

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN TURNBULL,
WAYNE HANSEN AND LEONARD STEHLIK
BY JIM BARR

June 7, 2013

1 PROCEEDINGS, June 7, 2013:

2 MR. BARR: This is Jim Barr, and we're doing an
3 interview today with Wayne Hansen and Leonard Stehlik and
4 John Turnbull on the early years of the Upper Big Blue NRD
5 and NRD in general. I don't know who wants to start, but
6 would each of you give us just a little brief background on
7 yourself and start with that?

8 MR. HANSEN: Wayne Hansen. I was the most recent
9 chairman of the watershed. Leonard here, after a while, and
10 he was the only living retired watershed person. The others
11 have passed on or moved out of the area.

12 MR. BARR: This is the Dorchester --

13 MR. HANSEN: Dorchester watershed, yeah. Only
14 reason -- I wasn't in on the very beginning of this because
15 I didn't -- I wasn't in the community. But when the
16 chairman, Mr. (Lester) Wielage, had to decline his membership
17 in the Dorchester watershed because he moved out of it,
18 about the same time Wayne Hansen moved in and I know a lot
19 of things about it since then. But I wasn't in on the
20 original organizing this thing. It's been a very favorable
21 thing for me.

22 MR. BARR: And you farmed here in the area?

23 MR. HANSEN: Yeah, all my (adult) life. I lived
24 here for 40 or 50 years and Leonard and I own one of the
25 quarters that one of the main projects are on. We've had

1 something to do with the maintenance of that project without
2 authority John or anybody. Whenever that pond got low
3 enough to haul dirt out of it, we both have dirt scoops. We
4 got down in there and hauled everything out that was black.
5 I believe he's got down to gravel once but he decided it was
6 too low so -- and we used to pump out of it. The facilities
7 are still there.

8 Just recently, two or three weeks ago, we got a
9 rain of three or four inches in a week's time and it finally
10 filled that thing up. And our dam here on my home place it
11 hadn't filled up for ages so we have been getting some nice
12 rain. I'm a retired farmer. My son farms where I am, our
13 joint land.

14 MR. BARR: Leonard, do you want to say a few
15 things?

16 MR. STEHLIK: I'm Leonard Stehlik. I've lived
17 here for all my life, just down the road about three-
18 quarters of a mile. In fact, I was born there on the farm.
19 The thing I remember about this, Leonard Leach was -- lived
20 down below the No. 2 dam and he heard about the small
21 watershed program and he came around to the group of -- or
22 to the members living or the people living in the area and
23 then organized somehow. This has been a long time.

24 MR. BARR: Do you remember about what years or
25 general --

1 MR. STEHLIK: Well, it had to be in the early '60s
2 because we started construction in '65, '64 or '65. I'm not
3 sure. And I think they started with 1 and 2 and then I
4 don't remember how they got the third and fourth one later.

5 MR. BARR: How was this financed? Was there local
6 money involved or was it all federal, or do you remember
7 roughly?

8 MR. STEHLIK: I couldn't tell you that.

9 MR. BARR: Okay, that's fine.

10 MR. HANSEN: He had a finance -- what was Jim's
11 title?

12 MR. STEHLIK: Well, he was just the bookkeeper.

13 MR. HANSEN: Bookkeeper.

14 MR. STEHLIK: -- because he was living in town.
15 He was a car dealer in town and just though somebody that's
16 used to bookwork and that sort of thing and so they hired
17 him. And I don't know if he was right at the start or not,
18 but he was later.

19 MR. BARR: Shall we get your voice, John? Do you
20 want to give us --

21 MR. TURNBULL: Yeah, this is John Turnbull here
22 and I'm just looking at the summary of the plan for the
23 Dorchester watershed that Wayne has handed me and it's dated
24 September of 1966. It says total project cost, \$255,800.
25 PL566 cost was 191,000. And the local interest share was

1 64,800 plus it looks like some land treatment costs upstream
2 of the structures. And then the watershed was responsible
3 for operation and maintenance costs after construction. I
4 don't see a construction date on here, but from what I
5 remember of the files in district office those -- it's
6 right -- what you said is right in the ballpark, yes.

7 MR. STEHLIK: I think they started in '65.

8 MR. HANSEN: I don't know. I had already been
9 here five years or four years. I didn't know anything was
10 going on until Lester moved out of the territory and had a
11 vacancy. Then they came to me.

12 MR. BARR: Do you want to go ahead and do the
13 questioning?

14 MR. TURNBULL: Well, Wayne, I remember you some
15 years back telling me about when these structures were built
16 there was the dedication on their completion. And as I
17 recall, didn't the Secretary of Agriculture come out for
18 that dedication?

19 MR. HANSEN: There were a couple of
20 representatives. Yeah, the Secretary of Agriculture was
21 here in the election year, so the local senator was here.
22 Do you know what the --

23 MR. STEHLIK: Callahan --

24 MR. HANSEN: Callahan.

25 MR. STEHLIK: -- was the representative. He's

1 from down southeast Nebraska.

2 MR. HANSEN: He was our local representative, a
3 different than mine. I would introduce him but I said to
4 this other guy, you introduce him, and he did, gave a very
5 nice introduction and speech from --

6 MR. BARR: What's his name?

7 MR. TURNBULL: The secretary of ag?

8 MR. BARR: Yeah.

9 MR. TURNBULL: That's what I was going to ask you.

10 MR. HANSEN: You just gave it to me.

11 MR. TURNBULL: No, I just said it was secretary of
12 ag. I don't remember who it was.

13 MR. HANSEN: What year were you looking at?
14 Hardin was in there.

15 MR. TURNBULL: '66 or '68 would have been when it
16 was dedicated.

17 MR. HANSEN: Yeah.

18 MR. BARR: So it would have been a Democrat.

19 MR. HANSEN: That's the reason I wouldn't have --

20 MR. BARR: Who was the one that --

21 MR. STEHLIK: Callahan was a democrat.

22 MR. BARR: Butz I thought was in Nixon's term.

23 MR. TURNBULL: Was it Butz?

24 MR. BARR: I think it would have been the guy
25 before Butz, but I don't remember who it was.

1 MR. HANSEN: I don't know. I thought you gave it.

2 MR. STEHLIK: I don't remember him being here, the
3 secretary of agriculture.

4 MR. HANSEN: He was just a nice local man. Might
5 be from somewhere further but Jim, as we told you, Jim
6 (Sehnert) was our bookkeeper. He also sold cars and he said
7 he has a car here good enough to haul the secretary of
8 agriculture from Omaha down here. Just a matter of
9 interest, they have their needs, too, and he said before I
10 stop here we've got to stop someplace so I can go to the
11 restroom so Jim took him to his home, driving right by.

12 MR. STEHLIK: Didn't anybody know he was coming
13 and definitely not his wife. It was a regular home. You
14 didn't always pick it up every Sunday before you go some
15 place. Something as important as the secretary of
16 agriculture coming to your local school district, we were
17 impressed.

18 MR. HANSEN: I think they were, too; tried to give
19 him a good show.

20 MR. TURNBULL: There were four dams in this
21 project, right?

22 MR. STEHLIK: Yeah.

23 MR. TURNBULL: How did the land rights work?
24 Those were all easements, is that correct?

25 MR. STEHLIK: Yeah, free easements. We got paid a

1 dollar. I was here during the last one. Do you remember,
2 Robert Krivohlavek?

3 MR. HANSEN: Yes.

4 MR. STEHLIK: He would come to our meetings before
5 I was appointed the representative around here. And he and
6 I volunteered on our own to build a crossing for Kucera over
7 there because he milked cows. After the rain like we had
8 the other day, I can see what he meant. The cows get
9 stranded on the other side and he didn't like them walking
10 through the mud coming over. Bob and I had never -- I hope
11 nobody comes -- Bob and I were the only ones that knew about
12 it, to build a crossing there. And, of course, different
13 people have the land now. Volunteer on our own, take our
14 own little tiny tractors and dirt --

15 MR. HANSEN: He did agree with the dam, if they
16 would leave the emergency or the draw down, draw clear down,
17 so it was never full at that time. And then there was some
18 sort of a dam a half mile up that just drained out
19 immediately. But it was a silt catcher or something. I
20 don't know what they called it. I don't even remember if it
21 had a number or anything like that.

22 MR. STEHLIK: (Joe) Macholan?

23 MR. HANSEN: Pardon?

24 MR. STEHLIK: Whose land was it on?

25 MR. HANSEN: Well, it was on -- it would be

1 straight east of Roger Barak's house. It was right on -- I
2 think it was on the boundary line between Albert Luzvum and
3 Lester Wielage's.

4 MR. STEHLIK: Yeah, I think we called it a great
5 state, had a number in here but to catch the silt coming out
6 of Dorchester. This watershed begins in the center of
7 Dorchester. It's on the divide. And part of the city comes
8 down here and was part of the cause of the flooding below.
9 Bob Krivohlavek, we mentioned a while ago, he was on -- and
10 Leonard Leach, he was on the lower side of these dams and
11 they wanted flood protection.

12 MR. TURNBULL: This is the fellow you're talking
13 about right here, right?

14 MR. HANSEN: Yeah.

15 MR. TURNBULL: Let me spell that for you, Jim, so
16 they can get it. Bob Krivohlavek, K-r-i-v-o-h-l-a-v-e-k,
17 and he was the secretary of the watershed district in '66
18 according to this paper. And Wayne was the chairman of the
19 district at that time.

20 MR. BARR: And did you say this was completed
21 before 1968 or by 1968? The dedication, I mean, that you
22 said.

23 MR. HANSEN: Well, we weren't done with
24 everything.

25 MR. BARR: Okay, that's all.

1 MR. STEHLIK: Had it all planned and most of it
2 was built, but not the --

3 MR. HANSEN: There's one dam we haven't even
4 talked about, two of Macholan's. It would be the last
5 number on that list of numbers. He had a little -- he
6 encouraged this project very much. One reason, he wanted a
7 dam on his place, it probably did involved -- this took
8 place in a time when the federal government had more money,
9 at least in this department, than they knew what to do with.
10 Otherwise, they don't build little watersheds like this any
11 more. It would be much bigger. I think this has been
12 worthwhile. But Joe always said he could do anything these
13 big contractors did. They build -- he had the little Ford
14 tractor with little tiny -- it would just take more trips he
15 said.

16 MR. TURNBULL: That's the map of the watershed.
17 Here is Dorchester on the south edge and it drains -- that
18 watershed generally drains north and east into the west fork
19 of the Blue. And the north part of the watershed is just
20 right adjacent to the Seward County line, right along
21 Highway 15 which would be on the west edge of the watershed.

22 MR. BARR: Did the district have all the entire
23 project completed by the time it was merged with the Natural
24 Resource District or --

25 MR. HANSEN: Yes, construction was all done.

1 MR. STEHLIK: We had to meet some standards as you
2 -- certain percent of that had terrace around it. Didn't
3 say that 50 years later the farmers put in pivots and farmed
4 across-ed them but we farmed with pivots with terraces on
5 them. We can go across the terrace.

6 MR. TURNBULL: Just how does the practice of
7 various conservation methods and practices compare today
8 with the time these projects were completed?

9 MR. STEHLIK: Well, I think they've finally come
10 to realize that no-till farming has a lot less runoff and
11 not only of water but silt. My little dam out here drains
12 the neighbor's, too, but I no-till everything. I was
13 surprised to find it full when we had this three or four
14 inches in a pretty close period of time and it's full now, I
15 think. It drains down every year on its own. Years ago I
16 used to pump out of it when I was gravity irrigating but
17 pivots have just about come over or taken over a large part
18 of our land. It's a better way to irrigate than gravity.
19 We have one underground system but not in our watershed.
20 It's in our area now and that's better than a pivot.

21 MR. TURNBULL: Do you want to -- anything else on
22 the watershed or do you want to go the natural resource
23 early years? Anything you would like?

24 MR. STEHLIK: I was just going to mention, Jim,
25 that thing can't hear you.

1 MR. BARR: Well, if I said anything out of order
2 it would hear me. Yeah, I noticed on the transcriptions
3 some of mine is garbled or -- but my part is not very
4 important, see, so it's mostly you guys that need to do
5 that.

6 MR. STEHLIK: If it wasn't for you, we wouldn't be
7 here.

8 MR. BARR: Well, there's other people involved
9 here.

10 MR. TURNBULL: So tell us a little bit about when
11 NRDs were created by the legislature and what did you guys
12 think on the watershed board, and how did that work,
13 transitioning from a watershed into the district?

14 MR. STEHLIK: I think like the soil district in
15 Wilber did most of the surveying for us, as far as that
16 goes. And now I don't know what his capacity was, but
17 Richard Jiskra was I think over by Hebron or some place and
18 he was brought over here to do some -- I don't think he did
19 any actual work as far as, you know, measuring or --

20 MR. TURNBULL: Did he do like -- did he handle
21 like the construction inspection?

22 MR. STEHLIK: I don't think so but --

23 MR. TURNBULL: Or more the management and
24 coordination? He would have been probably the district
25 conservationist, wouldn't he, for whatever county he was

1 from?

2 MR. STEHLIK: Yeah.

3 MR. TURNBULL: And Dick Jiskra, he ended up on the
4 Lower Big Blue Board and was the representative on the
5 Natural Resources Commission up until about not very long
6 ago, five years ago. He's been real active.

7 MR. HANSEN: And he's still active in his local
8 community and he's had two hip replacements since then.

9 MR. BARR: Do you want to spell that?

10 MR. TURNBULL: Yep, sure, if I can remember how to
11 do it. J-i-s-k-r-a, I think. Does that sound right?

12 MR. HANSEN: There's an A on the end, isn't there?

13 MR. TURNBULL: Probably.

14 MR. HANSEN: He still lives out of the farm that
15 his folks did have and he's been active in soil conservation
16 I'll say all his life.

17 MR. TURNBULL: When did you first hear about
18 natural resource districts and what did you think about it?

19 MR. HANSEN: I was waiting for Leonard to say.

20 MR. STEHLIK: I had good -- I was already on a
21 more -- involved in the process. It was all good from my
22 side of it. I don't know what the -- somebody else going to
23 take over our little watershed down there and tell us what
24 to do, not to do and all that. I think we were concerned
25 about it.

1 MR. STEHLIK: The natural resource district,
2 wasn't that a brainchild of Warren Fairchild?

3 MR. TURNBULL: Yes.

4 MR. STEHLIK: That's what I thought, and that's
5 basically when this was going on, too. I just remember they
6 talked about making larger units than what each -- I think
7 it was each county before that. And while we've still got a
8 soil conservation office, I don't know.

9 Mr. HANSEN: Well, (indiscernible) is Democrat.
10 Leonard and I might not be, but I don't know. There's so
11 much politics involved in some of this and I don't know why
12 we still have one now because they don't do the service they
13 used to. Not required to or sure don't require as many
14 board meetings. My daughter-in-law served on that thing.
15 She don't -- never had any trouble getting anybody to serve
16 on that board. They got a pretty good --

17 MR. STEHLIK: And they don't have the manpower
18 they used to have but you'd see a soil conservation truck
19 drive by just about every day in the summertime to either, I
20 don't know, keep up, you know, their image or to -- if they
21 were going to visit farmers along the way someplace.

22 MR. HANSEN: I think they weren't too busy
23 surveying out a new project while there was that area there,
24 or checking over things that had already been done.

25 MR. STEHLIK: They did a lot of work on farms. My

1 wife was cleaning out my closet and she just found a 1956
2 survey of our farm after that point. Put the well in in '55
3 and they came out and walked the thing in '56.

4 MR. TURNBULL: Did that help you lay out your
5 irrigation lines and things like that?

6 MR. STEHLIK: Yeah, yeah. (Material added later:
7 I used it to lay out pipelines and later to do some minor
8 leveling. I still have it in a closet at home.)

9 MR. HANSEN: I remember this big gentleman by the
10 name of Sherman who had to reseed some of these dams after
11 the silt moved. This was after hours, so he wasn't supposed
12 to be doing what he was doing. He'd ride back there on that
13 disk to get them to scratch the ground, someone pulling a
14 40-foot row plow beside him. My tractor at that time wasn't
15 safe on the sidehills. I mean, the SCS people all along the
16 way were very helpful.

17 MR. TURNBULL: Wayne, this is a list I have kept
18 over the years of board members at the NRD. And this first
19 two pages is the interim board for July of '72 to January of
20 '75 when the first elected boards came in. And I just
21 scanned down through here real quick and I see Warren August
22 is a name which shows up as on the watershed board in 1966.

23 MR. STEHLIK: He moved into the watershed. I
24 guess it was probably some time after you did.

25 MR. HANSEN: Leonard Leach you heard him mention

1 before. He was on Leonard Leach's place.

2 MR. STEHLIK: Yeah, how many members were in that
3 interim board? Seventy-five or so?

4 MR. TURNBULL: It was something like that, yeah.
5 I've got two, almost three full pages single-spaced of
6 names. Yeah, it was a great number, and as I recall out of
7 that list of however many that is, 72, I think, that they
8 decided to form an exec committee. Do you remember how that
9 was formed? Were those folks elected internally from that
10 group, the overall group, or the interim board? Or how did
11 that work?

12 MR. HANSEN: I don't know, to be honest with you.

13 MR. TURNBULL: I don't either because I wasn't
14 here yet.

15 MR. HANSEN: That was that long ago. This all
16 happened before your time.

17 MR. TURNBULL: Yeah, I came to work for the
18 district in January of '78.

19 MR. BARR: The Central Platte, they had 100 and
20 some on that first board and that's what they did. They
21 elected I think 21, their board did, on an exec, and then
22 they served until the actual first board was elected.

23 MR. HANSEN: That's probably what we did. I
24 didn't know whether they called us an exec or not, but --

25 MR. STEHLIK: I remember, there was Joe Macholan,

1 Joe Schwartz and was it Joe Jezl, but they were really proud
2 of the three Joes on their -- that was the county board at
3 that time.

4 MR. TURNBULL: Yeah. I'm getting -- I'm
5 recounting this here. I'm getting a way different number
6 than I remembered.

7 MR. BARR: Do you remember some of the early
8 leadership in the first NRD board?

9 MR. HANSEN: The top of the watershed people. Bob
10 and I decided -- Bob wasn't interested, he was nearing
11 retirement, and we were the two that were attending those
12 meetings. And he explained a few things. At that time in
13 my life I was willing to serve on these things for nothing.
14 Bob says (indiscernible) putting in our times that he
15 (indiscernible). Some of these fellows led for years and
16 years so they definitely deserved compensation.

17 MR. BARR: In addition to soil and water boards,
18 were there any other organizations that were merged into the
19 natural resource districts, this district?

20 MR. STEHLIK: Not from our area.

21 MR. HANSEN: No, not that I know.

22 MR. BARR: Do you remember the issue about the
23 groundwater conservation districts? I don't believe they
24 were merged at that time.

25 MR. HANSEN: Yeah, they came in later, yeah. That

1 was a separate unit for a while.

2 MR. TURNBULL: Jim, this page I'm looking at on
3 the original members of that interim board there were 88 on
4 the interim committee and I recall looking in the records
5 that the exec committee was 21 people. So the 88 selected
6 21 and they went from there. I'll just pass this list over
7 to you and you can glance down through those, see if you can
8 recognize some of those names. No, I don't -- I think in
9 the Upper Big Blue it was the Dorchester watershed and the
10 Soil and Water Conservation District that merged and there
11 were not any other entities that came into it.

12 MR. HANSEN: What were the groundwater --

13 MR. TURNBULL: All the groundwater districts were
14 created in about 1967, and there were five counties. That
15 would have been York, and Seward, and Hamilton, Fillmore and
16 Clay County each had groundwater districts. And those were
17 still active when I started with the NRD.

18 MR. HANSEN: Which was when?

19 MR. TURNBULL: I started in January of '78, so
20 they were active then and they had -- they did water quality
21 testing for nitrates. They had an association of
22 groundwater districts that was headquartered in York. Mel
23 Noffke was the manager of that and later moved on to work
24 with micrometer meters and Mark Nannan became the manager of
25 the Groundwater Districts Association. They did the water

1 quality testing for domestic wells for nitrates and they
2 also worked on water conservation education with irrigators
3 and they had the early responsibility for enforcing
4 irrigation runoff regulations in the counties. And that was
5 handed off to us then when the Groundwater Management Act
6 became effective in 1975. And their work sort of declined.
7 Clay County, as I recall, pretty much went on their own and
8 dropped out of the association. Cleo Rabbe was involved in
9 that a lot and he was on this early interim NRD board, too.

10 The other four counties struggled along and every
11 four years they would go to the legislature and get
12 authority to have their -- to be able to continue to
13 operate, another authorization for their existence. And I
14 remember the last one came up in about, it was probably in
15 '85 because I think they went out of existence in '86, at
16 least about that time period. And we had board members on
17 the NRD board who always supported the groundwater
18 districts. Real strong supporter was Bob Ehlers from York.
19 And finally that last time it came up, I know I had urged
20 the board to consider not supporting them because I felt we
21 were duplicating work. The only other groundwater district
22 in the state was clear out around Imperial. I think in --
23 at Imperial itself. Is that Chase County? And then the
24 five in this area.

25 And I urged the board to not support them just

1 because I thought it was a duplication of services. We were
2 essentially doing what they could do anyway and the board's
3 view was to continue the support until Bob Ehlers finally
4 spoke up, who had been a very strong supporter of theirs,
5 and he says, you know, boys, I think it's time. And so the
6 board just failed to take action to support the bill. The
7 bill did not go through the legislature and that was the end
8 of them and they were dissolved. And we took over then the
9 water quality testing equipment and continued that program.
10 It's still going on today. And, of course, we have picked
11 up the irrigation runoff things. We still handle that,
12 although not near as much of it anymore because of the huge
13 conversion to center pivots. We didn't hire any of their
14 staff. They only had the one staff member at that point and
15 that was Mark. He still lives in York and he's a private
16 businessman.

17 So that's kind of my recollection of the history
18 of the groundwater districts. Deon Axthelm and, of course,
19 the University was a very strong promoter of those
20 groundwater districts. The thing I remember about Deon is
21 he was always nicely dressed and always generally wore a
22 shirt and many times a tie or a bow tie. And I'm an old
23 retired pilot, I was really intrigued to find out that he
24 had been a P-40 fighter pilot
25 Over Burma in World War II. He and I got talking aviation

1 one time and he let that slip and I went, ooh, this guy has
2 got a lot more background than I thought.

3 MR. HANSEN: You were in the Nebraska Air Guard?

4 MR. TURNBULL: Army Guard.

5 MR. HANSEN: Army Guard.

6 MR. TURNBULL: For a long time.

7 MR. HANSEN: Long time. He finally retired from
8 that.

9 MR. BARR: Did you ever get a helicopter ride from
10 him?

11 MR. HANSEN: No, I don't think I did. My
12 helicopter ride was up in Alaska. There's only supposed to
13 be, what, three people in that thing or something but there
14 was a lot more than that. The guy couldn't run it. There
15 was so many of us in the front seat, the guy couldn't run
16 the stick because he was hitting our knees. Before we got
17 done I had stomach problems.

18 MR. TURNBULL: Did you recognize some of those
19 names on that list?

20 MR. BARR: You've seen it, right?

21 MR. TURNBULL: This is the interim board here.

22 MR. HANSEN: A lot of this interim board weren't
23 active. They didn't all come to the meetings. Our district
24 had two. All five of us are probably on there but --

25 MR. HANSEN: What is Friesen --

1 MR. TURNBULL: Curt Friesen?

2 MR. HANSEN: Yeah. What's he doing? I see his
3 name every once in a while.

4 MR. TURNBULL: He's on the State Corn Board now.
5 I think he's been the vice chairman, isn't he, currently?

6 MR. HANSEN: Ray Gard, what's he talking about?

7 MR. TURNBULL: I wonder if those weren't on the
8 executive committee, I bet. Ray Gard was from Seward
9 County, right?

10 MR. HANSEN: Yep.

11 MR. TURNBULL: And wasn't he also active on the
12 groundwater districts?

13 MR. HANSEN: That's what I wondered. It wouldn't
14 surprise me.

15 MR. TURNBULL: I think he was.

16 MR. HANSEN: Russell Hultine, I remember him.

17 MR. TURNBULL: Russell Hultine?

18 MR. HANSEN: He served on the board for quite a
19 while. Robert Greer from Seward County.

20 MR. TURNBULL: Yep.

21 MR. HANSEN: Jenson, he's from Aurora, had been
22 the mayor of Aurora for a while.

23 MR. TURNBULL: Yeah. I think he was still on the
24 board when I first came.

25 MR. HANSEN: Might have been.

1 MR. TURNBULL: Yep.

2 MR. HANSEN: Said January, '75.

3 MR. TURNBULL: No, he wasn't. He was gone, but I
4 met him, though, yeah.

5 MR. HANSEN: If he's around, you know him. He
6 wasn't bashful. Klosterman, John Klosterman, I see a bunch
7 of them terminated the thing in '75. Is that --

8 MR. TURNBULL: That's when the new elected board
9 took over. There's the Klostermans. You had asked about
10 that earlier today, Jim. Henry and John both were on the
11 board from Butler County.

12 MR. HANSEN: John's son was handicapped. Maybe
13 that's not the right word to use any more but he's got some
14 higher up position now, I think. Wendell Lauber, I don't
15 know how I first knew him but he's from an outstanding
16 family.

17 MR. BARR: Filmore County, around Geneva, right?

18 MR. HANSEN: Yeah, around Geneva, yeah.

19 MR. BARR: Wasn't he in the seed business or was
20 it a relative that was in the seed business, Dauber Seeds in
21 Geneva.

22 MR. HANSEN: I think that was him, yep, yep.

23 MR. TURNBULL: Norris Otto.

24 MR. HANSEN: Who?

25 MR. TURNBULL: Norris Otto, I remember him. I

1 remember some of these names. Might have been from other
2 sources but --

3 MR. TURNBULL: Ted Regier from Hamilton County,
4 Aurora, he was a character. I always liked Ted.

5 MR. BARR: Yes, I knew Ted real well. In fact, we
6 were once set up on a panel to be for or against funding
7 water projects through user fees, and I had taken the for
8 position and he had the against and he was a much more
9 popular speaker than I was.

10 MR. TURNBULL: He made his -- he knew how to
11 explain it.

12 MR. HANSEN: These two guys, Boat and Votipka.

13 MR. TURNBULL: Tom Votipka is from around
14 Fairmont.

15 MR. HANSEN: Yeah.

16 MR. TURNBULL: Deshler area.

17 MR. HANSEN: Yeah, the Votipkas, that's how I knew
18 him, through the feeder organization. And his brother
19 married my first grade teacher. She moved way out of our
20 territory and got her education and worked in that area for
21 many years. She just recently passed away. Dwight Walkup,
22 I remember him from another organization. He's a spokesman
23 at Farm Bureau meetings that he went to. He knew about
24 everything. Norman Wellman in another organization --
25 Morris White.

1 MR. TURNBULL: Yep. Morris White was from
2 Ulysses, Butler County. And Morris was the chairman of the
3 board when I got hired to come here. Little short and
4 really stocky guy.

5 MR. BARR: Yep, I remember. He and Larry would
6 travel together often.

7 MR. TURNBULL: Yep. Morris would try to coach
8 Larry on what to do. (Laughter.)

9 MR. HANSEN: It took him a while. Larry is pretty
10 good.

11 MR. TURNBULL: This list is then the directors
12 from January of '75 on, and I've got them listed
13 alphabetically.

14 MR. HANSEN: I see some board members.

15 MR. TURNBULL: Bruce Anderson, of course, of
16 Stromsburg, he had been -- he was on the board until 1995,
17 '96, died in '96, died in office. He had
18 been --

19 MR. HANSEN: We thought he was dead many times at
20 board meetings but he woke up in time for a vote.

21 MR. TURNBULL: Yeah, as a manager I often wondered
22 about Bruce because he would sit over on his side of the
23 table and he would have his arms crossed and you'd be in
24 this long discussion about whatever it was, budget or some
25 project, and Bruce's head would go back and his mouth would

1 hang open and you would think the poor man died and he would
2 be asleep. And all of a sudden when Wayne was chairman or
3 whoever and they'd call for the vote, he'd sit right up and
4 he'd vote. Never missed a vote but you'd swear he missed
5 the entire discussion. He spent -- he got an award from the
6 district before he died for 50 years of service with the
7 Polk County Soil and Water Conservation District and the
8 National Resources District. He had been active on those
9 two boards for 50 continuous years.

10 MR. HANSEN: Yvonne Austin, is she still active?

11 MR. TURNBULL: She's still active. She's the
12 current vice chairman of the board. She's from Staplehurst.
13 Of course, then there is Ray Burke.

14 MR. HANSEN: Yeah.

15 MR. TURNBULL: Ray had been very active in that
16 Polk County district also.

17 MR. HANSEN: He died in office.

18 MR. TURNBULL: Yes, yep, May of -- March of '97.
19 He was a land improvement contractor, plus farmed. He had
20 been on the Polk County Soil and Water Conservation
21 Commission and the NRD Board and served as chairman for a
22 while, treasurer for a while. He was a representative on
23 the Nebraska Association of Resource Districts from when
24 that organization started for years and years. (He) had
25 been their treasurer for quite some time. Real active.

1 MR. HANSEN: Yeah, I call them
2 old-timers. They both died in office, Bruce and him, but
3 they brought a lot to our board meetings. Dickinson, is he
4 back? Is he on the board?

5 MR. TURNBULL: He's still on the board, lives just
6 west of Seward. He came on in I think '81, maybe, '82,
7 somewhere in there.

8 MR. HANSEN: Looks like this (indiscernible) you
9 might be off 10 years, not quite.

10 MR. TURNBULL: January of '83 was his first time.

11 MR. HANSEN: And the other one.

12 MR. TURNBULL: Yeah, I typed this up but I didn't
13 memorize it. That's why I typed it up, so I wouldn't have
14 to memorize it.

15 MR. HANSEN: Well, it's spelled pretty good. Gary
16 Eberly, I think about him every once in a while.

17 MR. TURNBULL: Yeah, still on the board.

18 MR. TURNBULL: Do you remember Ed Eddiger?

19 MR. HANSEN: Yes.

20 MR. TURNBULL: Ed was a nice guy and interested in
21 what we were doing and really deaf. And we would describe
22 what everything was at the board meeting we were dealing
23 with. People would ask questions, get all done, and Ed
24 would ask the same question all over again because he hadn't
25 heard what was going on.

1 MR. HANSEN: He died in office, too. I didn't
2 realize that.

3 MR. TURNBULL: Yeah.

4 MR. HANSEN: (Indiscernible) and irrigation, south
5 of York?

6 MR. TURNBULL: McCool Junction you're thinking of,
7 or Fairmont or Geneva?

8 MR. HANSEN: Anyhow, I was up there and something
9 was supposed to be ready and it wasn't ready. He took me
10 home and fed me. I feel that was very generous. His wife
11 was, too.

12 MR. HANSEN: Well, Curt didn't make it to the
13 office that time he ran, go against a fellow from Hastings.
14 We all thought he would make it, but that guy from Hastings
15 was well funded and well known and he made it and he done, I
16 thought, a good job.

17 MR. TURNBULL: Uh-huh.

18 MR. HANSEN: I retired in January of '03. What is
19 this?

20 MR. TURNBULL: '13.

21 MR. HANSEN: So that's about 10 years ago.
22 (Indiscernible) brings back a lot of memories but --

23 MR. TURNBULL: What were some of the early
24 struggles of the district, with getting it organized and
25 getting it running?

1 MR. HANSEN: Yeah, see we had one manager before
2 John and we weren't organized and running for seven or eight
3 years. He was smart enough to go -- we were lucky enough to
4 get John to take over the organization then.

5 MR. HANSEN: Larry Moore is still doing good,
6 isn't he?

7 MR. TURNBULL: Yes, Larry is doing fine.

8 MR. HANSEN: Last time I saw him he was doing good
9 but I didn't get to talk to him. Ran into you once at the -
10 -

11 MR. TURNBULL: Clinic in Seward.

12 MR. HANSEN: Yeah. He was getting out somebody on
13 the left side and when he got out of the office a bunch of
14 grand kids came up to him and he was carrying a bucket of I
15 think it was field corn or sweet corn. Showing it to his
16 doctor, I suppose.

17 MR. TURNBULL: Probably.

18 MR. HANSEN: At the same time my wife's name got
19 called to go in the other room. In fact, she was already
20 walking in there and I looked at where he was. I've seen
21 him since he's seen me, I think.

22 MR. TURNBULL: Well, Wayne, remember we were
23 working on the David City project, the Central Butler
24 project in the late '70s, the Struebbing dam and range
25 around the airport and all that work? We left one big piece

1 unfinished, which was the northwest range. We got that
2 finished this last fall. I thought I would let you know
3 that it only took 30-some years for that project from start
4 to finish.

5 MR. HANSEN: Exactly the northwest district was --

6 MR. TURNBULL: We were adjacent right to Lower
7 Platte North. On that Central Butler project we worked with
8 Lower Platte North, Butler County, David City and ourselves,
9 four-way arrangement.

10 MR. HANSEN: What happened with the northwest?

11 MR. TURNBULL: Well, that was the one that was up
12 around where Tempe Trailer now is located, the manufacturing
13 plant?

14 MR. HANSEN: Yeah.

15 MR. TURNBULL: And the Butler County fairgrounds,
16 and that water was to drain off to the northwest, towards
17 the Platte River system, and we planned a dam to be built in
18 that whole system and turned out we couldn't build it
19 because they found peat, like, I don't know, 15 or 20 feet
20 down below the center line of the dam and so that site was
21 not suitable. And so it stopped at that time. And we had
22 the state funding from resource development fund for that
23 project, 75 percent grant, and then the rest was split
24 between the four entities. Lower Platte North was the lead
25 agency on that project with Al Smith, the manager, in

1 charge. And always controversial discussions of how that
2 thing was to proceed.

3 Anyway, for various reasons that northwest section
4 did not get done and a lot of it had to do with local
5 politics. When it was wet, the city would want the flood
6 control work to happen. By the time the weather turned dry,
7 the city councils were no longer interested. We went
8 through eight city administrators in 20 years plus all the
9 changes in city councils. And finally in the last five
10 years the city passed a sales tax to fund not only the
11 improvements for that drainage system, the storm water
12 drainage, but also recreation and downtown development. And
13 so that finally forced the council to go ahead and get the
14 project going. We did the engineering on it. Lower Platte
15 North paid part of the engineering and the city paid part,
16 and the city stood the entire cost of construction, \$2
17 million project.

18 We have reminded them if they had done it in
19 earlier years both districts would have helped them
20 financially, but they couldn't come to the decision until
21 just recently. Anyway, it's finally done. It's operating,
22 working.

23 MR. HANSEN: Good.

24 MR. BARR: Any particular projects that the
25 natural resource district did that you were particularly

1 proud of or enthused about or very supportive?

2 MR. HANSEN: I should have a long list, I suppose.

3 MR. BARR: Well, anything that just really sticks
4 out, I guess. John has probably got a list right there.

5 MR. HANSEN: Probably knows more than I do.

6 MR. TURNBULL: I've just handed Wayne a
7 publication that the district put together on the first 25
8 years of history of the district so he can leaf through it.
9 Here's another list of the first board.

10 MR. HANSEN: We didn't have the largest NRD board
11 in the NRD, but one of the larger boards.

12 MR. TURNBULL: We're still at 17 members.

13 MR. HANSEN: Didn't recognize my own picture.

14 MR. BARR: Did you have much involvement with
15 projects with the NRD, got involved in at any time or any
16 view of it from just in your local area
17 or --

18 MR. STEHLIK: Not really too much.

19 MR. BARR: Anything you'd like to mention while
20 we're here on conservation, or natural resource projects or
21 anything like that?

22 MR. TURNBULL: I know what you're thinking of, was
23 that project where that would have been, what, about '79,
24 '80 and '81 when there was a group in York County that
25 promoted cloud seeding to try to increase rainfall and they

1 brought in a pilot with a twin engine airplane, based
2 himself out of Utica and Clyde Ehlers and that group were
3 raising money by charging so many cents an acre to try to
4 get this thing off the ground?

5 MR. BARR: What was the rainfall increase from
6 that process?

7 MR. TURNBULL: I don't think anything happened
8 other than they spent a lot of time up in very rough air
9 trying to make something happen.

10 MR. HANSEN: And we've had some pretty good years
11 around here but now we're in -- I think we're in for a dry
12 spell for a while.

13 MR. TURNBULL: Of course, that was right during a
14 real dry period, too. We had groundwater declines going on
15 and there was lots and lots of controversy on the board when
16 I came about groundwater regulation. The control area,
17 which is now known as a management area, had just been
18 established by the Department of Water Resources at the
19 request of the district and then the district had written --
20 was starting to write some draft rules and --

21 MR. BARR: Were we at our low point when you came,
22 John? Didn't you say that --

23 MR. TURNBULL: It was pretty low.

24 MR. HANSEN: And you say that it's all went up
25 since you got here?

1 MR. TURNBULL: There's been some steep hills since
2 then, yeah.

3 MR. HANSEN: We're still holding pretty good.

4 MR. TURNBULL: Yeah, but it was a real
5 controversial time and the board was pretty well split on
6 what we should do or should not do and lots of fear that if
7 meters came the water would be taxed based on how much
8 people pumped.

9 MR. HANSEN: Yeah, that was the main thing they
10 had against them, I think.

11 MR. BARR: That's when Ted and I were doing our
12 little presentation.

13 MR. TURNBULL: And, of course, there was this huge
14 transition from this whole area that water wasn't regulated
15 in literally any fashion and then wells had to be registered
16 to, you know, the discussions about how it's in the control
17 area and there's potential allocation, potential requirement
18 for meters, could be restrictions on the number of acres.
19 It's a huge political change and there was an awful lot of
20 resistance to it.

21 MR. HANSEN: Took quite a while to get past that.

22 MR. BARR: About a generation.

23 MR. TURNBULL: Now the attitude is much different,
24 but those first few years was pretty contentious. Other
25 districts experienced the same thing. Little Blue went

1 through it in the mid '80s. Were really some leaders in
2 groundwater management and the board public elected a
3 different board of directors and that thing got undone and
4 set back years. They are just slowly gaining back to where
5 they were. Lower Republican went through it recently around
6 Alma with a huge controversy with a lawsuit with the state
7 of Kansas where they literally hadn't had much regulation
8 and then have been faced with it and now have implemented it
9 and it's been a lot of political turmoil because of it.
10 Middle Republican is going through that now. Lower Elkhorn
11 just had a round of it last summer with the dry spell in the
12 Elkhorn basin. So any time you bring regulations on when
13 people haven't had them it causes lots of controversy and
14 takes a long time to get the public settled down and let
15 them have time to understand it and accept it.

16 MR. BARR: Comment on any on the river, is it the
17 compact or court decision with Kansas. You've been kind of
18 peripherally involved in that or at least somewhat, haven't
19 you, with NRD and the Lower Platte?

20 MR. TURNBULL: Well, yeah, try to stay tuned on
21 what's going on in the Republican because what happens there
22 affects all the people in groundwater management and surface
23 water management around the state because it's really
24 setting some precedent and people are watching it close.
25 Unfortunately for the Republican, there isn't any good, easy

1 answer. We are fortunate in this district. We're not faced
2 with that and don't want to be. We're in a higher rainfall
3 area and we got a much better aquifer to rely on.

4 MR. BARR: Do you have a little different
5 arrangement in your compact?

6 MR. TURNBULL: Yes, there's a big difference in
7 the compacts. I can't explain the Republican one very well,
8 but it's based on each state has -- gets so much percentage
9 of the water within sub-basins and the basin as a whole
10 rather than a set amount of water crossing the state line.
11 And, of course, that compact was entered into in 1943, as I
12 recall, and groundwater wasn't talked about in that compact.
13 In the Blue River Compact with Kansas on the Big Blue and
14 the Little Blue River systems, that was entered into in
15 1978, groundwater was talked about and is restricted in its
16 use within a certain geographic area in Nebraska in times of
17 shortage. There has to be a certain amount of water that
18 crosses the state line, both the Little Blue and the Big
19 Blue at the state lines, but it's not been near the
20 controversy the Republican has. It's a much simpler compact
21 and cleaner for the states to administer. So it's not been
22 near the problem that the other folks have had.

23 MR. HANSEN: Some water flows from Colorado, down
24 through Kansas, up in Nebraska.

25 MR. BARR: You got into recreation and trails at

1 some point, didn't you, in this district?

2 MR. TURNBULL: Yes.

3 MR. BARR: Any thoughts on that?

4 MR. TURNBULL: Yeah, that will get people just
5 about as excited as meters on wells. We had a couple
6 attempts to convert old railroad right-of-way to hiking and
7 biking trails, one in the area of Geneva south towards the
8 Little Blue district and down by Strang and that direction.
9 It would have been 10 years ago probably. Land owner
10 opposition, particularly from the rural land owners, but
11 support from folks within the city of Geneva. But in the
12 end we decided not to proceed with that just because it
13 isn't what the majority of the public wanted in that area.

14 There has recently been effort by both the Central
15 Platte and this district, working with the city of Central
16 City on a trail system from Central City down the railroad
17 right-of-way to Marquette, which is an abandoned right-of-
18 way. Nebraska Trails Foundation actually owns that right-
19 of-way now. They acquired it from the railroad through the
20 rail banking setup. Landowners, rural landowners have
21 opposed that, have made that quite clear to us. In the end
22 both Central Platte and Upper Big Blue decided not to
23 proceed with the trail work as a public project. Central
24 City has done a little work in their area. The Nebraska
25 Trails Foundation has gone ahead and funded the

1 rehabilitation of the Platte River railroad bridge at
2 Central City. So that's done and it's now open for folks.
3 And folks are using the old right-of-way. It's just not up
4 to current standards.

5 But the two NRDs are not involved in it now. We
6 have been involved with trail systems in some local
7 communities and did a little trail work in Sutton, a little
8 bit in the town of Shelby in northern Polk County. Have
9 been extensively involved with the trail system in the city
10 of Seward, Plum Creek Trail. That's on the floodplain
11 buyout that Wayne was involved in. And we attempted to
12 extend that trail recently and finally backed out of working
13 with the Department of Roads because we could not reach an
14 agreement on the funding documents, the funding agreement.
15 The city has taken that one over and we have agreed to help
16 fund it on the side as a cost share.

17 That's one thing I remember, Wayne, is when we did
18 the floodplain buyout on Plum Creek, that project, as I
19 recall, had been talked about as a PL 566 watershed back at
20 the same time the Dorchester project was in the mid '60s.
21 But they didn't have the cost-benefit ratio that the
22 Dorchester watershed had and so it was not built.

23 MR. HANSEN: They needed one up there.

24 MR. TURNBULL: Yeah, because the city of Seward
25 gets flooded frequently and the district got involved early

1 on after they were formed in looking at more dams in there,
2 didn't they?

3 MR. HANSEN: I don't know.

4 MR. TURNBULL: Seems to me like they were at the
5 same general sites the SCS had, but again landowner
6 opposition, they backed out. And I came to work in January
7 of '78 and Jay Bittner was hired as our engineer and he came
8 about three months after I did. And we haven't been there
9 very long and the board told us to go look at dams upstream
10 of Seward again on Plum Creek so we did, and we got yelled
11 at again by the landowners so it got shelved. Then in about
12 '88 the city of Seward, chamber of commerce approached us
13 and said there was still flooding and we needed to do
14 something. And we took a look at a single -- we looked at
15 three dams upstream. Again, just politically it wasn't
16 going to work. We looked at a single dam just north of the
17 city of Seward and as I recall that structure was going to
18 be, I don't know, 4 to \$6 million and we would have to
19 relocate like five farmsteads to get this thing to work.
20 And there were like seven houses downstream that would have
21 benefited from this thing and it just didn't make sense to
22 proceed with that. And we hired Olsson & Associates to come
23 in and do a preliminary recognizance level study and they
24 came back with the alternative to look at levies along Plum
25 Creek down to where it joins with the Big Blue River just

1 right at the south edge of the city of Seward, and they
2 looked at doing nothing. And we looked at doing a
3 floodplain buyout, and the best alternative was to do the
4 buyout.

5 Dayle Williamson, of course, was the executive
6 secretary of the Resource Commission at the time and he
7 approached us and said that because of the '93 wind storms
8 there was money available through Federal Emergency
9 Management Agency and we ought to get cracking on putting
10 together a buyout plan and use that. We came up then with
11 an application that was approved and they funded 80 percent
12 of the cost. And that buyout happened. I think there were
13 like 27 properties we bought. Those were all willing
14 seller, willing buyer. I remember we had a hearing on that
15 and, Wayne, you were the chairman at the time and --

16 MR. HANSEN: I was?

17 MR. TURNBULL: Yeah, and we were at the Community
18 Center, Civic Center in Seward, and they had us set up down
19 in the basement, and we were on the east side of this room
20 that had a long table set up. And you were sitting in the
21 middle and I was sitting to your left and whoever else was
22 helping us was over on the right side. And the hearing
23 hadn't started yet and one of the local citizens, landowner
24 came up to us and put his hands on the table and leaned over
25 and looked you right in the face and asked you what in the

1 devil this project was all about. And you looked at him and
2 said, well, John is our manager. He can -- you just said,
3 he can explain it, and you pointed to me. And this guy
4 looked you in the face and he goes, well, who in the hell is
5 he? And you said, well, that's John, he's our manager. And
6 he says, well, you ought to fire him. And I remember --

7 MR. HANSEN: That's why you remember it.

8 MR. TURNBULL: And I remember starting to stand up
9 and you reached over and put your hand on my arm and just
10 held me in my seat and you said, I'll take care of this.

11 MR. HANSEN: I did?

12 MR. TURNBULL: You did. You just reached over and
13 put your hand on my arm and said, I'll take care of this,
14 and you diplomatically handled him, which is good because I
15 was hot by that time.

16 MR. BARR: Was that part of your role, then, to
17 kind of keep things moving?

18 MR. HANSEN: Must have been then as he tells it.

19 MR. BARR: Yeah.

20 MR. HANSEN: I didn't -- I liked to be a chairman.
21 I didn't take sides with anybody normally and I knew the
22 parliamentary procedure way to do things. I got that from
23 high school, from FFA, so I knew how to handle the groups.

24 MR. BARR: Did you have a few instances where that
25 became handy?

1 MR. HANSEN: None I need to talk about publicly.

2 (Laughter.)

3 MR. BARR: I'm just going to add a little thing,
4 that I've had other conversations where the most interesting
5 part of the conversation happened when that thing got turned
6 off. So, anyhow --

7 MR. HANSEN: Could be, but --

8 MR. BARR: One thing that has interested me was,
9 there was a period of time, and I don't know if it started
10 before you came or after, John, on the Prairie Bend project.
11 One of you want to talk about that a little bit?

12 MR. HANSEN: About what?

13 MR. BARR: Prairie Bend, the --

14 MR. HANSEN: You'll have to refresh me.

15 MR. TURNBULL: That was the proposed recharge and
16 irrigation project between Kearney and Grand Island on the
17 north side of the Platte River.

18 MR. HANSEN: I don't think I'm up on that.

19 MR. BARR: Okay, okay. John, do you have
20 anything?

21 MR. TURNBULL: Well, that was a project that was
22 proposed by Central Platte NRD and it was generally to bring
23 surface water in from the Platte River system and irrigate
24 lands that was considered under the bureau proposal known as
25 the mid-states. So the Central Platte had that going on.

1 Of course, they were faced with groundwater management
2 problems just like we were. We had groundwater declines
3 here from -- that were measured from early '61 'til about
4 '77 or '78 that were steadily going down. And the board, of
5 course, was wrestling with the political problem of how do
6 you regulate groundwater. And, of course, as soon as you
7 say regulation to somebody they say, well, can't you find
8 some other way? Isn't there some water we can get elsewhere
9 so we don't have to regulate it ourselves?

10 And so in about, I don't remember, probably in
11 1980, '79 or '80 the board directed us on the staff to start
12 looking at bringing water in to the Blue Basin from the
13 Platte River. That was the Landmark Project, which was in
14 competition with the Prairie Bend. And, of course, we had
15 worked on that for some time as a staff, kind of roughing
16 out a plan.

17 The history of that was that we had an idea of
18 where we wanted to bring the water into, which would have
19 been into the main stem of the Blue and into the West Fork
20 Valleys and build a series of reservoirs for storage and
21 then deliver water by canals from there to irrigated lands.
22 One of the possibilities we thought about was how do you get
23 the water into the district, and one of them was to use --
24 to work with Central Nebraska Public Power and use part of
25 their canal system. At the time they still owned the right-

1 of-way from the end of their canal system at Minden east
2 into Adams County that ended up around Prosser where the
3 waste ways were to go back to the Platte. We met with
4 Central Nebraska Public Power. They were willing to work
5 with us on it, and so we started kind of coming up with a
6 scheme of how to make that work.

7 We also looked at a diversion point off of the
8 Platte River near Chapman, just east of Grand Island about
9 eight miles, and bring the water through a pump station up
10 to the Blue River Divide which is within about a mile of the
11 Platte River at that point and then let it flow by gravity
12 into several reservoirs. So we were working with Central
13 Nebraska Public Power. I remember I had a call from John
14 Vanderwalker at one point. He was the director of the
15 Platte River Whooping Crane Trust that was set up as a
16 result of the settlement with the basin electric system that
17 built the Laramie power station out on Laramie River.

18 And, anyway, John wanted to come over and talk to
19 me about water in the Platte River. And I had never met him
20 before. And he came into our office, and that was up at the
21 fairgrounds at York. And he walked up to our big wall map
22 and he says, you know, we on the Whooping Crane Trust, we
23 think we can work with you on this. We know you're planning
24 some kind of irrigation diversion. And if you would put
25 your diversion point right here, and he put his finger on

1 the map, and he missed our planned diversion point by half a
2 mile, and I thought, man, where is he getting his
3 information? Because we hadn't talked to anybody about
4 that.

5 He said, if you put your diversion point there we
6 can cut a deal and we can work together. And I said, well,
7 why is that? And he said, simple. If you get the water
8 right, it guarantees the water coming through our stretch of
9 the river and the Platte River Whooping Crane Trust lands
10 and, therefore, it's a benefit to both of us. So we ended
11 up making an arrangement with the Whooping Crane Trust and
12 with Central Nebraska Public Power. It was a three-way
13 partnership to do that and to build a reservoir on the Plum
14 Creek south of Lexington. That ended up through lots of
15 planning.

16 One of the funny stories is there was a newspaper
17 reporter on the local paper that always came in our office
18 looking for stories. Nice guy, John Ortman with the News
19 Times. And he was always snooping around for a story but
20 never thinking we were Watergating or anything like that.
21 He just wanted to know what was of interest. And he came
22 walking into the office one time when we had all the topo
23 maps laid out, taped together on a big conference table.
24 And as he came in the front office, the guys in the back
25 just took those maps and just pulled one over the top of the

1 other so you saw blank backs. And he walked through and
2 asked what we were working on, and they muttered some story
3 to him. And he shrugged his shoulders and wandered out.

4 The next month is when at the board meeting you
5 folks then authorized us to make the filings with the
6 Department of Water Resources and we had to do all of that
7 in public. And I remember John Ortman sitting in the back
8 of the room with his mouth hanging open, like how long have
9 you guys been working on this? Said a couple years and ahh.
10 At any rate, the upshot was that ended up through a series
11 of hearings. The Central Platte opposed us on that because
12 they were working on Prairie Bend at the time and, naturally
13 so, they were protective of the water in the Platte River.
14 And we also worked with the Games and Parks Commission and
15 we had a favorable biological opinion from them on the
16 project. Lower Platte North opposed us and was able to get
17 that overturned in the hearing process and eventually we
18 lost that water right hearing, lost the application. So
19 that project never did proceed.

20 But there was a lot of planning in it, but I still
21 think it all went back to the desire to bring water in to
22 forestall groundwater regulation. I don't know if it ever
23 would have flown economically, but technically it could have
24 been done. Timing was -- at the end of all those surface
25 water projects been built around the state, whether it was

1 Enders, or whether it was the Twin Loups, of course, it was
2 about the time that Norden Dam was falling apart up on the
3 Niobrara and so the public attitude on those major projects
4 was shifting right under our feet.

5 MR. BARR: Corn prices weren't very high either.

6 MR. TURNBULL: No, that was -- the ag economy was
7 going downhill real fast.

8 MR. BARR: That was probably the -- you've had a
9 chance to look at some of those, review the projects. Any
10 of them that particularly stick out that you would like to
11 talk about?

12 MR. HANSEN: I haven't been blessed with a memory.
13 If it's written down, I said something, I'll believe that,
14 but I don't necessarily remember.

15 MR. BARR: John, do you have any -- the one
16 question I'd like to ask you is both of you were involved in
17 the early stages of conservation programs and you have seen
18 both the conservation programs and the natural resource
19 district develop. Any thoughts about what has happened over
20 the last 40 years in these areas that you'd like to comment
21 on or anything about how you think it might affect the
22 future?

23 MR. HANSEN: The only thing is something I alluded
24 to before. I'm a great believer in no-till. I mean, 100
25 percent no-till. Don't go out and tear up the ground,

1 cultivate it or anything, no-till. I'm a great believer in
2 that and our fields don't look the best today. Give us a
3 few more weeks and we've got to do that because you've got
4 to -- I don't know -- like to come behind and brag about the
5 farm but not if you got pennycress two foot tall and a crop
6 you can't even see it yet. It will be there. We know that
7 the pennycress is already -- you've got to hit pennycress
8 early and that's a problem, chemical -- sharing the chemical
9 expense. Convincing more people that no-till is okay. And
10 so our land is practically 100 percent no-till now and they
11 don't always look the best compared to our neighbors at
12 certain times of the year.

13 MR. BARR: How widespread is the acceptance of no-
14 till or minimal till in your general area? Well, actually
15 in the whole Upper Big Blue, I guess, in that area?

16 MR. HANSEN: Well, I think in parts of the Upper
17 Big Blue they're using it great. I can't witness that, but
18 no-till is here to stay I think. Do it right. Half and
19 half is no-till, that's not as bad as not no-till. Somebody
20 said, how come he's out there planting already? He's no-
21 till. The other guys that work up their ground and after a
22 rain it may keep you out for several days. There's
23 instances like that this year. I don't know whether
24 everything is planted or not, but some of the no-till guys
25 get kind of late once in a while. And exist the old weeds

1 are there before you plant it, but you've got to get --
2 learn to rely upon weed control by chemicals, right time of
3 the season.

4 MR. BARR: John, how is the acceptance of some of
5 the practices the NRD has developed on fertilizer
6 restrictions and soil practices? What have you seen over
7 the time you've been here?

8 MR. TURNBULL: Well, talk about water use to start
9 with. I often tell people when I first came to work at York
10 in the summertime I could canoe across York County in the
11 road ditches from irrigation runoff. It was a tremendous
12 amount, just from gravity irrigation. And so the water use,
13 the water pumping was high. The records that I've been able
14 to go back and find of that, 16 to 20 inches was probably
15 pretty common on pumping in the early '80s. We had about 20
16 percent of the land was center pivots then and the balance
17 was gravity. I think I saw one of our documents said in
18 1981 we had like I think 700,000 irrigated acres in the
19 district and we have 1.8 million total in land area in the
20 district, so that gives you a little comparison of size.

21 Today we have 1,120,000 irrigated acres, so it's
22 not quite doubled in that, however long that is, 35 years.
23 But the land, a lot of that land has been converted to
24 center pivots. We have probably 85 percent of the land is
25 center pivots and the balance is gravity, so it's a complete

1 reversal from what it was. And our average water use in the
2 last five years leading up to 2012 was five and a half
3 inches a year compared to the 16 to 20 range we had been
4 experiencing. So a lot less pumping. Of course, the
5 yields, because of variety improvements and everything else,
6 are way better than they were.

7 Last year, because it was really dry, our rainfall
8 was half of normal and the pumping average across the entire
9 district was 12 and a half inches. So it was pretty high
10 pumping. But the yields were good and it really shows in
11 the ag economy. A lot of people made a nice profit last
12 year and that's okay. Irrigation made the difference.
13 Those that were dry land in the state really were hurt, and
14 those that irrigated were not, so that really points up the
15 importance.

16 So I think the big thing has been the change in
17 the water use and the change in the attitude of the
18 operators. Early on the attitude was, it's my water and
19 I'll pump it when I want and you go away and don't bother
20 looking at me. And now it is, we understand that it's got
21 to be conserved, it needs to be managed and tell me what the
22 rules are and I'll figure out how to make my operation work
23 with the rules. But that's been a generational change.

24 On the water quality side we have got increasing
25 nitrates in groundwater and that's been a low increase over

1 a long period of time. Depths to water in the district are
2 generally 80 to 100 feet, so we have a lot less soils over
3 the top, takes a while for those nitrates to move through
4 that. We have expanded our management areas for what we
5 call the management zones in the water quality area. We now
6 have two Phase II areas and one Phase III. Phase III is
7 around York. And in Phase II areas we require the operators
8 to go through an education program that we put on. We
9 require them to take soil tests. We now require them to
10 take soil tests before they fertilize instead of after. We
11 didn't say that explicitly in the rules before and some
12 people took advantage of the way it was worded. We also had
13 some people filling out the forms to say what the fertilizer
14 tests were and we weren't so sure those numbers were
15 accurate so now we require a copy of the soil test from the
16 lab and that has fixed that problem. Learned those tricks
17 in the Army.

18 We also now require people, at least in one field
19 that they operate in, in the Phase II and Phase III areas,
20 to use moisture blocks or water sensors in the fields to --
21 and this is the first season of that, and our folks are out
22 helping them install those and getting those online. We're
23 having a lot of people come in the office and buy those
24 water sensors and the reaction has been generally pretty
25 good. We've had a few people disgruntled with it, feeling

1 that the regulations go a bit too far, but by far the
2 majority just ask, where do we put them in? How do we do
3 it? How do we make this thing work? They have been
4 watching some of their neighbors that have done it for a few
5 years and understand that if they watch those close enough
6 they can probably save themselves some irrigation and some
7 money and still get a really good net profit, probably
8 better than they were before. So that's going on.

9 We had a lot of controversy over the last year and
10 a half discussing whether we should require nitrogen
11 inhibitors with anhydrous ammonia. We went through two
12 public hearings on that over a period of a year and the
13 first proposal was nitrogen inhibitor state or district wide
14 and the end result was we now require it in just a Phase III
15 area. And so that's just gone into effect.

16 And we've had opposition to that but also some
17 support. And what we found out also is that the co-ops, and
18 particularly Aurora Co-op, is selling a lot of anhydrous
19 with Enserve already in it, and that was before our
20 regulation came about, so many producers have been using it
21 and it just hasn't been very widely known. So we hope that
22 starts happening.

23 Of course, the big emphasis is on educating people
24 of how to get the yield they want, what not to over apply
25 either water or fertilizer. Over application of water

1 flushes those nitrates through into the groundwater table.
2 Plus it costs them money they don't really need to be
3 spending. But I think the biggest change is just in the
4 public attitude about the whole conservation thing on water
5 and on fertilizer. It takes a long time to get that to
6 turn. You can't push it too hard.

7 MR. HANSEN: Most people in this area put their
8 fertilizer on in the fall, kind of a questionable practice,
9 and last fall especially. On November 1st the line is still
10 warm enough to grow corn. But there's also that same group
11 have cut their application down and get pretty good yields.
12 A bunch of them are experimenting now with side dressing,
13 (indiscernible) few hundred acres. So we're going to be
14 harvesting quite a while.

15 MR. BARR: This district has been kind of a leader
16 in groundwater or in water conservation, water
17 administration of groundwater and that sort of thing. There
18 is some controversy in the state about who should oversee
19 groundwater regulation. Would you both like to make any
20 sort of comments on that?

21 MR. TURNBULL: Who oversees it now?

22 MR. BARR: Well, you do, but, I mean, there are
23 some people that made an issue of it, that it's not -- the
24 surface water is administered at the state level and
25 groundwater at the district level and there's controversy

1 about whether that should be continued the way it is. Just
2 let you have a chance to comment on that, if you had any
3 thoughts.

4 MR. STEHLIK: Well, several given to the NRD
5 people, feel they could do a good job. That's all I can
6 say.

7 MR. BARR: Do you want to comment on that?

8 MR. TURNBULL: Well, yeah. It's been
9 controversial for sure. Just a quick bit of history. When
10 I first became an NRD manager at Tri Basin down in Holdrege
11 in June of 1975, and Russ Edeal was the chairman of that
12 board at the time. And I had been there about six weeks, I
13 suppose. And he came into my office one day and he had
14 eight and a half by 11 green paper in his hand that was
15 stapled together. I didn't in those days know what that
16 was. And he kind of just casually tossed it on the desk and
17 he says, John, that's LB577. It was just passed by the
18 legislature, Groundwater Management Act. You might want to
19 read it because I think you'll be working with it for a few
20 years. Well, this is now 2013 and I'm still working with
21 it. And I reminded Russ of that the last time I saw him.
22 But that was, of course, the act that Maurice Kremer was
23 really instrumental in getting passed through the
24 legislature. And that gave the authority and responsibility
25 to carry out that authority to the natural resource

1 districts for groundwater management, rather than giving it
2 to the Department of Natural Resources. So the intent was
3 with the legislature that it would be locally controlled,
4 locally managed.

5 The hard thing in that is, do the locals have
6 enough backbone to make it work, and is it something that's
7 acceptable by the local people? Because if it's not
8 acceptable on the local level, no matter how much somebody
9 else pushes it, it's not going to work, contrary to what
10 some of my friends in other agencies think.

11 Then, of course, there is the controversy that is
12 set up because of Nebraska's doctrine of water regulation.
13 Surface water is first in time, first in right under the
14 appropriate doctrine and that's the way the legislature set
15 it years ago. And that's the way it is. Groundwater is
16 under corollary rights, which is share and share alike in
17 times of shortage. Well, those two conflict. In times of
18 shortage everybody has the same pie but we get smaller
19 pieces of it. And surface water, it's the oldest right,
20 gets it all until he is satisfied and then the next one in
21 line. And so where you have a conflict between those two
22 it's really difficult to sort that out. Because of that,
23 there has been this push by some in the state that the
24 Department of Natural Resources should administer both or
25 certainly strongly oversee the management of groundwater.

1 Those of us in groundwater management feel the opposite.
2 And so there is a tug and pull that goes on all the time.

3 Several of us served on the governor's water task
4 force back in 2002 and 2004 to try to come to terms with
5 this, and I think a lot was done. Set up, fully
6 appropriated procedures for basins in the state and that's
7 being carried out today. Of course, some people feel it's
8 not going fast enough or far enough. Others of us think
9 it's gone too far. So I'm sure it's something we're going
10 to argue about for years to come. But we try to work as
11 best we can between the Department of Natural Resources and
12 the districts. The staffs do cooperate a lot and we just
13 continue that. The controversy is not going to go away,
14 particularly in dry years. So, yeah, a guy gets gray hair
15 over this stuff.

16 MR. BARR: Well, it looks like either grey hair or
17 no hair.

18 MR. TURNBULL: Yeah, that, too.

19 MR. BARR: Well, I don't have any other major
20 questions, but this is a chance, if there's anything you'd
21 like to say about the whole general idea of natural resource
22 districts and how they work out, this would be the time,
23 just anything you'd like to comment on, any of you.

24 MR. HANSEN: I don't think you have the personal
25 contact that you used to have with the local soil

1 conservation and that, to me, is kind of important, just to
2 see them around once in a while.

3 MR. TURNBULL: Good point.

4 MR. HANSEN: Takes a lot of management to carry
5 that out, but it needs to be done. I agree with that. As
6 John has demonstrated by his reporting on different things
7 here, you know, we do but he's going to retire some day.

8 MR. TURNBULL: Not long. Not too long from now.

9 MR. HANSEN: That's what I figured but I was
10 afraid to ask you. He has an awful lot of things in his
11 head and a lot of these things aren't written down. It
12 could be worked out but it takes time.

13 MR. TURNBULL: I've talked too much already.

14 MR. BARR: Well, thank you all. We've done this
15 here at the hospitality of Mr. Hansen and his wife in the
16 Dorchester area and I think that should be it.