

INTERVIEW OF
MARY ANN and JIM WORTMANN

June 6, 2014

1 MR. BARR: This is Jim Barr. It's June 6, 2014.
2 I'm in Crofton, Nebraska, interviewing Mary Ann and Jim
3 Wortmann. And I might just start out with whichever one of
4 you want to start, first with kind of a little bit on your
5 own background and then we'll go to the other one.

6 MR. WORTMANN: Okay. I was first -- I was the
7 first one elected to the board. My dad was on the old
8 Beaver Antelope Watershed Board and was appointed as a board
9 member. And they had, like, 40 board members the first
10 year. And then, when the election -- in '74, we had the
11 first election and dad didn't want to run for it so he asked
12 me to run, and I was elected, and I was on the board for 28
13 years.

14 One of the, I think, main goals that I had when I
15 started as a director -- we had the Aowa Creek Watershed,
16 which was a P.L. 566 watershed, and my goal was to see that
17 completed and I stayed on until it was completed.

18 MR. BARR: Not quite as long as the Niobrara
19 Bridge project.

20 MR. WORTMANN: Yeah, it was a struggle. There
21 were some people, some of the guys donated their easements.
22 Some of them you had to go to eminent domain to get them.
23 But it's a great project. The City of Ponca is probably
24 eternally grateful for it. And I did live to see it finish.

25 MR. BARR: You mentioned a watershed where your

1 dad served. Where, roughly, was that?

2 MR. WORTMANN: Well, that was right in this area
3 here and it was established -- it was called a Beaver
4 Antelope watershed and it was the two creek basins here.
5 And then, it was -- they started collecting funds and the
6 whole thing was designed by SCS at that time. And when it
7 got down the road a couple years, they decided it wasn't a
8 feasible operation so they canceled it. Well, we had
9 collected a pretty good sum of money already, tax dollars,
10 and they didn't know how to give them back, so we decided,
11 as the NRD board then, that we would only spend that money
12 in the Beaver and Antelope watersheds. And we built a
13 number of structures, road dams, things like that, and it
14 helped the whole watershed, but we did have to cancel that.

15 MR. BARR: Did you grow up in this area?

16 MR. WORTMANN: Yes, I was born and raised here on
17 Beaver Creek. I've spent my entire life here, other than my
18 three years in the Army.

19 MR. BARR: Oh. Where were you in the Army?

20 MR. WORTMANN: Huh?

21 MR. BARR: Any place interesting in the Army?

22 We've found all kinds of people --

23 MR. WORTMANN: I was a helicopter mechanic and I
24 got sent down to Whitesands Missile Range and it was a top
25 security base, and it took me, like, a month to get into the

1 base and then they said after I had that clearance, they
2 said, "You ain't never leaving here because we already spent
3 that money to get your clearance." So, I spent my entire
4 three years in Whitesands Missile Range.

5 MR. BARR: Do you want to give a little of your
6 background, Mary Ann?

7 MRS. WORTMANN: Well, I was born and raised two
8 miles south of this community, so I've lived in this
9 community my whole life. And Jim and I got married in 1963
10 and he was, later, on the board and I supported him with
11 that. He did his meetings and went places, and we had an
12 opportunity to go to some national meetings and some state
13 meetings because then, eventually, he came on the state
14 board as a board member. He was a board rep for Lewis and
15 Clark.

16 I primarily stayed home and did chores and took
17 care of kids so he could go. And then, when he decided
18 to -- (indiscernible) was done and he wanted to run for
19 another office that -- another position that required him
20 not to have two political offices so he chose not to run for
21 the NRD and he ran for the other. And Tom Moser, the
22 manager, said, "You have to get your own replacement."
23 Well, he said, "I think I'm living with the replacement."
24 He said, "I really think another woman should be -- a woman
25 should be on the board because there has never been a woman

1 on the board." Well, I ran and got on, and from there I did
2 take his position, then, on the State Association Board and
3 I ran through all the offices there. Currently, just
4 finished with being past president and I'm just a board
5 member. But we worked on the Lewis and Clark Board, we
6 didn't have any major projects that we were undertaking. We
7 did some work with the trails and just the work constantly
8 with conservation. We're now in the process of work doing a
9 water quality management program and putting that together.
10 That's in the works for that. So, this is probably my last
11 year on the board because I chose not to run again for the
12 local board, which means, then, they'll have to have another
13 board member on the State board. I just kind of followed up
14 with what he was doing and he's been a big -- Jim's been a
15 big help to me in understanding the background of where we
16 were, where we've come. He comes along to the meetings and
17 then meets some of his old friends and stuff, so it's kind
18 of like a reunion whenever we have our meetings, for him,
19 which is good. But it has helped me as a board member,
20 then, for some of the issues to -- just to know some of the
21 background of that, which I think in a lot of instances,
22 when you're making decisions, you have to have that
23 background. That's where I'm at right now.

24 MR. BARR: Kind of looking at the background of
25 the NRDs, what do you remember about your dad's role in the

1 early years of the soil and water conservation districts and
2 anything you might have been involved in during the time of
3 the NRD legislation or your dad?

4 MR. WORTMANN: Well, dad always was a conservation
5 guy. He started building his first terraces back in the 50s
6 and maybe even the late 40s, right after World War II, and
7 so I grew up with that, you know, contour farming and grass
8 waterways. I always thought that that was really the way
9 that things should be done, so I just kind of naturally fell
10 into the theme. I think that one of the biggest things
11 Lewis and Clark NRD got involved in was the rural water
12 systems. We have the Cedar Knox rural system here and we
13 helped establish the West Knox system up in Lower Niobrara,
14 and we're involved with the Wau-Col new one down -- it's the
15 Wausau-Coleridge --

16 MR. BARR: How do you spell that, just for the
17 transcribers?

18 MR. WORTMANN: It's W-a-u dash C-o-l.

19 MR. BARR: Okay.

20 MR. WORTMANN: And that thing has really been a
21 blessing in this area because this area is really short of
22 groundwater. Now, I see a lot of pivots going in and I
23 wonder where they're getting the water from when we couldn't
24 even get water to water our livestock, you know, but the
25 pivots have become so much more efficient than what they

1 used to be, they can run them on a lot less water and
2 irrigation is just really going hog wild up in this area.

3 MRS. WORTMANN: And that's why we're developing
4 the water quality -- quantity management plans so we can
5 monitor where the water's going, how much we're using. We
6 don't want the State to step in and say, "You have to do
7 this," we want to be proactive. Well, we want to be
8 proactive just for our -- the people in the district so that
9 they know where they're at, when they drill a well, how much
10 water they're going to have in dry years, and whatever, so
11 how we can do that -- we don't need neighbors fighting
12 neighbors for water and we don't need neighbors fighting
13 neighbors for water for the homestead, water for the
14 families.

15 MR. BARR: Have you had some court cases in that
16 regard?

17 MRS. WORTMANN: We have not had any court cases.
18 We've had some -- a couple of issues that were resolved by
19 talking, but no court cases. Hopefully, we don't have, and
20 that's why we're having the -- we've had lots of input from
21 the district patrons and we're -- we haven't had our -- we
22 had a hearing, but we haven't voted yet on the main -- the
23 last part of it, that's coming up. But we've had lots of
24 input, and good input. We have made some changes in what
25 we've developed, what the office has done and what the board

1 has asked for, but it's coming along and I think it's going
2 to be a good tool for all those who want water.

3 MR. BARR: Maybe we could talk a little about the
4 whole water quality issue, domestic water, starting with the
5 beginnings of the first rural water district. You were
6 involved in the first one, weren't you?

7 MR. WORTMANN: Yes.

8 MR. BARR: Kind of how that developed and what the
9 need was for it, and that sort of thing.

10 MR. WORTMANN: It was like, I suppose, like any
11 project. We had some opposition to it and we had some pipes
12 drilled that people were opposing, "You're not going to lay
13 that past my farm." And now, with the development along
14 Lewis & Clark Lake, we've just got a really hard time
15 furnishing enough water with the capacity of our plant. And
16 we keep upgrading lines and making them bigger, and we go
17 clear to Obert, which is 60 miles, I think.

18 MR. BARR: What is the source of your water?

19 MR. WORTMANN: Lewis & Clark Lake, and we're the
20 only surface water treating plant in our rural system in the
21 state.

22 MRS. WORTMANN: Well, initially, for wanting the
23 plant -- I'm going to jump in here just a little bit.

24 MR. BARR: Sure.

25 MRS. WORTMANN: Initially, for wanting water, they

1 were having water issues -- even we were having water issues
2 at the farm. And not having enough at the farm is because
3 water north of Crofton -- there isn't any wells, they have
4 to go really, really, really deep, and there is no water. A
5 lot of the communities were having problems with the nitrate
6 level and a lot of their drinking water wasn't good and not
7 enough of it. Consequently, they developed a rural water
8 board and then that was under the auspices of the Lewis &
9 Clark Board, so they developed the -- what they want it for,
10 a district. But that's what -- I believe that's right, that
11 that's what instigated the rural water. And then, it's
12 expanded because of -- it's a really good insurance policy
13 to have water right at your house in case you can't water or
14 you need extra water. We ended up not using a well. We
15 didn't have a well. We ended up using all rural water to
16 water our livestock, especially the hogs and stuff that we
17 were raising. Cattle, in the summertime, were able to, when
18 there was water in the creek, to water there, but we used
19 rural water, that's all we used. And a lot of farmers north
20 of Crofton, that's all they used.

21 MR. BARR: When you just compare the original
22 capacity or whatever you call the system, to what it is now,
23 what kind of change have you seen?

24 MR. WORTMANN: It's probably -- when we met with
25 FHA for it, we wanted to make it twice as big as what we

1 needed, and they said, "No, you can go 10 percent, that's
2 all," so we stayed at 10 percent. We're more than twice as
3 big as what we were when we started.

4 MR. BARR: Is that within the same area or has
5 your area also expanded?

6 MR. WORTMANN: We've expanded some areas,
7 especially to the recreation areas along the Missouri River.
8 The south, we haven't gone south.

9 MRS. WORTMANN: But the big pipes coming to
10 Crofton, they haven't made bigger. They were the same size
11 when they started, the same size when they branched off. As
12 we go east, then, in developing systems -- or they want to
13 come onto the system, Fordyce came on and --

14 MR. WORTMANN: Fordyce and Crofton and Obert are
15 the three towns.

16 MRS. WORTMANN: Yeah. But there's -- Brooky
17 Bottom is asking to come on, but we can't justify any more
18 unless we have so many users and we don't have enough users
19 down there to go --

20 MR. BARR: Do you go east of 81 -- or Highway 81?

21 MRS. WORTMANN: Oh, yeah.

22 MR. BARR: How far east roughly?

23 MRS. WORTMANN: To Obert.

24 MR. BARR: And you've also, now, been involved
25 with other NRDs and rural water districts to the west and

1 the south. Can you go into that just a little bit on each
2 of those?

3 MR. WORTMANN: Well, on the -- West Knox is
4 managed by the Lower Niobrara and Wau-Col is managed by the
5 Lower Elkhorn, so Lewis & Clark didn't get involved into the
6 management part of it, but we helped get easements and
7 things like that.

8 MR. BARR: Does that cover any of your NRD?

9 MR. WORTMANN: Yes. Yeah, both of them.

10 MR. BARR: And the one that the Niobrara works on,
11 that involves --

12 MR. WORTMANN: West Knox.

13 MR. BARR: West Knox involves some of the tribal
14 areas?

15 MR. WORTMANN: The tribal area chose not to go in,
16 but now they keep requesting water from both sides, you
17 know, and so far it hasn't happened. And I don't
18 know -- money is not the problem, it's the capacity of our
19 plant more than anything. We bought the old Devil's Nest
20 water treatment plant. It was put up as a recreation area.
21 Well, it never got off the ground and so we bought that from
22 the SID up there and remodeled it and fixed it up, and
23 that's the plant we're still using. So, the plant, it's
24 clear on the west end of the whole project, so all of our
25 water has to be pumped all the way east -- or run by

1 gravity. And the tribe is not that far to the west, but
2 there -- I don't know what all the problems are, but --

3 MR. BARR: They developed some water down by the
4 highway, didn't they, at one point?

5 MR. WORTMANN: Yes.

6 MR. BARR: And, I don't know, does that
7 cover -- does that go up to the town of Santee?

8 MR. WORTMANN: I'm not sure where --

9 MR. BARR: I know it covers, what you call it, the
10 casino and that area.

11 MR. WORTMANN: Yeah.

12 MR. BARR: Maybe that's all it covers. This
13 Wau-Col --

14 MR. WORTMANN: Well --

15 MR. BARR: Go ahead, I'm sorry.

16 MR. WORTMANN: Well, they was talking about
17 building a golf course up there, too, and I worked on a golf
18 course for 12 years and I know the amounts of water that you
19 have to use to keep them green. I don't know, our plant,
20 the Lewis -- the Cedar Knox plant could never provide that
21 much water for -- and the Wau-Col thing, I'm not real
22 familiar. Mary Ann probably knows more about that than I do
23 because that started after I was off the board. No, I
24 worked with our first executive director, Lee Orton. He's
25 the head of the well drillers now.

1 MR. BARR: Sure, sure.

2 MR. WORTMANN: I went with him to several meetings
3 to get the West Knox project started. Yeah, I knew all of
4 our executive directors.

5 MR. BARR: Maybe you could just review that
6 while -- since you know them. I kind of remember some of
7 them, but -- for the NARD Board. Who were they?

8 MR. WORTMANN: I got along with Lee great. We had
9 a good time together when we went and I still run into him
10 occasionally and we talk old times. The executive director
11 we have right now, I think, is the top of all that we've
12 ever had.

13 MR. BARR: Who else was in between Dean and -- I
14 was just trying to remember. Maybe it's not a big deal, I
15 just thought if you remembered.

16 MR. WORTMANN: I have a hard time remembering.

17 MR. BARR: I was going to get -- while you're
18 here, let's go over to the Aowa project and any other
19 projects kind of like that, if you want to kind of go into
20 that.

21 MR. WORTMANN: Aowa was, I thought, a great
22 project. And we had a hard time with a number of landowners
23 there, especially on the bigger projects. And we started
24 off, I think, with 120 structures on that and it finally got
25 cut back to 60, I think, about in half. And finally, the

1 last one was -- the biggest one was the Powder Creek
2 structure, there was a lot of opposition to that, but the
3 City of Ponca pretty much was a hundred percent in favor of
4 it and there were several businesses down along that creek
5 that said they were going to leave town if it was not
6 completed because they weren't going to be flooded again.
7 And that helped tremendously to get that project going when
8 they got behind it. I remember going down and testifying at
9 public hearings of why I thought it should be built.

10 MR. BARR: How many bigger reservoirs did you have
11 on that Aowa?

12 MR. WORTMANN: There's really only two big ones on
13 it. The first one, one of our board members, George
14 Schulte, owned the land and was a hundred percent in favor
15 of it, and I think he donated the easement to that structure
16 and it's a pretty good sized bin that he built on his
17 property. And that was one of the things that I stressed
18 when I testified at those hearings, that, you know, you had
19 guys like George that donated his land and really believed
20 in this project, and I think we owed it to him and people
21 like him to complete it and to get it done, to do what it's
22 supposed to do, and it does do that. Those old P.L.566
23 projects were very worthwhile projects.

24 MR. BARR: Did you have any others besides the
25 Aowa in this NRD?

1 MR. WORTMANN: That was the only -- and the Beaver
2 Antelope, and they discontinued that one.

3 MR. BARR: Did they do some farm dams or anything
4 in the Beaver --

5 MR. WORTMANN: We built a lot of -- road dams were
6 really popular at one time and that was the place to spend
7 money. You know, you could get more people involved and
8 more political subdivisions involved, and we built a lot of
9 road dams and they are really good. The County got rid of
10 their bridges and they supported us a hundred percent on
11 those.

12 MR. BARR: This is a technique that I think NRDs
13 may have started as I recall. I don't know if it was in the
14 Lower Big Blue district or which one.

15 MRS. WORTMANN: Roadside?

16 MR. BARR: One of the interviews, somebody
17 mentioned that.

18 MR. WORTMANN: It's possible.

19 MR. BARR: We can go back to -- we were waiting
20 for you to get back to talking about the Wau- --

21 MRS. WORTMANN: The Wau-Col?

22 MR. BARR: Wau-Col.

23 MRS. WORTMANN: Yeah, it's the Wausau-Coleridge,
24 but it's Wau-Col. I think it's W-a- -- I tried to look for
25 the correct spelling, but I think it's that. You can go

1 online and check it out.

2 MR. BARR: Okay.

3 MRS. WORTMANN: Yeah, Wau-Col. They
4 came -- Coleridge came and said that they needed water in
5 Belden and Randolph, one other community down there, and the
6 only place that had water, that would use, was Wausau, so
7 they built the -- put the thing at Wausau and then they
8 tried to find users along the way to those other
9 communities, to service them with water, but a lot of the
10 farmers had a lot of water so they weren't really
11 interested. After the system has been put in now, we're
12 having requests to tap onto -- it costs a lot more when
13 you're doing it that way for them, but they are coming on.
14 Both those communities needed water. Their nitrate levels
15 were too high for them and they didn't have any water
16 available and this is their next best option. Well, we
17 didn't have that many in our district, but more in the other
18 districts, so they took the leadership role. And then Tom
19 and -- we have -- one of the members on the board is on
20 their committee and they've kind of helped them with some of
21 the logistics of putting it in.

22 MR. BARR: So, was quality part of the problem?

23 MRS. WORTMANN: Yeah, the quality of water was the
24 problem because those communities just didn't have good
25 drinking water.

1 MR. BARR: Jumping around here, going back to the
2 early years at the time you were first elected, how did the
3 NRD get organized and -- with any issues involved there?
4 How did it get -- kind of get started?

5 MR. WORTMANN: Well, I don't know, they went
6 down -- a couple of the old soil and water conservations
7 district directors went down to Lincoln and interviewed this
8 young kid just out of college and hired him in a hotel room
9 down there in Lincoln, and Tom -- that was Tom Moser and he
10 came up. And we really struggled the first few years trying
11 to get to know what was going on. We rented an office and
12 then, you know, we had lots of issues with the building, the
13 roof leaked, and we rented another one, and then I think in
14 '91 we finally built our own building.

15 MRS. WORTMANN: You went down from board members,
16 too. Initially, you started with more board members than
17 what we have now.

18 MR. WORTMANN: Well, we did. We started -- I
19 think our board -- our first elected board was 17 members
20 and then we went down to 13, and now we're down to 11. I
21 ran seven times and was never opposed. It's hard to get
22 people to be on the board because, when we first started, we
23 were not paid, it was volunteer, and then we went to \$15 a
24 meeting and I think we're up to, like, \$70 a meeting now.
25 It was -- you had to love it to be in it, I mean, because it

1 wasn't a thing that made you rich. But they have
2 done -- the NRDs are looked at by every state in the union
3 and they all wish they could be that way, but none of them
4 will change.

5 MRS. WORTMANN: Well, they can't. It's too --

6 MR. WORTMANN: No one has taxing authority except
7 Nebraska and we're friends with some of the South Dakota
8 directors up there and they said, "Gee, what we couldn't do
9 if we had some money." I think Nebraska is miles ahead of
10 everybody else and they all know that.

11 MRS. WORTMANN: I think those who developed and
12 thought through the process to develop the system similar to
13 this or what we have were very thoughtful for the future.
14 Even those people -- those guys on the board that started
15 the board were all very conservation-minded. They love
16 their farm. They knew they had to preserve it. And those
17 are the ones who stuck with the whole thing. If we wouldn't
18 have had those forbearers of doing that, we wouldn't have
19 what we have today.

20 MR. BARR: Some of the leadership came from this
21 area, actually.

22 MRS. WORTMANN: Well --

23 MR. BARR: We had a governor from the general area
24 who had been working there and we had a state legislator.

25 MRS. WORTMANN: Jules Burbach was one.

1 MR. WORTMANN: Yeah, yeah.

2 MR. BARR: Do you want to comment a little on any
3 of those guys or any of the other people that might have
4 been involved?

5 MR. WORTMANN: I really wasn't -- I knew what was
6 happening, but I wasn't really involved in any then.

7 MR. BARR: Oh, okay.

8 MR. WORTMANN: I remember them talking about the
9 Burbach amendment and all that, you know. Governor Tiemann
10 was from Wausau over there and Warren Patefield was another
11 one that was -- Warren was the chairman of our board and --

12 MRS. WORTMANN: Well, he was chairman when you
13 hired Tom, wasn't he?

14 MR. WORTMANN: Yeah.

15 MR. BARR: And he was chairman of the Soil and
16 Water Conservation Commission at some point.

17 MR. WORTMANN: Right.

18 MRS. WORTMANN: But he was dedicated, totally
19 dedicated to conservation work.

20 MR. BARR: Oh, yes, yes.

21 MR. WORTMANN: And I remember when we were at a
22 meeting in Columbus, at a State Association meeting, and he
23 took me aside and he told me, he said, "Jim, I've got
24 cancer," and he said, "I want you to be president of the
25 board when I'm no longer able to do that." So, I said,

1 "Well, okay, I'll do that." So, then I wound up being
2 chairman of our board for 12 years. I finally told Tom, I
3 said, "It's time to spread this around a little bit," you
4 know. But I was chairman all through the building of our
5 rural water district.

6 MRS. WORTMANN: And the start of the Aowa.

7 MR. WORTMANN: I went to Hartington a lot of times
8 to sign papers and stuff, but, yeah, it was great. Warren
9 was an awesome man.

10 MR. BARR: What other issues, besides the
11 watersheds and the rural water district, has the district
12 been involved in? (Was there) anything else either with
13 communities or with recreation or anything like that?

14 MRS. WORTMANN: Well, we're currently working on a
15 trail program down by the river. We have one phase done,
16 but we're running into lots of obstacles with that,
17 especially with the Department of Roads. When we started
18 with the project, we were approached by Yankton because they
19 were looking at replacing the bridge, that was years ago,
20 and I think we started this -- this project has to be eight,
21 nine years in starting because it was just when I we
22 first -- I first came on the board, and asked us if we would
23 do that. Well, yeah, there was other -- there were some
24 other people who wanted -- they wanted a bike trail and a
25 walk trail to go around the lake and the dam, so we thought,

1 "Well, that's one of our missions." Tom put -- we put
2 together a proposal and the State came back and said, "Why
3 don't you start on the far end instead of the first end
4 because we're -- they go under the bridge and we don't
5 know just -- the design isn't ready." "Okay, we'll do
6 that." So we started with that and it took us five years
7 before we even got that thing done. Then, when we started
8 working at the next project, then the Department of Roads
9 said, well, we can't use the right-away, we have to buy land
10 and put it on private property. Well, the second phase, we
11 got some -- the State said, "I think we can get some money
12 from the federal government, the funds" -- what are they --

13 MR. WORTMANN: Stimulus --

14 MRS. WORTMANN: -- "stimulus funds" and we can get
15 that done with that. Well, they heehawed around that a
16 couple years and finally, now, they are taking a little bit
17 of initiative in getting something like that started, and
18 they said we could go into the right-away with that. But,
19 in the meantime, houses were built along there and now
20 they're not real excited about the trail. They're not
21 excited about having that in front of their homes. We're at
22 kind of a stalemate right now. And they said if we don't
23 finish that project, then all the monies that we took for
24 the first phase, we have to repay back, which this is all
25 Department of Roads throwing the stink into this thing.

1 MR. BARR: Yeah, we dealt with the Department of
2 Roads when we built the Niobrara bridge and with the one
3 over east, too.

4 MRS. WORTMANN: But anyway -- we're not the only
5 ones dealing with Department of Roads with trails.

6 MR. BARR: Oh, I don't doubt it.

7 MRS. WORTMANN: I think Glenn Johnson has just
8 been pulling his hair. They're -- they have a -- we have a
9 resolution from the board that, if -- that they change that
10 policy because it was a policy just by the director who
11 wanted to be in control of what was going on --

12 MR. BARR: And which one was it that wanted to be
13 in control?

14 MRS. WORTMANN: Yeah.

15 MR. WORTMANN: Yeah. It's --

16 MRS. WORTMANN: But, anyway, we have -- there's a
17 new one and I'm hoping they can do it. If they don't, then
18 we're going to look for legislation to change that because
19 all the other states, their walkways, their bike trails are
20 all in the right-away, all of them in the right-away.

21 MR. BARR: Interesting. I didn't realize that.

22 MRS. WORTMANN: Yeah, they are all -- and they're
23 all over. You've got -- when we had a meeting down in
24 Lincoln and we sat in that little room and the director of
25 the Department of Roads was in there and he said, "We want

1 people out -- we want people safe so they don't get hurt, so
2 that's why we don't want them in the right-away." And I
3 said, "Safe?" I said, "How many cars run off the road
4 hitting people and how many people are on the roads right
5 now where they're not safe and there are no trails?" I
6 said, "It doesn't make sense."

7 MR. BARR: When this legislation was being
8 prepared, Gayle Starr and Warren, and Doug and I, met with
9 Governor Tiemann. And Tiemann had just met with the Roads
10 Department director, I can't think of his name right now.
11 And he said, "You know, when I got elected governor, I
12 thought there was one state government, but I found out
13 there are three. There's the Department of Roads, there's
14 the University of Nebraska, and there's the rest of us."

15 MR. WORTMANN: Yeah, that's true.

16 MR. BARR: And dealing with Roads up here,
17 particularly on those bridges, was real interesting.
18 Senator Fisher's dad actually -- probably made the move that
19 actually let the Niobrara (bridge) really move ahead.
20 Originally, they wanted to do -- somebody wanted to do the
21 ferry. Well, they come up with all these kind of reasons
22 why they couldn't do a ferry. Well, that's what triggered
23 just doing the bridge then since they couldn't do the ferry.

24 MRS. WORTMANN: Uh-huh.

25 MR. WORTMANN: Well, you go back even further than

1 that, when they built Gavins Point Dam, everyone's
2 complaining now because it's filling up with sand from the
3 Niobrara. Well, I think originally the dam was supposed to
4 be above there.

5 MR. BARR: It was above the confluence of the
6 Niobrara River, but the town wanted it down there.

7 MR. WORTMANN: Exactly, and they had a --

8 MR. BARR: And, of course, that destroyed the
9 town.

10 MR. WORTMANN: -- they had a Senator Gurnsey down
11 there that pushed that and got it moved down there.

12 MRS. WORTMANN: Just politics. But, anyway,
13 that's what -- we're still kind of hobnobbing along with the
14 trail system. And we also help with some monies -- we've
15 got some monies set aside in our budget to help some of the
16 communities when they have a storm go through for repair
17 work, trees and whatever. We bought trees for replacement
18 for that. And other recreation -- some of the dams along
19 the Aowa now are -- they do a lot of fishing along there and
20 it's pretty primitive around there and we want to keep it
21 that way because we don't want to get into all the -- I
22 don't want to say rentals, but all the -- yeah, the rentals
23 for the spots and for all the -- any fees to charge for.
24 Right now, they can go in there and fish and it's pretty
25 nice.

1 MR. WORTMANN: Let me add one thing about this. A
2 lot of our board members are farmers and they -- their
3 attitude was, this was a farm program. And they -- when you
4 talk the trail, you know, they get very adamant about
5 spending money for a trail. Well, we have to remember that
6 there's a lot of people that live in town that pay taxes,
7 too, to the NRDs and they're entitled to some of the
8 benefits from that. And we still have a couple farmers on
9 the Lewis & Clark Board that don't think trails are the
10 thing to spend money on.

11 MRS. WORTMANN: They don't mind fishing, but --

12 MR. WORTMANN: But you talk to anybody in the city
13 of Omaha or Lincoln and ask them, "What does the NRD do?"
14 and they'll tell you, "They build trails."

15 MR. BARR: Yep.

16 MR. WORTMANN: And, to them, that's the most
17 important thing that the NRD does. And out here in the
18 rural areas, it's hard to get people to think that way.

19 MR. BARR: Any other projects or areas that we
20 haven't covered that you'd like to comment on or anything --

21 MRS. WORTMANN: No, but just --

22 MR. WORTMANN: I'll think of them as soon as you
23 leave.

24 MR. BARR: Well, yeah, but --

25 MRS. WORTMANN: Just -- we're coming to an era of

1 no Wortmann on the board.

2 MR. BARR: Well, okay.

3 MRS. WORTMANN: And that's probably -- let's see,
4 28 plus 12.

5 MR. WORTMANN: Forty-something.

6 MRS. WORTMANN: Forty years on the board. I
7 contemplated staying on, but I feel that it's always time to
8 rotate new members in. We have some new members on the
9 State Association Board and they've become awesome, awesome
10 board members, and they're a little younger. And I could
11 stay on, I'm not all that old, but in -- and I am the only
12 woman on the Lewis & Clark Board and I probably will be the
13 only woman on the Lewis & Clark Board because I really don't
14 think there are any women out there who have strong
15 conservation issues. I did ask one lady to run. This time,
16 we've got -- I think two of them are going to run, a guy and
17 a lady, for the board. Simply, because I'd like to have
18 another lady on, she's an (indiscernible) and she's
19 conservation -- but I don't think you're going to see that.
20 And on the State Association, too, we have -- there are
21 myself and one other --

22 MR. WORTMANN: Judy.

23 MRS. WORTMANN: -- Judy, and then one other is an
24 alternate, but that's all we have on the State -- I'd like
25 to have more because I think we bring a different dimension

1 to the boards and what they're doing and how they're doing
2 it.

3 MR. WORTMANN: Running for the NRD Board is
4 like -- a lot of people have one issue when they want to run
5 and they're running to push that issue. And the NRD is a
6 bunch of issues and, I mean, those people find those out
7 when they get elected that, "Gee, there is more to this than
8 what I was thinking." To give people the chains that way
9 is, you know --

10 MR. BARR: Well, just looking back on all this, do
11 you have any reflections on what --

12 MR. WORTMANN: I can throw this in, that I totally
13 enjoyed my 28 years on the board. Conservation has been a
14 love of mine my whole life, that I can remember. And I ran
15 for county supervisor and I got beat by nine votes, so I was
16 off the board, otherwise I probably would have stayed on the
17 board. But I also have a severe hearing problem and I was
18 going to the board and I couldn't hear all the conversation,
19 especially if two people were talking. And I was on the
20 State Association Board and that was another big reason why
21 I quit. And Mary Ann did a really good job after I was on.
22 She was the first woman president of the State Association
23 and is very, very well respected throughout the state,
24 actually.

25 MR. BARR: I don't want to prolong this, but if

1 you have other -- any other thoughts you'd like to mention
2 on anything in general, or thoughts about your --

3 MRS. WORTMANN: No. I think I learned a lot being
4 on the board and working with the district, and working with
5 the district people, and working with our local people. I
6 mean, I learned a lot. It was not a chore for me to work on
7 it. I don't think it was a chore for him either. I don't
8 think it was anything that we hated to do. I always looked
9 forward to going to the meetings and it was okay.

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