

INTERVIEW WITH AL SMITH

July 23, 2013

1 PROCEEDINGS, JULY 23, 2013:

2 MR. BARR: This is Jim Barr. It's July 23<sup>rd</sup>, and  
3 I'm talking with Al Smith. Ron and Darla Bishop are here  
4 helping. And I thought I would start out by just asking  
5 Al -- give a little background on himself.

6 MR. SMITH: Well, I was in the Navy for five years  
7 and then I got called back during the Korean War. I was a  
8 pilot and was on the Hornet and it got sunk. I wasn't on it  
9 when it got sunk. We was airborne. And then we went to the  
10 Wasp and then got knocked out but then I -- then during the  
11 Korean War, I don't know why I got called back, only that  
12 the damn four-star general had taught us at Iowa State  
13 University, who was a captain at that time, that's about  
14 one-star general in the Army, and he called -- out of 49 of  
15 us, he called 28 of us back. Never got aboard a carrier.  
16 Never left Seoul. In fact, I walked in his office every  
17 morning and handed him my resignation and said I give up my  
18 commission. I want out of this damn thing. I'd go back to  
19 work for Zenith because I was working for Zenith at that  
20 time. I worked for them 26 years.

21 MR. BARR: Where at?

22 MR. SMITH: I had -- I only called on our own --  
23 we owned 27 distributors in the Midwest and we owned 14 in  
24 the East. And that's all I called on, was distributors.  
25 And Mr. Livingston fired me at least once a month but I

1 never could get him to put it in writing. He told his wife  
2 he didn't have any lead in the pencil. But and then when I  
3 left them I went in the turkey business and invested a lot  
4 of money in the damn thing. And the government stuck their  
5 nose in, as they usually do. We used to sell them on yield  
6 and grade. They'd come out and grade them and they bought  
7 the whole flock. Swift and Company was probably our biggest  
8 buyer and Cutahey was our biggest town buyer. And then we  
9 kept flooding and so we farmed the Bellwood watershed and it  
10 went on for 18 years and never had election. So we  
11 circulated a petition to make them have an election. And  
12 Bob Bell was a hell of a nice guy, but he was so self-  
13 conceited because he never had anything -- his dad owned  
14 probably 12 sections of land here and in western Nebraska.  
15 And he never had a job that wasn't a state job. He ran the  
16 old people's home in Lincoln for years. But we pulled an  
17 election and I beat Bob. And Harold Zellinger beat Sara  
18 Birkel and Sam Podraza. Dale Williams said he couldn't do  
19 it, you know.

20 And then we made him start -- and that's when  
21 Kremer and Bernice Labest and the gal that was --

22 MR. BISHOP: Robak?

23 MR. SMITH: Robak and a fellow from -- the state  
24 senator from Indianola, which I knew real well, they started  
25 that. And first they had 33 districts, and then they cut it

1 from 33 to 24, and then from there to 21. Now I think  
2 there's 17, isn't there?

3 MR. BISHOP: No, there's still 21.

4 MR. SMITH: Is there still 21? But we had a lot  
5 of battles because, no disrespect to them, but the SCS was a  
6 pain in everybody's side. They are a bunch of parasites as  
7 far as I'm concerned. They didn't want the NRDs because  
8 they wanted to do what they don't do now, nothing as far as  
9 I'm concerned. If they consolidated Butler County, Colfax  
10 County, Saunders County, Platte County, they could get  
11 along, and then give that money to the NRDs to do  
12 conservation work with, they would get more done and more  
13 people would be happy with what they do. Because you have  
14 to know the people and you have to want to work with the  
15 people in order to get things done, and that's how we did  
16 it. But --

17 MR. BARR: Ron, you and Al were talking about some  
18 stuff earlier. Do you want to just go ahead and kind of run  
19 the interview?

20 MR. BISHOP: Sure. Do you remember when the bill  
21 was first introduced?

22 MR. SMITH: Yes.

23 MR. BISHOP: There was some opposition from Soil  
24 and Conservation Service and from some others. Do you  
25 remember some of those others that were opposed to it?

1           MR. SMITH: Well, there was a lot of the state  
2 senators was opposed to it. But Kremer and Bernice Labest  
3 and I can't think of the guy's name from Indianola, they  
4 were people that just didn't give up. They knew they were  
5 going to do it, and they made up their mind they were going  
6 to do it, and they asked for a lot of help, and they got a  
7 lot of help. The boards were so big. Remember how big it  
8 was? We had 58 board members when they went into effect in  
9 July of '71. And you just never could work with something  
10 like that. But --

11           MR. BISHOP: Do you remember some of the other  
12 groups that were opposed to the NRD?

13           MR. SMITH: Yeah, some of the watersheds were  
14 opposed to the NRD. Now take Wahoo, for instance. They had  
15 \$220,000 in the kitty and had never built one structure with  
16 it. They had never done anything with it. And Jerry  
17 Erickson from Price, Johnson and Erickson was a guy that  
18 helped us a lot. But the ones that was opposed to it was  
19 people -- well, you'd be surprised the people that was  
20 opposed to it, was in Lincoln mostly. Frank Morrison was in  
21 favor of it 100 percent. And we went to meet him a dozen  
22 times and Frank Morrison and I, every time I'd walk into his  
23 office, I'd go sit in his chair and reach over in his drawer  
24 and open it because he had Dutch Master cigars but they said  
25 Emerson on them. He would pull the labels off and put them

1 on the Dutch Masters and put Emersons on the Dutch Master  
2 and people would grab them Dutch Masters and they was five  
3 cent Emersons.

4 But the people around here that was opposed to it  
5 was like the Sobotas, because they were -- Louie was the  
6 head of it and his son was with it.

7 MR. BISHOP: The head of what?

8 MR. SMITH: The water --

9 MR. BISHOP: The watershed?

10 MR. SMITH: Yeah, the Bruno watershed. Now,  
11 people in Prague, the only one that was against it was a  
12 county supervisor and he was really opposed to it because he  
13 was on the Bruno watershed board. The people that was on  
14 boards thought they was going to lose their jobs, and they  
15 didn't have jobs. All they had was appointments because  
16 they -- but some of the people in Lincoln and Omaha that was  
17 opposed to it, believe it or not, Kiewit was opposed to it  
18 because Kiewit got jobs from the watersheds and they had  
19 taken conservation things. Now a lot of people don't  
20 realize this, but Ron probably knows it, but the secretaries  
21 for this conservation service was all paid for by the  
22 watersheds. And another one that was opposed to it, Dr.  
23 Gold was at the University, head of the Extension Service.  
24 And the Extension Service was really opposed to it because  
25 they could see maybe a consolidation of that organization.

1 But the thing was you never really knew who was opposed to  
2 you. But we had a state conservationist at that time called  
3 Benny Martin. He was probably the only person I know in the  
4 Soil Conservation Service that wanted the NRDs. He really  
5 wanted them because he said it would make them stronger and  
6 make them better because somebody would be there to push  
7 them, to make them do something besides in the wintertime  
8 putting round circles on paper that had a hole punched in  
9 it. But, Ron, the people that was opposed to it.

10 MR. BISHOP: How about Senator Schmit?

11 MR. SMITH: Oh, yeah, and him and I battled a lot.  
12 When I got elected to the NRD Board I got more votes than  
13 all of them put together. And Loran come to me and he says,  
14 could I still be chairman? I says, hell, you ain't even on  
15 the board anymore. You got beat off. Who beat me? I says,  
16 Dan Podraza. Oh, Dan couldn't beat me. I said, well, he  
17 did. But we had so organized and set up the thing with  
18 farmers and our NRD only sued one farmer in 27 road  
19 structures we built, and he was a guy that just absolutely  
20 wouldn't -- he spent \$40,000, his nephew was a lawyer in  
21 Lincoln, they spent \$40,000 trying to beat us three times in  
22 the Supreme Court. And finally I happened to be in the  
23 courthouse and one of the girls said, Smitty, do you know  
24 that he don't own that farm? I said, well, hell, he don't.  
25 No, no, his three daughters and him own it. I said, his

1 daughters own that? So I went to see him and I said, now  
2 the state says you're entitled to \$4,000 because you sold  
3 land to the state for the highway for less than \$2,000. Now  
4 you girls either settle with us or we're going to take it  
5 away from you, and then we're going to go back to the \$1,200  
6 that the state said you should have. Otherwise, I'm going  
7 to give you 12,000. You either settle or not. And she says  
8 well -- Zager girls, Zager now, she says, Smitty, are you  
9 sure we own it? I said, yeah. I'll go get the deeds and  
10 abstracts for you. And I went and got them and then we went  
11 to court up here. You probably remember that. Went to  
12 court up here and I told the girls, this is the last chance.

13 MR. BARR: While we got a break here while Ron is  
14 away, do you want to just kind of give a background on  
15 yourself and how you were involved in this process?

16 MS. BISHOP: Well, I grew up in this area and I  
17 knew Al since I was a little kid, ran with his children.  
18 And I had been a legal secretary and I had done a lot of  
19 abstracting. And I had worked in Lincoln and moved back to  
20 David City. And at that time we were doing quite a few  
21 things with checking to see who owned what and whatever and  
22 I was able to do that because I had been doing abstracting  
23 and worked with the courthouse really well. And then, too,  
24 when I started working there in '73, we were in a trailer  
25 home which we were in for quite a little while, and my

1       cousin, Virginia Rugel, was working there just a little bit  
2       before I did. And when I started working I was doing the --  
3       not the books, I was like the secretary, answering the phone  
4       and typing. And the Central Platte NRD secretary, they  
5       aren't called that now, but was the secretary was Diane  
6       Miller. And her and I got together with Hazel Jenkins and  
7       we set up how to do some of the bookkeeping but mostly we  
8       set up files, how to do the filing because this was all new  
9       projects and whatever. We did the filing. And then we also  
10      worked with her a little and some of the other people to set  
11      up the insurance program at the time. So that is kind of my  
12      background on this.

13               MR. BARR: I got over there while you were away.  
14      I'll let you go ahead again with Al.

15               MR. BISHOP: Al, when the NRDs first started, what  
16      were some of the problems that you had getting set up and  
17      getting things underway?

18               MR. SMITH: The biggest problem was the amount of  
19      board members we had to have because we had to keep all the  
20      watershed board members. We had to have a city like Fremont  
21      and Columbus and Schuyler.

22               MR. BISHOP: They all had to have a  
23      representative, didn't they?

24               MR. SMITH: Yeah. And the thing was Fremont was  
25      not in our NRD. But Columbus wanted in the Butler County

1 NRD. There's always been a friction between Columbus and  
2 David City and the main reasons, like the highway -- you  
3 remember when Highway 64, how they fought us on it. But a  
4 lot of it was people didn't understand that you can't change  
5 progress, and that's what they was trying to do, was change  
6 progress. And it just -- you've got to work with the people  
7 and you've got to talk to the people. You've got to talk to  
8 them. You've got to go see them. I bet I spent, out of my  
9 own pocket, I bet I spent a couple thousand dollars trying  
10 to get the NRDs so they worked right and they went right.  
11 But if I had a county board up here that I don't care what I  
12 asked for, what I asked them to help me do or what  
13 resolution I asked them to pass, it got passed. There was  
14 Gruball and Beanie and Audrey Krisinger and Johnny Svoboda.  
15 They'd just go in and say, what have you got, Smitty? And  
16 I'd hand them a piece of paper and they'd say, I make a  
17 motion and, bingo, the NRDs -- that was for the NRDs was  
18 there. They had what they wanted. And it was -- but the  
19 biggest thing was the money. I don't know how much money  
20 you had in Central Platte from watersheds, but I think we  
21 had close to a million and a half dollars.

22 MR. BISHOP: That was transferred over?

23 MR. SMITH: Yeah.

24 MR. BISHOP: I'll be darned.

25 MR. SMITH: But now Fremont -- but Wahoo had

1       \$280,000. Bone Creek had 290,000 and they hadn't done  
2       anything with it, only collect it. They hadn't done a damn  
3       thing with that money. And what happened was they thought  
4       we were going to get it, but they didn't read the law  
5       because the law said it had to be spent in the watershed to  
6       which it was collected. And that's when Jerry Erickson from  
7       Price, Johnson, Erickson said, Smitty, let me try to help  
8       you guys. Let me try to work with it because I am chairman  
9       of the Wahoo watershed board. And we went to the county  
10      commissioners and we talked to them for probably an hour and  
11      they asked us to leave, Jerry and me to leave. And when we  
12      come back they said, what do you guys -- what's that  
13      resolution you had? And he said, you got it. But that was  
14      again when you had county boards and township boards working  
15      with you. Them people that got elected. And maybe they  
16      aren't all real honest with their gravel and things when  
17      election time comes, but at the same time they knew there  
18      had to be changes. There just absolutely had to be changes.  
19      And they still need changes, and Ron knows that. The money  
20      that is wasted by agriculture is pathetic.

21               MR. BISHOP: You mentioned 27 road structures.  
22      What other kind of projects did you do in the early years?

23               MR. SMITH: Dams. We built probably 35, 40 dams.  
24      We probably built more dams than any NRD put together. But  
25      we did it because the people worked with us. I never, ever

1       went to see somebody that I didn't take the board member  
2       from that district with me. I didn't ask them to go. I  
3       told them to go. That's one thing I had a bad habit was  
4       doing, which Darla knows, and I didn't mind telling a board  
5       to kiss where I sit because 90 percent of them can't get  
6       away from the political part of it. And you can't work if  
7       you don't have help. But you can't get politics fixed into  
8       the thing. It's got to be honest to God people wanting  
9       something and you've got to create the want. That's one of  
10      the biggest problems we had, was creating the want. Ron  
11      knows that.

12               MR. BISHOP: When you started here, Al, you were  
13      all by yourself. How long before you started getting some  
14      help?

15               MR. SMITH: Well, 90 percent of the people didn't  
16      know it. Dick Behrens had to find out the hard way. But I  
17      was hired with six months before the NRDs ever went into  
18      effect and I was hired in Yutan, Nebraska, by 42 votes. And  
19      the opposition had 12. We thought they actually had 14, but  
20      at the first meeting when they picked a manager we had 17  
21      people involved in it. And believe it or not, six of them  
22      was SCS district conservationists and the vote, 22 times  
23      that night, was 14 against anybody being a manager and 44 --  
24      I mean, 44 against them, 14 favor of them. And then finally  
25      Jack Sutton, there was another guy, Ron, that was opposed to

1 us so bad, him and Peterson, the mayor, and all of a sudden  
2 they just turned absolutely around because they seen -- they  
3 was flooding and they was getting dams. They needed dams in  
4 Dodge County. And the thing was that meeting that night, we  
5 come to it and finally Jack Sutton said to Albert Yardbar,  
6 Mr. Yardbar, who have you guys picked for a manager? He  
7 says, I make a motion Al Smith is our manager. And with 44  
8 Jack says -- well, it ain't going to be 45 because I'm  
9 changing. And that just turned the whole table around.  
10 That just turned Fremont. But him and Pete Peterson did  
11 everything in their power to make sure the NRDs worked. But  
12 we actually had 58 board members when it first went into  
13 effect.

14 MR. BISHOP: When it started?

15 MR. SMITH: Yeah. And we decided to divide it up  
16 into 10 districts and have two members from each district  
17 plus one at-large. And Kermit Wagner was another one that  
18 just pushed it. He was a Board of Regents and owned the  
19 elevator and Kermit was somebody that just pushed the NRDs,  
20 pushed it and pushed it behind the scenes. You can't  
21 remember how many people Kermit changed to want the NRDs.  
22 But I actually was hired six months before the NRDs ever  
23 become legal.

24 MR. BISHOP: How did they happen to have that  
25 meeting, Al, six months ahead of the NRDs?

1                   MR. SMITH: Well, I suppose maybe I instigated it,  
2 but Dick Gruball and Mark Gruball and Denny and them said --  
3 Wahoo county board said, let's get together, Yutan, and pick  
4 a manager. And they sent me to go get a couple cases of  
5 beer and a fifth of whiskey. When I come back they said,  
6 Smitty, you're going to be our manager. We got a contract  
7 here for you. And nobody knew that I signed a contract six  
8 months before the NRDs went into effect. And I tried to  
9 tell Dick Behrens, I said, Dick -- he called me, asked me,  
10 because I knew Dick from Papio in Omaha and I think you was  
11 there, too, when --

12                   MR. BISHOP: Yes, I was.

13                   MR. SMITH: And I think he called me and he said,  
14 Smitty, I'm going to apply for that job. I said, okay. He  
15 said, can you help me? I said, no. Why? I said, because  
16 I'm the manager. He said, you're crazy. They ain't had  
17 elections yet. I said, they might not have but we did.  
18 Dick come to the meeting and I said, Dick, I'm going to put  
19 your name up first. He got beat 44 to 14. And then I put  
20 Mel Saw's district conservation and then Harlan Hendricks  
21 and then Glen Forey. You remember, he was the head of the  
22 Federal Land Bank. And Al Gruball, Marv told Al, that's his  
23 brother, they were twin brothers, told him, he said, if you  
24 make -- if you even give him a chance or even ask your  
25 people, he said, I'll disown you. But it was just the

1 people. It wasn't politics. It was the people that --  
2 because it was something that the people knew they had to  
3 have. They had watersheds for 10, 12 years, collected money  
4 and it sat in the bank and the banks made a big profit off  
5 of the interest off of it. But it was just something that  
6 had to be done and the people realized it. But it wasn't  
7 for the county boards and people like Jack Sutton.

8 MR. BISHOP: He was the city manager of Fremont?

9 MR. SMITH: He was the city manager of Fremont,  
10 yeah, and Pete Peterson was the mayor. And we had one  
11 little gal over there, Mary Callas, remember her? One time  
12 at a board meeting I said, Mary, why don't you do me a  
13 favor? I was sort of crude and I said, why don't you do me  
14 a favor. Why in the hell did you get married and have twins  
15 the first time and wait three days and get pregnant again  
16 for triplets. And she said, I ain't never going to get  
17 married. I was married once. I said, well, Mary, you'd get  
18 the hell out of my hair. You're in my hair continuously.  
19 Get the hell out of it. And, you know, but I got by with  
20 stuff like that because you did it in a way, you tried to do  
21 it in a way that made people feel they were part of your  
22 organization and you could talk to them that way. But the  
23 same way with the state commission. They was run by big Bob  
24 Bell, Bob Bell from there, Rich Hahn that was a big wheel  
25 with Farmers Mutual, and I told them right out, point blank,

1 I said, I might not be a Kay Orr fan because I never have  
2 been a Democrat or Republican. I've been an Independent. I  
3 said, but I guarantee you, you two guys ain't going to be on  
4 this board come the first of the year. As soon as she takes  
5 office you're gone and make up your damn mind. Big Bob Bell  
6 said, do you know who I represent? I said, yes, some stupid  
7 city called Omaha. I said, but you ain't going to be on  
8 this board. And Rich Hahn never believed us. He just  
9 didn't think it would happen. But we had organizations  
10 inside our own organization that didn't try to do things  
11 only to better themselves. They thought you had to do  
12 something to help people. And you had to help the people  
13 that needed the help, not the people that wanted the glory,  
14 and that was what was wrong. Ron, you know that. You had  
15 it in your area. You had a big board.

16 MR. BISHOP: Yeah.

17 MR. SMITH: But you had to whittle them down.

18 MR. BISHOP: 155 I started with.

19 MR. SMITH: But that was the thing. But it was  
20 the cities, maybe not in your area but in my area, it was  
21 the cities and the county boards that got behind us because  
22 they knew the roads were going to hell, the bridges were  
23 going to hell and they had to have somebody that was willing  
24 to push it. I think we was the first one to ever build a  
25 road structure.

1 MS. BISHOP: And it was just Al and the board.  
2 There was no assistant manager. There was no help outside  
3 of the office.

4 MR. SMITH: No. And this is something people have  
5 to start realizing. I don't care. It doesn't change one  
6 damn bit today. But a manager is not the boss. He is not  
7 the one that makes the wheels turn. He is not the one that  
8 grease the wheels. The girls that work for him, that is the  
9 people that make the wheels turn. And that's what our board  
10 had a hell of a time figuring out because I was paid good.  
11 There was no doubt about it. But Darla remembers one time  
12 they was going to give me a 20 percent raise and give the  
13 girls a damn 3 percent raise. And it was stupid. I said, I  
14 don't need a 20 percent raise. You've got another deal like  
15 you got in Omaha paying somebody \$1,000 a day. That's the  
16 kind of thing that you had that people was wanting. They  
17 didn't care whether the money went to work or it went to  
18 play. And play I mean by spending it. But our NRD was --  
19 and the biggest problem I had was the Soil Conservation  
20 Service.

21 MR. BISHOP: How was your relationship with the  
22 Soil Conservation Service?

23 MR. SMITH: Null and dull and I think today we  
24 don't need it. My -- Gene Sullivan was state  
25 conservationist. Harlan Hendricks was a retired district

1 conservationist. They tried to get a medical discharge  
2 because he had an open heart surgery for a valve and Dr.  
3 Culpen said, no, there ain't nothing wrong with you. Then  
4 you had Paul Smith, they stayed at the Country Club drinking  
5 beer more than they did.

6 MS. BISHOP: You never could get anything. I  
7 mean, I couldn't even go over and get a map or anything.  
8 They would give us nothing, not anything.

9 MR. SMITH: And that was the thing. I wasn't  
10 bashful. And when they -- they tapped my phone for two  
11 years and they got caught at it, and I got freed on all  
12 charges. They filed charges against me that was  
13 unbelievable. But it took Benny Martin from Washington to  
14 call me and said, Smitty, you're being screwed by our  
15 people. Your phone is tapped. So what we did, I got a hold  
16 of Bernie Meisinberg, I got a hold of people in Fremont.  
17 Jack Sutton got some people that would call and say, hey,  
18 Smitty, I could get you \$1,000 under the table. Would you  
19 take it if we could get a dam built here? Oh, hell, yes.

20 But the best friend I had in the state government  
21 was Paul Douglas. Paul Douglas says, everything you get  
22 recorded. And remember something, Smitty. Don't push it  
23 past the point because the more you stir stink, the more  
24 your shit, the worse it stinks. And he did the same thing.  
25 He had to go to the Supreme Court to prove he hadn't done

1 anything wrong. And I had to go to the County Commission, I  
2 mean, the State Commission and they proved it without a  
3 doubt. They freed me on every charge. But it was them.  
4 But Bob Crosby and Steve Seglin had -- Steve Seglin is still  
5 with the law firm. They wanted me to sue. And Paul Douglas  
6 called me one night at two o'clock in the damn morning and  
7 he said, I just left Bob Crosby and them, Smitty. Don't do  
8 what they want you to do. Do what your wife told you.  
9 Don't sue nobody. It ain't the guys that done the dirty  
10 work that suffers. It's their wives. Leave it lay. Just  
11 leave it lay. And I did. But the telephone company man --  
12 but they transferred Gene Sullivan to Alabama. Harlan  
13 Hendricks was drawing his salary plus his pension which is  
14 absolutely illegal. You've got to pay it all back. It was  
15 federally illegal.

16 And Benny Martin is the one that -- and then they  
17 had, I can't think of the guy, I always called him Slim Jim,  
18 when he come out here as a state conservationist. He  
19 stepped out of the car and he says -- I was standing right  
20 there. He says, where is that son of a bitch called Al  
21 Smith? I said, that bastard there knows who he is. Why  
22 don't you open your eyes, you dumb bastard. And he says,  
23 you know, I think you and I are going to get along, and we  
24 did. But he didn't last a year because he started working  
25 with the NRDs, started helping the NRDs and that just

1        didn't -- because how many people know today that us farmers  
2        and every farmer in Nebraska only pays 72 percent of his  
3        mill levy. The rest is all tax -- some of the people -- out  
4        of nine state supervisors right today we got eight of them  
5        to get over 500,000 a year. It's all back payments. One of  
6        them gets over a million.

7                MR. BARR: What's this now?

8                MR. SMITH: That's for conservation work that they  
9        don't do. But the thing is, we wouldn't have financial  
10       trouble in Nebraska if the farmers would pay their fair  
11       share of the taxes. We had a farm sell down here for 14,000  
12       an acre. We had another one sell for 12,000 an acre. We  
13       had one in Hastings sell for 13. And do you know what the  
14       assessor said? I don't know how to appraise it. I said,  
15       well, at the County Board meeting I said -- and Hank Kobza  
16       was there and he done the auction. I said, well either you  
17       got a dummy for a supervisor, bunch of dummies for  
18       supervisors and you got an auditor that don't know what  
19       she's doing, or you got a damn crooked auctioneer because  
20       there was two people bidding on that land. So it went for  
21       14,000. Hank, did you run that bid up without anybody  
22       bidding? Are you that big a crook? No, no, no, Smitty.  
23       That was an honest bid. I said, well, then it's an honest  
24       appraisal. There's two people, the guy that bought it and  
25       the guy that didn't get to buy it, bid it. But our

1 government, to me, our agriculture department is so corrupt  
2 it's pathetic. Because when you can buy land and when you  
3 can get the kind of money Oskedaus, for instance, two  
4 million a year, and own their own equipment to do the land  
5 leveling, the drag line work and their wife told me one day,  
6 she said, God, Smitty, I hope you don't get that farm bill  
7 killed. She said, we'll be sitting out there looking at  
8 people because we got so much invested in equipment and  
9 farms. They owned 2,200 acres. But that is what is wrong  
10 with the NRDs. Somebody wanted to control them but they  
11 didn't have the brains or the background or the initiative  
12 to know it wasn't the board members. It was the people you  
13 had to have and the people you had to work with.

14 MR. BARR: Did you have any other questions, Ron,  
15 or --

16 MR. BISHOP: You did a lot of road structures and  
17 built a lot of dams. What was some of the other work that  
18 you started when you first became an NRD? What were some of  
19 the other priority projects?

20 MR. SMITH: The projects, like Fremont was West  
21 Bend. They had a dam there they worked on for 10 years,  
22 never got it done. That Mary Callas and the other guy, her  
23 husband shot the manager, remember?

24 MS. BISHOP: Oh, yeah, but I can't --

25 MR. SMITH: Josh, no. Well, anyway, I went to her

1       one day and I said, I got to talk to you. I said you own a  
2       section and a half of land. Bellwood, yeah. I said, you  
3       want a dam? You want ditches through there? You want that  
4       thing drained out? You want to quit flooding your damn  
5       land? Yeah. Well, then get your nose out of my business  
6       and get it out now, not tomorrow, now. She says, well, what  
7       am I doing wrong? I said, well, you're fighting the NRDs  
8       and fighting North Bend and Fremont. Well, they're going to  
9       take some of my land. I said, well, you were willing to  
10      give it to us in Bellwood to stop the flooding. You want to  
11      stop it on your land but you don't want to stop it on  
12      anybody else's. You don't want to give us the land. I  
13      don't want to buy your damn land. I think you ought to give  
14      it to us.

15               MS. BISHOP: Was that Rawhide Creek?

16               MR. SMITH: Yeah, and she looked at me and she  
17      said, how do you know I'm going to give it to you in  
18      Bellwood? I just opened my briefcase and there's a letter  
19      you willed to me. You didn't know who the hell I was, do  
20      you? I do now, yes. Yes, I wrote that. Yes, I'll still  
21      give you the land if you get that dam built. I said, well,  
22      then give us the land here to complete the ditch to your  
23      farm.

24               And this one guy, I can't think of his name, his  
25      son was on the county board over there and they owned a lot

1 of land. They owned a development company. And he said --  
2 his son said, you know what? A little banty rooster met a  
3 bigger banty rooster. My dad won't give in. I says, oh,  
4 hell, he'll cave in. I said, he knows that that money  
5 didn't come honestly and he didn't get it all by working  
6 hard. He swindled people the same way I'm trying to swindle  
7 you. And he started laughing. And he said, you and Mitch,  
8 you're trying -- I said, hell, yes, I'm trying to get to you  
9 for nothing. I said I didn't tell you I was going to give  
10 you any money for anything. And, by God, him and Jack's  
11 son -- I asked Jack, I said, Jack, go talk to him. Pete  
12 says, you and I better go with him. And we went out there  
13 and he said, how much land do you want? I said, 90 acres.  
14 Is it good land? I said, No. 12. He said, well, what have  
15 I got it for? I said, how in the hell do I know? I guess  
16 you thought you had to have more land and you didn't know  
17 that, did you? He started laughing. He said, you know  
18 what, let's go over to my lawyer, was Brad Holdorf in  
19 Fremont. He says, let's go to Brad and get this damn thing  
20 settled right now and we did.

21 And that's just the way things went with people.  
22 If they knew you was sincere and you wasn't afraid of them  
23 and you wasn't going to do something that was bad for them  
24 but was going to help the community, then help the  
25 community. Don't just say give them so much money like

1 Kiewit does. That's one of my biggest pet peeves in this  
2 state right now. Nebraska Foundation got 2,300,000,000 and  
3 yet they want the taxpayers in Omaha to pay for a medical  
4 center with a cigarette tax of 35 cents with a \$50,000 from  
5 the County -- I mean 50 million from the county, another 50  
6 million from the city. They're paying three times taxes and  
7 don't know it. But that Foundation, I've tried to get them  
8 to say you can't have more than 500,000 in the bank. And  
9 now they got the guy that broke the World-Herald running the  
10 thing because the other manager quit because they give all  
11 the professors a 13 percent raise.

12 And there's another thing. How many people  
13 realize that they give them that raise two years ago, but  
14 next year -- that was a contract. Now next year the  
15 taxpayers got to pay that 13 percent increase. And people  
16 don't realize it because they don't stop to think and they  
17 don't stop to try to listen to what somebody is saying.  
18 Because, like I said, if you don't have good help, and you  
19 know that is true, just like the Extension Service.

20 Dr. Gold one time walked in my office and said,  
21 I'm Dr. Gold. I had the Extension Service. I was in a  
22 crappy outfit and a dumb do-nothing outfit. I said, by the  
23 way, you sold our truck -- remember, we bought the truck for  
24 the soil sampling and they sold it to Steve Oltman. I  
25 called Steve and said, hell you bought something that's

1       stolen. How do you figure? I told him, I got the title.  
2       It's in my name and the NRD's name. Steve, I want 12,000  
3       for that truck. Are you sure? I said, yeah, I'm sure, and  
4       I didn't do a thing. But then what's her name, the county  
5       attorney, they had cuts all over, the one that was so  
6       bashful, and I called him and told him. He said, does Dr.  
7       Gold know? I said, he's a thief. I said, it takes a thief  
8       to catch a thief. Are you a thief or are you honest? Well,  
9       I try to be honest. I said, I didn't ask if you tried. I  
10      asked you, are you honest or aren't you honest? Yeah. We  
11      got the truck two days later. But that was again Extension  
12      Service. People don't realize that the NRDs paid the  
13      secretaries and the SCS office. And I said, you ain't going  
14      to tell me who I can hire and who I can't hire. I'll hire  
15      who I want to hire. You're not going to hire your friends.

16                I told Dr. Gold, Delmer Lang is not getting help.  
17      You're not going to hire an assistant for Delmer Lang and it  
18      happened to be April's uncle. And he hates me today for it.  
19      But that saying was -- I said, and by the way, we're not  
20      going to pay for a car any longer. See, the County paid a  
21      third of the Extension Service. You do, too. You pay a  
22      third. But the University runs it. And when we took that  
23      survey the biggest county we had was Hatton from Wahoo and I  
24      called him Hatton do nothing. And he had 3 percent of the  
25      people he was representing. Columbus and Butler County

1 represented less than 1 percent of the people. But every  
2 time you walked by and seen Delmer she would say hi to  
3 Delmer, he would make it down as connection.

4 MR. BARR: When they started the NRD, was there  
5 any difficulty in establishing boundaries and everything? I  
6 guess one of the mysteries I have had is I used to work with  
7 the city of David City on drainage and they kind of headed  
8 that out west of town and everything. Was there any  
9 controversy on the boundaries?

10 MR. SMITH: Yeah, Fremont, I don't know why, they  
11 didn't want in the Elkhorn and they didn't want in the  
12 Omaha. They wanted in our NRD. Columbus didn't want in our  
13 NRD because Columbus was afraid of us. They was afraid the  
14 politicians couldn't run it and they knew they couldn't.  
15 And Duane Smith was on the Loup Public Power Board. He was  
16 a lobbyist for them. They didn't call them lobbyists  
17 because it was illegal, so they called him a business  
18 manager, but they were opposed to us. But a year after they  
19 got moved to Ord Dick Beren called and he said, you know  
20 they're starting a petition in Columbus to come to your NRD?  
21 I said, they ain't welcome. I said, they didn't want us.  
22 We don't want them. I said, they might as well quit. And I  
23 called -- the mayor over there was Johnny Check and I called  
24 him and I said, you might as well give it up because our  
25 board will vote on it and set not to take you because we

1 don't want you. Dick Beren is doing a better job than I'm  
2 doing so you stay with Dick. But that was the trouble. I  
3 think, Ron, we tried to work with your NRD on some different  
4 projects.

5 MR. BISHOP: Uh-huh.

6 MR. SMITH: And my wife had an aunt that they  
7 wanted to go through her land she was just bitter as hell  
8 over it. And I went to see her, I said, why? You didn't  
9 earn your damn money. You inherited it. And now you don't  
10 want to give somebody else a chance to have some good out of  
11 your money? If they want to build that through Silver Creek  
12 and I said, give an easement.

13 MR. BISHOP: Shell Creek, one of the first tours I  
14 ever made of a snagging aquarium project was on Shell Creek.  
15 That was in your district, wasn't it?

16 MR. SMITH: Part of it was in his, part was in  
17 ours.

18 MR. BISHOP: I don't remember where it was  
19 exactly, but is that a program you did very often or  
20 snagging --

21 MR. SMITH: Yeah. See, we didn't -- number one is  
22 I had the state commission over a damn barrel because they  
23 never had public hearings on any of the rules or  
24 regulations. That's when I built the ditches over in  
25 Fremont. We just built them. Gene Sullivan took us up to

1 State Commission and said, you've got to pay back the  
2 90,000. I said, the hell we do. And I looked at Jim Koch  
3 and Jim Koch was another one that I liked and appreciated.  
4 He was an honest guy. And he looked and I said, Jim, your  
5 state commission is a little illegal, aren't you. That was  
6 at a board meeting. Bob Bell says, I suppose you think you  
7 know now what we do wrong. I said, hell, yes. I said,  
8 number one, you didn't have public hearings and you don't  
9 have your own rules and regulations and the law, federal law  
10 says you've got to have public hearings on every damn deal,  
11 every rule you make, and you haven't done it. Am I right or  
12 wrong, Jim? Or should we call Paul Douglas and ask him to  
13 come over? He said, leave him out of it. Leave him out of  
14 it. And they didn't get their money back because there was  
15 a case again where they wanted to do it, but the way they  
16 wanted to do it the damn ditch they didn't bid. It was just  
17 a waterway. The damn ditch would have been 200 foot wide  
18 and 10 foot deep. But whatever -- they wasn't going to stop  
19 the silting up above. And Ron knows that's half your  
20 trouble, is the silting up above.

21 MR. BISHOP: You mentioned Jim Koch. Were there  
22 others that stand out in your mind as being helpful to the  
23 NRDs either in the formation or --

24 MR. SMITH: Oh, yeah, they was --

25 MS. BISHOP: Dale Williams?

1 MR. SMITH: Huh?

2 MS. BISHOP: Dale?

3 MR. SMITH: Dale, yeah. There was a lot of  
4 people.

5 MS. BISHOP: Ben Star?

6 MR. SMITH: Huh?

7 MS. BISHOP: Star?

8 MR. SMITH: Yeah. There was a lot of people that  
9 worked for the Commission that knew the Commission was a  
10 political deal and it was run by big Bob Bell. Bob Bell  
11 from Bellwood. Little Bob Bell. And from Hahn. Hahn had  
12 national farm. And he -- the one time he popped off and  
13 said, I'm a lieutenant commander. I said, when do you have  
14 to do your duty? Well, I'll go this summer. I said, I'm  
15 calling the old man and ask him because I'm a Goddamn  
16 commander and you're going to go (indiscernible) and you  
17 make up your damn mind to it. I said, you ain't nobody.  
18 You just got a dad that had a lot of money. And that's  
19 where the damn thing comes from. It's people don't realize  
20 money don't buy friendship and money don't buy honesty and  
21 money don't buy people that want to work with you.

22 Ninety percent of our people, Ron, 90 percent of  
23 the people you work with, after they figured it out and knew  
24 it was going to go, wanted it. And they always come back  
25 and say, I should have built that damn bigger. Yeah, why

1 didn't we build that bigger. But the whole thing is, I  
2 think that you're going to see more controversy in the NRDs  
3 because -- John Mioshi is a good manager, but how in the  
4 hell could a manager get himself in a ringer where the  
5 county owes \$4 million on a project, the city owes \$4  
6 million and the NRD owes \$4 million because they didn't make  
7 the papers out right. And they got in a hurry and started  
8 the project before they had the money. You've got to have  
9 the money in your hand. That's another thing that got me in  
10 trouble.

11 I found out through Benny Martin that the SCS had  
12 a \$10 million slush fund every year. And October the 1<sup>st</sup>,  
13 if it's not spent, they used it for bonuses. Who gets the  
14 bonuses? State conservationists. So I applied for it.  
15 Benny Martin helped me and the other one was Whitman that  
16 was with --

17 MR. BISHOP: The SCS?

18 MR. SMITH: -- no, he was with -- yeah, he was  
19 with SCS but he was actually was hired by the agriculture  
20 department. And he says, I'll help you every way. We got  
21 the whole damn 10 million. Steve Oltman was the first one  
22 to call me. You gonna give us some of that money? I said,  
23 hell, no, you didn't earn it. I earned it. I worked for  
24 it. But that's where my trouble started. They just  
25 couldn't see -- well, Gene Sullivan come right out and said,

1       you lost me a \$5,000 bonus last year and I'm coming after  
2       you. I said, be my guest. But that was the problem.  
3       People didn't understand how much money was in the  
4       background. But if you dug deep enough, you could find it.  
5       But I remember up here, Bob Lichem says, you're going to  
6       give our NRD \$2 million? I said, yeah, that means you're  
7       going to get off -- your board has got to get off their dead  
8       ass and start getting easements for me. But do you know  
9       that Colfax County, we had five days to get 104 easements.  
10      The City Council, the County Board --

11               MR. BISHOP: Which project was that?

12               MR. SMITH: That was Shell Creek.

13               MR. BISHOP: Shell Creek?

14               MR. SMITH: And people couldn't realize. Mary  
15      called me and she said, Smitty, I don't know how we done it.  
16      We all got toothpicks sticking in our eyes, but we got every  
17      easement but one and we can't get it. I said, who is it  
18      from? One of your board members. I said, Don Bosch. Yeah,  
19      I'll have it for you. And that was about five o'clock. And  
20      I called Don and I said, I want to see you and I've got a  
21      piece of paper and I don't want your Goddamn excuses. I  
22      want your signature. His wife was on another phone and she  
23      said, Smitty, if he won't sign it, I will. And that's how  
24      the people worked with you.

25               MS. BISHOP: Tell us a little bit about the board

1 members. You always had a good group of board members.

2 MR. SMITH: Well, board members, I wasn't bashful  
3 about going to a board member and saying, I want you to  
4 resign. Remember Red from Fremont? I said, you're  
5 worthless. You only come here when you want something for  
6 yourself and your Goddamn construction company. So why  
7 don't you resign? I got the papers made out. But I had  
8 board members like Irvin Bull. Leroy Nelson was one guy  
9 that voted against me all 14 times. But at the same time  
10 him and -- one time I told him, I said, you know what, I  
11 took your wife when she was in high school up to a duck  
12 blind and she was so Goddamn ugly she scared all the ducks  
13 away and I left her out there with wet clothes and I told  
14 her I would be back with dry clothes. I forgot to go back.  
15 And he started laughing. She told me that's why I voted  
16 against you every time.

17 But the thing was, our board members, you take  
18 Jerry Erickson. Jerry was our first chairman. And he had  
19 Price, Johnson and Erickson. One time I looked at him and I  
20 said, Jerry, you know what we're going to talk about  
21 tonight? And I said, the Wahoo dam. Get the hell out of  
22 here. You can't be here. You want to screw things up? Go  
23 home. Well, I guess I am wrong, ain't I? I said, yeah, you  
24 got a conflict of interest. But that's the way -- and the  
25 board members, you could talk to them, couldn't you?

1 MS. BISHOP: Yes, and they were good about  
2 attending meetings and giving reports on meetings they went  
3 to.

4 MR. SMITH: What we did was illegal. There was no  
5 two ways about it. If a guy didn't attend three meetings,  
6 we asked for his resignation. Now you can't do that if  
7 somebody is elected for a four-year term. But we got away  
8 with it because the guys figured, well, they know what I'm  
9 doing. I'm here for -- to help somebody. But that was the  
10 thing. But just like the night that they was going to give  
11 me the big raise. Give the girls 3 percent. I told them, I  
12 don't want your -- this is the God's truth. I figured it  
13 out. Out of a 20 percent raise I would get less than 3  
14 percent because the government, the city, the state would  
15 get the rest of it. I said, give it to my girls. It ain't  
16 me that runs this Goddamn NRD. It's them and you guys ain't  
17 smart enough to know it. Because I talked to my NRD not --  
18 but if they didn't do something, they got told, didn't they.

19 MS. BISHOP: Yes, they did. We got used to  
20 language here and there.

21 MR. SMITH: Yeah. But they -- I had the best damn  
22 board.

23 MS. BISHOP: Yes, you did, very good board.

24 MR. SMITH: I had a very good board. I had guys,  
25 you know, Stan Podraza. Maybe he wasn't the smartest man

1           when he started on the board, but he was a good man.

2                   MS. BISHOP: He learned.

3                   MR. SMITH: He learned. And everybody that was on  
4 the board, you had to instill in them, they didn't know,  
5 they had to learn. And you wasn't going to be the teacher.  
6 The girls were going to teach you stuff. If they called you  
7 and told you you did something wrong, you did something  
8 wrong. Don't argue with them, dammit. You did it wrong.  
9 And most of them accepted it, didn't they.

10                  MS. BISHOP: Yes, they did. They were very good.

11                  MR. SMITH: But a lot of times, you know, we would  
12 take board members up to Burwell, to Calamus and things  
13 because -- but I never, ever went to get an easement that  
14 that board member didn't go with me. He wasn't asked to go.  
15 He was told to go. Dammit, it's your job. That's what you  
16 got elected for. And they would just go, wouldn't they?

17                  MS. BISHOP: Yes, they would.

18                  MR. SMITH: Darla would call up and say, Smitty  
19 has got a meeting for an easement tomorrow.

20                  MS. BISHOP: Meet him at certain, certain place,  
21 certain, certain time.

22                  MR. SMITH: Yeah, and they didn't give a real  
23 argument. They didn't give Betty no argument. But it was  
24 the people that work for you that make you. It isn't the  
25 person -- Ron didn't make himself. That board member -- but

1       them office girls made them board members and that's what  
2       people don't realize.

3               MR. BARR:  What are some of the main  
4       accomplishments of the NRDs, not only yours but in the state  
5       that you think --

6               MR. SMITH:  Well, I got two or three NRD managers  
7       that I respect.  Ron is one of them.  He knows it.  Steve  
8       was another one.  Maybe he had an affair, but that was his  
9       damn business.  That wasn't nobody else's damn business.  
10      That was between him and his wife.  And the other one is  
11      John Turnbull because I think John has done one hell of a  
12      job controlling water and not being afraid to step on  
13      irrigators' damn toes.  And the other one partway, but he  
14      lets a damn lawyer control him, that's Ken Miller out of the  
15      Central Platte.  If he had kicked that lawyer's ass out of  
16      there and said, stay away, I don't need you, Ken could be a  
17      good manager.

18              But Ron Fleecs was another one.  Now Ron and I  
19      didn't agree because I never used the SCS to build a damn or  
20      a road structure.  I used Olsson & Associates or HRD.  I  
21      used private engineers.  But at the same time Ron got along  
22      with SCS.  Ron done a hell of a job down there.  And he done  
23      a job because he had a different attitude than I did.  He  
24      had a different personality than I did.  He didn't show  
25      somebody their butt when he didn't like what they did.  But

1       that is the thing that makes natural resource districts.  
2       And today I'm afraid we're getting in the rut again. We're  
3       not getting the job done that we should get done, but we  
4       haven't got a legislature.

5               And this might sound funny to you, but the best  
6       friend I got is Ernie Chambers. And I could say things to  
7       Ernie Chambers that nobody else could say and get away with  
8       it. But Ernie can say things to me and get away with it.  
9       But Ernie and I have always been friends. But you have to  
10      have legislatures. But if they tell you know, think they  
11      put a Y in front of that n-o and go back and see them, but  
12      don't pester them. Don't pester them. If Bernice Labest  
13      told me no on some bill, I didn't go back and bother her.  
14      But you have to get people behind you. No one person can do  
15      anything without help. It is impossible to do stuff without  
16      help.

17             Just like the Games and Parks. I could chew on  
18      them board. I called Walter Scott one day the biggest  
19      asshole that ever walked down the streets of Omaha. You  
20      ain't giving your Goddamn money away. You're giving tax  
21      money away, you lying bastard. He said, Gene, do I have to  
22      put up with it? He said, you're as big as he. You're  
23      bigger than him. Go after him. But Walter Scott finally  
24      said, well, I guess it's truth, because that isn't their  
25      money. They say it's their money, but it isn't. It's tax

1 money. But they don't let somebody that knows how to use it  
2 wisely because Ron don't want to make money. He wants to be  
3 paid well, but he don't want to be a millionaire. Hell,  
4 what the hell do you do with a million? But you want people  
5 to respect you and you want people to know that what you  
6 say, you mean.

7 MR. BARR: Ron, do you have some more questions  
8 or --

9 MR. BISHOP: I don't think so.

10 MR. BARR: Any final thoughts you want to share?

11 MR. SMITH: No, I think we consolidate the SCS  
12 there and wipe them out and then give the money to the NRDs  
13 to do construction work with.

14 MR. BARR: Well, speaking of that, why do you  
15 think maybe it happened in Nebraska with natural resource  
16 districts but didn't happen in any of the other states? Do  
17 you have any thoughts of why it might have happened here?

18 MR. SMITH: You had probably out of your 49  
19 senators, I would say you had 22 of them to start. Well,  
20 you had six to start with. Kennedy from Newman Grove was  
21 one of them. But it was the senators that worked behind the  
22 scene that knew something had to be done for flooding.  
23 That's just like forest fires. Somewhere we've got to take  
24 everyone, just like that 60,000 acres the Sierra Club owns.  
25 Every five miles we've got to put a road through there so

1 the fire trucks can get into them things. We've got to  
2 start cleaning the brush. Right now how come we got 2,000  
3 foresters in the federal government and yet all the conifer  
4 trees, white pine, Scotch pine, the Austrian pine, are  
5 dying. But the ash is gone, the American elm is gone. And  
6 they sit down there with 1,700 acres at Fontenelle Forest  
7 and lost 60,000 trees last year and they don't know what the  
8 hell killed them. Now why don't they know what killed them?  
9 American Elm went that route. But why can't we figure out  
10 what happens to things? And just like the president of the  
11 University, and I call because I ain't afraid to call  
12 nobody. I call today and said, what the hell you running?  
13 Bob Daugherty wouldn't have hired a Goddamn president for  
14 120,000 to sit on his board. He would make them pay him to  
15 sit on his damn board. He says, well, we had to do  
16 something. I said, why, tell me why. I said, is that the  
17 way you do things in Belgium? He said, you don't forget  
18 very easy, do you? I said, no. Because I don't know if you  
19 knew Ruf Amos.

20 MR. BARR: Yeah, I remember Ruf, yeah.

21 MR. SMITH: Well, Ruf and I were friends. But  
22 Ruf's brother left him the Belgium Foundry and Ruf didn't  
23 want it because he said, I can't take care of the money I  
24 got. Now I've got to rewrite the whole damn thing again  
25 because people didn't realize, but Ruf Amos owned the land

1       that Douglas Aircraft sits on. I flew down there with him a  
2       dozen times and always a big limousine would meet us out at  
3       the air strip. I said, what the hell are you? Well, I own  
4       the land we're sitting on. They rent it from me. But he  
5       owned Arrow Commander. He sold it for 250 million and kept  
6       half of it. He didn't give -- he didn't take 49. He took  
7       half because he still could make a tie and he couldn't get  
8       anything done. That's the kind of guy Ruf was.

9                 But at the same time, Ruf never would say what  
10       they did. I worked for the head of the Zenith Radio  
11       Corporation -- was Mr. Livingston. And one time I told him,  
12       I said, Milt, you built Children's Memorial Hospital.  
13       You're chairman of Boys Town Board. How come you don't ever  
14       say it. He said, my name is not Eppley and only fools'  
15       faces and fools' names appear in public places. He said,  
16       you keep your mouth shut about what you give and what you  
17       don't give. And you don't -- like I say, he fired me at  
18       least once a month. He would call me and say, Goddamn, you,  
19       you're fired. Do you want me to bring the plane to Lincoln  
20       or Chicago or should I just leave it in Omaha? Maybe I can  
21       land it on top of the Douglas Street bridge.

22                 One time -- this is terrible. Jack Knox, Art  
23       Knox's son, was the aeronautics, head of aeronautics here.  
24       He called me and he said, Smitty, I've got to ask you a  
25       question. I don't want you to lie to me. Did you fly

1 upside down under the Douglas Street bridge? I said, yeah,  
2 I was getting my old Livingston to wash his dirty face. He  
3 got dust and tears in his eyes from flying with me. Made  
4 him start bawling so the dust got in his eyes. And, you  
5 know, the thing was, Jack Knox said, well, you ain't going  
6 to do it again, are you? I said, unless I can get you or  
7 your dad in the plane. But that was the way I was. I was  
8 who I was because of who I was. But I'll be 90 years old in  
9 November and I've enjoyed every damn bit of my life, but I  
10 don't want to live a damn day of it over. I couldn't stand  
11 it.

12 MR. BARR: Well, thank you very much.

13 MR. SMITH: Thank you, sir. And I hope somewhere  
14 somebody gets wise and starts giving some money to the  
15 Historical Society so they can buy some more of these  
16 plaques. Because a lot of times I don't know why, out of  
17 curiosity, I guess, I stop and see what the hell they say  
18 and what. But, you know --

19 MR. BARR: Do you have anything further?

20 MS. BISHOP: No, I just do that, too. I think the  
21 Historical Society is great because if we don't learn from  
22 the past, how we are going to get better.

23 MR. SMITH: Yeah, do you know, that's like a lot  
24 of people don't know it, and the historical -- I call them  
25 Hysterical Society, that didn't know it. They got Oregon

1 Trail went right through this damn farm right down here but  
2 they had it over a mile because some little politicians in  
3 Bellwood wanted it to come that way.

4 MR. BARR: Do you have any old sign of it out  
5 here, by chance?

6 MR. SMITH: Yeah, there's a -- well, there's  
7 still -- you can see the old bridge that was made out of  
8 planks and they had -- they run steel on the planks. But  
9 they run 10 by 10 planks alongside of them and they drilled  
10 holes through them and run big bolts through there. But,  
11 yeah, the Historical Society admitted finally that they  
12 knew, but the money to put the plaques and things come from  
13 Jerry Mick, Jerry and Joe Mick. I can look at in their  
14 point of view. Was I going to give them the money for it?  
15 Hell, no. Did I happen to give it to them? No. But they  
16 did. And so they give it to them. You got five miles  
17 difference or no miles difference. It's still -- it went  
18 through here.

19 MR. BARR: Well, thank you again.

20 MR. SMITH: Thank you.