

Colorado River Water Users Association –UTAH
Tape #1
DON CHRISTIANSEN (TAPE #1)
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
August 19, 2008

dc – Don Christiansen

ps - interviewer Pam Stevenson, Agave Productions, Inc

bs - videographer Bill Stevenson

ps We're doing an oral history interview for the Colorado River Water Association, and these are the Utah interviews. Today is Tuesday, August the 19th of 2008. We're here in Orem, Utah, to do this interview. I will let you introduce yourself so that your name is pronounced correctly.

dc Thank you. It's nice to have you here. I'm Don Christiansen. I'm the general manager of the Central Utah Water Conservancy District.

ps Very good. I always like to start with some sort of general background. Tell me when you were born and where you were born. (laughs)

dc You mean you want me to tell...tell you my age?

ps Yes. It's usually the women who have a problem with that. (laughter) Men don't give as much trouble.

dc Well, I was born here in Salt Lake City....well, I guess we aren't here in Salt Lake City. I was born in Utah, in Salt Lake City, at the LDS Hospital on July 24th. That makes me kind of a pioneer baby. That's a pioneer celebration in the state of Utah. In 1936.

ps Okay. So you've lived in Utah all your life.

dc I've lived in Utah all my life. Either in Salt Lake County and Utah County... has been my residence.

ps Okay. And, obviously your parents were here. What brought them here? Or are there several generations here?

dc There's several generations that have been here. My parents were born in Central Utah. In the area that is included in the Central Utah Water Conservancy District boundaries. But they are about two generations since their grandparents came over from the Old Country. My father's is from Denmark. And my mother's people are from England.

ps And...well, what did your family do here? Were they farmers? Or were they...profession...

dc My father was a businessman. And his parents...he grew up on a farm. My mother grew up on a farm, also, in Central Utah area.

My father's father died when my father was about 10 years old, so farming didn't become a big part of his thing, except that he had to help to support his mother as a very young man, and did some helping on farms and what have you at that time. But then went to school and actually became a schoolteacher for one year, and then went to work in a business that he spent about 40 years in, after that.

ps And what kind of business was that?

dc He was in construction equipment and heavy equipment, and steel fabrication, and things of that nature.

ps And what about your mother? Did she work at all?

dc My mother did not work outside of the home. But she certainly worked very hard in the home, and was one wonderful mother.

ps And did you come from a large family?

dc I have two brothers, and one sister. So there were four of us. My sister and my youngest brother are still alive. A brother who was next younger than me has passed away about 12 or 15 years ago.

ps And your parents are both gone?

dc My parents are both gone. They've been gone for a number of years. Yeah, they would be substantially over 100 years old now if they were still around.

ps (laughs) Well, you're not that old! (dc – No.) (laughter) Tell me about...what were your growing up years like? What do you remember about growing up here?

dc Well, as I grew up in Utah, I went to the public schools, as did most of the folks around here.

I was a little athletically inclined, so I spent a lot of time on the athletic field. You know, most any sport that they would have me in, but I spent most of my time probably on the football field, and spent a lot of time there in high school.

After high school, I went to the University of Utah. I was majoring in business management. An accident that I was involved in stopped my schooling, and I never went back, so I didn't complete my schooling. Those things I learned, I learned from experience, and the School of Hard Knocks.

ps You weren't old enough to have served in World War II, but do you remember the war years?

dc I remember the war years very, very well. Very, very clearly. As a matter of fact, my mother and father built a new home. The weekend that we moved in, actually, was Pearl Harbor Day - December 7th, 1941. I remember that so clearly because we were moving into a new home on that particular day, and that was quite an emotional, and a traumatic day. Not only the move, but the events that took place that day. In Hawaii.

ps And you were only, what? Five years old?

dc Yeah. I was about five or six years old.

ps So you can remember that.

dc I remember it very, very well, I'm sure, because of the move that was taking place. And that the event was...didn't interrupt our move, necessarily, but it certainly made our move more dramatic than it might have been. Rather than being...always the happy, glorious time of moving into a new home, it was a...one of much concern.

My father was probably the ripe age that could have been drafted and spent time. For one reason or another, as years went by, his number never came up, and he did not serve, but it was just the luck of the draw probably that he did not serve.

He had three younger brothers that did serve. Two of them served in the Navy. One of them died in the Navy. One of them was on an aircraft carrier that was sunk by the Japanese, as part of the battle that took place at Midway. So, we have a history of World War II. But, they're all gone now as well.

ps I always like to ask people about that, cause those memories are disappearing. (dc – Yeah.) And I've gotten some interesting stories.

dc I'll bet you have.

ps So, you grew up in then, pretty much in the 50s...you'd have been in high school. College age.

dc I did.

The 40s I was in grade school, and then the early 50s in high school, and had some great experiences.

I remember when Ike Eisenhower was elected as the United States President. Those times are all very clear in my mind.

I remember Eisenhower...probably the biggest thing he did...we were in the equipment business at the time, obviously, and he was the President at the time the interstate highway system was passed into law. Being in the equipment business, that was big for us. So, yeah, I remember those times very, very clearly.

ps So, growing up, what did you think you wanted to be when you grew up?

dc Ah...you know, I've been through that a lot of times, and I don't know that I ever had a... hmmm..

Athletics were big, as I've said, and I wanted to play athletics and I wanted to be involved in athletics. And, uh, I was able to do that for a lot of years. But I don't know that I had any real big career goals at that time. I was just doing what many other kids did. I certainly wasn't drifting. I was very oriented to work hard.

When I started working my first job, I was 11 years old. I had a paper route, at 11 years old, and I have not, since that day, been unemployed in my life. So...that's a pretty good record that most people can't brag about. Got a lot of work under my belt.

ps Yeah. I guess. And what was your next job after paper boy?

dc After paper route, I worked in a grocery store as a bagger. Then in a service station doing what doesn't happen today, filling gas tanks in automobiles, and checking oil, and washing windshields and things of that nature.

And then, I started working for a company that was a steel fabricator, and just a flunkie around the place, doing whatever nobody else wanted to do; then ended up working with the company that my father was with, in the equipment business

Ended up, after that, in the insurance business. After the insurance business, I end up in this job. I guess maybe I've had a history of working, with not keeping a job for a long, long time. It's hard to say. (laughs)

ps Well, it's not that many jobs, (dc – No.) over the years.

dc But I've changed. I haven't stayed in one career or occupation.

ps So, how did you get involved in the water business?

dc The water business comes by kind of an interesting story, I guess.

Years ago I moved into Alpine, which is a town in the north end of Utah County. I went to a mass meeting in which the candidates for mayor of this particular town were going to be nominated by the Republican Party, and the Democratic Party. I came out of that meeting as the Republican nominee for mayor, of the town of Alpine. Several months later I became the newly elected mayor of Alpine.

Alpine is in the area served by the Central Utah Water Conservancy District. Some of the features that were going to be built by the Central Utah Project affected that town and that got me involved in the water, kind of a thing.

I was so knowledgeable when I was elected mayor, that I probably knew no more about the water system than...you turn on the tap and you expected it to come out clean and

pure, and in the quantities that you wanted. And that's about as far as my knowledge went. I learned very rapidly that there was a lot of work that went on behind the scenes, so that when you turned the tap, it did happen.

But that, along with the things that were going to happen by the Central Utah Project, and our neighboring cities, and so on, that got me involved.

We were concerned about a facility that the project was going to build...going north through Utah County. Seven cities on the north end of Utah County got together and formed a little association or group to work with the Central Utah Project on some of these features. They elected me as their chair. We went to work on a number of things there. And, that's the story of how I got involved in water.

ps So what year was that that you became mayor?

dc 1972.

ps So that's when your real water career...

dc That's when my water career really started. Yeah.

ps So, you were working for this group as the chair?

dc I was the Chair. Actually, at the time...that became a part time job. At the time, I was an insurance agent. I had an insurance agency, and was selling insurance. Then, in my spare time...and it turned out to be far more than my spare time...I was the mayor, and then took on some of these other things, as chairman of this group of the seven cities. And any number of things like that. And, that kind of got me involved...I won't go into a lot of details, but...

We had a concern with the appointment of directors to the Central Utah Conservancy District's board. This group of seven cities.

We went to work with Governor Matheson to change that process. He agreed with us that it probably was unconstitutional. We went to work with him to change it. Once it was changed, Governor Matheson says, I would like to appoint you to this board, Don. Anyway, that's the long story. That's where I got started in Central Utah water - was by Governor Matheson.

ps How was the Board originally selected, and how...

dc The judges of the state court of the Fourth District Court.

Seems like a kind of a funny process for a water board, doesn't it? (ps – Uh, huh.) We thought so, too. So the process now is that, for the vacancy on our board, the county commissioners nominate three from their county. The governor selects one of those, and appoints him. And then the State Senate concurs in that appointment.

pp And so, there are what...18 board members?

dc We have 18 board members from 10 counties that make up our district. That's correct.

ps And they're all appointed through...

dc They are appointed through this process that I just, uh...

ps Through the county supervisors and, and...

dc The county nominates three, the governor picks one of those three, and then the State Senate confirms those...that selection.

ps Did you ever consider having them elected by the people?

dc We looked at that very closely. As a matter of fact, when we were working with Governor Matheson to change the process, that was my first choice - direct election by the people. After a lot of discussion with Governor Matheson, he convinced me that the appointment process would be more effective and better representation. I think it has proven to be this way. We don't have too much of the special interest groups.

A water board sometimes isn't the biggest item on the ballot. Sometimes special interest groups can, if they work hard, dominate who's going to be elected to those positions, by who's going to be on the ballot. Governor Matheson thought that was not the proper way to do it.

He thought that by having the county commissioners, who were concerned about what was going on in their county, nominate three responsible people from their county, that the governor picking one of those, and having it confirmed by the Senate, gave you a better make-up of your Board of Directors. And...so, the, the process we used was really the process that was favored by Governor Scott Matheson at that time.

ps And when was that...what year was that that they changed it?

dc That was about 1984 that the legislation passed. That's close. It might have been 83, but I think it was 84.

ps And then you were appointed shortly after that?

dc I was appointed shortly after that. You know, I'm probably off. That may have been 82. Because I spent two years on the board before I became the General Manager, an employee of the District. I'd become General Manager, in 1985. So, it was probably about 82 that that legislation passed and that I was appointed to the board.

ps And how long are the terms for the board?

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dc The terms on our Board are four years. Half of our board is up for renewal or re-appointment, or whatever you want to call it, every other year. So, half of our board turns over every other year - or could turn over every other year.

ps I was going to ask you, are there term limits or how long...

dc There are no term limits. We have some people who have been on for a, a number of years, and we have some who are brand new. Generally speaking, I think three terms turns out to be the maximum that somebody would spend - the average is probably two terms.

It's pretty complicated...it takes a lot of learning. It takes a lot of experience to get up to speed and to understand all of the issues that are involved in it. I think the directors feel...almost takes them two to four years to get their feet on the ground and understand where they're going, and then the next four years they can serve with some confidence and authority, if I can say it that way. And so, it turns out...an average probably two terms, eight years.

ps So you served part of a term before you became then an employee?

dc That's correct. I had to resign from the board to accept the appointment.

ps And, were you appointed to be the General Manager right away?

dc I was.

ps So, you came in at the top. (laughter) Why did you take that position? How did you...how did that come about?

dc I was happy and content in the insurance business, and had a good career there - figuring I would retire there and live the happily ever after .. you know.

Ten about the time we were looking for a new General Manger, I was Chairman of the Board. The general manager that we had at that time had turned in his resignation. So, we were actively looking for his replacement. I was chairing the selection committee.

And then I went to some of the Council of Governments meetings, the Mountainlands Association of Government meetings, and was encouraged by County Commissioners, by mayors, and others, to actively solicit the General Manager's job myself. I really had given no thought to it, till I was encouraged by them to do it. Eventually I did throw my hat in the ring and resigned from the board, figuring I would accept whatever fate would deal me. And, and the board did select me as their new General Manager.

ps Well, what made you decide that you wanted to make that move?

dc I, I thought that I could honestly be of some help to the district and to the Central Utah Project in seeing it completed. It had been authorized for some time. The construction had started a little ways ahead of that time, but they weren't making much headway on it.

They were spending a lot of money, but they weren't getting a lot of facilities built, and I thought maybe I could help. Maybe I could do something that would be worthwhile. Not that selling insurance wasn't worthwhile, and some of the other things I was doing, weren't worthwhile, but I...I thought that I could.

And so, with the encouragement of others, I accepted the, the appointment, and went forward.

ps When you were on the Selection Committee, what were you looking for in a new General Manager?

dc Well, we were looking for somebody that had experience in water. Probably something that I didn't have. We were probably looking for somebody that had an engineering degree. Something I didn't have.

We weren't looking as much, and maybe it was our error, we weren't looking as much for somebody that could deal with people - with other governmental officials, with other entities of the state government, and of the federal government. We were looking at experience and expertise other than that.

That was probably short-sighted on our part, cause as it turns out, what we needed more than anything was the ability to work with other agencies, and to work with the public and to get the Central Utah Project moving.

I don't know that I had those skills. Other people thought that I did. I've been very fortunate. I've had a lot of good help, a lot of good support, and maybe a lot of good old luck. But we've been very, very successful in the things that we've undertaken.

ps I would think your experience as mayor and working on the water commissions would be valuable. You understood how it worked at least.

dc I had some understanding. Maybe I didn't understand as well as others did, but I had an understanding of how things should be. But, it worked out well.

ps So...., how would you describe the, the job of General Manager today? If you had to tell somebody what the job entails. Say you were looking for a replacement for yourself.
(laughs)

dc The job as Manager of the Central Utah District is, ...it's an exciting job. It's an interesting job. It's something new almost every day. I have a great group of people, assistants, managers, that are with me.

My job is really to, and this is how I describe it, is to keep them, my assistants and my staff, between the fence posts, going down this road, and not get out of bounds on either side, but to keep them going down the track.

I allow them plenty of latitude to run their department, and their responsibility, and they're to report back to me how things are going, and where their problems and successes are. My obligation is some minor course correction, to keep them within those fence posts.

Of course, I'm the over-sight. I'm the guy that...I'm where the buck stops. I'm responsible for everything, but, again, with a wonderful staff, and a staff that is enthusiastic and hard-working and as loyal as these people that I have around here, the job...I don't want to say it's easy, but it's very exciting, very interesting, and very rewarding because of their expertise and their accomplishments.

ps And you started here in, what did you say, 1985?

dc About...I think, it was the spring of 1985 when we started.

ps So, you obviously accomplished a lot over those...more than 20 years.

dc We think that we've done well.

ps What are some of the major projects or things that you accomplished?

dc Probably the major thing that we've accomplished...and about the time that I got in this manager's job, it became obvious to me...The Department of the Interior and Bureau of Reclamation people were telling me that the authorization for the Central Utah Project... Congress had authorized so many dollars to build the project...we were going to hit that limit before we came even close to getting the project completed.

So, re-authorization became, along with everything else that we were trying to do, it became the number one problem, or the number one issue that we had to solve in order to complete the Central Utah Project.

We went to work trying to figure out how we were going to do this.

The first piece of legislation that was introduced, was authored by Department of Interior, which just essentially said, we hereby raise the limit on...authorization of the Central Utah Project by x-number of dollars. And I will tell you, it was dead-on-arrival in Congress. It just had no chance.

The environmental community was involved...things that they didn't like about the Central Utah Project. Both local and national people. So, it was a real challenge.

We were able...with the help of Senator Garn...Senator Garn was a tremendous help. He was our CUP guide, if I can say it that way, on Capitol Hill in Washington. Senator Garn did a tremendous job of helping and supporting. The rest of our delegation was there as well. I have never had a disagreement among our delegation when it came to supporting the Central Utah Project.

I've never lacked the support of a governor of the state of Utah, when it came to moving the Central Utah Project along. It is so important to the state of Utah that we get this project finished and developed, and deliver the water, that it's obvious why they were supporting it. It was just good and essential for the state of Utah.

But, Senator Garn was there. We did an awful lot of work with Senator Garn, in getting a piece of legislation drawn up that we helped author. At the end of the day, we probably did author it; and we authored it with a lot of input from local people, and from the environmental community.

It was very clear to us that, if we were going to be successful, and get the votes that we needed to get this project re-authorized and to get the money we needed to complete it, we were going to have to plan an environmentally friendly project, if I can say it that way - one that the environmental community didn't look at and hate. We needed one that they would look at and think that it was, even though it was developing water, it was in a way that would be responsible to our natural resources. And, I think that we were successful.

We worked hard through Senator Garn's office. We developed a real relationship with Senator Bradley, who was chairman of the sub-committee that we had to work with in the Senate. We developed a very close relationship with Representative George Miller from California, who was chairman of the sub-committee in the House that was...again...the Energy & Water Committee that we were going to have to work with.

His Chief of Staff at the time was Dan Beard. Dan Beard today is the Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Representatives, working for Nancy Pelosi. We developed a very close relationship with these folks, and were able to work with all of them, with Senator Garn helping us through the mine fields. We wrote the legislation in a manner that they were comfortable with.

The environmental communities were led by Ed Osann, a name that many people in water will remember, over the years. The environmental community got together and elected Ed Osann to be their spokesman in putting this legislation together. Ed Osann literally was the author of our Section 207, which is our water conservation section. We worked with him on it. We developed a piece of legislation there that we could live with. Water conservation, when you live in the West, needs to be a pretty big thing.

Not that water conservation was ignored in the state of Utah before that, but it wasn't as big as it has become. And water conservation is an item that needs to be dealt with in Utah, and it is being dealt with, and I compliment the residents of the state of Utah. They have got on board and they have adopted water conservation as something that's absolutely essential to their future.

We have, and we will have, plenty of water to take care of the growth that's going to happen. If we are sensitive, if we are smart, and if we, if we conserve the water and use it wisely, we'll be fine.

I can ramble on and on and on, but this legislation is probably the biggest thing that I can claim a piece of responsibility for. It ended up in what we call the Central Utah Project Completion Act – or CUPCA.

It was passed in...I think it was 1992. It was, it was the last thing that President George Bush, Sr. ...almost the last piece of legislation that he signed before leaving office. And we passed it in just those final days of that particular administration, and that particular Congress. But, we had done enough work that when we did pass it, we had very few negative votes.

I'm doing this from memory, but I think in the Senate, we had two negative votes, and in the House of Representatives, probably less than 10 negative votes when it came to the floor of those two bodies.

So, it was a piece of legislation that we'd done a lot of work for. A lot of work! And, I can tell you that, literally, I went arm and arm with the environmental community, visiting senators and representatives' offices, lobbying for the passage of this piece of legislation. I don't think that's ever happened before in history, where the environmentalists and a Water District Manager have gone arm in arm, supporting a piece of legislation. That's why we were successful.

Since that time we have built an awful lot of the Central Utah Project.

Now, I did one other thing that I could mention, and I think it's worth mentioning...cause we are the only water district in the United States, presently, that has the responsibility for completing that project, a federal project. The responsibility was removed from the Bureau of Reclamation and given to the Central Utah Water Conservancy District with oversight from the Secretary of Interior.

Now, the Secretary of Interior designated as his oversight person, the Assistant Secretary for Water Science. But, the legislation reads that it's under the direct supervision of the Secretary of Interior.

We have a line item in the federal budget, in the Department of Interior's budget, for the Central Utah Project - which is unique among any other water district, or water project in existence today. Those are reasons why we have been successful. We have learned how to work with people; rather than being combative and confrontive (sic), we've learned how to sit down with them, work and negotiate out our challenges, our differences.

Not that we were willing to give up everything. I've always said that the Central Utah Project needed to develop, and needed to deliver the benefits that the state of Utah always thought that it was going to do. It needed to be affordable, and it needed to be reasonable. We've accomplished all of those things, and we have moved well along the road to completing the Central Utah Project.

As a matter of fact, in the recent drought that was experienced here along the Wasatch Front, had we not had the water supply from the Central Utah Project, we would have had serious water rationing. But, as a result of having that project in place, and have it

operational, we were able to get through this drought without water rationing along the Wasatch Front.

ps Is there a reason why you didn't want it to be under the Bureau of Reclamation?

dc No...., I could say no and yes. We thought we could be more effective. We thought we could move it on more rapidly, and that we could get the project built. I don't know that it was our goal to remove it from the Bureau of Reclamation. Our goal was to get the project built through the negotiations, and through all the ramifications of getting a piece of legislation passed. The assignment was taken from the Bureau and given to the district.

ps Did you have a problem with the Bureau when you were working...was it originally under the Bureau when it was first authorized?

dc It was under the Bureau. Just like any other federal project. (ps – Right, right.) Is...

And, no, I...we've learned to work with the Bureau. We've always had a reasonable relationship with them. I think that we had some issues with them. I don't need to go into those issues now, but we had some issues with them that needed to be resolved.

ps This is a good time to go into those issues. (laughter)

dc Well, some of them get controversial, and I'd rather be positive than controversial.

We had some issues where...I remember that Senator Garn and his cohorts in Congress would work very hard to get 80 to 100-million dollars a year appropriated for the Central Utah Project. When I got into it and would investigate where all the money went, I would find that ten million, fifteen million dollars went to bulldozers and concrete. The rest of it went somewhere else - to overhead within the Bureau of Reclamation.

At one time they actually admitted that their overhead was in excess of 50-percent. We felt that was not acceptable. We did some things to try to control that overhead - to put more into construction, rather than the things that they were spending it on.

Some were effective; some weren't effective. But, through the negotiation of the legislation, it was decided, by those who had the power to decide it, that they'd put the Central Utah District in charge of the construction of this project.

I think we have proven to them that it was a wise decision on their part. We have gotten a lot built. We have spent the money wisely. I think the proof of that is that they continue to fund us. They continue to...meaning the Department of the Interior...they continue to enjoy pointing to us as one of the great successes that they have in working with local governments.

ps And if this was authorized in 1992, then the first Secretary of Interior you would have had to really deal with was Bruce Babbitt, right?

dc We dealt with Secretary Babbitt, yes.

ps And how did that work out?

dc We got along...I have to say, we got along very well with Secretary Babbitt.

We have one portion of our project that was planned to be a dam that is not a dam. It was built in another way. We built a pipeline and we built a number of things that have delivered the same water supply that we would have delivered with the dam. But his administration was not in favor of dams. We understood that. We got the message loud and clear, and we went to work and found another way to accomplish the same purposes. If I can say it that way.

And, I think, as a matter of fact, the plan that we came up with... the idea one of my assistant managers, Lee Wimmer, is better than the dam would have been. So...

You know, you can choose to work with people, and try and get something done, or you can choose to be confrontational, and fight and spend a lot of money and never get anything done. And we chose to get things done and built for the people of the state of Utah.

ps Well, and Bruce Babbitt is something of a water expert.

dc Yes.

ps It wasn't like you had somebody there that didn't know... (laughs)

dc He knew about water. And, he knew about a lot of things. I would just say that we had a very good and productive relationship with Secretary Babbitt. I have no misgivings about any of his staff that we worked with while he was Secretary. It was excellent.

ps What are the key components of the Central Utah Project? That, ...you say, one was going to be a dam. Now it's a pipeline. Talk about that.

dc Central Utah Project essentially develops a portion, a pretty large portion, of Utah's share of the Colorado River. Most of this water fell as snow in the wintertime, up in the High Uintas. As it melted and then it ran off, it ran to the Colorado, went down, and didn't ever get out here to the Wasatch Front. Where Brigham Young, if you go back in a number of years, said, "This is the place." He didn't say, "That was the place." He said, "This was the place."

So, now that the people are here. We need to get the water for them, because this is where the development is happening. This is where the millions of people are going to live. Not that they aren't going to live in other parts of the state of Utah, but the mass of the population is here. And they need water.

So, the Central Utah Project...basically it's, biggest challenge is to develop the flows of the Colorado River that belong to the state of Utah. And, instead of letting them run to

the East, to the Green and to the Colorado, bring them to the West, across the transbasin diversion from the Colorado Basin, into the Great Basin here where we live.

And so, that's really what it is. We, we have a collection system that begins to collect water in the High Uintas, brings it through to the Strawberry Reservoir that is really the main key feature of the Central Utah Project. I'm speaking mainly of the Bonneville Unit. There are several units on the project, but the Bonneville Unit is the one that comes this direction.

The Strawberry Reservoir is about a million and a quarter, million-two hundred and fifty-thousand acre feet. That's a big reservoir for an area like Utah - it's our main feature.

And then we bring the water from there into the Wasatch Front. We have built the Jordanelle Reservoir, which is about a 300-thousand-plus reservoir, which is the heart of the system that brings the water to the Wasatch Front.

We have many pipelines, and...those are the features. The feature that, that was going to be a dam in Diamond Fork Canyon, called Monk's Hollow Reservoir; that's part of bringing the water out of Strawberry Reservoir and getting it over here to the Wasatch Front. We were able to develop that through a pipeline and bring the water in, and do the same thing without having the dam and reservoir there.

Money-wise, you never built a dam, so you don't know what it would have cost. We think that they were pretty close to the same.

It's a big project. It's a huge project. But it is essential to the future of the state of Utah. It won't be the only water supply, but it's a huge portion of the water supply for the growth of the Wasatch Front.

ps So most of the water from the Strawberry Reservoir comes through pipelines? And how many miles is that?

dc The collection system that starts up in the High Uintas, and brings it into the Strawberry Reservoir is just under 40 miles long. I think the exact is around 38 miles. It's a series of pipelines and tunnels, and a reservoir, getting it into the Strawberry Reservoir. And then from Strawberry Reservoir down here to the Wasatch Front, I don't know the exact miles, but it's probably about a 10 to 15 mile stretch to get it to the mouth of the canyons. And then, of course, we've got pipelines that distribute it along the Front here, as well.

So, it's a massive project, a big project. I don't know the exact number. I guess I should know it. When we get finished, we'll probably be in excess of three billion dollars that will have been spent on the Central Utah Project.

ps And that will be paid back then?

dc We have a re-payment contract with the feds. However, we've done another thing that has been kind of creative. That legislation required us to pay, up front, 34-percent of the

cost. The old contract, we didn't have that. The feds would put up all of the money - we would pay back the reimbursable costs.

With this new legislation in 1992, we had to come up with 34-percent of the reimbursable costs, right up front, as part of the construction.

To do that has been a challenge for us. To do that we employed a couple of things. The main thing was, we pre-paid our obligation to the feds. We owe them very little.

We went to the bond market. Borrowed. We have a little longer payment time...or, at least as long as we would have. Probably a little longer than we would have with the feds. But we had a slight discount with the feds, by pre-paying them. Because the money is more valuable to them today than it would be strung out over 30 years.

So, we got a discount in paying them upfront. We were able to get good financial situation in borrowing from the private...from the bond market. With the savings that we made there, we have been able to finance our portion of the 34-percent up front.

We saved, literally, several hundred million dollars in this re-financing, over the lifetime of the project. So, we've done some innovative things. We've done some things that a lot of people said you couldn't do. But, that's the kind of challenge we need, is people to tell us we can't get it done, and we sure as heck will get it done.

ps So, it sounds like you've become...not only...you said you had to be sort of a politician in this job to work with the politicians and the people, and engineering to understand it, but you've also had to become a financier...financial expert.

dc I've had to learn my way around the financial market a little bit. Thank goodness, I've been able to hire good people. I've been able employ good firms that have real expertise. And, I've been able to have a lot of help. No way does Don take credit for all of this.

I have the top seat, maybe, because I'm the General Manager, but, the credit really goes to a whole bunch of great people who have worked with me here. They've caught my vision, and have seen what I have been trying to accomplish, and then have gone out and found ways to accomplish it. That's the great thing about...my whole staff here, and the consultants who have worked with us.

ps So you really got....well, you got moving on this as soon as you took the job in 1985. But, in 1992, when the act was signed, moved into high gear, working to complete the project. How much more is there to be done? Where are you today?

dc Where are we. Our last major feature, we are in construction on it right now. We completed the environmental work and got a ROD, or a Record of Decision, several years ago, and we started construction. And we are now moving along in construction, and working with the federal government and working with the Office of Budget and Management. We have a goal of completing it by 2021.

ps And what project is that?

dc We call that the Utah Lake System. It's the one bringing the water down...a lot of water...down out of Strawberry Reservoir, and distributing it along the Wasatch Front. It's the main distribution system.

Now, when I say distribution...we're distributing it to our customers - other water agencies, and cities and what have you. We don't have any retail. We don't sell it to the homeowner or anything of that nature. Ours is a wholesale type business. We're developing the water, and we're getting it to where they can come and pick it up, and then take it to their systems.

ps And you call it the, the Utah Lake...

dc Utah Lake System.

ps And how many lakes does that entail?

dc Well, Utah Lake is a big lake down here, and, and I guess that was just...a convenient name to.... Because it does involve working through Utah Lake a little bit. We do a bunch of series of exchanges. Kind of complicated exchanges. At the center of those exchanges is Utah Lake. And that's why the system kind of got the name of Utah Lake system.

It brings the water... that system brings the water down out of Strawberry Reservoir, through a tunnel. Then down, now that we're this side of the ridge, and into this basin, we're now bringing it through pipelines and so on, and down several canyons. We will come out at Spanish Fork Canyon over here, and then from there, we'll go....to Salt Lake County and down to the other parts of Utah County.

But, hopefully, by 2021, we'll have that little project done. Unfortunately, I may not be around by 2021.

ps Not going to stay to see it through? (laughs)

dc Well, you know....I told you my birth date. And, I...don't know how long... (laughs)

ps Let's see. I've got some sort of general questions that they, they asked me to ask you. (dc – Okay.) You've answered a lot of them, I think, already. But, is there anything that you would do differently now, looking back on...over the past 20-some years?

dc You know, I, I really....there are some little things that you might have tweaked here and there. But, I really believe that over the major portion of my time as General Manager of the district, I wouldn't change much. I would pretty well....even knowing the mistakes I've made, and nobody knows them any better than I do, I believe I'd still go down about the same path.

ps You want to name any of those mistakes?

dc No. (laughter)

ps You don't want those recorded for history?

dc Some of those mistakes aren't public knowledge. And, I'd just like to sort of keep them that way. (laughter)

We've, you know, some of the mistakes you make, you are, ...you haven't got another path that you can go. But, when you go down that path, you find that you should have done it differently. But you didn't know that, and that information wasn't available to you at that time. So, to say you would have changed it, you'd have changed it if you had other information, but that information wasn't available when you made that mistake.

We've had to re-do some of our bonding here just recently, as a result of the sub-prime mortgage mess that the company has found itself in.

A few years ago, when we issued some bonds, the people who would buy the bonds, would buy them at a lower rate, and they were more receptive to buying them, if they were insured.

Well, okay. So, we go deal with an insurance company, and we get them insured. And we sell the bonds. Along comes the mortgage sub-prime thing, and the company who had insured our bonds got messed up in the sub-prime, and the rating agencies dropped the rate.

Well, what happens to us, we're paying less than two-percent on some of our bonds, and now our bonds aren't desirable because the rating, the insurance company, who's insuring our bonds, their rating is down ... but our rating is still good. We pay our bills and nobody has ever missed anything.

But, because the insurance company we have has been downgraded, then we start paying three or four or five times as much interest. In other words, we might have been up around eight or 10-percent. Maybe even 12 percent. Well, that will kill you, to pay that, compared to two-percent. So, we've had to refund our bonds. Get rid of, abort any insurance, and go out based on our own good faith and credit and sell the bonds. We're back down to under two-percent.

Because we have a good credit rating, we have a good future, and people can see that we're solid. We're going to pay our debts- but....four or five, six, eight, 10 years ago when we sold those bonds, people said, oh, we want them insured so that we have this extra safety.

So, you know, that's the kind of, (ps – Right.) that's the kind of thing I'm talking about that we might have done different. But, you'd have had to have some knowledge that wasn't available to you.

ps What about the, the political atmosphere in Washington and in Utah? How has that had an impact as the whole political system...

dc You know...(ps -- ...has changed.) I don't want to get into a, a political discussion. But, I will say this to you. That...

We have been....I want to say good. I want to say excellent. I want to say really good. But, we've also been lucky. We have been able to work with whomever was in office. Whomever was in control. We have worked with the Democrats, we have worked with the Republicans.

When our legislation was passed, if you'll recall, the Democrats had the majority in both houses, I believe. We had a Republican president, but they had the majority. So, we have worked with the Democrats, we have worked with the Republicans. And we have been successful with both.

Again, I think it goes back to....we don't want to be confrontational. We don't want to fight. We just need to accomplish what's good for the people of the state of Utah. And we find a way to accomplish that.

So, the challenge is that the country has issues that are politically related....I don't want to say we're not touched by them, because we certainly are affected by anything that affects the whole nation. We're affected by the large deficits. We're affected by Congress having less and less discretionary spending to fund projects like ours. So we are affected by those kinds of things.

But, we have been very successful in working with the people who helped make those decisions. And then, we have been....we've been honest. We've been open. We haven't pulled the wool over their eyes. We don't ask for money that we can't legitimately spend, and spend effectively. We don't...you know if they give us 10-million-dollars a year, we can spend the 10-million dollars, and we spend it on bulldozers and concrete, and get something done.

And we can show them, and we do furnish them reports of where their money went and what they got for their money. And, they're impressed with that. And as a result of that, they continue to work with us very closely in the funding of the project.

So, I...the politics of the country....whoever wins, whether it be Obama or McCain, in November. Whatever that administration turns out to be, I'm confident that we'll be able to work with them. I'm not going to get into any personal preferences as to what I have, but we will be able to work with them.

We have had a wonderful delegation. Senator Orrin Hatch did a tremendous job for us when we were trying to get George Bush, Sr., to sign this piece of legislation. The CUP Completion legislation. It was in a package of other legislation, and there were some controversial pieces of it, and there were other senators around the country who were...or at least in the West...who were fighting, saying, Mr. President, don't sign this legislation.

And, I believe Orrin Hatch, Senator Hatch, did a wonderful job in helping us get President Bush to sign that legislation.

And, as I've already said, Senator Garn...he's.... Of course, he was, he was a mayor of Salt Lake City. He was involved in water for Salt Lake City. He didn't come in to being a senator as a dummy and no water background. He knew how important Central Utah Project was to Utah. Senator Garn has been one tremendous supporter for all the years that he was in there. After Senator Garn retired, and Senator Bennett came along, Senator Bennett has just been a brick. He's done anything and everything to help this project.

I probably should mention the late Representative Wayne Owens. Wayne was a little controversial. He was a Democrat, he was an environmentalist. But Wayne Owens helped us get this project passed as well. I mean, he helped us get it into a form, and get the enviros on board to help support us.

Not all of the parts of everything that Wayne did were always popular, but they helped bring together all of the factions that were important to be together to get a piece of legislation passed.

And all of the others that we've had - Congressman Chris Cannon, who's about to go out of office, has been a tremendous help to us. Howard Nielsen, when he was in office, was a tremendous help to us. Bill Orton was a lot of help to us. Karen Shephard when she was in, was a tremendous help.

As I said earlier, we have been blessed...we've been fortunate. We've been lucky. But, I also think we've been good at working with our congressional people, helping them understand how important Central Utah Project is and what they can do to help move it along. And they have been terribly responsive.

The last thing I want is anybody to think that Don has done this alone. Don hasn't done much. I've done a lot of talking. I've done a lot of encouraging people to do things. But, others have really done the thing that's made this thing go.

ps Maybe this might be a good time to change tape here. (dc – Okay.) ... we still have a bunch more questions.



Colorado River Water Users Association –UTAH
Tape #2
DON CHRISTIANSEN (TAPE #2)
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
August 19, 2008

ps Okay. Let's see. Let's talk some more about, about the Colorado River. Obviously, that's your whole goal with the Central Utah Project is getting the Colorado River water here. How important is the Colorado River water to Utah?

dc Well, it's our lifeblood. I mean, water's the lifeblood of any area. it's a large water supply.

Of the Upper Basin allocation, Utah's share of that is about 22-percent, and we need that water for the state of Utah. With the growth that's going on. With the growth that will be here in the future, even though we're...as the rest of the country, we've kind of hit this lull where things are a little bit not so bright right now. But, they will turn bright. This isn't the first time we've had a slow down in the country.

So this water is tremendously important, and we have to develop it, and we have to develop it effectively and efficiently. And, beyond that, we have to be responsible in how we develop it.

(camera stops)

dc Well, we were...I guess I was explaining that the Colorado River water is tremendously important to Utah.

It is just essential that we develop it. And, as I said, we need to develop it responsibly, too, because we do have an environmental concern in the country today. And, I've always said that Utah is capable...given the latitude, given the freedom to do it, we'll respond. We'll develop our natural resources in a responsible, economic, effective way. And, I think that we'll do the same with the Colorado River resource that we have.

ps But...until the Central Utah Project has been developed then, you really weren't using that much of your allotment.

dc Using very little. Very little of our allotment. We had a few other projects that were using some, but it was a very small amount. Central Utah Project is really the big share of the river.

- ps So, how much of the allotment will you be using when the project's complete?
- dc Don't ask me that question. (ps laughs) That being honest? I don't remember..
- ps Half? More than half?
- dc Yeah. It's, it's in excess of half. I want to say, somewhere around the neighborhood of, of 75-percent of Utah's share. But, I....
- ps Well, we can look that up somewhere. (dc – Yeah. Okay.) Cause it's not...some of your allotment's also being used for Southern Utah, isn't it?
- dc They are attempting to take some out of Glen Canyon, out of Lake Powell, and take it over to the St. George area. That's in its environmental stage right now, and it could be a few years before that happens, but given all of the approvals, yes, they will be taking....seems to me like it's around... around the neighborhood of 70,000 acre feet. Annually. They want to take into the St. George area?
- ps And, do they really need that?
- dc Oh, tremendously, yeah. Without it, the growth of St. George will be stymied. Even with more water conservation, and they're...they are getting on the bandwagon down there in water conservation. They're even more of a desert than we are up here. But, they're getting with water conservation and they're doing a really fine job.
- But they need that water for development down there. There is no question. It's a very desirable place for folks to live. You see an awful lot of retirement age people settling down there. And, I guess with the Baby Boomer generation reaching retirement age, you're going to see an awful lot of pressure for more retirement.
- It's just a nice place. It's a clean place. It's a...it's a little warm in the summer, but it isn't as hot as Phoenix or some of the other places. It's warm and comfortable. Comparatively. Warm and comfortable in the wintertime. I mean, it can get cool, and it will freeze there. But it doesn't get down to zero, and you don't get snow.
- You never have to drive in snow. You may get a few inches of snow, but it seldom...gets on the road so you have to drive in it. So, it is Utah's Dixie. It will attract a lot. So, the water's essential to the...
- ps I've even heard some people from Phoenix moving up there. (laughs)
- dc Yes. They've been...they've come there from all over the country. You can go around St. George...you can find them from Georgia. You can find them from Illinois. Michigan, Massachusetts. You just ask questions of where people came from.
- The reason being, a few years ago, in a lot of retirement magazines, they listed St. George as one of the top five retirement communities in the country. And some people make

their decision based on what they read in a magazine when they want to retire. I find that a little difficult, but some people think that's the way to choose it.

ps So do you think there'll ever become a competition between Central Utah and Southern Utah (dc – No.) for the use of water?

dc Absolutely not. No. No. And, and the reason I say that as much as anything, is that there's such a thing as endangered species in the Colorado River. Some of the water is going to need to be left in the river to provide habitat for those fish.

We think there is, in fact, a twofer – in that you can leave water in from Flaming Gorge Reservoir clear down to Lake Powell and provide habitat for the fish and what have you. And at that point take it out and deliver it to Southern Utah. So we think that there's a twofer there that you can actually accomplish a lot of things that need to be accomplished and still use the water for human purposes.

ps Yeah. Since this project's only been developed over the last 20, 25 years...um, before that, Central Utah was...has other sources of water.

dc Oh, yes. Yes.

ps So, you still making use of those also.

dc Absolutely. Absolutely.

That's one of the things, when the early pioneers, the settlers of this area, came into this...

Obviously they could not settle except where there was water. And they needed enough water, and a good source of water for drinking water, and they needed a source of water for irrigating their crops. Because they were separated from the rest of the United States by a long ways, and they weren't going to import too much food or what have you, they were going to have to grow most of what they had.

So, one of the first things that the pioneers did when they settled in the Salt Lake Valley was start developing irrigation systems. That was one of their first things as they settled.

Brigham Young sent them out specifically to develop these various water resources, so that they could begin to irrigate and grow crops. Even before they began to build homes or anything, or settle, he sent them out to develop the water. So irrigating and developing water started with the first people that settled this area.

ps And, you do have, like you said, good sources of water.

dc Good sources of water. And, and...I don't want to say anybody's been spoiled, but to a degree, we have become spoiled, spoiled because we've had such pristine good water sources, and as the population grew, we outgrew those sources of water. And that's why

we need for the Colorado River water to be brought over. And, for all of these other developments that have to happen.

ps Has there been any concern about the quality of the Colorado River water?

dc No. No. There has not been a concern.

Certainly we're concerned about it, but modern technology, you can handle the purification of water. So...it's a...it hasn't been, it hasn't been our major concern.

ps I know Tucson for awhile didn't want the Colorado River water. (laughs)

dc I know. I remember that. I remember that discussion, and I remember that argument very well. You bet.

ps But that hasn't been an issue?

dc That hasn't been our big issue. No.

ps What kind of changes have you seen in the interaction between the states of the Colorado River? Water...

dc You know, I don't know that I've seen a big difference. I think when I took this job and I got involved in it, the relationships were, were good. I think the relationships are still good. The issues are a little different. And when I say different...they're still over water. So they're not different, but they come from a little different direction.

And you've had Nevada grow up, if I can say it that way.. that wasn't a factor in the beginning. Nobody, obviously...by the amount of water that was allocated to Nevada, they weren't really a player. They didn't feel like they needed to be a player, and they weren't a player.

Now they are a player and they have a challenge. And, it's a challenge that affects all of us along the Colorado River. When they start wanting more, and dealing and developing and what have you, it affects all of us.

But, I think the states get along remarkably well for the battles that are potentially there over water.

It was, I think Senator Garn told me, a quote from Senator Barry Goldwater one day when he was a...he says he was visiting with Senator Goldwater about the Central Utah Project. And Senator Goldwater said something to the effect...and I don't know that I can do it justice...but he says, you can have my beer, or my liquor, and you can mess around with my women, but don't you mess with my water supply. Have you heard...

ps I've heard similar ones. Yes.

bs Mostly the wife one. (laughter)

ps I'll trust you with my wife, but not with my water.

dc Yeah, something like that. (laughter) It gets worded a little different with everybody that...

But nevertheless, Senator Garn gave Senator Goldwater credit for having made that statement originally.

ps Yeah. There's a lot of those going around. I've heard...cause, since we've started doing the other states...we did Colorado and New Mexico, and we did Nevada last year, so...you hear....Colorado had a lot of really good ones.

dc I'll bet.

A little more of the answer to how the states get along.

Each, each state has its own individual way of developing or working with or handling its water problems within its boundaries. And, I think given that each state approaches it maybe a little bit differently, the states...remarkably well in getting along.

We see it a little bit differently than Colorado, but we're able to, we're able to find some agreement. We may not always walk out of the meetings, and we may not always have a smile on our face, but I think, at the end of the day, the agreements are such that both states can live with them. Or all seven states, or whatever, can live with them.

And, I...in politics, quite often, that's the test of whether you've got about the right agreement is if everybody can live with it, but nobody's overly-joyed (sic) with it. You know. (laughs) It's a good test.

ps Well, and it seems like the states are battling over the legal water rights, but the water associations, the Central Utah Project and Central Arizona Project, and SRP, they all have a lot in common working together. Do you share a lot of information about managing that water once you have the rights to it?

dc We have a good relationship with all of the water districts.

I have a very close love and relationship for Pat Mulroy. Pat, she's out-spoken, she's very aggressive. She's...however you want to describe her, it's probably right. But, I have a very close association and love for Pat Mulroy.

That doesn't mean that I agree 100-percent with everything that she does. But, she's got a job to do. The same that I have a job to do here. And she may approach it a little differently than I do, but I have a tremendous amount of love and respect for her. We've been involved in an awful lot of things over the years. We don't have as much interaction now, as we have over the years. But, a good, good relationship.

And, with water managers in Arizona, California, Colorado. Chips Berry, the Water Board of Denver. I have a great relationship with Chips. I get along with all of them.

We may have our differences. We may disagree on things. But that doesn't mean you have to be disagreeable.

ps I'm sure a lot of the technology that you've used is similar.

dc Very, very similar. And, many of those folks have been very helpful to me in telling me how they've handled a particular problem or issue and what have you. It's been very helpful to me over my 25 years working here on the Central Utah Project.

ps One of the questions they wanted me to ask you was about, what individuals do you see have made the biggest contributions in the development of the river, and the relationships between the states.

dc You know, I don't know that I'm an expert to say that. I can go back to one name that really needs to be...from Utah. He should not be left out. And that's Ed Clyde.

Ed Clyde was very much involved in the original agreements on the river. Very much involved with the legislation, the Colorado River Storage Project legislation that was passed, and so on. And, he was probably the Colorado River's/Central Utah Project guy in the state of Utah for years and years and years.

His son...Ed was our legal counsel for some time, and then unfortunately passed away, and his son, Steve Clyde, is our legal counsel today. So...we've been at one law firm from day one.

But, his dad has a real history in it. And, if you noticed, our board room down there, we have affectionately named it the Ed Clyde Board Room, because Ed has a real history with this district.

Jake Garn. You can't leave Jake out. He's had a tremendous effect on what has gone on here. And, Orrin Hatch has... and you go back to Governor George Dewey Clyde, who was governor at the time of a lot of the Central Utah Project, and the Colorado River Project becoming reality if you will.

ps Is he any relation to Ed Clyde?

dc Yeah, but you gotta go back quite a ways. They're not very close, but, but they are...I think all of the Clydes...some where...come together.

ps Kind of like the Udalls. (laughs)

dc Yeah. I think so. I think very much like the Udalls, as a matter of fact. But they may not be brothers or, (ps – Cousins.) first cousins or, or what have you, but they're, they're not very far away. They're not very far removed.

I hate to name names because you leave people out. And there certainly were other governors and there were other people involved in the natural resources of the state of Utah. Directors there at that agency... did partner eventually, who over the years have had a tremendous input on the development of water .

ps It's hard to remember all of them.

dc So, I apologize.

ps But, you've named quite a few of them, so that's good. Looking back, are there...what are the legal developments that you think prepared Utah to be ready for all of this growth?

dc The legal developments?

ps Or, developments in...political, legal arena, I guess.

dc Well, I think....to a degree I've kind of covered a lot of that.

The Central Utah Project...well, let's go back even further. Obviously the compacts on the river.

But then the passage of the CRSP legislation, Colorado River Storage Project legislation, of which Central Utah Project is a participating unit. And then getting the Central Utah Project authorized and started construction on it, and what have you...bringing it to a reality. Tremendously important for the state of Utah.

As happens far too often, I guess, in government, things move along, and they move at kind of a slow pace, and sometimes when they do get passed, they even hit a snail's pace, if they haven't been already slow. And, I think that is one of the things that I wanted to do was...move Central Utah Project along. Because, as times change...as...

You know, when, when the Central Utah Project was first authorized, there was virtually no environmental legislation existing in the United States of America. Endangered Species Act didn't exist. NEPA didn't exist. The environmental community didn't have that much impact in Congress.

ps That was the early 60s, right?

dc Well, yeah. Hm, hmm. And, and, that's not all that long ago. Maybe to young people that seems like a long time ago.

But that isn't all that long ago, and it passes awfully fast.

And, so, I...you can't get caught up...and I think you mentioned it a little bit earlier. You can't get caught up in...this is the way we've always done it. If you get caught up in that scenario, that we've got to do it this way because this is the way it's always been

done, of this is the way we've always done it, the crowd's going to pass you by. You're going to lose the race.

You've got to be creative, you've got to be open to change. You've got to do what will be successful today, and look forward enough....and so, taking that aspect, or that vantage point, I looked at the Central Utah Project, and we had already lost a lot of ground in getting construction really in high gear. The environmental movement was changing drastically. We needed to get with the program, and get things constructed, or I could see Central Utah Project never being completed.

I could see things changing enough, that the opposition would be strong enough, that you could never get the project off the ground and built. And, the same thing is true today.

You have got to be open enough, and willing to accept change. But, to move things along, you can't just...

One criticism I had of the Bureau of Reclamation - many, many people worked for the Bureau of Reclamation on the Central Utah Project. It was their career. They started their career on the Central Utah Project. They retired from the Bureau still working on the Central Utah Project.

How many projects can survive, unless it's National Defense, you know, as a lifetime for people after people, after generation after generation? It's going to die. We needed to get it done. We didn't need to furnish jobs for everybody; we needed to get the project built. And, let the economy, let the growth of the area, furnish the jobs for the people. That's where I had a problem.

ps So, when you came on board, you...was it a...the Central Utah Project in one of those times when it was kind of stalled?

dc Well...yeah. Earlier I mentioned to you that our delegation did a great job of getting reasonable at that time allocation, or authorization, in the budget for Central Utah Project. But, of that money, a very little portion of it was going into actual construction.

We were in a...I think....some people would disagree...but a desperate situation. We were, we were kind of carrying the load...a big load...for the Bureau of Reclamation. They were able to say, we need all these millions of dollars for the Central Utah Project, then they were re-allocating and not doing the Central Utah Project. All that was doing was dooming Central Utah Project for death somewhere down the road. We needed to get that changed. That's where I went when I came.

ps So, did you realize that when you took the job?

dc No. No, I was dumb and stupid. I didn't realize much of anything. I, I learned a lot of things. I was a little pushy, a little shove-y, and probably a little bit, uh...oh, I hate to say it, but on the border of...some people thought ignorant.

But I got into the bureau's budget. I wanted to know where some of the money went. What some of the funds that they were doing, and so on. And you can't do that without being just a little bit fussy, I mean, a little bit shove-y, and a little bit of a pest, because they don't want to share that information with you, because they know it's not going to be to their betterment to share that kind of information.

ps So, was it your idea then to break away from the Bureau?

dc No. I would never take credit for that. (ps laughs) I would never take credit for that. I, I can tell you where the idea...

It came in a meeting that I was in one day with my Washington, D.C. counsel and lobbyist, Marcus Faust. We were in a meeting with George Miller and Dan Beard, who I've mentioned previously. And, I was complaining a little bit of the negotiations. We were negotiating and putting together the CUP Completion Act. The Central Utah Project Completion Act. We were negotiating.

We were meeting with Department of Interior officials, Bureau of Reclamation officials, Representatives from our senators, and from our delegation in the House of Representatives. Myself. We were meeting every couple of weeks in Washington, D.C. Nothing was getting done. It was another one of these, we have a place to be and, uh...we have to be there because in two weeks, we'll get a pay check for having been there kind of a thing, where nothing was getting accomplished.

And I complained to Dan Beard and to Congressman George Miller one day that we weren't going very fast. And, if there's any credit for the authority coming from the federal government to us, it comes from those two fellows.

ps But, was it your idea to push them to do that?

dc Came from those two fellows.

ps (laughs) You don't want to take credit for that? Cause that is a pretty radical idea. I mean, all the water projects have always gone through the Bureau of Rec that I know of.

dc Let's say that I didn't oppose it.

ps Okay. Well....

bs She'll make you try to toot your horn, won't she?

dc I...it's okay. I'm okay. No...I...really, that's where the credit comes for making the decision that we would change that responsibility.

ps So they helped accomplish that, but was it really their idea?

dc They did a beautiful job of helping get the Central Utah Project legislation into the form that it finally passed, and, get us authorized to get things done that needed to get done.

ps Is there an accomplishment related to water that you're proudest of, that you'd like to talk about?

dc I think that's it. The Central Utah Project Completion Act. CUPCA.

I spent, literally, over half of my life for almost seven years, in Washington, D.C., trying to get this legislation passed. From 1985 to 1992.

And, when I say literally half, I spent probably on average for five of those seven years, I spent 30 weeks a year in Washington, D.C. I'm very proud of having got that legislation passed. I'm very proud that the district was given the confidence and the authority to build the project. I'm very proud that we have taken that responsibility and run with it. And made ourselves proud and made people, happy to say, we were part of that decision.

ps Spending that much time in Washington must have been tough on your family.

dc My family was grown at the time, as you can tell by my birthday. They were grown and on their own.

My wife got a little tired of it. We had some horses at the time and she needed to...it was her responsibility to feed the horses and water the horses and take care of them morning and night. She was...at that time...I told you she didn't work. She worked in the house. And, for a few years while I was working, about 10 years, she worked for a local school district. Just because I was gone so much, she needed to be somewhere.

But she had the responsibility of feeding the horses and taking care of the place. We had several acres, and I was gone a lot. It wasn't bad in the summer, but it was kind of hellish for her in the wintertime, I'm sure. But she's tough. She's good. And she never complained one bit.

ps That's pretty amazing.

dc But, we ended up getting rid of the horses. (laughter)

ps (laughs) So, did you think when you took this job that you were going to be spending your time (dc – No.) in Washington?

dc No.

I honestly...when I took the job...I was pretty naïve. I didn't know what it was going to be, or what it would entail. Or what was going to be my biggest responsibility, what was going to be my biggest challenge. I had...how can you know. You, you really don't.

I had been on the Board for a couple years, and, yeah, I came to a board meeting and did a few things. But, you really don't get your hands into it, and get your head into it one or two days a month. You know. So, I didn't know what to expect. And, it has turned out...as I said earlier...it has turned out to be a wonderful experience in my life

And, the people that I have surrounded myself with...you mentioned somebody earlier...hired a lot of young people. I'm guilty. Yeah.

I love these guys that were in their middle 20s, to their later 20s, - and hadn't worked too much for anybody else - that could come in and learn how I would like to do things. And, these guys have been...guys and gals... have been absolutely outstanding. They've been perfect. They just been so good.

Betty in there, my administrative assistant - Betty has worked with me, and we've worked together since I was mayor. We're about 35 years at least, that we have been together, that she has been my...

When I came down here, I needed...we needed... One of the first things I had to do was go to a...we had to go to a general election on a re-payment contract. And we needed help. And I asked Betty if she would come down and work part-time for us. Sshe did and she never left.

The lady that was working as my assistant at that time decided to retire, and I gave the job to Betty. And, you know, she's, she gets...tremendous...a lot of credit for the things that we've accomplished, too. All of them do around here. It's just a tremendous staff.

All I am is kind of the cheerleader. I just keep cheering them on. And they do a wonderful job.

ps Must be a good personnel person at hiring the right people. (laughs)

dc When I took the job, we didn't even have a personnel manager. We, we did finally hire a Human Resource Manager, and he does an outstanding job. Outstanding job.

ps So you were doing that, too.

dc I was doing that...I...yeah. You had to...you had to do everything in those days.

ps What has been the, the biggest surprise for you regarding water in Utah over the years that you've been here?

dc I guess I came in a little naïve, as I said earlier. But, the intensity that people defend their water rights, and are willing, or not willing to talk about ...improvements or changes in how they handle their water, how they deliver water, how they use water. That's...that was probably the biggest surprise that I had. People are very, very possessive of the water.

The story that Senator Barry Goldwater is given credit for, is very, very real. And more real than we would, I think, like to believe, but it is. But, that's true today. Even with that being true...you know...that is so true, I still feel good about the relationship between the states. The relationship between other water districts. Just locally, we...we run into it.

As I work with other water districts, with cities, with irrigation companies and so on, the...change is very difficult for them.

And, many of them see change almost as giving up some right, or some...betrayal of their forefathers, or something, if they change. And that's probably been the biggest surprise. And probably the hardest thing for me to deal with.

I can deal with a lot of these other kinds of things. You can deal with financial problems if you can sit down and figure it out, and work at it and come to a solution. But, sometimes when you gotta deal with personalities over water, where they...you know...they feel like they're going to betray their great, great-grandfather if they do something with that water right, it's pretty difficult.

And, you've probably done enough interviews, or been around enough, you know that people get very, very possessive, and very emotional about their water.

And, I guess in the West, where the water's a little scarce, and, again...where I was naïve, I didn't understand that as well as I do now.

ps I guess Utah hasn't faced the, the same kind of shortages as Arizona and even California have faced for a long time.

dc I think that we have avoided those. And, my hat goes off to those people who preceded me and preceded many of our local leaders now in the water arena.

Salt Lake City Corporation, for instance. Those people have been very, very aggressive and forward-thinking in their water supply from day one. As have many, many of the cities done a great job. And you have to take your hat off. And that's why we haven't had a shortage. But the other reason is that we've come a long...the CUP and filled in the gaps and the potential shortages.

As I mentioned earlier, we would have been water rationing had we not had Central Utah Project water in that six to seven year drought that we just ended a few years ago.

ps Well, what, what issues relating to Utah's water resources do you think are the most critical today?

dc I think the most critical is conservation. We've got a long, long ways to go in conservation. And, and there is a long ways for us to go there, too. I mean, there's plenty of room for us to do better, and to do a job on re-using water, and any number of things.

Re-using water locally is not very popular, because they've had this pristine mountain water for all these years. And re-using water...

They don't think about the fact that if they go to Washington, D.C., that's what they're drinking is re-used water. They go almost any other place in the country, and they're

drinking re-used water. But, not in Utah. We can't do it here, you know. And, I think they've got a little adjustment...that's going to be...

We've got plenty of water, with what we can develop, what we have now, what we have on the drawing boards to develop. We can take care of the ultimate population in the state of Utah. But, we're going to have to be wise, we're going to have to conserve. And, we're going to have to use that water very smartly.

ps Talking about effluent and that sort of thing?

dc All of it. All of it. Anything. We're going to have to use effluent from water treatment plants. We're going to have to use any number of sources that we can find. It will all have to be used, and I think we'll have to use it till we wear it out.

ps I know Arizona uses a lot of effluent for golf courses and things. I don't think anybody would want to use it for drinking water. I know you could if you had to.

dc You don't want to use it for, you don't want to use it for drinking water, unless you've diluted it or mixed it with some others.

ps Right. Right. But...for watering golf courses.

dc It's not very popular today, I...and I recognize that, so don't play these comments very far and wide. But, the day will come when we will dilute that with the other supplies that we have and mix it and we will treat it and it'll be just fine. And we'll be happy with it. I'm confident of that. I don't know that I'll be alive when that happens, but I'm confident that...if we're going to exist in the desert, we're going to have to do that.

ps What about the desalination? They're looking... they built a test plant down by Yuma to try to...de-salting water.

dc I think that has a real..

ps You've got a whole Salt Lake here.

dc Yeah, well, I'll tell you, de-salting the Great Salt Lake would be a challenge. (laughter)

ps Some people have said California should look at de-salting the Pacific Ocean. (laughs)

dc Well, bit by bit, or gallon by gallon, yeah, I think that it has its place. The challenge with it is, you know, it's very energy intensive. And energy is a challenge. But, I think we will solve the nation, if not the world's, energy problems one day in the future.

There has to be a way to solve it. We may not understand what it is today, but they will solve it. For our own, for our own existence we're going to have to resolve this energy problem.

ps I know some people are concerned now about dealing with the shortages on the Colorado River. That all of these, the Compact and all of the...dividing up the water is water that may not even be there. To be here by...

dc That's a challenge and that's something that the states are going to have to work together and cooperate on and find a solution to. And there may not be.

I think they already know that the water they thought was available when they did the original Compact between the Upper and Lower Basins, there's not as much as they thought then. And, obviously...depending on what climate changes, if there are any...and if they go the wrong way, there could be less water available in the Colorado. Those are things that we just have to be prepared, in my opinion, to work together.

I don't see how Colorado can suffer, and Utah not suffer. I don't see how Utah can suffer and Colorado doesn't. Or Arizona, or California. Or Nevada. New Mexico's just a little piece of the pie there. But, we're all going to have some shortage. It can't be just one that has the shortage. We're all going to have to figure out a way to deal with it.

I'm not really close to the resolution that they adopted among the states here a while back, because I wasn't involved in the negotiations. I've been through it with our leaders and so on. It's, it's a reasonable approach, but, it's not the last approach. And, it's not the last resolution to the problem. They're going to have to continue to talk.

It won't do any good for one state to get bullheaded and say the heck with you. We're going to do it alone. We're going to have to work it together. We all...we're all are...to one degree or another...we live or die by the flows of the Colorado River, and we need to work it together, and, I'm confident we will.

ps Let's see. You've answered some of these questions here. What advice do you have for people today that are dealing with the river water? Obviously, you're still working and dealing with it. A lot of people I interview are retired. (laughs) What, what advice do you have for today, and tomorrow, when maybe you are?

dc I just think the only thing you can do is continue to be creative. Continue to talk. Continue to be open to working to working with others, and don't get too caught up in the personal side of it, but stay objective in what you're trying to resolve. Remember that you're dealing for more than yourself. You're dealing for, whether it be the inhabitants of the Central Utah District, or you're representing the state of Utah, or whether it's California, or whatever you're representing. Don't get so narrow minded that you think that you're the only player in the dog-gone thing.

Remember that we've all got the challenge. We all need to work together. And we can learn from each other. I think if we can continue to have a cooperative spirit, and a cooperative attitude, and a desire, truly, to solve it among us, we will find a solution. It may be a little painful at times, but we'll find a solution.

So, I would just say, work together. Be cooperative, be creative, be willing to look at change, be willing to look at different answers and alternatives. And, don't get locked in that this is the only way to do it.

ps More people say that we've seen the end of the big water projects. The Central Arizona Project. Even the Central Utah Project. Do you feel that, that this is the end of those kinds of big projects?

dc You know, I really don't know. I've thought about that many times, and I haven't ever come up with an answer.

A lot of things are going to have to change before there's ever going to be further and more large water projects.

Our approach to environmental problems is going to have to change. I think we're going to have to develop an even more strict, and restrictive, conservation ethic. We're going to have to be almost in dire need. That civilization can't continue to exist if we don't do something, before it's going to get much consideration. And certainly, the fiscal position of our federal government is going to have to improve, or the money won't be there to fund a large water project.

It is very difficult, as I think many of us in the states are finding, to develop and fund these projects without the help of the feds. But, we're going to have to find it.

So, I don't know whether there will be large water projects in the future, but I would venture a guess that, if there are, they're quite a ways away. Quite a ways down into the future.

ps Some people have said there'll never be another big dam.

dc You know, I don't think that I would go that far, but I, I would certainly say that they are way out in the future. And, again, need...if the need arises, it will drive the solution. And, that's the best that I can come up with in my mind.

They may not be big water projects as we know them today. Central Arizona, Central Utah, and, those kinds of things. The Columbia River type thing. You know. They may not be those kinds of projects. But we're going to be in a real world of hurt before they're going to really get much consideration, in my opinion.

ps Some people in Colorado even suggested that...maybe bringing water from the Mississippi would be a, a solution. That's a big project. (laughs)

dc That's a big project, yeah. Well, I've heard some people say, we ought to bring some down here from the Columbia.

ps Yeah, that's been suggested. And vetoed. You know, back in the 60s, when they were doing the CAP, ... Let's see. You talked, too, about conservation. Is it harder here to get

people to conserve when there is still plenty of water, and that water is relatively inexpensive?

dc Water is getting more expensive around here. It's far more than it used to be. And, I would compliment the people of the state of Utah. I think they have embraced water conservation, and done a pretty good job of conserving.

But, when I say that, in almost the same breath, we still have a long ways to go.

Growth will force some of that, but the progress that we've made in the last 15 years, I think, is remarkable. And sometimes I think we fail to go back and look where we were 15 years ago, and where we are today.

If you look at where we are today, some people can say, jeez...we've got to do conservation. We've got to do conservation. We gotta do a lot more conservation. But, if you look back and look where you were 15 years ago, we're doing a great job. We aren't at the end of the road. We haven't won the battle. But, for heaven's sakes, give people credit for what they've done, and let's continue, and I think we'll make it.

So, I think, I really compliment the people of Utah. They have embraced the water conservation ethic, but we've got a long ways to go.

It's not because they haven't embraced it. Some of it's because we, as water leaders, haven't done everything. But, the demand or the need for those kind of things isn't quite here, and it's a little hard to build ...some re-use projects, until they're really needed. You know. Because, you've got to be able to pay for them. And, if you can't, if you can't get a stream of revenue coming in, it's pretty hard to spend the money if there isn't going to be some revenue to pay it back sometime.

So, as I say, look at where we were back when Central Utah Project Completion Act was passed. Look where we were in water conservation. Look where we are today. And, if in 15 more years we can make the same kind of gain that we've made in the last 15... The people of Utah have bought that ethic, and they're more than willing to do it.

We get crowds of people going through our conservation gardens out here. If people hadn't bought that ethic, it wouldn't be worth it to spend a million dollars to put that garden in, and people wouldn't come and visit it, cause they wouldn't care about it. And, while we do have a reasonable...I hesitate to say abundant water supply...we have an adequate water supply. Nobody's being told they can't water their lawn and what have you. But, they know that they need to be headed in the direction of water conservation. There needs to be less Kentucky Blue Grass.

When I was mayor, that was one of the things that...whenever you would hold planning meetings and you would get input from the citizens, that's what they wanted, was huge lots with all kinds of shrubbery and acres of Kentucky Blue Grass around them. You know. Because....two things.

One, it was beautiful, and, number two, they thought that was the way to limit growth limit the population. Cause, if we only had one house on every two acres, you know. Compared to four houses on every acre. So, yeah. We're doing well, but we'll just continue to do even better.

ps Do you have the issue here that when houses are built on agricultural land, whether they're...houses use less water than agriculture?

dc I haven't heard that being a big issue. Generally what we have said is that....generally in a subdivision, you get about four homes to the acre. We've been saying that it takes about an acre foot to farm the house, and it takes about four acre feet to farm an acre of ground.

Now, I think that acre is going to have to come down and be a portion of an acre foot of water to take care of our residents in, in the years to come. But, in the past, and when I was in the city, that was kind of what our guideline was. That if you had four acre feet for agriculture on that land, you had enough for four homes, and that was about where you should be looking.

But, we are getting...like a lot of areas, getting smaller lots. We're getting more homes per acre, and some of them are trying to put some open space...crowd the homes together, leave some open space.

ps The long time appropriation doctrine of water in the West was...first in time, first in right for who got the use of the water. Do you think that's going to continue to survive with population growth and drought issues?

dc I think it's going to continue for a good long time. It may change. It's...again...it's kind of like some of those other things that are out there, the need may force a change. But, until the need and the demand gets there, it puts the pressure on that system of appropriation, I don't see it changing.

Again, that goes back to the individual water right holders, and even some folks who hold water for cities and so on... they're going to be betraying their ancestors if they mess with any of this kind of stuff. It's hard for them, it's really hard. And, it's going to take some change in their mind-set. And that won't come easy. And that's going to come over several generations.

So, it may change, but it ain't going to change very fast, in my opinion.

ps Well, it seems like there's been some changes with introducing the environmental issues, recreational and...in Colorado, the kayakers, (dc – Yes....) and the fishermen.

dc We see a little of that when...

ps In Arizona, the Indian water rights have, uh...

dc The Indian water rights are going to have an effect on us.

ps Yeah. Cause they're first. (laughs) They're going to come in under the...

dc They're going to have a real effect on us. We haven't seen all of the effect that the Indian water rights are going to have on us. And that may affect some of the other changes that we've talked about. Is the pressure to deliver the Indians the water they have the right to.

ps Yeah. Arizona allot...well, a lot of Indian tribes have won their water rights, but they're selling the water, or leasing the water (laughs) to other people. Is that an issue in Utah?

dc It has not become an issue, but it's very close to surfacing, I think. Very close to surfacing.

ps Another thing they're doing in Arizona is, they're banking the water. And, pumping it in...underground to re-fill the aquifers.

dc I'm aware of that. We have several experimental, I think would be the best way to describe them here. They're experimental projects, where we are banking water and then taking it out at the time the demand is high. And, those will prove, I think to be somewhat effective.

We have some more of it, or at least on the drawing board enough that they're being talked about. So, yeah, that's something that's in our future, I believe.

ps All those are very new...

dc They are new, (ps – concepts.) They are new, and that's what I say. We have to be willing to look at change in other ways to solve our problems. That's one of the things that we will be dealing with. We will bank some water. I think there's no question about that. Arizona's doing a good job of it.

ps Yeah, and then they're selling some of the...banking the water for Nevada, and selling that. Some people have said that perhaps we need to re-open the 1922 Compact and renegotiate it. How do you feel about that?

dc It is so sensitive, it is so sensitive, that I think that we need to pursue other solutions, and other forms of cooperation before we get into that one.

I hate to...it's like legislation...I hate to amend legislation. I hate to re-open pacts. I hope...I hate to re-open agreements, because you have your idea of what you want to re-open it for, and what you want to put in there. But they may get out of control once you get it opened. And everybody else comes in with all of the other things that they want. And maybe when we end up with your final product, with all of the changes, it may not serve the purpose that it was there for.

So, I have a little hesitancy...now that's almost contradictory to what I said earlier. But, I have a little hesitancy to get into that, reopening that. And I just think there are other...we should approach other solutions before we ever think of getting into that one.

ps Tell me a little bit... the Colorado River Water Users Association brings all of the seven states together. What has your role been with that organization?

dc Well, I've been....I guess since my first year as General Manager here...I've been on the Board of Directors. I've been on their Executive Committee. I was the president of the organization for two years. Trying to remember back....I think it was our 40th or 45th anniversary I was chairman of .

I think it's a great organization, if for no other reason, it allows all of the water users who are interested to get together once a year. To develop a little exchange of information, and to become acquainted with Don from Central Utah Project. To become acquainted with others, you know, from the Colorado River. And, when you know somebody...at least it's been my opinion...when you know somebody first hand, it's easier to deal with them, and you deal with them, probably, on a little higher plane than when you're talking to a stranger.

And so, I think the organization serves a great purpose in getting everybody together.

Their annual meetings, their annual convention, has some very informative topics and subjects that are addressed by qualified and good speakers every year. As far as an organization that can solve anything, no, I don't think so. But I don't think that was the purpose. Maybe I'm wrong, but that's been my sense.

The organization serves a real purpose in getting everybody together, developing a little bit of camaraderie. And, the basis for settling the problems outside of the organization. I think has a great future.

It has grown, continues to grow every year. You know, the attendees at that conference, with very, very few exceptions, go up every year. And, the group that are leading it....this year the leadership is back in Utah. Ron Thompson from the St. George area, Washington Conservancy District, is the chairman this year. Or the president. Whatever. I guess they call him both.

He's putting together the program... and Chris Finlinson who's on my staff, is the chair of the Program Committee. So, she will be working hard to put together the program for this year. And I know that it will be a good program.

We hear from, as you know, we hear from elected officials. We hear from people who are experts in various arenas, whether it's endangered species, whether it's... We might even hear on some Indian issues, and what have you.

It was while I was Chair that the Indians were brought in and then made a part of the organization, if you will, and give them a seat on a...the Board of Directors.

So, I like the organization. I encourage my directors to go. We probably get 50-percent attendance, to, to 75-percent attendance of my 18 directors every year. So they see it as a positive thing as well. So...yeah. We're supporters of it.

ps Just to wrap up here a little bit...um... How do you see the future of water in the West?

dc Water in the West will always be interesting, will always be challenging, and we'll always have new issues out there. We will never have put all the issues to bed. They will always change as long as there's people, as long as there's growth, there's going to be issues on water. There's going to be challenges on water. And...

Some of the greatest people in our country, especially here in the West, work on water issues. I'm convinced, as I have met the people in water around the west that they're outstanding people. Outstanding people. None of us are perfect, but they're outstanding. They're good. They work hard. That's why I think we've been pretty successful out here in the West, developing our resources. They're good people.

So I think it has a very positive, and a very bright future. And, in lots of ways, I wish I was a little bit younger so I could be around and enjoy some of the growth, and the development, and the solving of some of the problems that are yet to come up.

ps Sounds like you sort of got into this almost by accident. What advice would you have for young people today that are thinking...trying to find a career?

dc Go sell insurance. (laughter) No...I...hey, if, if they're interested in a very interesting, challenging, occupation, career, water is a good one. The people that have come to work with us here at this district have earned a good income. They've had secure employment, but they have had an interesting, challenging, and a satisfying career in solving problems that need to be solved for...for what...human kind? We can't deal without water. We've got to have water.

ps Haven't found a substitute.

dc No. And what better place, what better way to serve your fellow man than to help in developing a very essential resource. The water that they all need.

You know, you gotta be able to do something that's satisfying...or work every day is going to be a drudgery. And I think you can come to work in the water industry, and find an awful lot of success and happiness. And contentment. A lot of challenges, a lot of controversy. But, a good time.

ps Job security.

dc I wouldn't...yeah...I wouldn't discourage anybody from going into water. It's a good place to be.

ps Anything else you wanted to add before we wrap up?

dc I think I've probably talked more than I should have already.

ps All right...