

THE CENTRAL ARIZONA PROJECT

Interview #9

Friday, July 6, 1990

RITCHIE: I thought today we could talk about the Central Arizona Project, which has to be one of the longest running legislative battles probably in the history of the institution. At least from 1947 to 1968, but even before 1947, it was an issue. I wondered if you could give me some of the background to it, and also your own role in the CAP?

ELSON: Well, to put it into perspective, from my standpoint, I heard about the Central Arizona Project when I was growing up, particularly during the '40s, and certainly when I came back with Carl Hayden. When I got back here, of course, we had been forced into the Supreme Court by California to determine the rights of Arizona diverting its share of the water under the compact, and under the Bolder Canyon Act and all the other things. So there wasn't much to do, other than the senator, because of his position, every time the Bureau of Reclamation came up for appropriations he always kept the studies alive and kept the thing going that way, getting ready for his day, when he'd be able to move on it. We had huge files going way, way back. Of course, Carl Hayden had probably forgotten more about the Colorado River than most people ever knew. He certainly was equal to Northcut Ely, Mike Ely who represented all of the southern California water districts, and who was a real shrewd, bright, and capable opponent, who actually was a native of Arizona. But I'm getting off the point.

We had I don't know how many file cabinets, it was just a continuation over the years. And the great thing about Carl Hayden, which came in very handy from my standpoint later, was the way he broke in his staff. You worked on everything, and when I came back in '55 and was released from active duty from the air force, almost immediately I started working on a combination flood control and another small reclamation project. So I got in on the ground floor to learn some of that. Of course, some of the job was you were supposed to read a lot of these files when you had spare time, just to get yourself acquainted with all that, which I really didn't have a chance to do because so much else was going on for our small staff.

I was always interested in water politics, mainly out West in those days—now it affects the country everywhere and they're getting a taste of what the West has always been like. But fights over water involve every segment of the community. It's just fascinating what people will do, and how life is spent fighting over the limited supply of water, which determine the destiny of regions and states. Up in the Interior Committee at that time there was a former reclamation official by the name of Goodrich Lineweaver, who used to give me a lot of background information, just from conversations, and I went out of my way to try to talk to some people like that. Also there was another man who was manager of the Welton-Mohawk Project that we brought back in a special capacity and had him up in the committee, a guy by the name of Gene Eaton, who was really knowledgeable on water. He was sort of scientific, very contemplative, deliberate, but a guy that I spent a lot of time with, as often as I could.

But in those early '50s I didn't really know that much, other than what I gathered indirectly as I worked on these other things, and from these various sources, and just because I was interested in the subject. Of course, we were always working on reclamation matters because of other projects in California and the West that we had an interest in just because they were regional matters and their affect on the Colorado River basin, the Upper Basin and Lower Basin. It seemed like half our time was spent with all the reclamation projects down around Yuma, the Welton-Mohawk always had problems, and the Yuma Mesa, and the Yuma Valley irrigation district. It was always on-going and you spent a lot of time with others, with the Indians, and up and down the Gila. What always amazed me was the incredible knowledge the senator had of all this, as well as any project anywhere in the country, mainly because of his position on the Appropriations Committee and his interest in developing water resources and power.

As the court case went on, we followed that. People would come in from our Interstate Stream Commission, and Central Arizona Project Association as they followed the law suit in San Francisco before Judge [Simon] Rifkind, who was the master in the case. We'd get briefings and I'd sit in on some of those, of how things were going. Of course, Arizona sort of reversed itself in the middle of the case, went to a different theory, and that caused a lot of consternation, but we weren't really directly involved in any of that. The state was fighting that through their legal counsels and the Stream Commission people. But after all the filings and when Judge

Rifkind's findings came down, findings of facts and conclusions of law, things started heating up. This was in the early '60s.

The senator was reelected in '62, and one of the reasons that he ran again—and probably the principal reason—was that he still very much wanted that Central Arizona Project authorized. He figured he had one more shot at it, and this was going to be it. I think that was the compelling reason, because he had done everything else. The only real reason for his seeking that last term was that he wanted to see Arizona prevail. He felt very confident that we were going to win the suit—no one knew how it would turn out.

My education really came about when Rifkind came down with his report. It was one of the most interesting documents that I ever read. I was really so well done, and thought out and tightly written, and in English language that you could understand. It was a masterful job. Arizona did win the suit, but the report explained all the conflicting water rights between the Indians, the Upper and Lower Basin under the compact, and went through all the history. It was just an incredible document, how he sorted out all the conflicting claims. It was one of the best basis, for someone like myself who was not an engineer, not a lawyer, to get a feel for all the competing forces, though I had been exposed to them internally on intrastate matters, working on reclamation particularly in the Yuma area, and I certainly had a working knowledge of all the people involved down in the Bureau of Reclamation in the Department of the Interior. That document did more to help me sort of see the big picture.

Some of the projects were authorized in the mid-'50s while I was around, particularly the California projects, because the senator was the type of man who would not use his power to hold up things until he got his. He was always a big believer in the development of the West and any region of the country. He was a resources developer of natural resources. And also an environmentalist, I might say, despite what might have been thought. But he did believe in multiple use, that theory. He was very practical and knew how to work out those solutions on environmental type matters. But starting with that document I really got heavily involved in trying to educate myself, because I knew his was going to be the biggest fight probably of Carl Hayden's whole career, certainly the one that he really wanted to see before he left the Senate.

Looking back on it, that was probably one of the best self-educating documents I've ever used to fit in everything else that I had learned. I would talk to these other gentlemen and the people in the Bureau and others, and got better acquainted with the people on our Interstate Stream Commission and the project association. Of course, we were elated when the decision came down, but we also knew that California and Northcut Ely would try some way to stop this through the legislative process, even though they had lost in the Supreme Court. What they couldn't accomplish in the court they would try to do the field of politics.

Once Rifkind's report came down, we were pretty sure the Supreme Court was going to buy his report. They weren't going to open it up and redo the whole situation. That's why he was appointed as a master. They had masters in many interstate disputes, and very rarely that I know of did the Court overturn or reverse something that a master had put together. So we were very confident, and when the final court decree came down it cleared the way for Arizona to go claim the use of its 2.8 million acre feet of water. Starting at that time I really got involved in working with some of our state people on strategies and what to do. Then, almost immediately it got tangled up in controversy.

As I look back, Carl Hayden knew exactly what he wanted to do. He felt that Arizona had proven its case, did everything that everyone had asked them to do, both in the Upper and Lower Basin, and we now had reached the point where he was entitled to move ahead with his project. And of course it was based on a High Bridge Canyon dam as the cash register—of course, in '56 you had Glen Canyon dam, which was the cash register for the Upper Basin and their projects, which was really built in Arizona at Glen Canyon. I was very much involved in that one, by the way, in that legislative fight. Also, we got the construction site located in Arizona at Page. When they had the coffer dams, the senator went down in a chopper even before the dam was built. We saw it and followed it all through. Then you had Hoover Dam and other dams on the Lower Colorado River.

Carl Hayden wanted to go with a simple Central Arizona Project. Well, Stewart Udall had become Secretary of Interior from Arizona in '61, during Kennedy's administration. As this thing proceeded from '62 into '63, we heard these rumbles that everyone was complaining again, California was complaining whether there was enough

water in the river, and immediately we got into the numbers game and hydrology, what was coming down, and the water that was passing through Glen Canyon, and the run-offs from the Upper Basin to the Lower Basin, and Mexican Water Treaty obligations. You had everything involved in this, international, interstate, the West. Then there was the suggestion that this ought to fit into a broader program, which really irritated the hell out of Carl Hayden, mainly because there was nothing incompatible with a simple Central Arizona Project to any regional plan. For California, though, it all became an argument over what to do about shortages in the river, and of course California who had been wasting so much water in the Imperial Valley and everywhere else wanted to guarantee in perpetuity for their 4.4 million acre feet out of the 7.5 that was to go to the Lower Basin. Arizona had 2.8 million acre feet and that was her fair share. I forget what New Mexico and Nevada had. Anyhow, we got into these early difficulties mainly over the shortage issues.

I remember, I think it was after the Rifkind's report and before the decree, we were working with two people at that time that the senator trusted very much. One was our state water engineer, who was also with the Interstate State Stream Commission, by the name of Bill Gookin. The other was at that time counsel, and was really the brains that turned Arizona's case around, in San Francisco, a guy by the name of Charlie Reed. On one of my trips to Arizona I met with them, because the senator wanted a whole bunch of strategy laid out for him. Charlie Reed was doing all the legal stuff in this outline that the senator wanted. Gookin was doing all the engineering and water supply and hydrology. And I was doing the politics. We had worked all this weekend, I don't know how long I was out there, and then we were coming back to Washington to brief the senator. We had all been up many, many hours, working late. I think we were all taking amphetamines, because we were really cramming to get this done, rewriting. But we pretty much outlined a program, which as I look back on it, even with the way the thing changed and everything else, it was pretty much the way it turned out. I know from my standpoint, the politics of it, I think I predicted pretty accurately and laid out what Carl Hayden pretty much pursued, and what he had explained to me what he wanted to do, and how he wanted to do it.

We came back to Washington—and the only reason I'm bringing this up is because there's a story that still sends chills up and down my spine. Did I mention this to you? We came back from Arizona, and Gookin and Reid were staying down at the Jefferson

Hotel. This would be 1963, I think. We got everything done, we briefed the senator but we were still having meeting and seeing people, and lots was going on, introducing the bill that the senator wanted. Gookin had finally gone back to Arizona, Charlie Reed stayed over a little longer, and I was meeting this particular afternoon with him at the Jefferson hotel. He was acting a little strangely. We were all tired, and I knew he had been on the wagon. He was a little wiry guy, cowboy, big thick glasses, wasn't very tall, 5'6 or 5'7, bowlegged, talked like a cowboy, his grammar, but had a mind like a steel-trap, just a brilliant attorney. He had these eyes, because of the Coke-bottle lenses, that made him seem like he was looking right through you. He was a tough little hombre. At one time he was a heavy drinker, so I guess you'd call him an alcoholic. But I was really fond of him, and had great respect for him, so did the senator.

We were meeting this afternoon, and he was really pissed off, or irritated with Stewart Udall, because he had come up with saying that Central Arizona had to be part of a regional plan. We all sort of felt that Stewart had sort of forgotten what he was when he was a Congressman and where he came from, and what we had all talked about long before he became Secretary of Interior. I've never seen it in print, or anyone mention this, I'm digressing I guess, the ulterior motive of why Stewart went along with some broader regional concept, even to finally what became what they called the Pacific Southwest Water Plan, which contemplated diversions from the Pacific Northwest into California or the Upper Basin, from different water exchanges, a very ambitious project but no engineering studies. It had been in the minds of the dreamers for years.

I felt, and I think Senator Hayden did, though we didn't discuss it much, that Stewart when he became a cabinet member, I think there was an understanding with President Kennedy: "Let's not rock the boat with anything that's going to cause a big problem with California, particularly southern California, at least until after the '64 elections." He didn't want Udall taking sides with his state of Arizona as opposed to California with their big electoral vote and Arizona with its tiny little one. I can't prove that, but it makes a lot of sense to me in retrospect. But it changed a lot of things, and I personally feel that there was something to that, and so did some other people whom I talked to.

I've never talked too much about the Central Arizona Project to anyone because it was such a traumatic experience for me personally. I caught a lot of hell from everyone when I was carrying out the senator's orders. I became a very, very controversial figure, not only in Arizona but back here among the delegation, in the Senate, in the Upper Basin—I think I got more press in Colorado than I ever received in Arizona over the years. This was mainly because everyone thought I was manipulating Carl Hayden, that he was getting older—and there's no question that as he grew older he gave me more and more authority, and he trusted me totally. And it put a big burden on me, because I had really no expertise in all this, other than what I had acquired through practical experience up here in the political field and what I learned as I went along. I used to spend nights reading, and coming over on weekends, and sitting in the office going over files, and meeting with people, getting educated as I was going along and as everything was coming up. But thanks to the senator and some of these people, I think I really had a good overall feel for what had to be done, what could be done, and where the old man wanted to go—meaning Carl Hayden—and who our opponents were and how they were going to play the game.

Anyhow, back to Charlie Reed.

RITCHIE: Right, you had started that "chilling story."

ELSON: Well, we were down at the Jefferson Hotel, had a suite there that faced out onto Sixteenth Street, and across the way was the Hotel 1500. I think I was talking to some woman across the street, but he was so mad at Stewart that he wanted to go have a meeting with him and let him know how he felt about a lot of matters, and particularly about his plan and why Stewart wouldn't issue a report on a simple Central Arizona Project, or get the Bureau to issue their feasibility study, which Stewart from the beginning refused to do, giving all sorts of reason.

This was late in the afternoon, and he finally got an appointment through Orren Beaty, who was Stewart Udall's number one man at the time, to see the Secretary about five o'clock, something like that. He went in and put on his best cowboy suit and boots, and got all spruced up. I was on the telephone when he came out. We had agreed that after he got back he would brief me on what happened, and I would wait for him to return, and then we'd have dinner, because he was leaving the next morning

to go back to Arizona. I think he was getting married again, he had gone through a whole horrible divorce, but he was marrying this other woman that week when he got back to Arizona. He came out of the bedroom and into the living room of the suite and went to the door and stopped. He said, "Roy," in a loud voice, "I am going to Nineteenth and F, aren't I?" I was talking on the phone, I knew he was saying something but I didn't pay too much attention. He repeated it at least two more times, same thing. Finally, he said, "[Expletive], Roy, I am going to Nineteenth and F, aren't I?" I put my hand over the receiver and I said, "Yeah, Charlie, yeah, I'll see you later." So he left. Shortly after that my conversation came to an end, and I hung up the phone and said, "Nineteenth and F? Christ, he's not even close to the Department of Interior. That's at Nineteenth and C." I didn't think too much more about that, because he had been there a thousand times probably during his career, and certainly he knew where the secretary's office was.

Well, he came back, and he was still fuming. Apparently they had a real shouting match and it was not very friendly. He briefed me on everything. When he briefed me we went downstairs in the Jefferson and sat at a little table, just as you go in the entrance. It was lovely place, and it still is. We were sitting at a table for two. We both order steak, salad, baked potato, all that, and he's briefing me. Our steaks come and we're eating, he's briefing me, and he's still mad. I looked up from cutting my food, and all of a sudden Charlie goes plop, his faces falls right in his plate. I thought, "Oh, my God!" My first reaction was he was having a heart attack. So I called the waiter and said, "Get a doctor, I think my friend's having a heart attack." The waiter comes over, big black man, I had known him from before, he said, "There's nothing wrong with him, he's just drunk." I said, "What do you mean? The guy's been on the wagon for years." He said, "Nah, you should have seen him in here last night." So I went over and felt his pulse. He was out, but his pulse was steady and regular. After awhile I asked the waiter, "Will you help me get him up to the suite?" Here's this little guy, wiry as hell but he couldn't have weighed more than a hundred and twenty-five, thirty pounds soaking wet. We carried him up to the suite, or dragged him up, it was like carrying a sack of cement and took him in.

In the living room there was a couch, sort of an extra bed, and we put him on that. The waiter left. I rolled him over, took off his tie, shoes and all that, and checked his pulse every few minutes. Finally I rolled him over on his stomach, after I got his coat

off, checked for dentures, all this other stuff, and put his hand under his face so if he did get sick and threw up he wasn't going to smother in his own vomit. I checked everything and called my wife. I said, "Would you come get me?" We had just moved over to Virginia. She drove in. I said, "I'll meet you downstairs in fifteen or twenty minutes." So I sat there with him and he was just breathing so well, I checked his pulse at least every two, three minutes, finally lowered the lights, but I left a lamp on near him in case he woke up and had to go to the bathroom or something like. The last thing I did was check his pulse one more time, looked at him real carefully. Left, went downstairs, told the guy at the desk, whom I had known for years, that he had to get this guy up by six o'clock in the morning. I said, "I don't care if you have to go up and open his door, he's got to catch this airplane because he's getting married." And I go to leave.

My wife drives up and I get in the car. I quickly said why I was detained a little bit. We hadn't gone a block before she said, "Wouldn't you feel better if you went back and checked on him for sure?" We hadn't gotten to K Street from the Jefferson. We turned around and went back up Connecticut, we had to come around to get in front of the Jefferson coming back down from the north, and pulled in. I went to the desk, and I said, "Give me the key, I just want to go check on the guy one more time." I went back upstairs. As soon as I opened the door I knew the guy was dead. I went over, same position I had left him in, hand under his face, not a sign of anything, but no pulse, nothing. I grabbed the phone right away and called the desk and said, "Get a rescue squad and an ambulance here right away." They were there within two or three minutes. It was about as fast as I had every seen a response. They came up and they worked on him for awhile, put oxygen and all that. I kept standing there and I said, "Is he still alive?" They kept saying yeah, but then they said, "We've got to get him to the hospital." They put him on a stretcher and started to wheel him out, but they took off the oxygen. I said, "Why did you take the oxygen off if he's still alive?" They said, "We've got to get him to the hospital," and they went wheeling out and said, "We're going to Washington Hospital Center."

They took off and my wife and I followed. By the time we got to the hospital, homicide was already there, because under D.C. law if there's a death in a hotel and all that you've got to go through all this stuff. Immediately I was being question about what happened, I went through the whole story, what happened during the afternoon

and evening. We were all going on the theory that it was a heart attack, and this detective said there would be an autopsy. After I left the hospital, I went back to the office and then I had to call the fiancée and all the people in Arizona that we had lost one of our key people in this whole Central Arizona fight. It was a horrible night, I don't know what time I got to bed, but I only had about an hour or so of sleep and came back in the office and was there early in the morning, answering phones and trying to explain to everyone what had happened.

About noon this same detective calls. The reception said that this detective was on the line. He said, "The autopsy ought to be finished, but do you suppose you could come out and identify the body? By that time we'll have the result of the autopsy." I said, "Of course." He said, "Do you know where the D.C. morgue is?" I said, "I don't think so." He said, "It's at Nineteenth and F, Southeast." I dropped the damn phone! Even as I tell it now, I still get chills going up and down my spine. He knew where he was going all right, because the Department of Interior is at Nineteenth and C, Northwest. It's one of those stories I think I ought to write up for *Readers' Digest* or *One Step Beyond*. But he was deader than hell.

When I went out to identify the body I went out in the senator's limousine. One of the senator's assistants went out with me. When we got out there we went to the wrong morgue, there's one out there for the hospital, and then there's the D.C. morgue, but we got there and identified the body. The assistant coroner was there. I said, "It was, of course, a heart attack, wasn't it?" He said, "Oh, no, he choked to death on a small piece of steak." That really killed me, because I did everything I knew how to do to prevent anything like that from happening. They theorized because there was no sputum, no moisture, nothing, no mark on the bedspread or anything, that he had started to get sick and it just came up and caught in his windpipe and that was it. I guess he had been hitting the booze and he was drunk enough that he just died. It made a nervous wreck out of me. So, we lost Charlie.

Anyhow, at that time Goldwater was on the Interior Committee and the senator was not. Then, I think it was about this time that they had another reorganization in the Senate. I forget which committee Barry went on, it might have been Armed Services, from Interior to Armed Services—wasn't there a major reorganization going then? This was about the same time that I had urged the senator to get on the Space

Committee. But Barry left the Interior. That really sort of upset the senator. It forced Carl Hayden to go on the Interior Committee. Now he sat on the Interior Committee, as a junior member of course, as well as the Appropriations chairman. He was a little disappointed in Barry that he would leave the committee right at that particular moment, but never said anything about it.

Senator Hayden's plan was to move this ahead as a simple project, because he thought he had earned over the years by helping everyone else that there was no reason why now he should not have his project. We did encounter California's opposition, which was mainly masterminded by Northcut Ely. They wanted these guarantees. Then the question of water supply came up. Then the Secretary and the Department of Interior had their own plans for a regional development. This played into the hands of Wayne Aspinall, who was chairman of the House Interior Committee. Then everyone started questioning the amount of water in the river that could be utilized. We had hearings, the senator forced some hearings even though we didn't even have the Bureau of the Budget report, or a Bureau of Reclamation report on the feasibility of the project. It should have been all done, they had done the studies, the state had contributed money.

Stewart and the Department for whatever their reason came up with this regional plan, and that delayed things and everyone started exploiting that. Then they came up with this Pacific Southwest Water Plan, with all its ramifications. Of course, this just irritated the hell out of Jackson, who was chairman of the Interior Committee and Maggie in the Pacific Northwest, because we were going to take their water in this five billion dollar scheme to move all this water down there, which you knew wasn't going to happen. And Carl Hayden looked at that as another delaying tactic. Of course California exploited all that, and the Upper Basin didn't want to see this develop either.

Then came the controversy over the dams, and Stewart and some of the other people were afraid of the environmentalists, led by [David] Brower and the Sierra Club, and the National Park Association, and the Arboretum, and all this, about the Bridge and Marble Canyon dams. We only originally went with the Bridge Canyon because that's all we really needed for that, but then everyone wanted to put in Marble for more cash revenues to develop a development fund. The senator was irritated very much about the so-called environmentalists because he was the father of the Grand Canyon

National Park and the Monument. I think I mentioned how he deliberately drew the boundaries of the Monument and also preserved these sites, knowing that someday this would be one of the best dam sites along the Colorado River, particularly Bridge, that it might buy some water into the lower reaches of the Grand Canyon National Park, about twelve miles, and the Park is about a hundred and forty miles from east to west. He had always contemplated that dam, and got irritated at some of the PR-type of actions that were taken particularly by the Sierra Club, who used pictures of the Grand Canyon that weren't even near Bridge Canyon dam to show how it was going to be destroyed.

Most people in the East and other places, everyone always said, "We're for the Central Arizona Project, *but*. . ." It was "but this," "but that." You don't need the dams, you can use a coal-firing plant, because we had fossil fuels in Arizona, low-grade coal, and then you went to nuclear energy and all these various alternatives. All of it meaning: "We like the Central Arizona Project, but we really don't want you to build it." That's what it narrowed down to. As things progressed, they got lots of allies along this way. Oh, God, it seemed like we were always fighting!

Then you had the salinity problem with Mexico, under the '44 treaty. Let me stop right there—I want to say something about the Rifkind report that I didn't when we were talking about that. If you read that, or you read any of the history, the legislative history that Rifkind used to justify his position was the record that Carl Hayden had made, about the Compact, and about the Boulder Canyon Act, and everything else. I mean, he just quoted him all over the place. Carl Hayden had preserved and laid down this beautiful legislative history, which was sort of the swing that Rifkind tied everything together with. He had such a clear concept of it. If you never looked at it, it's one document that's really worth reading if you want to know about what the fight was all about.

Then at the same time, because of these delays and other actions, there was tension between our power authority and the Arizona Interstate State Stream Commission, and the Central Arizona Project Association. The state wanted to finance Marble Canyon dam and bridge alone, you know, we're going to do it alone. Well, Carl Hayden said and knew that the odds of that happening on a river that flowed through so many states and was divided by interstate compact, it's a federal river, that for one state to

stick their own little project in the middle there, the odds weren't too good for that. But our power authority for whatever reasons were pursuing part of that, so there was not the unanimity that we wanted to have. They hired some engineers, did some studies, they were going to finance it by revenue bonds.

It caused some real problems, in fact, it was part of the strategy that I put in this memorandum way back, but Carl Hayden shocked everyone when he put in a bill taking away from the Federal Power Commission any authority to grant a license at Marble Canyon Dam. This was early on, back in '63. Well, that really just—Jesus, I never had so many irate calls, and so did the senator, about taking away from his own state the right to pursue their rightful things. We didn't press it, not at that time, eventually later in the '60s I think it passed and took the authority away. But we hoped it was enough signal to the Federal Power Commission, because California had also, after the Arizona Power Authority had filed for it, they also had filed an application. They wanted the power too, because southern California's power needs were growing so rapidly and of course they wanted the cheap power. They had an application down there too, and we didn't want either one of them to get a license. California could have afforded it a hell of a lot better than Arizona could, if they wanted to go it alone. So that caused consternation.

As I look back on it, even then there was never this unanimity that Aspinall and others insisted you have to have. We had to make peace with California and everyone else. The senator was really upset that he didn't get a chance to move it along and take his chances. If we had to make compromises to expand it, which we eventually did, into a broader regional bill, or for instance to take on the environmentalists, we never had a chance to fight an early battle. We were sort of convinced, the senator was, that we could have won if we had started out early enough, because they weren't that well organized, though they had been successful up in Echo Park and things like that. But he felt that he had a lot of Brownie chips that both sides owed him, even from California and the Upper Basin. That's why I give credence to this idea that nothing was supposed to happen until after '64 to begin with, because they had no plans, the Bureau didn't, the Department of Interior.

Then at the same time came along the salinity question. The State Department wanted to bypass sharing this water that was coming down from the Welton-Mohawk

down there in Yuma and the salinity content was very high. We had a big fight with the White House and the State Department on that. The guy who was ramrodding that was a guy by the name of Bob Sayre in the State Department, he later became an ambassador. He was pushing this and wanted to kiss Mexico's [expletive] at any cost and not make a big issue. Johnson was going down there to have meetings. The interesting thing about that, if you read the '44 treaty, and again Carl Hayden and Earnest McFarland made quite a record that the Mexican government would take water from any and all sources, whatever the content was, they never got into quality. The thing that was happening, even with the water that was being delivered to Mexico under the treaty, even though the salt content was high, they were irrigating more acres than they could rightfully use—not rightfully, but I mean could have successfully irrigated with that quantity of water. Something like 440,000 acres. The interesting thing about that: a lot of those lands, although they were operated supposedly by Mexicans, it was really Anderson-Clayton that had the biggest interest in all that and financed most of it. They were irrigating more 125,000 more acres and they weren't using enough water to leach, you know, to get the salts to drain through, so yeah they were salting that, but not so much as a result of our project. So we got into arguments over that. Then who was going to pay for it. Seems like we were fighting the whole world.

Then in our own delegation relationships were strained. I got the blame for a lot of that because they thought I was unduly influencing the senator to take such a hard stand. Part of the problem was aggravated because of the quarrels that our office, Senator Hayden's office, got into with Secretary of the Interior over patronage matters after he became a member of the cabinet. So there was a lot of resentments and political undercurrents there that added to this. Now, Mo, his brother, was on the Interior Committee. We had John Rhodes over there on the Appropriations Committee. I didn't, and I'm not sure the senator did, although he always respected Stewart, but we didn't quite trust Stewart as secretary because he was supposedly Secretary of the Interior for the whole nation, and he was taking the high road while we were down there trying to look out for the interests of Arizona. I sort of felt, though it never really came up, that when we had some of these conferences that they next thing I'd know Stewart would know everything that had happened at the meeting, from either his brother telling him or something like that. So a lot of things, particularly on some strategy that the senator had in mind, we didn't feel that we could share as openly as we should have been able to, had there been a greater sense of trust—and I'll take my

fair share of the blame for that because I really didn't trust what was going on. All the senator could see, and I could see, was just further and further delay if we were going to have these studies. And everyone was trying to blackmail us, from the Upper Basin, it was just a nightmare going on all the time.

I know that some of the early memoranda that we did got to people. I had been too candid, I know, on the politics of some of mine. But I think as it turned out in the long run it might have been beneficial because in that memorandum on the politics of what should be done I had made all sorts of recommendations about what projects he could cut, on what justification there would be for him, in the Upper Basin and in California, it just went through all through a list of retaliatory actions that he could take in the Appropriations Committee and other places if we didn't get the type of cooperation he felt entitled to. And I'd sort of documented it with how he had helped bring these projects about, and where they were, and all the other things. The information was there, what we were going to do, but we were frustrated in a lot of it because of the getting into this bigger plan. I've always wondered what would have happened had the old man had had a chance to just pursue—because there was other ways that we could have brought pressure on Aspinall in the House. Carl Hayden always knew that he could get the bill through the Senate at will, anytime he wanted to. Scoop was just wonderful in all this. Of course, he was looking out for his interests, but he also wanted to see that Carl Hayden got his long-sought project, just because of the respect he had for him. We always were outnumbered in the House by the California delegation and others, so we always knew the battle was going to be over there.

Then they started playing games with us, both California and Aspinall, about "you've got to do this," "you've got to do that." Then we started getting heat from our own delegation and people at home, "Carl Hayden, use your power, let's move this along." We did move it along. Then Aspinall announced he wasn't going to hold any more hearings, and nothing was going to happen. In the meantime, Kennedy had been assassinated, Johnson was now president—that's when we worked out some of the salinity problems at that time. I should tell you about the call from the president over the salinity problem, which is sort of funny, but that's for later.

The senator got lots of pressure to move it along, even though the House wasn't doing it. We were successful in putting the monkey on the House's back. We wouldn't

do anything until they reported out a bill, because eventually we agreed to giving California some sort of guarantee in times of shortages for their 4.4. But as the price for giving that, the senator insisted that the House had to send a bill over to the Senate, and that was incorporated in a bunch of legislation.

Well, as I say, the battles that went on within our own delegation, and then of course in '64 I ran. The senator trusted me totally, but I always felt at a disadvantage. You were dealing with people who were experts, supposedly, in this area, and I knew the trust that the senator had in me. I was sort of his chief negotiator in all these things. During that whole time of the '60s, only once having anything to do with the Central Arizona Project did Senator Hayden and I get at cross-purposes, where I was taking a different direction that he was. In one meeting that he was attending, and I was taking the position which he had told me to take at this other meeting, and was very successful at mine, and here he was meeting with [Thomas] Kuchel or Scoop or someone and he gave away some things that put me in just a horrible position with everyone else. So when he told me what he had done, I said, "Jesus Christ, you can't do that. All your strategy has worked so far." He thought about it a little while and said, "You're right." And instead of his bringing me around to his position, he went back and said, "No, I can't. You're going to have to release from that. I can't do that, at least not now."

Out of all these wild sessions that went on, and meetings with the governor of California and his people and our own governor, anything that I did, I did in his name, which is where a lot of people made mistakes. Stewart Udall would have Floyd Dominy, who was then head of the Reclamation Service to go over to see the senator. The senator really liked Floyd Dominy, and thought he was a hell of a commissioner. A big [expletive], womanizer and all that, but he was a hell of a commissioner of Reclamation. But he used to go over and see the senator at Stewart's orders, because they thought I had too much influence on the senator, to bring him around the other way. Well, what they didn't know was that the next morning Carl Hayden would come in and tell me the whole story. There wasn't a thing that I did during all that time that wasn't with the approval of the senator, or he didn't know about.

All I was doing was assuming a lot of the details. I was his hatchet man, I was his negotiator, and caught a lot of hell for it because they didn't think this was what the

senator really wanted. We had so many conversations about it, and before we'd take any steps affecting anyone in any state, we had pretty much gone over it pretty bit and had lengthy discussions about it, particularly on the weekends when it was quiet and you had time to sit down and map the next strategy. I caused some people some real harm, like Bill Gookin, the state water engineer. The senator really thought he was very fine, and when the set up a task force back there and brought all these people back to help with it, Bill Gookin was one of the ones that we relied very heavily on for engineering stuff, and then we worked with the other attorneys, but we had our own internal stuff. I say it was just such a nightmare of stuff going on.

Aspinall was a tough hombre. He wanted some of his projects eventually included the in the regional plan. But we always found, though I admired his talent and he was always a gentleman, but Northcut Ely—Mike Ely—was really the thorn. We could see his hand, which he of course would deny, but you could spot Mike's stuff all the time. He was going to win that way what he couldn't win in the court. We went through I don't know how many battles, but the senator did trust governor [Edmund] Brown, Senior. We even got into trouble, having discussions with him, with our own delegation. I particularly got into some real difficulties with him, working with two of his people, [Russell] Sprague who was California's representative here in Washington at the time and later became the head of the FDIC, and another person who interestingly the state of Arizona hired, a guy we were working with from California by the name of Wes Steiner. We hired him as our state water engineer after the project was authorized, which I thought very strange. Another guy, who was a classy individual, by the name of Abbott Goldberg, who was one of the assistant state attorneys for California. A gentleman, a man of his word, a very bright guy. The senator trusted him.

He also trusted Governor Brown, but again Brown only had limited room to maneuver too. We had some very good negotiations with him, although we were criticized by our own state and our own people. Actually, I was pulled out of dental appointment once where they ordered me not to even have discussions anymore with Brown. Of course, these were unofficial meetings. As far as Senator Hayden was concerned, they were going to be official if we worked out some things that he could live with. So he really didn't give a damn at that point what the Stream Commission said, or our own governor or anyone else, at some of these junctures. That's how bad

it had gotten. When they pulled me out this one time and ordered me, I said, "Look, I don't give a [expletive] what you say. I'm not working for you. I'm working for Carl Hayden, and what Carl Hayden wants me to do, I'm going to do." I think I walked out of the goddamned place. Oh, then they took Bill Gookin away from us and sent him home—well, no, I think we prevented him from being taken away, the senator got on the phone, but it was a nasty, tense time.

I should tell a story about Governor Brown when I ran in '64. We had had some negotiations with Governor Brown and his two people. In fact, I think I made a trip to Sacramento with Bill Gookin and one of the senator's other aides that I brought back here, a guy by the name of Ed Davis, who was an attorney and my chief assistant. I remember when we went on that trip to Sacramento, in one of the early negotiations with Governor Brown's people, they had just completed their Natural Resources Building in Sacramento. It must have been nineteen floors. They had three floors of computers. This was for their state water plan and all the other stuff. They'd come out with all these flow charts and computer print-outs of all the water flows from every dam and reservoir, and we were up there, myself and Ed David, and our water engineer who had a circular sliderule. This was how we were doing our calculations! I looked at that and said, "This is a little overwhelming to say the least." [laughs]

But back to Brown coming over in '64 when I was running. When I heard that he was coming into the state, I had already won the Democratic nomination, and he was coming in to campaign for the Democratic ticket. I found out about it and I called the state chairman, and Goddard who was the gubernatorial candidate, and Mo Udall, and I said, "What the [expletive] are you guys thinking about? Here we have been fighting California for forty years and you're bringing in the governor to campaign for us? You've got to be out of your gourd!" But they had already invited him and it was too late to withdraw the invitation. So we did the next best thing from my standpoint in the campaign, we got him to put into his speech some nice things about me, and how we had worked together negotiating, and hoped that we would get this all worked out. I couldn't have written it any better if I wanted an endorsement.

So he comes to Phoenix for a luncheon. All the press is there, the place is packed. I'm sitting at the head table next to him. Now, mindful by this time I had all these law suits against me, the call girl law suit filed against me and everything else. Well, he

gets up to make his speech and he starts ad libbing. He says, "When Roy picked me up at the airport this morning and we were driving into downtown Phoenix, I noticed one of his billboards. It's a nice striking billboard and I liked it, but I said, 'Roy, why don't you try the slogan that I used when I ran to be attorney general of California,' and if any of you are familiar with California political history you'll know that I was the only Democrat that won on a statewide basis that year, and from that position I went on to become governor of the largest state of the union." He went on, "Roy said to me, 'Governor, what slogan was that?'" And there was this long pause, and he said, "Roy, use: Women of Arizona, Wake Up With Roy Elson!" Well, you could have heard a pin drop in the place [laughs].

Here my wife was sitting at the head table with me, and all of a sudden I couldn't hold it any longer, I just broke up with great laughter and the whole place came apart, just a roar came up of laughter. Well, he thought he was just funnier than hell. He went on and gave his speech, and later that afternoon we flew down on his private airplane to Tuscon, where he was going to make an evening speech. I said, "Governor, you probably know that I didn't want you in this state in the first place. I'm the only one of the Democrats that really objected to your being here. And now I know why. I hope you don't repeat the same story." And then I told him what had happened. He said, "Oh, God, why didn't some one tell me?" [laughs] And years later I saw him, this was in the '70s when I was a lobbyist for the broadcasters, I ran into him out in LA somewhere, in some restaurant, and we were talking about it. We both laughed about it then, but it wasn't so damn funny at the time. Anyhow, where were we?

RITCHIE: We were back when Brown was still governor and you were engaged in negotiations. This would have been around 1966.

ELSON: Actually, they started back before that and then they went on. Both his people, Steiner and particularly Abbott Goldberg, he's now—I think he made him a state judge later—but he was just a really fine man, and very, very, very bright. We worked pretty well with him, but still our fight was with southern California and the irrigation districts there, in the Imperial Valley and the metropolitan water districts and all that. But we knew we had to get the House to move something. Things started hitting me—and now I'm confused of when some of the time events were, when these things happened.

The critical period of really moving and finally getting off was from the '65 to '68. We eventually had to guarantee California their right in times of shortages, which the senator only very reluctantly did. Then all the pressure started building up for not using the Bridge Canyon or Marble Canyon as the cash register for the project, or the development fund, deferring that. A lot of it was due to the pressures that were building up from the groups that I mentioned, the so-called environmentalists. And what just boggled my mind, outside of using a bunch of phony statistics and propaganda, was their advocating these steam plants as one source on the Navajo Reservation, and then nuclear energy later. Of course, you realize that hydropower is the cleanest, cheapest power, because you can turn those generators off and on and it's not a pollutant.

I remember going to a meeting in Stewart Udall's office where they were seriously talking about abandoning the dams and using this coal-fired plant on the Navajo Reservation, and how it was going to benefit the Indians. I said, "I don't understand. You're supposed to be one the great environmentalists"—there were only three of us in the office, maybe four, maybe Dominy and Eddy Weinberg who was then with the Department solicitor's office, maybe Orren Beaty, and Secretary Udall, maybe it was a bigger meeting than that, but I just remember saying, "I just do not understand your position at all as an environmentalist, or any of the other groups, because you're advocating putting a huge steam plant on this reservation that's going to pollute the entire [expletive] southwest. And you're supposedly an environmentalist? And the few jobs that the Navajos are going to get, you know they're going to get screwed with the type of contract you're going to have with them. It's not going to amount to that much. And they're going to be tearing up the countryside, because they're just shoveling the coal with bulldozers, it's lowgrade ore." And sure enough, that's what's happened. Christ, that's what they're bitching about now. The smoke from that powerplant is corrupting the Grand Canyon, and the whole damn thing.

But eventually we had to use that approach, and again the senator was really, really bitter, though he never said too much openly about it, about losing particularly Bridge Canyon dam, and Marble. He already had Glen Canyon on the upper reaches of the Grand Canyon, and you had Hoover down at the lower end, and Bridge was only going to block the waters for a few miles in between. The power that they could have generated, and clean power—if he were alive today I'm sure he'd still be irritated with

them. Then of course, now we do have nuclear power, one of the biggest plants in the country at Palo Verde, that hasn't been working yet, and it's only about seventy-five miles upwind from Phoenix!

RITCHIE: The Sierra Club lost its non-profit status with the IRS about that time because of their lobbying.

ELSON: Yeah, I think it was a little later, wasn't it?

RITCHIE: About '67. But it was directly from their lobbying about the Grand Canyon. Did Hayden have anything to do with that?

ELSON: No, we did not. I thought about it. I know I suggested it internally in our own office and to the senator, but he'd have no part of that. I think a lot of people in their various working groups back here—I forget exactly how that came about—but certainly the senator wasn't involved, though he didn't like their tactics, and we did urge something to counteract them, getting a publicity campaign going of our own. I know the taskforce agreed with that, so did John Rhodes and Mo Udall. I'm probably the one in our delegation at the time—because we even had trouble with first Duke Senner from northern Arizona and then later with Sam Steiger. But the guy who was probably the most moderating person in our delegation, from the senator's standpoint, and the one that he trusted, was John Rhodes. I worked well with him. I had more tensions with Mo and some of the others. I always felt, particularly after I had lost the election, Fannin was back here and it was very difficult to work with him. He made it sort of difficult. Fannin really didn't know that much about water, even though he had been governor and was on the Interior Committee.

See, what the taskforce and everyone else in the delegation knew back home, as I mentioned in our last interview, I think, was that Eugene Pulliam, who ran those two big newspapers that permeated the entire state by this time, that he really believed, and no one could convince him otherwise, that Carl Hayden was the man who should call all the shots, and that he knew more about the Colorado River than all of them combined. And he put me in the same category. It wasn't justified, but he felt that way. So they all knew that we had this sort of hand, that if anyone got out of line that we could get an editorial written or some pressure brought to bear, if people were going

in different directions. I can't really think, except maybe at the bill signing, that there was ever a lot of unity among the Arizonans, where we were supposed to be unified. Fortunately, in a water fight, every other state's the same way. They're fighting among themselves and then they're fighting everywhere.

So, though on the surface we looked like we were all getting along fairly well, there was always this tension underneath, because you had a Secretary of the Interior who was from Arizona, who felt he should be leading it, though he was also supposed to be secretary and giving an equal hand to all the other principles, and felt that he was in a better position than Carl Hayden. It always bothered me that here Carl Hayden sat on top of the Appropriations Committee, was chairman of the subcommittee on Interior matters of the Appropriations Committee, was on the Interior Committee, had all this respect up here in the Senate, and Stewart had to come up and beg for everything that he wanted from him, that why we couldn't ever get that report out initially. That gets back to my own theory on why we weren't going to get one early on, it was for political reasons rather than the disharmony in the Upper and Lower Basins and Arizona versus California.

Everyone had said that Carl Hayden couldn't be tough. Well, I think everyone found out later that he could be very tough and could be vindictive. When I look again back on that whole '60s period, from '62 on, again the senator had this long view, he could be patient, but he also knew he had only one term. Of course, any day he could have dropped dead, so he was playing a pretty risky game, but he still felt that he knew what he had to do. So everyone accused me of getting him to be mean, or threaten, but I didn't. I know I helped draft a lot of letters that he wrote that were sort of out-of-character from what people were used to getting. But he read every word, and made some beautiful changes, and signed them all. It was never my signing his name on any of those letters that went either to the Secretary of the Interior or anyone else. When we got into '67 and cutting off funds for the Frying Pan-Arkansas, to get Aspinall's attention, or even attaching the entire Central Arizona Project and a small regional plan to the Senate Appropriations bill. And we had done our headcount. We had the votes and we could have passed that. John Rhodes and the senator and I went to see old Mike Kirwan, I think I mentioned that meeting, during that later period, to set up the stage if we wanted to run it by on the appropriations way. And under the rules, when we were checking out how we would handle that, we could have gotten a vote on

the House floor and bypassed the Interior Committee. So as the time got shorter and shorter, he played some very, very tough games.

RITCHIE: That was late '67, when Aspinall wasn't going to hold hearings anymore.

ELSON: Right, he called them back. But again when you think of that whole history—I call it the CAP, but you had a lot of other projects authorized in that whole thing—it's probably the last big, major, huge reclamation project that Congress will ever enact and pass into law. When I look back through the whole history of the Central Arizona Project, and from what I knew about it, and then being so much involved in leading up to its enactment, it was one of the most exciting, interesting, all-encompassing events. And what it made it unique for me, and I can understand why people didn't trust me, because the senator wanted me to run again, and I did run again in '68 while all this was going on. It almost made it impossible.

When I look back, I don't know how I got through it because I was physically always exhausted. I'd be going to Arizona and coming back, going again. In some of that period in '68 when I was out trying to campaign and get ready, and of course Barry was not in the Senate at that time and knew he was running. The senator wanted me out in Arizona campaigning and everything seemed to be going all right. I'd be back here for a week and then go back to Arizona. Every time a problem would come up, I'd get a call from Ed Davis or someone, "The senator wants to see you." Though he would say, "Go," I'd just get out in Arizona, and he'd say, "Get Roy, I want him back here." By then, I had been involved in every piece of stuff that he had wanted done and helped put it together, so it was an extremely difficult time. I'm sure it was difficult for other members of the Arizona delegation as everyone else, because I was suspect, they knew I was campaigning—no more than they should have been as members of United States Congress, but being a staff member it was a little different. So that whole period was extremely difficult for me, and a lot of people thought I was doing it all for the publicity and for political purposes, some of the things that the senator did.

I'll take a lot of credit for urging very strong actions, and he'd been urged a lot of times, but he was the one that made the judgment of when the timing was right to

do it, when he thought it was right. But it still bothered him that he had to give up more than he wanted to give up, because he never really had a chance, because of other external politics that didn't make it possible for him to move it along the way he wanted to move it along. I don't know whether we would have gotten it enacted any faster, but I don't think we would have had to give up as much as we had to give up eventually, because I think all along he knew that some point along the line he might have to take some actions that were out of character for his reputation, the way people knew him. But people tell me who have seen some of those letters that some of them were really tough, [laughs] they were nasty.

And Aspinall kept—I remember on the Frying Pan-Arkansas, we were talking about shortages, how much water was going to flow to the Lower Basin, so it got very simply, if there's not enough water to come to the Lower Basin, there sure as [expletive] isn't enough water to go through the turbines at Glen Canyon Dam, and there sure in hell isn't enough money to pay it off, so why keep continuing to build this project? Eventually, I felt Aspinall put himself on his own petard, so we had something to work there. There's no question that the senator was prepared to go to war then. He would have pulled out all the stops, from the fall of '67 through '68 when his term was over, he was going to cash in every Brownie point he had. I think everyone knew that there were a lot of people who were going to help him do that. Certainly Scoop did.

But we had problems with—you mentioned Clint Anderson, who was a power in his own right. I don't know how many times we bought New Mexico and Utah and were giving them little things here. It was a difficult time for me with Senator Anderson because he thought I was Paul Eaton, and Paul Eaton he thought had done something in the Appropriations Committee that affected New Mexico adversely and he was blaming me because Eaton and Elson, I guess, aren't too far apart. And Clint was very close to Stewart Udall, and there's no question that Stewart was painting bad stories about me and how I was unduly manipulating Carl Hayden, which was a myth that they were actually believing. To this day, I don't know whether they understand that Carl Hayden knew everything that was going on. He wasn't this senile old man that they wanted to make him out to be, and so did California, a lot of people tried to do that.

But even Clint Anderson and others, the whole West, and on his own committee, Ellender and the people from the South, they were all prepared to see that Carl Hayden—I'm convinced of this—that after all these years there was that much feeling, and you know this place as well as I do, there's not a lot of really genuine feeling about really wanting to help someone. They'll do it if it's in their own self-interest to. But I'm convinced that there was this outpouring that you could feel almost, that before Carl Hayden walked out of this Senate he was going to have that damn project, if it was the last thing everyone up here did. Even Tom Kuchel, who could put on the best damn show for home that I've ever seen, he wanted Carl Hayden to get his project. I think he even probably resented the fact that we had to give up so much to get it. I don't think he would have felt hurt had we won it without all the concessions that we ended up making to California and the Upper Basin.

It was the most exciting, fascinating period of time that I've ever been around. I'm sure there's a lot of things that I've forgotten, because as I mentioned at the beginning, after it was all over and I was down with the senator at the signing at the White House, when Johnson signed the bill, I felt that I had as much right as anyone standing in that room to say that I had a lot to do with helping get that project, mainly because of what I was able to do for the senator. But so many careers were ruined, people were in fights, friendships lost, that when it was all over and I lost the election to Barry, and that next year when I came back and figured out what I was going doing, I almost deliberately went out of my way to try to forget all the war that went on for that period of time. Just thinking about it, when you mentioned that you wanted to talk about it, I could feel the scars start opening up, and I feel bad about some of the things that were said and done, and the knife cutting, back stabbing, and all the other things that went on, and the people that got hurt in the process. Even now I'm still shaking a little bit, thinking about some of them. And I really admired a lot of the people who were involved, and had a great deal of respect for a lot of them. But, as I say, I can't think of one subject that brings together, outside of war, more emotions, more controversy, more things affecting every part of a civilized society than a fight over a bucket of water.

RITCHIE: Well, I notice that the tape is about to end. It's twelve o'clock, you have a lunch. And I have a lot of questions I'd like to follow up on this. But as a case study this is spectacular insight into all the things that go on up here.

ELSON: Oh, really?

RITCHIE: I always think about those political science flow-charts that say this is the way a law is passed, which bear no relation to reality. And here we're discussing decades of fighting and all the complications that go into it. It's a fascinating story.

ELSON: And when I thought about it last night, because it came up with this reporter who is staying with me, I said that what from my standpoint made it so wonderful, outside of also having the chance to run for the United States Senate twice, was the interplay of all the human events and the people, because it always gets down to making judgments about people and their motivations, and analyzing their strengths and weaknesses, and trying to manipulate that to achieve your goal.

End of Interview #9