

INTERVIEW OF  
WAYNE HEATHERS  
November 18, 2013

1                   MR. BARR: This is Jim Barr. It's November 18<sup>th</sup>.  
2 I'm in Curtis, Nebraska visiting with Wayne Heathers.

3                   Wayne, would you like to give a little background  
4 on yourself, leading up to how you got involved with the  
5 Natural Resource Districts?

6                   MR. HEATHERS: Well, I guess my whole adult life  
7 I've worked with soil and water conservation and I really  
8 got started down in Alma. I lived in Huntley at that time  
9 and worked for the Soil Conservation Service as a  
10 conservation aide for probably a couple years. I filed to  
11 get on with SCS, you know, and then here come the Army. I  
12 kind of forgot about it. When I got home I got a call that  
13 they had some openings, you know, across the state for  
14 technicians and I wound up out at Trenton, Nebraska as a  
15 technician for about six years.

16                  MR. BARR: About when was this?

17                  MR. HEATHERS: Oh, I'd have to stop back and  
18 think. It was probably about '60 -- 1960. I was working  
19 there at Trenton and Stan Matzke called from up here at  
20 Curtis, the superintendent of the School of Technical  
21 Agriculture, and he wanted an instructor for their  
22 conservation and soils department. The area  
23 conservationist, Don Broberg, of McCook, you know, was kind  
24 of instrumental in trying to find somebody that would fit in  
25 and so I don't know just what transpired, but they kind of

1 had an agreement I'd come up here and try as an instructor  
2 to see how that worked out. I was there for about six years  
3 at the college over here, they call it the Nebraska College  
4 of Technical Agriculture now but -- and we got several  
5 students out of that program that are involved in soil and  
6 water conservation one way or the other, you know. It never  
7 really took off like some of the other departments that --  
8 in that timeframe, they were coming up with the NRD  
9 legislation. I wasn't involved with any of that but one of  
10 the guys down here at the Soil Conservation Service office  
11 contacted me and said, "Hey, they're looking for a manager."  
12 For the Middle Republican NRD, probably going to -- an  
13 office's going to be here in Curtis. So I applied and then  
14 I guess I was finally selected to be the manager so I was  
15 kind of flying blind. And I really, as far as education, I  
16 didn't get any degree at all until I got up here at the  
17 college and working with the University, and between them  
18 and the McCook College, I got an associate degree so that's  
19 -- kind of transferred credits backwards. Usually I  
20 transferred some of the University credits to McCook and  
21 went to summer school. That's kind of my beginning, you  
22 know, to get in conservation. It was kind of a hectic  
23 thing. I had to learn what we were really doing because I  
24 hadn't been involved with the NRD process. Although I had  
25 worked with soil and water conservation districts before

1 through SCS and had some knowledge of it there, but this was  
2 a new deal. And, of course, we got the court restraining  
3 order and we started working with the districts. We had to  
4 keep nine sets of books, you know, we had the restraining  
5 order.

6 MR. BARR: What was that about? Was that --

7 MR. HEATHERS: Oh, it got filed -- I don't think  
8 there was so much resistance right around here --

9 MR. BARR: You mean the one at the state --

10 MR. HEATHERS: Yeah, the state level.

11 MR. BARR: I thought maybe there was --

12 MR. HEATHERS: I don't know if I'm using the right  
13 term but --

14 MR. BARR: No, I understand.

15 MR. HEATHERS: -- I was thinking it was a  
16 restraining order where you couldn't mingle funds, you know,  
17 so we had, oh, I think eight little districts we were  
18 keeping books on and then we had to have the NRD books, so  
19 we had to have a pretty good bookkeeper.

20 MR. BARR: How long did that go?

21 MR. HEATHERS: Oh, I think it was about a year,  
22 year and a half or so, and then it was --

23 MR. BARR: So the accountant really had a  
24 challenge?

25 MR. HEATHERS: Yeah, the accountant -- we had a

1 good accountant that kind of helped us keep everything  
2 straight. But, oh, there was a lot of resistance to NRD's  
3 across the state. There was a little here, a little  
4 reluctance, and understandably so.

5 Yeah, this is my wife, Loretta, Jim.

6 MR. BARR: Good morning.

7 MRS. HEATHERS: Hi. I'm trying to clean and I'm  
8 slow. It takes me three days.

9 MR. HEATHERS: We're on tape so be careful.

10 (Laughter)

11 MR. HEATHERS: You're all right. But -- well, I  
12 could understand some of the resistance in the beginning  
13 because some of these little special purpose districts had  
14 actually functioned pretty well and served their purpose,  
15 and I think of the dry creek pilot and the dry creek south  
16 watersheds, they had their projects pretty well done and it  
17 was just kind of in maintenance, you know, and keeping them  
18 going. And most of the soil and water conservation  
19 districts out here were fairly active. They were -- didn't  
20 have financial standing because they couldn't levy tax and  
21 what have you, but they had to rely on the County or  
22 something. But they had pretty good programs going, you  
23 know, and -- but we had some resistance, but we had a lot of  
24 support, too, of getting the district going and it was a lot  
25 of the board members that were fairly active in going to the

1 new district's supports. Don Roberts, he was one of them.

2 MR. BARR: Any other particular ones that stood  
3 out?

4 MR. HEATHERS: Well, Bud Nelson here at Curtis,  
5 he's passed on, but he was really a pretty good driving  
6 force. Bud had a lot of respect. Everybody liked him and  
7 he could go in a meeting in a tough situation and get  
8 everybody kind of, "We've got to make a decision." But  
9 there were a lot of others, Lester Harsh was pretty  
10 prominent in our -- he was a state senator and he actually  
11 was representing the City of McCook when we first got the  
12 board started, any city that had, I don't remember, it was  
13 over 800 or 900 people, or so, had to have a representative  
14 on the new board and so we had one out of McCook and one out  
15 of Curtis here. They were both instrumental in getting the  
16 new districts formed. The guy here at Curtis, Clifford  
17 Terry, has passed on. He wasn't probably a background so  
18 much in conservation or farming, but he was a  
19 Parliamentarian and he really got a lot of that stuff kind  
20 of going. He had a nice manner about him that he kept us on  
21 track. So they -- actually, the City representatives  
22 contributed pretty well to the formation and operation of  
23 the new district, too. (It should be noted that Jerry Vap  
24 was also a city representative from McCook. He is referred  
25 to later in this interview.)

1           MR. BARR: Did you have any special purpose  
2 districts that weren't soil and water conservation districts  
3 when you started?

4           MR. HEATHERS: Well, we had watershed districts  
5 and we had the Medicine Creek, which was just starting  
6 construction. Then we had the Blackwood District over in  
7 Hayes and Hitchcock counties, so that was probably our big  
8 challenge in the beginning was getting land rights, you  
9 know, for these watershed structures. As compared to the  
10 two dry creeks that had been put in earlier, they went to  
11 the bigger structures, you know, so the easements and right-  
12 a-ways were a lot bigger. We had some court battles and  
13 stuff through this, probably some hard feelings yet about  
14 some of the challenges and land rights that we had on that,  
15 although I don't think anybody would say that we actually  
16 hurt them now in the long run. I think some of them  
17 probably benefited from it eventually. But it was a  
18 different ballgame where they -- and it was probably the  
19 idea of the NRDs to address things on a more regional basis  
20 and then they had some financial backing in not just the  
21 local levies but, you know, we could apply to the state and  
22 other sources for easement help and stuff. So we kind of  
23 went from -- we had a fairly active tree planting program  
24 and continued the old conservation programs pretty well with  
25 all we could with grass drills and what have you, but we

1 kind of moved from watershed and flood control to  
2 groundwater management.

3 MR. BARR: When did that kind of start?

4 MR. HEATHERS: Oh, I'd have to stop and think  
5 back.

6 MR. BARR: Roughly, it doesn't have to be exactly.

7 MR. HEATHERS: Yeah, we probably went about 10, 15  
8 years in mostly conservation and watershed, and then we  
9 kept -- the Upper Republican got into a management area. I  
10 suppose in the 80s and early 90s we kind of had to come up  
11 with what they called management areas but we were looking  
12 at water quality because of the nitrate increase so we had  
13 established well-monitoring programs, we'd keep track of  
14 groundwater levels and water quality tests. And we were  
15 encouraged -- at the time, we had to get in the control  
16 areas, kind of like the Upper, but it was kind of a  
17 double-edged sword because we'd be encouraged -- I know Mike  
18 Jess, who was the director of the Department of Water  
19 Resources, said, "You've got to get into management but then  
20 you've got to prove you need this to me." So we had to show  
21 a conflict among users. Well, it's pretty hard to show one  
22 unless we had declines as they had in the Upper, you know.  
23 You had to have something really to go on. And as far as  
24 conflict, there were probably people here that had to drill  
25 a new stock well or stuff like that, but it didn't build up

1 a big court record, you know, or any number so you can show  
2 anything or conflict among users. The surface water people  
3 were still able to supply their patrons, you know, their  
4 irrigation districts, so it was pretty tough for us to come  
5 in and prove our case if we wanted to go into a control  
6 area. Now, everybody kind of accepts it as, "Yeah, we need  
7 to do that," with the trouble in Kansas and what have you.  
8 But we done some basic work, got some historical data on  
9 groundwater levels, not just us but we were working with the  
10 Conservation and Survey Division and the State of Nebraska.  
11 You have to begin somewhere and get a history. Of course,  
12 the Department of Water Resources was doing some of that  
13 because of the compact.

14 MR. BARR: Did you have much contact with the  
15 Compact Administration or anything?

16 MR. HEATHERS: Oh, yeah, we did. We went to their  
17 annual meetings, like that, and Mike was pretty good about  
18 keeping us informed of everything. We had -- he would be at  
19 not just Compact meetings, but he was at the Association  
20 meetings and we had side meetings, you know, for the  
21 Republican Basin because we met on those and so I think we  
22 had pretty good contact.

23 MR. BARR: What sort of interaction did you have  
24 with the Upper and the Lower NRDs -- Republican NRDs?

25 MR. HEATHERS: It was pretty good. I would say it

1 was probably stronger with the Upper. I don't know, it just  
2 seemed like we had a little more in common and perhaps (Ron)  
3 Milner and I was always good naturedly, picking on one  
4 another. We'd be pulling gags on one another and stuff.  
5 But we had a pretty good rapport with the Lower, too. I had  
6 always got along with them pretty good. I grew up in the  
7 Lower so --

8 MR. BARR: Where did you come from originally?

9 MR. HEATHERS: Well, Huntley, north of Alma, so  
10 I've got a lot of relatives there. And, of course, we had a  
11 pretty good rapport with the Tri-Basin, too, which was  
12 involved with us quite a bit. And I think we came into a  
13 basin group that met together, or association, and we had  
14 irrigation districts and NRDs, and there was a lot of good  
15 discussion that come out of those meetings. Whether we  
16 solved anything or resolved anything, I think that everybody  
17 understood what everybody else was thinking and what we had  
18 to do so those things. We had pretty good cooperation and  
19 rapport with the irrigation districts, too.

20 MR. BARR: That was another area I was going to  
21 ask you about is, what kind of interrelationship did you  
22 have with them?

23 MR. HEATHERS: Yeah, it -- Norma Sitzman who was  
24 at Culbertson, she was always pretty good to work with. Roy  
25 -- what was Roy's last name (Patterson), Frenchman-

1 Cambridge. I'll come up with it later after you leave.

2 MR. BARR: That's fine. That's fine.

3 MR. HEATHERS: Yeah, Roy was always good to work  
4 with and we cooperated with him on a lot of things.

5 MR. BARR: Did you have any other particular  
6 projects besides conservation projects? You had P.L. 566  
7 projects?

8 MR. HEATHERS: Yeah. Well, we had an interesting  
9 one, it was with the city of McCook. We went in and they  
10 got a small drainage down through town but it's a quick one,  
11 it's one of those that, when they get a big rain, it just  
12 flushes right down through there like a funnel. Kelly  
13 Creek, they called it. So they had some re-channelization  
14 and we built a small flood control structure in there. We  
15 had a little opposition from McCook when we started. They  
16 didn't like the tax levy -- that we'd levy on town. They  
17 couldn't  
18 see -- not all of them, you know. A lot of people in McCook  
19 realized that their commerce and everything was based on  
20 agriculture and so you had that in there, but there was some  
21 criticism, "Why are we paying tax?" And there was some  
22 opposition when we put in the small dam area and the  
23 channelization until we got -- one day they had a big rain  
24 come along and they didn't quite have the dam done, but the  
25 water got up into about a foot of going over what we had

1 built and everybody could go home from work that day, you  
2 know, the channel wasn't flooded or anything. They all  
3 quieted down after that. They saw it working, you know.  
4 It's always -- you get those projects in and then  
5 maintenance is always a problem people don't understand.  
6 They crowd into the right-away and the City's supposed to  
7 help but that's kind of one of their back projects, you  
8 know, they don't get their mowing and stuff done. We  
9 probably don't either because everybody's interested when  
10 the new projects are going in, but the old routine, taking  
11 care of it, it gets kind of dull and not very exciting.  
12 Although, it's really important to keep those things up  
13 after we make the investment.

14 And maintenance of the watershed structures is  
15 still a problem. We had a couple that -- they come out with  
16 engineering techniques that was supposed to be the best, you  
17 know, but it didn't work on these collapsible soils here so  
18 they had to repair a couple. And not only us, the Bureau of  
19 Reclamation had a problem with the McCook Dam on the Red  
20 Willow Creek down here and so they've had major  
21 reconstruction, too, same problem.

22 MR. BARR: What is the problem exactly?

23 MR. HEATHERS: Well, our soils have a low liquid  
24 limit range that is so narrow, you know, that you get  
25 anything in there, any seepage or anything, it just kind of

1 collapses. We try and keep them from cracking and if you  
2 ever do get a leak or a crack, well, it just kind of melts  
3 everything in there and down they go. They came out with  
4 what they call sand blankets and overloaded the soil,  
5 saturated them, overloaded them and created settlement, and  
6 it seemed to work on some of these structures and others, it  
7 really didn't. They still didn't get all the settlement, I  
8 guess, out. Now, instead of a horizontal blanket with all  
9 the weight, they go with a chimney drain, more of a vertical  
10 one, to cut those flows off and drain them out. It's kind  
11 of complicated but --

12 MR. BARR: Oh, yeah, especially when I'm not  
13 really familiar.

14 MR. HEATHERS: It comes back to the silt loams  
15 have a low liquid limit and they go from being a solid to a  
16 liquid with very little saturation. And, you know, how  
17 nature laid these things in here, I don't suppose every  
18 layer, of course, is the same. But a lot of them are  
19 holding real good. I know the big one there on 12-A, on the  
20 Blackwood, it really took a big -- a couple of big rains and  
21 it held them real good and so there don't seem to be any  
22 problem there. So it's like anything, it works most of the  
23 time but not all of the time.

24 MR. BARR: Any other big challenges that the NRD  
25 faced?

1 MR. HEATHERS: Well, like I said, the groundwater  
2 situation, it just kept kind of growing, the droughts and  
3 with Kansas. That's the main thing right now is how we're  
4 going to balance that out. I'm kind of excited about the N-  
5 CORPE project where they bought a big acreage up here in  
6 Lincoln County.

7 MR. BARR: That's kind of between -- within more  
8 than one NRD, isn't it?

9 MR. HEATHERS: Well, more than one NRD is  
10 involved. Most of the land that was purchased is in the  
11 Middle Republican and the old Prudential development. I've  
12 always wondered, if that ever come available, if that  
13 wouldn't be a real good project, you know, that maybe  
14 somehow the Government or somebody would take that over,  
15 particularly when they started recharging over in the Upper  
16 Republican, you know, I see a lot of potential. I never  
17 dreamed that would be available on the market but it was.

18 MR. BARR: Have they cleared the court cases?

19 MR. HEATHERS: Yeah, the surface water interests  
20 ruling they threw out and they're moving ahead, as I  
21 understand, with the pipelines and that's going to create  
22 more problems because you can handle flood flow, but  
23 constant flow is another problem, you know, with little  
24 crossings and everything down below so they'll have to keep  
25 addressing those things. And then they come in and they've

1 got to do something about like a school district or  
2 something. You take a big tract of land out, a lot of  
3 property tax, they've got to address that I think. And I  
4 don't think that there's anything in the statutes right  
5 now -- I guess I'm speaking without real good knowledge but  
6 they've got to clear the way so they can pay in lieu of tax  
7 or something because you've got a lot of little sub-units of  
8 government that are -- fire districts and everything are  
9 going to get hammered with that.

10 MR. BARR: Did you happen to see yesterday's paper  
11 with the court -- the ruling on the Republican?

12 MR. HEATHERS: Well, I guess it was on the news,  
13 yeah.

14 MR. BARR: Oh, okay. Anything thoughts on that?

15 MR. HEATHERS: Well, it looks to me like we're  
16 doing real well in that. I guess I always did feel that  
17 Kansas was making a big issue out of something when they  
18 really weren't hurt that much, you know. And you look back  
19 in the past, they had opportunity to develop more off-stream  
20 storage down there for the dry years and they passed it up  
21 in the past, so I don't know. It's really difficult to get  
22 into all these legal issues. You look at everybody's  
23 interest and how things historically develop and everything,  
24 you just -- a big old merry-go-round that just doesn't stop.

25 MR. BARR: Looking back on the NRD developments

1 and stuff, particularly in the Republican, do you have any  
2 general thoughts or anything specific you'd like to mention?

3 MR. HEATHERS: Oh, I think the thing -- the  
4 experiment, so to speak, actually worked here. I'm not so  
5 sure that the outline they set up and everything was the  
6 best answer, but you have to have some kind of system and  
7 then it doesn't matter what system you have, people have to  
8 work with it and support it, and I think that's where the  
9 success came from. Even those that were reluctant, you  
10 know, went ahead and decided we have to do something. There  
11 are still people opposed, they -- it goes back to the -- you  
12 own a piece of land, you ought to be able to do what you  
13 want to, even bringing the water up and watering, you know,  
14 you should be able to do that. But it hurts others so you  
15 have to -- I guess that's what government's for, is for the  
16 general good, and sometimes we wonder if we don't miss the  
17 target on that general good.

18 MR. BARR: Did you see any particular change in  
19 the thinking of board members or citizens in relation to how  
20 the NRDs are developed over time?

21 MR. HEATHERS: Oh, I don't know. I thought about  
22 that and I've often thought that maybe the Republican ought  
23 to be one NRD, but the interest is different. It's a lot  
24 different down around Imperial as compared down around Red  
25 Cloud and in there so it -- perhaps dividing it up -- I

1 don't know just where you make the division. We've got a  
2 complicated history. As we developed, even our water law,  
3 you know, we had two laws go on groundwater and surface  
4 water and then decided that there's just one water, you  
5 know, and now with all that history you've got to put  
6 together the past --

7 MR. BARR: Probably if there had been the  
8 understanding today when that was started, it might be  
9 different.

10 MR. HEATHERS: Well, it could be, yeah.

11 MR. BARR: I don't know how it would have  
12 developed but --

13 MR. HEATHERS: Well, I don't know either. And I  
14 was kind of amused, we were talking about this N-CORPE, you  
15 know, pumping water into the streams to replenish that.  
16 When I first started, we started out -- we had a lot of tail  
17 water out of irrigation going down and we decided that was  
18 bad. Roy Patterson was this guy's name. He used to bring  
19 that up. We used to have a lot of tail water coming down  
20 that they picked up for surface water and now we're kind of  
21 going back to it. It's more efficient this way. Before,  
22 they were letting it run out the end of the field. We had a  
23 lot of erosion, you know, and particularly up here on these  
24 high table lands, they'd let it go and secondary erosion  
25 cuts back in a hurry, a little secondary erosion develops

1 down the canyons. So it kind of goes full circle, we had  
2 that in the beginning and we decided that was bad and had to  
3 -- and they really did a lot of work on that. The guys are  
4 pretty efficient about using their water and not wasting it.  
5 Now we've got to pump some down the creek again. I don't  
6 know, it's an interesting situation. I guess I'm kind of  
7 glad I got to share in the experience of it. Sometimes  
8 you'd come home from working on land rights, we weren't too  
9 sure.

10 MR. BARR: You'd have to keep the car running?

11 MR. HEATHERS: I had a lot of humor --

12 MRS. HEATHERS: There was always one or two  
13 cantankerous farmers.

14 MR. HEATHERS: Oh, I always think back to some of  
15 the court situations we got into. One I always remember  
16 was, the attorney -- I don't remember his name from Lincoln,  
17 but it was on the McCook project. We'd done the basic  
18 information with aerial photography. Evidently he'd used  
19 this technique before, but he called me as a hostile  
20 witness, you know, and he was saying, "Well, how can you  
21 take the airplane and develop a map with any accuracy?" And  
22 he didn't realize I taught aerial photogrammetry up here at  
23 the college so I went through it, the principles of similar  
24 triangles and comparing the focal length of the camera to  
25 the altitude of the airplane, and even when you get to the

1 edges, it's not as accurate but that's why you have to have  
2 more than one map. And it was so funny, he challenged --  
3 said, "Well, you aren't qualified to testify on that. You  
4 aren't an engineer. You aren't qualified." And our  
5 attorney said, "Well, wait, you called him, we didn't." But  
6 he was challenging it. And, of course, it was a jury trial  
7 but the judge at least said, "Well, we'll hear this in  
8 closed session. I kind of want to hear it," he said. And,  
9 at no reflection I trusted this judge. I used to play golf  
10 with him over at Trenton, but he -- and if you knew him, he  
11 was straight-laced, you know. He genuinely wanting to hear  
12 it.

13 MR. BARR: Sure.

14 MR. HEATHERS: Anyhow, it was so funny. I  
15 got amused, they call me and then they challenge me that I  
16 wasn't qualified, and our attorney says, "You can't do that.  
17 You called him. He's your witness." So some of those  
18 things are what were kind of funny as we went along.

19 Then, on kind of a serious note, a guy's name was  
20 Padley up at Ogallala. He was really a tough attorney. We  
21 was down on the big dam down there by Stockville and he was  
22 telling us that night, he said, "You'll get this guy's  
23 property over my dead body." About a week later he was gone  
24 and it always -- I know it was coincidence but it still  
25 sticks in your mind.

1 MR. BARR: What was the name of the fellow?

2 MR. HEATHERS: His name was Padley, I can't  
3 remember -- William?

4 MR. BARR: That's fine, I was thinking of the  
5 transcriber.

6 MR. HEATHERS: I can't think of his first name, it  
7 doesn't matter, but it always stuck in my mind. Anyhow, we  
8 did get the land rights finally and the dam works. I think  
9 the party that was involved, we had quite an easement effort  
10 with him but I think he used that to improve his situation  
11 and I think it turned out all right. But, you get into a  
12 lot of funny things.

13 MRS. HEATHERS: Planting trees.

14 MR. HEATHERS: Yeah. Dan (Smith) down here, I  
15 don't know, as a assistant manager, he's kind of a jack of  
16 all trades. He's retiring now.

17 MR. BARR: That's what I heard.

18 MR. HEATHERS: We were the only two that's been  
19 managers here and so they've got to replace him.

20 MR. BARR: When's he retiring?

21 MR. HEATHERS: Oh, end of the year.

22 MR. BARR: He was busy today or I would have  
23 caught him today, too, but somebody will get him eventually.

24 MR. HEATHERS: Gosh, this one day, I don't know  
25 how it happened, but with the tree planter, he fell off of

1           it and it ran over him. And I don't know where his head was  
2           because the wheels was here --

3                     MR. BARR: Oh, my goodness, on his chest?

4                     MR. HEATHERS: -- but he had to almost go between  
5           the packer wheels, but he was okay. He had bruised ribs and  
6           everything, but I always wondered about that. Man, we could  
7           have lost a guy there.

8                     MRS. HEATHERS: Both our sons help plant trees.

9                     MR. HEATHERS: Yeah, it kind of --

10                    MRS. HEATHERS: Gene, he is over at Imperial  
11           working in Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

12                    MR. HEATHERS: Yeah, he's an engineering  
13           technician over there. He kind of -- apple didn't fall too  
14           far from the tree.

15                    MRS. HEATHERS: Well, that shutdown caused a lot  
16           of havoc.

17                    MR. BARR: Oh, I would imagine.

18                    MRS. HEATHERS: They got so behind, he said, that  
19           while some people are really understanding and some aren't.

20                    MR. HEATHERS: Yeah, we raised two sons and all  
21           this. And it's kind of interesting, the oldest boy, he got  
22           into air conditioning and heating, and stuff. He went to  
23           Milford but then he wound up over here at the college in  
24           their maintenance department where I taught for a while and  
25           now he's down at the McCook college where I got my degree

1 out of. He's kind of following the same track.

2 MR. BARR: Yeah, yeah.

3 MRS. HEATHERS: He's a custodian there. He's a  
4 custodian at the McCook college.

5 MR. HEATHERS: Well, I don't know, he's really  
6 higher than just that. He works on cooling and heating and  
7 everything down there, and electrical stuff.

8 MRS. HEATHERS: I think they think they got more  
9 than they really knew they had.

10 MR. HEATHERS: Small college, you know.

11 MR. BARR: How big is McCook now?

12 MR. HEATHERS: Oh, geez, about 8,000, 7500,  
13 something like that. I think it's dropped a little but it's  
14 a pretty active little community.

15 MR. BARR: How big is the college?

16 MR. HEATHERS: Oh, gee, I can't tell you that.

17 MR. BARR: That's fine, I just was curious. No  
18 problem.

19 MR. HEATHERS: Yeah, they've got a pretty good  
20 enrollment, but I can't speak to numbers. They've been  
21 picking up and --

22 MRS. HEATHERS: Those three are his children and  
23 that little boy over here on the left is Keith's son. He  
24 mowed lawns all summer.

25 MR. HEATHERS: Yeah, the kid in the white shirt's

1       about to graduate from the "U" as a civil engineer so  
2       he's --

3               MR. BARR:   Still in the same general area.

4               MR. HEATHERS:  Yeah, I think so.

5               MRS. HEATHERS:  And management.

6               MR. HEATHERS:  Yeah, he's in management  
7       construction and civil engineering.

8               MRS. HEATHERS:  He'll graduate -- he's put in  
9       close to five years at Lincoln and he'll graduate May 9<sup>th</sup>.

10              MR. BARR:  Anything more on the natural resource  
11      district or conservation in general or natural resources  
12      that you'd like to mention?

13              MR. HEATHERS:  Oh, there were a lot of guys that  
14      kind of stood by us in the beginning.  I always remember  
15      Harold Baker down at Trenton who was very active, and Virgil  
16      Bodeman from over at Palisade, and Virgil Nelson from here  
17      in Curtis.  He was in the watershed and stayed with us all  
18      the time.  And Godfrey Nielsen and, of course, Lester Harsh,  
19      who's pretty prominent.  Jim Hoyt out of Culbertson was a  
20      pretty strong supporter.  Lester Harsh's son and Jim's son,  
21      they got on the board later, Del Harsh and, oh, which Hoyt  
22      is it now?  There are several boys.

23              MRS. HEATHERS:  It was that -- which one run that  
24      store?

25              MR. HEATHERS:  Oh, Jerry Vap, too.  Yeah, we don't

1 want to forget Jerry. He was pretty --

2 MR. BARR: Somebody's -- I think somebody's  
3 already interviewed Jerry.

4 MR. HEATHERS: Yeah, he was the national president  
5 of the Association of Soil and Water Conservation. We can't  
6 ever forget Jerry.

7 MR. BARR: I think Gayle (Starr) interviewed him.

8 MR. HEATHERS: And Jerry -- yeah, that's -- I  
9 talked about the city reps. McCook had two, Lester and  
10 Jerry, and they were pretty instrumental in development and  
11 the operation of our district, and very good supporters.  
12 Had a lot of good suggestions and they communicated well  
13 with the public, both of them. I think they had a lot of  
14 respect and that helped us a lot in the McCook and Red  
15 Willow areas.

16 MRS. HEATHERS: Was Gene Campbell in any of that?

17 MR. HEATHERS: No, no.

18 MRS. HEATHERS: Something else.

19 MR. BARR: If there's not anything else, we can  
20 stop, but if you've got another thing, go ahead. If not, I  
21 thank you very much for doing this.

22 MR. HEATHERS: Well, yeah, I guess I look at the  
23 Compact Settlement on the Republican River. It is a very  
24 important issue and I hope that these recharge -- I guess I  
25 shouldn't call them recharge, but these augmentation

1 projects that the Upper started, and they went together  
2 here, I think that we need to look at those types of  
3 inventive thinking. It looks to me like they've got  
4 potential for really helping in the -- because it's so hard  
5 with these drought cycles that we get in and we need to  
6 store the water during the rainy season -- and available for  
7 the dry. These large reservoirs -- the Republican Valley  
8 Conservation Association, that's another group that worked  
9 with us pretty well, keeping us going, but they were so  
10 instrumental in getting the big flood control structures and  
11 those things are very valuable, but they're kind of  
12 inefficient as far as storing water and using it, the  
13 seepage and evaporation losses and stuff out of that, but  
14 probably the most efficient reservoir is this big old  
15 groundwater reservoir that we've got under us. And what  
16 they're looking at is, have that storage, you know, kind of  
17 create it during the recharge years and then you can pump it  
18 down later when you get to dry years. I think there's a lot  
19 of merit in that, it's not too well developed right now,  
20 it's not too sophisticated, but I see a lot of potential  
21 there. I'm kind of looking at that N-CORPE project. It  
22 looks to me like we've got a natural there, it's -- I can't  
23 see why they can't convert to some wind energy up there.  
24 It's right close to the big power line in Sutherland. They  
25 could probably pump their water almost for nothing and

1 recharge that. I don't know, I think Kansas has got to do a  
2 lot of, I don't know, thinking on their project, too,  
3 because they're not without sin in northwest Kansas.

4 MR. BARR: Do they have any comparable -- I know  
5 it's not a natural resource district and not directly  
6 comparable, but do they have any kind of -- for the Kansas  
7 portion of the basin, do they have any kind of organized --

8 MR. HEATHERS: Well, they've got their soil and  
9 water conservation districts and then they've got  
10 groundwater management districts.

11 MR. BARR: Do they have any overall coordination  
12 between them?

13 MR. HEATHERS: Well, I think they do. The State  
14 of Kansas might be a little more active in doing things  
15 and -- not that Nebraska is lax but it's just the way we set  
16 up the system. But they might be a little more active in  
17 groundwater monitoring and land rights and water rights and  
18 that type of thing, and perhaps our state agency isn't. And  
19 I'm not throwing stones at our agency, it's the way that the  
20 legislature set it up.

21 MR. BARR: Sure. What about the Colorado portion  
22 of the Republican?

23 MR. HEATHERS: I think they're pretty active, too,  
24 but it's more of a state-controlled program. It's a little  
25 hard to understand their management program out there, how

1       you can move water around. I get lost when they get to  
2       talking about it. But we've had pretty good  
3       across-the-state border cooperation. I know when I was at  
4       Trenton -- and even with the NRDs we cooperated with, Kansas  
5       districts on different things, and neighbor-to-neighbor a  
6       lot of times, putting up signs, you know, for entering this  
7       district or leaving that one. I know we wound up with a  
8       drill one time, grass drill. We finally decided it belonged  
9       to the Kansas district and got it back to them. But there's  
10      things like that -- when I worked for SCS, I laid out  
11      terraces in Kansas because the farm was combined with one up  
12      here at Nebraska, and we even worked with the Kansas office  
13      out of Atwood and those places, and Oberlin, to do some of  
14      those things. So it's not all throwing stones at one  
15      another.

16                MRS. HEATHERS: So why did Kansas raise such a  
17      stink over the water?

18                MR. HEATHERS: Yeah, it's -- but you meet with  
19      those Kansas people. They're good people, too, just as good  
20      as Nebraskans I think. They've all grew up like we did, you  
21      know, the hard way kind of. But, I don't know, we get some  
22      power struggles, too, and -- between states and attorney  
23      generals, and what have you, so --

24                MRS. HEATHERS: There's always that greed.

25                MR. BARR: Well, if there's nothing else --

1

MR. HEATHERS: No, I don't know of anything.

2

MR. BARR: Thank you very much.

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