with my dad for a short period of time, went in the Army during the Korean conflict, and, then in 1959 went to work for North Unit Irrigation District, as a ditch rider.

Bailey: And, where is North Unit at?

Dickman: Out of Madras, Oregon, connected with the Wickiup Reservoir, diverts out at Bend, the main diversion.

Bailey: And so you stayed there as a ditch rider until . . . ?

Dickman: Well, I went to Baker in 1967, as manager of the Baker Valley Irrigation District.

Bailey: Okay.

Dickman: Then, in 1971, I went back to North Unit. Roger Norland [spelling?] was in poor health. I went back there as an Assistant Manager, and then in '75 came up here.

Bailey: How did you find out about this job here?

Dickman: Roger, the manager at North Unit, was asked to come up and look at the project. At that time they were without a manager and they hired him as consultant as to more or less what to do with the project. And his intention, he would have taken the job as manager here himself, if his doctor would have permitted it. And, the doctor said "It was too much strain," so he, Roger recommended that I put in an application. Wound up at getting it.

Bailey: What were your first impressions upon getting this job here? What did you think of the area?

Dickman: I liked the area, and in talking with the Board of Directors they were of a mind to

completely rebuild the system, or rehab it, because it was in tough shape as far as being able to deliver water.

Bailey: Would you expand on that a little bit about it?

Dickman: Well, ... over the years conservative assessments led to poor maintenance and it, which it had came time the old invert siphons across canyons were the old wood-stave and and in order to stop the leaks in that we'd put in and replace the timbers that were rottcn, and put horse manure in to plug it up so it wouldn't leak all summer. In fact two or three applications. It was just generally, well it had been in operation since 1910, and this was in the mid-70s, and it just gone a long time.

Bailey: Sixty years.

Dickman: Yeah. It needed help.

Bailey: So, you came in about the, was it, when did they go to pressure system?

Dickman: We started that, started excavation, I believe, in 1980. I don't remember the exact dates. Or, in 1982.

Bailey: Exact dates aren't important, if we can just kind of get generally on any of these.

Dickman: Talk we had, I had about it was with Seedstrom [spelling?] Hill engineer John Mayo [spelling?], in the fall of 1976, and talked about what to do. And, I mentioned to him that, "You know with the amount of fall on here maybe we should look at pipe and pressure." There's some 800-900 feet of fall, from one end to the other. And then the engineers made the first look and it was possible, and minor pumping combined with power generations for pressure reduction. So, it was energy --

eliminate all the home farm pumps. It was totally energy efficient. It was power for market.

Bailey: We'll talk about technological landmarks. Well, then do you consider the pressure system something as a huge, major kind of contribution to the irrigation, to the way crops are irrigated as opposed to the old open system?

Dickman: Oh yes. It, the old open system, thirty percent of your diversion was lost. And, with the twelve miles of horseshoe concrete form and tunnels, you were limited to what you could bring down. There was no way you could, you just had to divide that. Well, when the pressure system came in and stopped this leak, there was suddenly thirty percent more water available for the crops.

Bailey: Okay.

Dickman: Which really was a help.

Bailey: Was this about the time they started moving toward more sprinkling systems too?

Dickman: Actually, no. The, most of the sprinkler systems were in, but it was electrical energy pressurizing to sprinkle. There were a lot of handlines at that time. But now most of it's underground.

Bailey: So, when, did you become a manager when you came in here in August of 1975?

Dickman: Yes.

Bailey: How are, you don't have to be ... specific with names or anything like that but what were some of the impressions of some of the gentlemen you worked with as ditch riders?

Dickman: Well, the were on a par, very competent people. Well, they had to be. Leo Heilman was very capable as a watermaster, because you had to handle water with as tight a control almost as tight as an eyedropper, because of the very limited availability to the growers, because of the losses. And, guys light Leo, Jack Hart, Dex. Most of them dead and gone now. But, they knew their business. They were long-time employees. Some of, of course with any organization you have some that aren't productive, but they usually weren't around very long. There were some younger guys we hired are still, they're in their mid-forties now. Hired some good help. But, these guys were good. The best. Maintenance too. I had a very talented maintenance foreman that could -- a long-time employee, but he knew all the weaknesses and the weak areas, and what to hit and what to do quick.

Bailey: So, those you relied on, the people who had been here for a while to help you in your job in the beginning?

Dickman: Any district, if you don't you're done for because that's, you know, one guy can't know it all. And, each man had individual talents, and they were well-versed in their individual areas. Each ride had a personality of its own, so to speak.

Bailey: Did you ever have anything to do with the patrol houses? They're kind of the central topic of this whole historic project?

Dickman: Certainly. Repair work and maintenance.

Bailey: Did you ever live in any of them?

Dickman: Well, not the patrol houses. I lived down there and then, of course, up here. Well,

but I've been in and around all of them.

Bailey: What are your impressions of the patrol houses?

Dickman: Well, the newer ones were modern three bedrooms, but the older ones were, say, built in 1910, and not a heck of a lot of money had ever been spent on them. Maybe a bathroom added somewhere. And, they had cisterns for their water supplies. And, they were pretty, pretty well used and pretty old. And, they had a scheduled replacement, then they quit that in the late '60s. They were going to replace them all. But, you know, well they had some lean crop years and that shut down on the growers money, which affects your assessment.

Bailey: Speaking of lean crop years, how did that affect your job?

Dickman: Well, it doesn't change the job. You have to be, stretch your maintenance dollars much further, and you have to maintain, you have to maintain the system. There are certain obligations, you have to pay your storage fees. They're set. Your fee for your employees is the same. You basically have to stay up with cost of living on that. So, even if there are times when there is a lean crop year that the assessment has to be raised to meet the expenses, which doesn't help the water user, but it's just a fact of life and most of them can face it.

Bailey: What are the most water-intensive crops grown in this area? What ones really, really take a lot of water to go from seed to harvest?

Dickman: Mostly it's tree fruit and hay, now. In the, the, I think this district probably gets by on fewer acre-feet per acre than any district in the area, simply because they, you

know, they just can't get any more water. But, in answer to your question, with the crops we have, apples, pears, and now cherries coming in, they, I would say the apples would take more because you pick them later, and you have to keep water on them or you'll affect the fruit longer. Pears you can shut off earlier. Cherries you can too.

Bailey: Jack Hart mentioned something about farmers, to getting a lot of water to pears so they can fatten up the pears a little bit and make them a little more pleasing.

Dickman: Yeah. That was always a very tense time, because they would be pulling water off the apples, and that upper main canal would be sloshing water out of the top, and the guys were trying to hold every drop of water they could off of the spills. Yeah, it was tough. About this, and they're starting to pick now, and it'll just be a big relief because the pears would go off, and they would just be irrigating apples from here on out.

Bailey: So the pears created problems of their own, huh?

Dickman: Well, you know, it wasn't really a problem it was just a matter of economics. If you didn't size up your fruit you didn't make as much money. And, of course, that's the name of the game, profit to stay in business.

Bailey: How about freeze cycles around here? Do they ever have problems? I've noticed a lot of wind machines, and I think I've seen smudge pots around here and there. Because I kind of, I have grandparents that live near Ventura, California and so I know about wind machines and smudge pots, and things like that. Do they have

early freeze cycles here where they come in necessary?

Dickman: They have frost every year. Sometimes it's spotty and there's some areas like right up here where we are on the Naches Heights, in this particular area, wind drainage to both sides, you never, the orchard across from the office never puts frost protection on. Now, just down over the hill there's wind machines, and with the new system, we're able to provide frost water, which is a big help. But, yet, there are nights when you just can't cover it all. And, there was crop loss this spring in some areas due to frost. But, that's pretty much a give and take every year. And, in the areas that freeze every year you'll find the trees pushed out, maybe a patch, small patches of alfalfa here and there. All economics. Now you see trees pushed out and hay in, or nothing growing. But, that's not as a result of frost, it's just economics on that part.

Bailey: Tell me about any interesting stories with your job. Did you have anything come around that still stands out in your mind all these years later? About humorous incidents? Or anything like that to -- any kind of a yarn you can spin about being a manager around here?

Dickman: Probably quite a few. On the most, the thing that I remember the most is when Mt. St. Helens blew in 1980.

Bailey: Go ahead and expand on that all you want, because I'm putting it in here.

Dickman: Totally covered the water shed with ash, and a few days later followed by violent thunderstorm, and the ash covered the ground and didn't let the water in and it took

out our upper main canal. I mean, that big horseshoe flue, the siphon that's hanging on the hill, it was gone. No water. And, we worked for about three weeks. We had the helicopters in, flew bridging in, pipe, got the water across, and cranked it up on the Fourth of July. The fifth of July we had another thunderstorm further up, and it that didn't take it out but it filled it clear up and we were a week getting that mess cleared up. But that wasn't humorous.

Bailey: It was still a major event though?

Dickman: Yeah. First time it had ever gone completely out. And since then, there have been two more occasions where its gone. Another one was another canal outage up by Windy Point, and I know what caused that, possibly a tremor. Because when you walked the canal, below the break, we could see on the trail where water had sloshed out of the canal for no reason. Just like something shook it. It splashed out. But, there's always humorous occasions. Anytime you're working with a crew if they get along well there's a little monkey business goes on, you know. But, pretty serious bunch really, when it came to work. When they walked on the job they were serious about what they were doing, most of them. If they weren't, Bob Herr [spelling?], the watermaster, or Leo Heilman, the watermaster and Bob Herr, the maintenance foreman, pretty well kept things under control.

Bailey: Talk a little bit more -- I always ask this in doing these interviews here, and Dave Lester said, "Ask them about St. Helens." I was in Colorado when it happened and I remember we got ash in Colorado as well, coming down, (Dickman: Yeah.)

carried by the jetstream. Any other impressions of St. Helens? I mean, did it, how did you feel about it? Because I know Yakima got blasted pretty bad.

Dickman: We, well, when it came through Leo was over at the office. And when I realized, well I thought it was just a violent thunderstorm, and I called. And, as soon as ash started coming down I called Leo and told him, he was on duty that weekend and I told him to tell everybody to "stay put until you hear from me." And I said, "You get home. Get out of the office." And so I called and, a little while later I called, while we still had telephone, I called the headworks and said, "Shut her off. We got problems," or "We will have problems." And so he did, and then the power went off and the phone lines went dead, and of course with no power and no phones we had zero contact because radio systems at that time needed power. And, it was right here in this area was totally dark from a little after ten until four in the afternoon. I mean just as dark a night as you'd ever want to see. And, we felt a tremor, and the Bureau guys, I talked to them, and they wanted to know what I'd done. So, without able to get people out I told them what we had to do, because you know, all the power was off, and all the pumps running, we of had water running all over the Yakima area. Three hundred and fifty second-feet. And then Bill Gray [spelling?] told me that it was a quake of a certain magnitude, and they had to get up and check out Wickiup. And, of course, I knew at that time that we had to walk our, and check our canal, but we couldn't do it. That day I wouldn't send anybody. I just told everybody, "Stay home." And, the next morning about sunup, we all gathered and had a look at the

main canal. You could only go down the road fifteen, twenty miles an hour and you'd have to be about a mile between each rig because of the dust and ash. The Sheriff wasn't going to let us up there. He says, I told what the situation was. I said, "We had a tremor. We have to check the canal out and make sure it's intact," and he says, "Well, go on up, but you guys are damn fools." There were cars in the river, cars up on the bank. Nobody was seriously injured or killed. And, we got up on the canal and split up in about four groups and started walking down. And the old grouse, you could see where the grouse had been flapping their wings, and where the snakes were crawling. I even walked by rattlesnakes. I felt sorry for them. But, just a ugly gray eerie feeling. And all of us, when we came down, had about the same story. The canal was intact and we struggled getting water back down.

Bailey: I was going to ask you about any repairs that you had to do as a result of that. Were they pretty extensive?

Dickman: Well, it was just sand. And we opted to turn on, and if we got into problems we'd shut down the system and bail sand. But, it was so fine it just flushed right on through. It took out a lot of pumps or a lot of people didn't run the water through, they kicked it on immediately and took out their pumps, and their sprinkler heads. It just cut them out, or the sand did. Boy it's very abrasive. But that caused us really no major problems on the system. Other than we cut down, maybe, and take a backhoe out and bail out a small pond or something, silt pond just to, and our whirlpools, on the main laterals so we'd get better readings. But the big problem

was the fact that it wouldn't let water into the soil, and all the run off took your canal. We had damage down here as a result of thunderstorms too. But, the application through a sprinkler system would trickle on through the ash layer. But just a real rapid, no way. It was a couple of years before that, plants started growing up through there and got a little organic in it. And now, you make a cut out there it's two or three inches of soil and organic duff over the top of that ash layer, and roots down in it, so it's pervious.

Bailey: Did it affect any of the crops around here?

Dickman: The lack of water due to the shutdown for, well it was off nearly a month in the middle of the summer. But, we also had some rains that came in that really -- we had an inch of rain here on project in July, just a gentle rain that we normally don't have. I've never seen it rain an inch in July in the 28 years I've been here. But, that helped the fruit. But the trees were all covered with ash, and some people cut their speed sprayers out and, to blow the sand off the trees. I remember a couple of the guys came up a couple days after it went off. And Ron Smith he says, "Well, I'm not going to do anything." He says, "If I blow it off it'll probably sandblast the fruit." And, he says "The trees just keep water in. I can see new growths coming out on the ends already." And most of them then just waited it out, and picked a pretty darn good crop that year. Smaller apples, because of the reduction in the water, but there happened to be a pretty good market for small apples that year.

Bailey: It's a good thing it happened in May, instead of August.

Dickman: Yeah. Well, our canal went out in June.

Bailey: Okay.

Dickman: And, yeah, we were back on again full-bore. If we'd have had a hot summer then, like we had this year, they wouldn't have picked much of a crop. But, June was cool. We were pretty well caught up in June when she hit. Then July, like I say, had the rain and it was off and on cool. We had cloudy weather.

Bailey: The eruption probably affected the climate around here?

Dickman: I suspect it did. I expect the atmosphere was full of small particles, it collected moisture, and here it came. And we have thunderstorms through here every year, but that particular year, in many years, I've shut that canal down to save it, you know. Because if it washed full of water and then overtop and takes the tallis slope out, and away she goes.

Bailey: I guess we're getting pretty close to flipping this thing here.

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Bailey: So, you were a manager? How many people did you oversee, on this project?

Dickman: Oh, somewhere around twenty, I think, here.

Bailey: What were some of your biggest challenges as a manager on this project?

Dickman: That pressure system.

Bailey: Go ahead and elaborate on that.

Dickman: Well, getting the finances pulled together, all the water-user meetings, putting out the information, and the water-user vote. And then when they actually got into the construction it got pretty, pretty hectic.

Bailey: Okay.

Dickman: You're pretty much away from the district, and you let, Leo and Bob pretty much take care of their end of it. And then I hired a young fella, who's now manager, Rick Dieker. You may have met him.... And, but it just took me pretty much out away from thc district operation just to get the pressure system done. And shortly after we got it on the line I'd had enough and retired.

Bailey: So what other problems did you face at the pressure system? Just the old system trying to deal with this new technology?

Dickman: Actually that was easier than the paperwork, the financing, the environmental issues, and Fish and Wildlife, and all that. Everybody going for money. You know, when you get some money, why they want their cut.

Bailey: So this is about the time, too, NEPA came. Did you have to go through the whole

NEPA compliance on this?

Dickman: Oh yeah. Yeah. Trips to D.C., and Olympia. Scads of them.... it was a real eyeopener. You have these canals that are seeping and there's brush and waste in them, and everybody hollerin', "Well why don't you clean up your mess." Well, then when you do here come Audubon Society and the Fisheries, and, "Hey. You're destroying habitat." And, it was damn-if-you-do-and-damn-if-you-don't scenario, and you just had to make a decision, whether you're to bag it or you're going to do it. And, for the sake of the water user there was no question. We had to do it. We would have spent a large chunk of money rebuilding in-kind, still had the losses. We could have reduced the losses, but never could have cut them to the near zero as we did with the pressure system. Because, well you take the surface of water you have over 200 and some miles of open channel, you got a lot of evaporation loss. You figure three or four feet a year just off of that area, which is a lot of acre-feet. And then your seepage. But that was the biggest challenge here.

Bailey: How do you think the pressure system benefitted the growers and the farmers here?

Dickman: The pressure system was a big help. It provided, like I say, a third more water, eliminated their cost of power and maintenance of pumps, and the electrical motor or electric motors, provided frost water that the old system couldn't because of lack of capacity.

Bailey: So, it was well received by the farmers in general?

Dickman: In general, and some of the more vocal ones that opposed it have come up to me

later and say it's the best thing that ever happened to them, you know. But they thought the cost factor was so great, which it is. It, but the thing that hurt the most was the economics in the fruit industry, well Ag in general was in the tank. But if we maintained just the income that we had prior to the pressure system coming in, why, then no. It really wouldn't have been any hurt at all, because they can raise a better crop with more water. When we did the study here, I had a soil scientist, or irrigation specialist, from Washington state come over and establish water duty for the district, and he said it was 4.1 acre-feet. Well, in the ninety years we've been in business, or whatever it was at that time, we had never delivered more than three. So, when we made that extra water available, like Mill [spelling?] said, "You were water short." And, you could tell it on the trees. They had better crops, trees are healthier, particularly the pears and the cherries. Even if, you know, you dried them off, dried them up to save water there was an effect on them, in their looks the next year. They just didn't look as healthy, in particularly in the fall they didn't look healthy because they had been starved for water.

Bailey: So, you're saying it greatly benefitted the farmers around the area?

Dickman: In my opinion it certainly did, and I think most of the farmers would agree. You know, when we were putting that Baker project in, the Chairman of the Board there, Lyle Ward [spelling?], who's few people really opposed to it. He says, "Oh." He says, "A few good funerals will take care of that." (laugh) And they were. They were all old-timers, you know. And, but their kids were running the ranches and

they were supporting it, but, boy, some of those old boys didn't go for it.

Bailey: Simply resistant to change, that's all.

Dickman: Right.

Bailey: They didn't understand.

Dickman: No, they didn't. They got by without it and they couldn't understand why they had to pay money (laugh) pay so darn much money. Of course they weren't, a lot of them weren't farming anymore anyway. Or it was cattle country.

Bailey: So basically alfalfa and hay and those kind of crops.

Dickman: Hay and pasture.

Bailey: Impressions of your job, what did you enjoy most about what you did? About your job? I remember Jack Hart was telling me he liked the community. He liked being part of the community. Elaborate on what you liked most about your job.

Dickman: Well that. The community, and dealing with most of the people. They were just very supportive. And, the, and many of the small farmers here had to sell out and go. And it was a pleasure to deal with them. They were just real good folks, not that the bigger outfits aren't either, but they're so busy, you know, they don't have time to stop and visit with ya? And, being a part of the community, and I don't know, every year it was a pleasure when, during the fall of the year, to see those old apples rolling in, you know. Particularly if it was a good crop. And, if they had a decent price everybody had a grin on their face, and it was just nice to be part of that. And, I think you finally got to the point where, if the farmers were down because of the

weather conditions, and bugs, and water or lack of, or out the wrong kind in way of rains, you got down too. You, I think then you realized you were a part of the community.

Bailey: So, you, like Jack Hart, you derived great satisfaction from being part of the community?

Dickman: Yeah. Just getting the job done is a big satisfaction. You may not -- I was never satisfied with how well I did, but I was satisfied to have got something come out good for most everybody. We had a crew of people that just dove in. We put in lots of long hard days in, and the farmers would come up and help, and they'd send their hired help up, you know. It was, everything was a community effort when we had problems. There were about three people in this whole fiasco after Mt. St. Helens, why, one of them, a farmer walked out and he says, "Dickman you have problem." And I says, "No. You're the one that has the problem." (laugh) He kind of looked at me funny. But, you know, he just didn't understand. Unless we got that together, he was going to lose his crop.

Bailey: So, during that time we're dealing with more, you were dealing with small individual farmers?

Dickman: Yeah.

Bailey: The Ag business, did it, did big Ag concerns, did they start coming in about that time? Or was it still small farmer, family-operated?

Dickman: Big outfits not so much came in here. Just some of the people that were doing well

and were big here, and they were actually born and raised in this country. They're the ones when a guy would get in dire straits, why he'd sell to them, and they became big. Locals became big here. It wasn't like, say the Columbia Basin area, where Prudential owns a lot of ground.

Bailey: ConAgra?

Dickman: Yeah.

Bailey: Concerns like that?

Dickman: Yeah.... well, my last contacts, they weren't here. It was Evans Fruit, Borden Fruit, Rene Garcia, who is a former board member, is able or has been able to expand. And, oh, there are several others. Some of them picked up and got up to around two or three hundred acres, and that was all they wanted. That was -- there was a time here when you could make a living for a family on ten acres. Well, now you need about 200.

Bailey: Okay.

Dickman: Just to make a living, you know, for a family. Which means you handle a lot of money. And, if things go bad, well you go out of business in a hurry. Can't weather the storm.

Bailey: So, the big agricultural concerns really haven't made it into this valley have they?

Dickman: They'll be here. I'm sure.

Bailey: Yeah.

Dickman: Because some of the bigger outfits, there's no one here that can buy them other than

one of these bigger organizations, corporations, or whatever they are.

Bailey: Alright. Well, you talked about what you liked most about this job. Of course, the balancing question there is, what did you like least about this job?

Dickman: (laugh)

Bailey: And, if you didn't like just like anything, you know, that's fine.

Dickman: Well, you know. There are many aggravating things, but nothing that really comes to mind that I would say dislike. If it was aggravating we usually took care of it. One way or the other. Minor, very few people problems, but there were a few who you had to watch pretty carefully. And, the, most of the issues, the problems were of course, you know, little employee issues, but there again you take care of that and it's gone and forgotten. Because if you don't have the attitude that all you have left is today and tomorrow and the rest is history, why you'll let it eat on you. Just take care of it and go on.

Bailey: What kind of employee issues did you have to deal with?

Dickman: Oh.

Bailey: Absenteeism, or. . . ?

Dickman: That, and, well, a little alcohol problem occasionally with some of them, you know, with the fact of their performance. And you, number one you feel sorry for the guy and try to help them, and they won't help themselves. You got to, you have to replace them. It's just a fact of life. Give them the opportunity. If they don't take it, why, well there's nothing you can do but take care of it.

Bailey: Right.

Dickman: And, if you're careful with your hires you can eliminate a lot of employee problems right there, when you hire the person. You never hire anybody's nephew, or his brother. (laugh)

Bailey: Avoid that?

Dickman: No. There are times when, you know, that's a good thing. I don't know if there's any relatives working here now or not, but we had the two Beck brothers were ditch riders. No problem whatsoever at all. And, oh I worked with another, in the other districts, with people that were relatives, no problem. But boy, on occasion you can get into a serious one, because if you're not careful you'll find you'll be a source of, well a welfare source for somebody that's no good.

Bailey: What changes have you seen on the -- I mean, you retired in what, '75, was it?

Dickman: No. '90. I came here in '75.

Bailey: Right. Sorry.

Dickman: I retired in '92, I think it was.

Bailey: What are the major changes you've seen in the job since when you started? Just, we talked about the pressure system enough. Are there any other changes in the job itself over time? Like I say, you know computers, or anything like that?

Dickman: Well, computers, yeah. But that, you know. When I first started working I, there just, whether it's maintenance equipment or whatever, you know, we didn't have backhoes when I first started. Boy, you grab them and you go. Track excavators,

they came along. Better Cats, better equipment. Computers. All something to make the job easier, more efficient. And I think the biggest issue is regulations now, or it was for me. They started coming in from the Bureau, from the ecology, and chemicals, just a continuing round of EPA, and Fisheries. (laugh)

Bailey: I understand.

Dickman: You have an emergency and you have to take a Cat across the river, you have to get a permit, and they say, "Well, look, we'll get this out to you in two weeks." I don't need that in two weeks. I need it this afternoon. But, if you're not going for money for a project, and they got the hammer over their head then. But some of those old guys can, you know, still tough it out with them.

Bailey: About the Forest Service, did you say you had dealings with them?

Dickman: We did. The, getting a FERC [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission] license to put a generator on Rimrock Dam, we were held hostage on several, by the Forest Service, by the Fish and Game. And finally it became so costly that you just, you couldn't do it. In other words it would -- they control construction and expansion by running you out of business, is just exactly what they did to us. And, for no reason, no purpose. You want a put a generator on the tube coming out of, out of the existing dam, and put the power into the existing power lines, well you have to get all the permits to. And then the Game wants you to put nets in to keep the fish from going through. Well, they're going to go through anyway, whether the generator's on there or not, and the fish were planted in the first place. So yeah,

yeah. Getting the permits from State, and now you try to build a house, the same thing with the county, permits will kill you. That's the reason I haven't built a house. (laugh)

Bailey: How was your experience with Reclamation, in general?

Dickman: Overall, pretty good. Well, excellent for, you know. As a Reclamation, on the tail end of my career with the district, and I've traveled to Boise and I'd see employees wearing Greenpeace T-shirts was when I noticed the turnaround. It was tougher to deal. They came away from being the country's largest builder and producer of electrical energy, and Ag lands, or reclaimed Ag lands, to a regulation, more regulation-type agency. But, I haven't dealt with them for years. I still know many of the people. John Keys. John was an excellent, excellent man to work with. Well, they're, all but one, I won't put a name to it, all the Regional Directors were very, very good to deal with.

Bailey: In Northwest Region?

Dickman: Yeah.

Bailey: Out of Boise? (Dickman: Uhm-hmm.) What do you think about the future of ditch riders? Do they have one? That's the reason why we're doing this.

Dickman: Totally dependant on, well it's dependant on many things. Number one, Ag economy. Water. Much of the water piping and so forth, to conserve water, because you're losing it for fisheries which is a benefit but it isn't a benefit to the ditch rider. If you pipe the land, take his job away, and put the water to fish, it benefits the fish

but not the rider. And, I don't think we should destroy the fish, and I don't think we should destroy people's life either. I think there's some expansion that could be made in the storage facilities devoted strictly to fishery folds. That could save a lot of these jobs. And then, Ag economics is such that they wouldn't be forced into doing something different. Cut people, your labor is a big expense. So, the higher labor goes the more you can afford piping, and concrete lining, and so forth. So it's kind of a chase-your-tail situation.

Bailey: Well, the general impression, and one reason why we're doing this project, is that they think that, I've heard that, ditch riders could be a thing of the past. And the way technology is going now, that everything could be automated. For example, I have friends in Denver that were meter readers for utility companies. And pretty much all meter readers were eliminated when the local utility concern went to automated meter readings. And so, all these people lot their jobs. Do you see the same for ditch riders, down the road? An endangered profession?

Dickman: I doubt it. Number one, handling water is different than handling, say, power where you could read a meter. You've got to have that individual go down that canal daily to watch, look for weed jamming, rodent damage, regulate the water levels to distribute to laterals and sublaterals. If all ditch riders are to be replaced with technology in the future, but I can't envision it. So, there'll be a need for ditch riders on many of the existing projects. They may cut back on some, but I doubt if they eliminate them.

Bailey: Okay. Now, what have you been doing since your retirement?

Dickman: Oh. It's not, not a whole heck of a lot. I, when I retired I had an apple orchard, and I sold it. I was going to retire to the orchard, but that's about the time the economics went to pot there. And I bailed out on that. Travel some, and have five kids, and a dozen grandkids that I spend a lot of time with them. In fact, I'm on the road this weekend, going camping with my daughter and grandkids for about five days. And, things like that. All year long. Summer -- well my daughter was in Okinawa, and I spent two months over there a winter ago.

Bailey: She military?

Dickman: No. She's an RN. She was heading up the WIC [Women, Infants and Children] program on Okinawa. And, but most of them are close. Son in Bend, two sons here in Yakima, a daughter in Kennewick, and a daughter in Port Angeles. The one that was in Okinawa is now in Port Angeles. So, I don't have far to travel. (Bailey: Hmm.) So, I can do it frequently.

Bailey: Good. Okay, if you were going to sum up your career as a manager, for this district, what would you say about it? What, how do you feel about what you accomplished?

Dickman: Oh, I'm pretty much pleased with that. And, if I had a choice, I'd never do it again. I'd do something else. (laugh) There's a heck of a lot less strain involved in other things.

Bailey: Yeah?

Dickman: I would qualify that statement a little bit. I would thoroughly enjoy working on a

pressure system if it were like the old Reclamation. You put in a pressure system for undeveloped lands and supply the land, then bring the people in. That'd be, oh that'd be fun. Because you wouldn't have to spend a lot of time compromising. You could do it right without compromising, and not go around the other. And I, you can't fault people for that, but if you have wide-open ground you could do the job, do it right, and then they can build around it. They won't, you won't be disturbing them, and you just maintain your right of ways and that'd, that'd be nice to do.

Bailey: You wouldn't have nay retrofits to worry about?

Dickman: Nope.

Bailey: Or anything?

Dickman: No. Wouldn't have to fight the issue. Just build it and turn it on. Or, even an old open-channel system. Be fun to do without, before the development hit.

Bailey: And your profession was, you were manager? What was your job title here, just for the record?

Dickman: Secretary Manager.

Bailey: For the Yakima-Tieton?

Dickman: Irrigation District. Had the same title at Baker Valley Irrigation, and Assistant Manager, Ditch rider, Equipment Operator, whatever, at North Unit.

Bailey: Well. Unless there's anything else you want to add to this, off the top of your head, you can think of? I think we're pretty close to. . .

Dickman: Well, it was an eventful thirty-three years. I'll tell you, you, put in a lot of long days.

Sometimes a canal breaks, and so forth, through the years, all over the area. Forty-eight, seventy-two hour days, you know, before you'd get things stabilized. Never boring, I will say that.

Bailey: Very good.

Dickman: And, it just seems as though you never get caught up. You're always a little behind.

Bailey: I think that'll do it. I thank you very much for your time today, and this interview. And, this sure will help me out when I write my article.

Dickman: I tried to tell the truth.

Bailey: That's why I've always raised specific questions. I don't (Dickman: Yeah) like taxing people's minds for exact dates.

Dickman: Well, I , there's some I couldn't give you. May 18, 1980 is Mt. St. Helens. I remember that.

Bailey: (laugh) It's kind of hard to forget around here, I would think. So.

Dickman: Yeah.

END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1. AUGUST 28, 2003.
END OF INTERVIEW