

## Interview with Stella Montoya

Intro: Ok, this is August the 8th, 2006, it's Tuesday. I'm Bonnie Leverton, the photographer is Bill Leverton, and we're doing this interview for the Colorado River Water Users Association and if you'd introduce yourself.

A. My name is Stella Montoya. I live at La Plata, and we have a cattle ranch and we graze in Colorado and New Mexico, we also farm the ranches and irrigate them.

Q. Tell me where you were born and when you were born?

A. Well, I was born in Silverton, Colorado and my children always ask me about why I was born there and I tell them the main reason I knew is because my mother was there because we never did live there. We just happened to be there that fall. My father had ran sheep, and they were up there that fall, but I always lived in New Mexico and I grew up at Cedar Hill. That's were I went to school in a one room school house and I, we used to walk to school for a mile. It was cold in those days we had snow, which we need a lot right now. But it was cold, we'd get to school and we had the old stove in there, a coal stove they'd have to heat up the school, one room, teacher, one teacher in the school.

Q. Where is Cedar Hill compared to like Farmington?

A. Well it's between Durango, and between here and like going to Durango, ten miles out of Aztec.

Q. So you've always kind of been in . . . tell me when you were growing up what life was like for you when you were a youngster?

A. Well, we grew up on a farm, we entertained ourselves out there. We didn't go to town very often. We had an orchard and we used to go eat fruit off the orchard and they raised a garden. So we'd go out and, I think she lost a lot of salt shakers, because we had to go out and eat tomatoes and cucumbers out of the garden and things like that. We had 4-H club there, we used to go to 4-H clubs and square dancing. And, oh, we just had the good old fashioned time, we had bake sales things like that, you know that we, it was fun, we had a good time.

Q. You're talking like you have brothers and sisters.

A. I have two brothers and three sisters.

Q. Did you do like girl chores or did everybody do everything?

A. No, everybody did everything. In fact, my dad was gone a lot and so we did milk cows, and had a separator which we didn't like washing the separator, that was a nasty chore, and we had some pigs that we fed so that we could butcher to feed in the, have hams in the wintertime, and chickens, we gathered eggs, and all that.

Q. Then what happened when you got older and everything? Were you always on the ranch, always on the farm?

A. Well, then I left and went to California for one year and I worked for almond growers, one winter I stayed over there and stayed with one of my relatives, and then I later I came back.

Q. What was that where you were working?

A. In Sacramento, California.

Q. No, what was it?

A. Almond growers.

Q. Oh, almond growers.

A. Yeah, where they pack almonds in the packages, and I did that. Then I came back then I worked at the bus depot at, here in Farmington for awhile, then I got married and started my family. And we moved over the hill to La Plata from Aztec.

Q. And you married a rancher?

A. Married a rancher and sheep man, he did kind of the same thing that we were doing at home that I was used to and we had a farm and he took, we took the sheep up in the mountains in the summertime, we went to Hesperus and stayed up in La Plata Canyon and camped up there. And he moved camps and took care of the herders up there and then in the

winter we'd come back and tend them down here and so that was what we did you know that, and.

Q. Sounds like a hard life.

A. Well, it wasn't really that hard. It was, I guess it was compared to what we do now, but it was, we didn't have the equipment that we have now to do the farming and stuff that we have. But now it's a lot easier but it seems like you work just as hard or harder as you did then because you can't have help. Used to get a lot of help, you could hire people to do your work, and you can't do it any more, they're just not around.

Q. When were you first aware of like water issues? Was it as a child?

A. Well, no not really. Where my dad's farm was, we had plenty of water. But when we moved to La Plata, at first it wasn't so bad, but as time went on it got drier. But they've been always working on that project for years, they've been working. In fact, I had a paper once, I don't remember now, it was the early, early 1900's when they started working on that project. I remember the surveyors, and they had it started up at Silverton, they were having, it started. It's changed a lot from the time that it is now, and they kept moving. One time my husband came home and he was so happy because they were going to have it pumped through the mountain and come down. And then it was going to be gravity flow down here, and we could just, all we would have to do was to hook up our pipes and I mean he was so excited, he just thought they had a lot of problems solved. But then they took that project away from us. And every time, they'd always keep, they kept changing it. Every time they'd decide on something, then they'd move it because for some reason they couldn't have it there you

know, the environmentalists kept moving it down, and so that's where it is now.

Q. Which project was that?

A. The Animas-La Plata water project.

Q. Talk about that project, talk about just for the cameras and everything else, explain what it was, why it started, when it was started.

A. Well, like I say it started, it started, they started working on that project in the early 1900s, but then, and they surveyed, they were surveying. They knew they needed water because there wasn't enough; the water supply was low down here. And they went to hearings in Washington for years and the tribes, they needed to settle the tribes, the Southern Utes and the Ute Mountain Ute tribes in Colorado so that they could get their share of the water and we could get ours. And so they decided that they could work together and make the dam so that they could get irrigation water and they could get their water and we could get ours. But then later on they weren't doing their thing and they were gonna sue us, but they finally made an agreement and they decided if we built it together, that we could work together and we could do it. So since then we started working together and of course the people went to Washington. I don't know how many times they'd go to Washington. And one of the reasons that they really pushed my husband to go was because he was from New Mexico and so we could get the New Mexico people down here, we had Manuel Lujan and Pete Domenici, and people like that that were down here.

In fact, one time we were in Washington and we hadn't made an appointment with Manuel to go into his office and they said, no you can't see him today. And they opened the door and Manuel was standing in the back of the room and he saw Chano and he says, "Chano! Hey!" Boy, he came out and we had a meeting with him. So after that, believe me, he always, we always went in. Senator Anderson was there then when we first started. See, a lot, even the congressmen have all died, Johnny Morris, and I don't remember now who all they were but the different ones that we used to go talk to all of them, you know.

Q. Did you make much progress?

A. Well, we thought we were. It kind of felt like you were not making any progress because then you had to keep going back and doing the same thing over and over again. You know. And he'd testify. I didn't go all the time, he went a lot of times, but I didn't go as many times as he did. But he kept going back. And then they'd come back and get some money, they'd have to get money appropriated and they'd get some money and it was always for study, and I used to tell him the Bureau of Reclamation, they're just, I'd tell him that's job security for them because they'd come back with a little money and they'd spend it on studies, and they never, that's all they did was study, we couldn't get the project going, you know, it took until just recently.

Q. What were they studying?

A. Where to put it, and I don't know what they were studying so much you know. They just had to have... Like I told you, I think, I kept telling him, I said, that's just job security, that's all. Some of those guys retired and

never did get anything accomplished, you know. But, at least we didn't feel like they were. Spent a lot of money.

Q. How did your husband get involved in these water issues? What was that path?

A. Well, he just...we needed water. It was just a matter of needing water. See, we have a farm and we can only farm so much we and run out of water in June our river runs dry and so we had to get some, we just wanted to get some irrigation water. And then when it first started, they were supposed to, it was gonna expand and take up a lot of the land that didn't, wasn't farmed and so then they were gonna have, give, it was way out in Colorado and New Mexico both. And they were gonna have like I think 160 acre tracts that you would get, and then you could give them like to each child that you had could take up 160 acres, you know. But then see when they took it all away from us well, we're back to our historical water that we have on the farms now, so we can only, that's all we were entitled to, so.

Q. Doesn't sound like you made much progress after all...100 years.

A. Right. Well, we lost it all because then it went back to where we can't use it for irrigation. The only good thing that's gonna come of it, or one of the things is that when they make the water and hold it in Colorado in a dam, it's gonna seep down in to us and we're gonna have groundwater and that's something they can't take away from us. If it comes in the ground, it comes down the river because that river is funny. You can go up the La Plata River and it'll be running, and then you can go a little ways farther and there's no water, and then you can go a little ways farther down and

there's water again, and it goes under and comes back up in different places. So, that's why we feel like if we get the dam it's gonna put water back into the ground, so we can, we'll get water that they can, it's ours and they can't do anything about it. I was hoping anyway.

Q. Talk about some of the changes because I know that it's no longer what . . . even when your husband first got involved with this, it's no longer that big of project. Talk about the changes.

A. Well, that was one of the changes, when I told you, when they took away that they can't expand out of the system see, and we're not gonna get irrigation water, it's strictly the M&I water, that's all, the cities can use it, all the towns are gonna benefit because the towns... See right now, if we have a dry summer and the river, the San Juan dries up and the Animas, they have, there's three rivers that meet down by Farmington and those two rivers have a pretty good stream of water, but there's years that the Animas doesn't have enough water and the towns of Aztec and Farmington and Durango don't have enough water. They've rationed it in Farmington at times, there's been times, but there's times that about time they start rationing it rains and it saves them and they don't have to ration it. But that will give them a supply of water that they won't have to worry about, you know.

Q. Do you think the project will ever be finished?

A. Well, I hope so, I'm hoping. It's kind of long ways. See, if they don't by, I think by 2010 that they have to have, that the Utes, the Indians have to get their water or they'll sue us or something so. That's why, if it hadn't been for the Utes, I can tell you, we wouldn't have a project. Because we didn't have the money to be, to go back and fight, and hire attorneys to go back

and fight like they did. And they did. The environmentalists tried their very best to separate the two of us, to make us enemies. There was one time when we were going to the Schoettler water project hearings that they wanted us to, they wanted to buy up land, irrigation land and give it to the Utes so they could have water instead of making the dam that way it would satisfy them. The Utes said no we're not gonna do that, we've been in this together all this time, and we're not gonna do it. We're partners and we're gonna stay partners, and so they didn't. And of course, I was really upset then because we had bought a place in Ignacio so we could buy irrigated, have an irrigation pastures for cows cause we'd run out of water so we could go over there and irrigate and haul cows up there and feed them. Well I said now you're trying to buy up the land that's the reason we came over here to do that. But, it's been a real battle, that's just all there is to it.

Q. Historically what did you do when the river ran dry? Just stop running cattle, what did you do?

A. Well, the cattle we graze in the mountains in the summertime, that's no problem. But it's our farming, see our hay. We can only get maybe two good crops of hay and so if we had water we could irrigate more. And then there's some years that we can't, we don't farm the whole place because there's not water for the whole place you know. And you can't tell, there's some years that there's quite a bit of snow up on the mountain and you think, oh, this is going to be a good year you know. And it'll get really hot in the spring and come off really fast. And so it just all disappears then you don't have it. And then there's years there's not very much snow, but if it comes early, it freezes up on the mountain and it stays longer. And if it doesn't get too hot too soon, so we're just, that's the advantage we have, I mean. One year they called from the paper and they wanted to interview

someone from the Conservancy about the, 'cause we didn't have any water in the mountain. That's all there was to it. And we had enough water, it was in May, and we had enough water for one ditch, that's all the river had. And so we knew we couldn't do too much farming. And so they came down. And I told them If you want to see a dry river just go down by Farmington, it's dry. No we want to see it at La Plata. So they came up to La Plata and they had me stand down by the river and I told them that we didn't have, you know, that's all the water we had. But you know that year it started raining and it rained all summer in Colorado and the river started coming up. And we had water all summer long. It's the only time that I ever remembered that we had water all summer and no snow on the mountain. We did. 'Course you go to Colorado and, "I am so tired of this rain." But we were not tired of that rain, we wanted it.

Q. They consider that right now we're in a pretty severe drought and everything, have you been through worse ones than this?

A. Well, that year was worse, the year my husband passed away, we had a bad drought. See we graze here on a range here in the wintertime and they'd grazed everything off, there was nothing left on the grazing land, and so we had to sell a bunch of cows and, because we didn't have any place to run them in the summer, in the winter. See we graze in the summer in Colorado. And then we come down here in the summertime and graze. And if it doesn't rain we don't have any. And we've had a little bit, a few more showers this year lately then we had...We were worried because we didn't have anything all winter we didn't have snow. And see there's nothing, the moisture in the ground, and so. But we've had a few showers and stuff so we're a little more hopeful this year. So I don't know.

Q. What year did your husband pass away?

A. In '95.

Q. They're talking about, when we're interviewing people, they're talking about the eight pacts that New Mexico has to bring in water and everything else. Don't those help you, like whatever New Mexico's share of water is; doesn't that help you eventually with your irrigation, with your farming?

A. Now, what was that?

Q. They have these river pacts that we get a certain amount of water from the Colorado.

A. Oh, we rotate. Well, see but if there's no water in the river, there isn't anything to rotate. No water comes down. We have a water compact is what they call it. Yeah. And we get half of the water that comes from Hesperus. And we get half of New Mexico to irrigate, that's our irrigation system. But see it doesn't help the range any even if there were. It has to come down from the sky.

Q. There's no storage areas and stuff like that?

A. No, that's what we're fighting for, Animas-La Plata. Correct.

Q. So if that doesn't happen...

A. We're still in the same place.

Q. Tell me about your husband. You said he was very involved in water issues.

A. Well, he was. He was involved in a lot of things, you know. We had Cattle Growers, we went down to Cattle Growers and he went to that and, in fact my husband and I got the Cattle Grower of the Year award one year, the two of us together, which was the first time in the State of New Mexico that a husband and wife got it together. It was in '93, I think. And then, but he was on the Soil Water Conservation, he did that, and he won a Ranchers award in... Maybe it was a Soil Conservation I think, I don't remember, they give a Rancher's award. And the BLM, he was involved in the BLM, he'd go to BLM meetings and stuff. I can't remember, I didn't take down all the stuff that he did. He was involved in the 4-H, he was a board member on the 4-H and he took over the sheep barn or the cattle barn, I can't remember which. And he was parade marshal one year, and he was involved in a lot of things, he kept busy, we had a lot of meetings to go to.

Q. Did you get more involved with water issues because of your husband or just because you could see it was a problem?

A. No, we just worked together on that. Farm Bureau, he was involved in Farm Bureau too. No, we just worked together, whatever happened. And I'm glad I did because after he passed away I knew a lot of the things that were to be because he didn't let the boys take over until after he passed away and so between the boy that's with me, Louis, and I, we made it go,

made it work. He's still good, he does a good job. He's a hard worker and he's doing a good job, so.

Q. How many children do you have?

A. I have six, five boys and a girl.

Q. They all in ranching or . . .

A. No, no, he's the only one. Well, I have another one that lives in Colorado, he lives on our place up at Colorado, but he has his own place up there, and he has a few cows but he does contracting too, land work. And the oldest son is La Plata construction, he does a lot of the building here in town, a lot of the dirt work, and then the one works for Bolack, he's a cowboy for Bolack, and my daughter lives in Colorado, they build houses, construction.

Q. Let's see, what were some of the biggest problems confronting water issue problems, what were the biggest challenges? Was it just to get the Animas-La Plata going?

A. That's been our big challenge and keeping the river. We had to do a lot of work on our river dams because when we had a big flood, you know. When that river comes down, it comes down with force. Its small but it would wash away our dams and then every year then we'd have to rebuild them, so they've been all trying to get them built right so they don't wash away every year and that kind of thing. Course we get beaver dams in the

ditch, beavers make dams in the ditch and block it up, and you know, things like that. Normal farmer stuff I guess.

Q. Do you see in the future, because there's so many more people who are moving to the southwest, so many more people making demands on the water that's here, do you see farming and ranching surviving in the southwest?

A. Well, there's a lot less then there was, you know, like in the Bloomfield area, you'll see, that was all about farming, they have plenty of water there, but they made it into houses. Every time . . . and in our area all the way coming down from town, they're building houses all the way down. After they put that pipeline in to get water from the city, you'd start seeing houses come in. There weren't very many, there weren't very many full time farmers anyway, nearly everybody that had a ranch had a job, but my husband never did we always did just the farm work. But, we didn't have time to work anywhere else. But, there aren't very many true farmers anymore; they're just less and less. They're getting old and the young ones can't make enough money to stay on the farm, and you can understand that, and so they've had to move to other jobs.

Q. Is some of that problem because it costs so much to bring in water and do whatever?

A. Well the main problem is it costs so much money for machinery and fuel and if you're not a big operator, you just can't make it, that's just all there is to it, you just can't make it. And it costs. If you don't inherit a farm you can't buy one, you can't do it. Because of the price of the ground and the

machineries is a big problem, you know, a big thing. Once they close a farm down, you'll never see it come back, it's gone to cement and houses.

Q. We don't need farms; we just have food in the grocery stores.

A. No, that's right. That's what they think. And they also feel the same way about water. They think that all they have to do is turn the water on the faucet and it's there.

Q. Do you ever see a time when it's not going to be there?

A. You know, there are two things we need worse than anything and that's air and water. We cannot survive without those. And we'll just have to see what happens. I'm sure we'll have to have water some way, but it's... In our area it's bad. Well, there isn't any area that doesn't...California's wanting our water, Nevada wants our water, they all want our water. And so, no, water's priceless. When we first started going to meetings, I remember that they said that that was gonna be one of the biggest challenges we had was the water. But it didn't sound possible at that time because, you know, we didn't have the amount of people we had, and it just seemed like... It's ok, we're ok. I believe it now.

Q. Let's go back to talk about the Animas-La Plata project. You were saying that there was, you know, what was the deal with the Squawfish (Pikeminnow)?

A. Well, it kind of stopped our project. The endangered species has caused us more trouble in ranching, and all of it, Animas-La Plata to everything.

You know, they bring in wolves to ranchers and they killed 'em off at one time, because they were dangerous, they'd kill people, and they'd come. Then they bring the Squawfish and as I understand, well, when they first started this, they killed all the Squawfish in the river, you know. And then it was funny, but all of the sudden, they found five Squawfish. Now I can't believe that they could find five Squawfish without planting them in the river and finding them. But anyway that's where they all started, so that was, they were endangered species. So, we had to save the Squawfish, and so it just ballooned from there.

Q. Has the environmental movement been something that you weren't ready to deal with?

A. Well some of the things they brought up, they were ridiculous and we thought it'll pass by. But we believe them now, when they tell us something's gonna be endangered or they're doing something, we pay attention.

Q. You don't always win though. What were some of the things that you thought were pretty silly that they brought up?

A. Oh gosh, I can't remember now. I can't remember now, but there was a lot of things that they'd bring up and think, you know, they were gonna do. And we'd think naw, they wouldn't. But you know we found out that you left the door open a little bit and they kick it open and they get in, and they're there.

Q. Is it just time that they're taking up or are they taking up money?

A. Oh, it's time and money, you know. The project has gone ballooned, I don't know. If we would've built it when we started, it would've cost not very much. But the price of everything has escalated so badly, cement, the whole thing, material fuel. And it's just, the price of everything has gone up, and so that's . . . I know Steve Reynolds told us when he was State Engineer, he told us one time at a meeting, he said if we don't get this project built now, this is the last project that was gonna be built in the state of New Mexico. And he was about right. Because after that, you know they always have, in fact, they want to bust the one down in Nevada, Glen Canyon, what is that down there, and let the water out, you know. What are they gonna do for electricity and for water and for people? You know, we need that water, we just do, we just can't do without it. It's a lot better than looking at rocks and land like it used to be. It's nice to dream, but you can't do that.

Q. I don't think the environmentalists care.

A. They don't care. They don't care about us. In fact, I think the Squawfish have more benefits. They talk about the endangered species, and we've always figured out that we're the endangered species and when you get right down to it because we get more endangered every day.

Q. Somebody was telling us that even if there was a really severe drought, that New Mexico would have water for drinking water and everything else, but agriculture would have to dry up and blow away. Is that acceptable?

A. I don't know. I don't know. If we had a severe drought, I mean this lake, Farmington Lake, where Farmington gets their water. It fills up from the

rivers up in Colorado with the snow. And the Animas comes down and, I mean, there's been times when it went down really low. And of course, and we've had a lot more people come in since then, and there was a lot less people around. And you know, I do figure one of these days we're gonna have to quit making lawns and trees and things like that just for beauty because it takes a lot of water and it takes away from your homes. But people, they won't do without, they run the water and just turn it on and let it run, you know. And, where we are, the one year when it was a severe drought, my husband was still alive, it was one summer, we didn't have any water in the mountains and we didn't have any irrigation water, I mean there was none, and the wells were drying up. And so I had a lawn, and I always used to make a garden, 'cause we've always had a good well and plenty of water. And we had the corrals and everything goes, in fact, a couple houses that the kids lived in dried up, and that year I let my lawn dry up and I told them, you know what, I'd rather have water in the house than out on the lawn, and so I let it dry up. And our fields just, they dried up. We didn't have any crop at all. He had time to go fishing that year that year because they had water in Navajo Dam and he and my youngest son was there at home. They'd go fishing, they enjoyed the summer, but you know, when you stop and look, and a lot of the wells dried up around home. So it can be critical, it really can.

Q. Can it get more critical in the future?

A. Yes, sir. It can. It just can do it.

Q. Tell me about the La Plata Conservancy District.

A. Well, we have five board members, and we, the job of the Conservancy is to put the water in the ditches, you know. We hire a water master. And the water master goes around in the spring of the year to put them on to make sure that each because our . . . we have to put it in the order of ditches that have because some of them have high priorities. And they put them like the number one and number two, and so on down the road. And so as the river dries up, maybe the lower priorities don't have water and so they start shutting them down. And so, in the spring of the year of course everybody has their priority and they can all get their share of water, but later on it dries up. And so our, we administer; we take care of it, that's our job. We don't, after it gets in their ditches, we don't have anything to say what they do with their waters, that's up to each ditch company. But we just bring the water.

Q. How were the priorities set?

A. They did that when they adjudicated the ditches in 1942 or something. They went down and they have a big book that has all the priorities and all the adjudications. And that, we call that our bible and that tells us whose got the priorities and stuff.

Q. Was the Conservancy something that your husband was involved in starting?

A. No, he was in it for thirty years, though, he was president of it, at that time, yeah, he stayed, he was in that.

Q. And now you're in it?

A. Then they put me in there, like I say, I'm not sure why, but I'm there.

Q. Are you a member or?

A. I'm the chairman of the Conservancy.

Q. Who do you think have been your greatest allies when you're talking about water issues?

A. I don't know.

Q. You were saying that the Ute Indians had helped you quite a bit. Who else really was out there for you and helped you?

A. Well, we just all worked together I don't know that anybody else was... We worked as a team, the Colorado people and our people and the Indians. We used to all work together. I guess, of course Van Lutz was in there at that time, and he came, he just recently slowed down, and, but they all, all of the New Mexico people went to all the meetings and hearings and stuff too.

Q. What about Congress people? Were there any really powerful allies in Congress?

A. Oh yeah, we did. I can't think of the one from Colorado. This morning I was thinking I should have written them down because if I don't write things down, I forget. But, no, they helped us. Aspinall, Wayne Aspinall was one of our big helpers up there.

Q. What did he do to help you?

A. Well, in the hearings, you know, all they could, they'd do whatever they could to pass whatever it was that they were doing and help us.

Q. How about people like Babbitt?

A. No, no, they were all against us, they didn't help us a bit, you know. No, we didn't get... Now, Gayle Norton, she was, after she got in, she was on our side, but no, Babbitt was not on our side, he was not on the rancher's side period.

Q. He's from a ranching family.

A. I know, you know, that's what we were thrilled about when he got on the, we thought that's great, we can... And then we had a BLM board member, a BLM director here in Farmington and he was the same way. He came in and, he's, you know, and come to find out he was one of Babbitt's men. And he was planting sagebrush on the pipelines 'cause we have a lot of oil and gas minerals out here on our land. And he was, and we have a lot of sagebrush, and we spray it to try to kill it because it takes over the grass and we can't grow grass, and so we want... And they were planting it on our right-of-ways and we found out about it, and so we started going to

hearings on that. It's a battle, every time you turn around, we have a new battle, you know, something all the time.

Q. Why were they building, why were they trying to grow the sagebrush?

A. It was just, he was an environmentalist, and he just wanted it out there. And we told him, we said, you know, we don't want; we've got plenty of sagebrush. He was sending people to get the seed off the sagebrush so they could have it to plant. And we found out about it. 'Cause the pipeline, the people, the oil companies would ask us what do you want, what kind of seed. Not the BLM, we want our own mix you know. And, so we told him, you know. He said well we have to have a little bit of sagebrush left, and I said you know what, sagebrush is like coyotes. You'll never get rid of it. You can kill every sagebrush that's out there and it'll grow back. But you can't kill it, I said, you'll never get rid of the sagebrush, you know. You can kill it off, and it's funny. You know, if...When they spray it and kill it, they put this spike on it, from the air, and it kills it, and then the grass will immediately just come up, it's like they fertilize it and it comes up. But see the sagebrush is taking away all the water and moisture from the ground, and it doesn't let the grass grow and that's where you can get erosion, where you see a lot of sagebrush, you'll see all those arroyos start, and that's where they start.

Q. Frustrating. Who's been your greatest opponents do you think?

A. The environmentalists. They haven't been our friends, some of my neighbors.

Q. That's got to be so frustrating too. Because, you know, you're seeing things in one, you know, this is how things really are and everything else and other people are having a say in how you do things.

A. And see most of those people, they're not involved in ranching, they don't have anything. And some, they would come from all over, not just our area, from everywhere they would come down to testify on these hearings and I don't think that's right. I think a person should be where they are because they know the locality and they know more about the country than somebody from Washington or California or anywhere else. But those people go from one place to another. And we had this one girl that used to live in Colorado, in Durango, and she moved away. But I still I saw a letter in the paper the other day, where she, and this has been years ago, that she would write. And several of those have died so God's helped us a little bit. It's not very nice to say.

Q. Were there any battles that you felt that you won?

A. Oh yeah, yeah. We did.

Q. What were some of those?

A. Who was it, we were fighting for, um, oh what was it? We've had these big hearings, I can't remember now. I remember there were people going in there and, we've had so many battles, I've lost them.

Q. What do you think that your role was in helping to find the solutions to the various problems?

A. Just staying in there and fighting. I just think...If you just have to be there and go to meetings and listen to them and answer them back. And like going to those hearings, and like Gayle Norton heard our story, you know. She's from Denver; she doesn't know anything about what was going on here. But when she came, and listened. She made a lot of trips down here when she was in Denver, and listened to our story. And then she took it back, and she knew what we were talking about, she believed us, you know, and she understood what we were talking about. I think that those are the kind of things that help us more than anything, if you can get people to listen to you. You know, people from back east, they don't understand our problems. We have a different kind of a problem than they do because they have a lot of water. And they can't...Why would you want to build, spend so much money to build a dam to hold water? You know, it doesn't make sense to them. But when you're here in the drought, and like the fires and all the things that are happening, you know. They come down and, when they have a fire, where are they getting the water? They go into the dams and they take it out to fill their planes to go put the fires out and things. But they don't understand those kind of things, there's not, you know, they don't have the kind of problems we have.

Q. And yet they have a lot of influence over how things happen here.

A. Well, there's more of them, and more senators, you know, in comparison to ours so they do have a lot more influence. And so that's why we have to bring them over here and show them, and try to sell it to them. And then they have a lot more environmentalists over there too, I think. They don't understand our problems.

Q. When your husband was still alive, what do you think that he considered as his biggest challenge or frustration in the water issues?

A. The environmentalists I just think that was... Getting it passed, and going to meetings and coming back and thinking, you know, we're not getting anything accomplished, you know, that's really frustrating, you know. When he spent 30, 40 years doing the same thing over and over again, you know, and it's frustrating.

Q. I'm not sure if we had it on this tape, but you were saying before that he got so excited way back when they thought the project had been passed, and they were signing, the picture you showed us, and everything, he thought oh, we got it in the bag.

A. Yeah, well see he went, in September the 30<sup>th</sup>, 1968. They had five projects that they signed on and that they were gonna be built. And so they were in gonna be in stages, and ours was the last one and ours didn't get built. The last one was up in Colorado, Dolores, the had the McPhee Reservoir, and it was built, and they're raising hay and selling hay, just like down here at NAPI, you know. We're still waiting, hoping, working.

Q. Well, he got his picture taken with President Johnson.

A. That he did.

Q. Was there anything that you would've done differently over the years or that you think your husband would've done differently?

A. I don't know that there was anything we could've done any differently. I don't know. Hindsight is 20/20 they say, but it's a long battle and when you don't know, you just do the best you can, and...

Q. What do you see as your future battles?

A. Well we still have to go back to Washington and ask for more money. You feel like, once you go, you go testify and they pass a project and they sign a project, why do you have to go every year to ask for more money, you know? Of course these last few times they've given more and been able to accomplish more than they did before. For a long time it was \$10 million dollars or something, that was a drop in the bucket. Of course things cost more now I guess too. But it finally got started. We were thrilled to get that done, you know.

Q. What's been the greatest surprise you think regarding New Mexico and water issues?

A. Well I think when the environmentalists got so much power I think that's what was one of our biggest surprises really. Because we didn't think they could stop us, you know. When we got the projects signed, we thought we were on a roll and we weren't. We got a flat tire on the way.

Q. Ok, what do you think is, this is some of the questions that they give. What do you think facing our water resources today in New Mexico, what do you think is the most critical?

A. In New Mexico or here?

Q. Yeah, the same...

A. Just getting, is finishing that project. See if we get that project finished, and we can afford to pay for our part of the project, then we can sell the water and then we can use that water to cement our ditches or do things like that that'll save water and right now they get full of willows and we have to spray them and dig them out and so on. And, if we could cement the ditches, and not only that, it silts, and goes out into the, not silt, but gets into the fields you know and it causes damage there so if we could cement them, you could hold water in the ditches and irrigate more and fix our ditches so that we could maybe make a little bit more hay.

Q. Do you think that there's enough water allocated to New Mexico, in any way that they get it, is there enough water for everybody who's got an interest in water?

A. Is there enough water . . .

Q. For everybody who wants it?

A. Well, like I say, here in our area, farming is going downhill, it's turning into houses, you know. And so a lot of the farming is not going to be there. But the ones that are there need to get their, more share, more of the water. That's our biggest thing, is getting water, I don't know.

Q. Any advice you have to give to people who are operating New Mexico's water resources now?

A. No, just try to help and help us to do it better. That's all. All the help we can get, that they can come up with, we'll take.

Q. Put a few environmentalists out of the State?

A. (Laughs.)

Q. Is there anything I didn't ask you that you'd thought I was gonna ask you that you thought we should make sure to bring up? Now's your chance.

A. I don't know. I don't think so. Like I say, we're only gonna get 750 feet of depletion, 788 acre-feet of depletion. When the water, that's what we get, that's our allotted share that we're gonna get when that dam comes through, it's 1560 acre-feet of water that we're allocated that we can use for, that's the water that we're going to be able to sell, which is not very much but it's a lot more than we thought we were gonna get done.

Q. And that's once the Animas is finished?

A. When it's all done. And I don't know, I guess that's probably, I don't know.

Q. Did you have anything else Bill?

A. I don't have anything else.

- - - End of Interview - - -