

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

KATHERINE JABS



**STATUS OF INTERVIEWS:
OPEN FOR RESEARCH**



Interviews Conducted and Edited by:
Brit Allan Storey
Senior Historian
Bureau of Reclamation



Interviews conducted–1996
Interview edited and published–2011

Oral History Program
Bureau of Reclamation
Denver, Colorado

SUGGESTED CITATION:

JABS, KATHERINE, ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS. Transcript of tape-recorded Bureau of Reclamation oral history interviews conducted by Brit Allan Storey, Senior Historian, Bureau of Reclamation, in Billings, Montana. Edited and desktop published by Brit Allan Storey. Repository for the record copy of the transcript is the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland.

Record copies of this transcript are printed on 20 lb., 100% cotton, archival quality paper. All other copies are printed on normal duplicating paper.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents i

Statement of Donation xiii

Introduction xv

Oral History Interviews 1

 Born and Raised in Hardin, Montana 1

 In 1974 Went to Work in the Secretarial Pool in
 Reclamation’s Regional Office in Billings
 1

 Earned a Business Management Degree at Eastern
 Montana College 1

 Moved into the Realty Section in Various Jobs . . . 2

 “. . . when they retired, I took over their jobs. I was
 doing both of their jobs. . . .” 2

 “. . . it *was* advertised, I think it was advertised as a
 5. I went into it, and while I was doing that
 job, I went up to a 9, because I kept taking on
 more and more work. . . .” 4

 “When the two realty specialists retired . . .
 management . . . would move me into that
 realty specialist job as a GS-9 . . . So what I
 told management was that I could compete
 with *anybody* . . . go ahead and advertise it a
 GS-11/12 and I would apply for it. . . . they . .
 . basically told me that I should be happy that
 I got a GS-9 because I was a woman. . . .
 advertised it as a 9 and I did not apply. It was
 that moment that I decided to leave that
 division. . . .” 4

 “. . . good years for me . . . I was excited . . . I liked
 Reclamation. . . I learned a lot. And what
 was really sad about the whole thing is when

I left, there was no one that knew anything about realty . . . and whoever they took in there now was a real novice and had to learn it from scratch. . . .” 5

Moved into the Program Division as a Budget Analyst 6

“ . . . I’m a person who likes numbers. . . . I was good at my job. I could see things that most people wouldn’t see, and it was an exciting time for me. . . .” 6

After a Couple of Years Moved to Washington, D.C., as Assistant to the Budget Chief 7

“ . . . I eventually became the budget chief for Bureau of Reclamation, and I was in Washington for about six and a half years. . . .” 7

Working in the Secretarial Pool in the Region in Billings 8

Worked on Electric Typewriters 8

Moved as a Secretary to the Water and Land Division 9

“ . . . I moved . . . and *became* a technician and started making decisions, I did have some problems with management. . . . going through college at the time and knew that I had the ability to manage or the ability . . . not to be where I was at . . .” 9

Reclamation Supported Her Going to College but Paid for Only One Class 10

“I just didn’t want to be where I was at. . . . wanted to be somewhere else, and I was willing to take the energy that it needed to do that. . . .” . . . 11

While Working for Reclamation Raised Three Children 11

“ . . . my daughter and I graduated from college at the same time. . . .” 11

Had a lot of energy “And a lot of passion. . . .” . . . 11

Evolution from Working as a Secretary to a Lands Technician	12
Moved over to Planning	14
Learning Lands While Working with Bob Stong and Merlin Archibald	14
“ . . . it was generally the realty specialist out in the field who dealt with people, and I only dealt with the paperwork. . . . ”	16
Merlin Archibald	18
Bob Stong	18
“He used to say that, ‘You realize, of course, that the irrigation districts could have title to their facilities after they’re paid, <i>any</i> time they want it, and all they have to do is go to Congress and get authorization to get title to their facilities.’ But the reason they didn’t is that we had a lot of free programs for them. . . . ”	19
“Now that we are in this initiative for a title transfer, it’s becoming a very complicated process, because we do have to go through NEPA to do that, whereas years ago it probably would have been pretty simple to do. . . . ”	20
When she changed divisions “ . . . they were . . . real mad. . . . And I could understand why. But I was mad at them, too, so— . . . ”	21
Move to the Planning Division	22
She Was Hired to Keep Track of Money Spent on Planning	22
“I went and I researched every single person who worked in that division and for the last two years where they charged their time. I did an analysis of that. Took me maybe two or three months. He was really impatient . . . ”	23
“What we ended up doing . . . was to start . . . a division charge, and I think that’s the first	

time it ever happened in Reclamation. The people who weren't working on a specific project now charged into a general expense, and that money was allocated to just his projects, GI projects. Since then it's become pretty common now for people to do that. . . .	
"	23
" . . . I <i>love</i> working with numbers. . . . I was really into my element, and that's why I was good at the job, because I <i>liked</i> what I was doing. You know . . . I sort of created the job. . . ."	25
Monitored Expenses During the Year and Helped Develop Budgets	25
"There was a clerk's job I was in for a year . . . That's the only job I didn't like working with Reclamation. . . ."	26
"Of course, I'm good with numbers. But I think it was more analytical skill that they needed, being able to take a lot of kind of nebulous things that were going on and put them together in something that people could understand. . . . it's an analytical mind that's important for a budget analyst. . . ."	27
For each person in the office I looked at how ". . . much they earned, how much they cost . . ."	28
In this study in the early 1980s "It seemed like we came up with an average of \$50,000 per employee. . . ."	29
"Things come up that have higher priority, something you'd rather be doing for a lot of different reasons. You simply . . . ask for a change of funding from here to there. . . ."	31
Moved from Planning into Programs	32
" . . . I was in charge of all the O-&-M budgets for the	

Great Plains Region.	32
Had Trouble Convincing One of the Project Offices it Was Going to Be Short about \$800,000 for the Year	34
In the End the Office Came up Short, but We Had the Money Ready to Cover the Shortage	38
“ . . . there was a time when the regional office used to nurse them . . . that’s one of the major changes you’ll see in Reclamation, the area offices, you know, like <i>I</i> now am responsible for my budget, and it’s up to <i>me</i> to monitor it. There’s nobody in the region that monitors my budget like they used to . . . ”	38
Regional Office Budgeting When She Was There	40
Sent to Boulder City on Special Assignment	43
Went to Washington, D.C., in 1987	44
“They were looking for a budget analyst from one of the regions. . . . I thought, oh, I’d never have a chance. But they were calling all the regions and asking if there was anyone who might be interested in coming to Washington for that job. It was for the assistant budget chief . . . ”	45
The Budget Job in D.C. Dealt with Many Different People on a Different Level than Regional Budget Work	46
“It was really exciting. I loved it . . . thought it was the greatest place in the world, and I really had fun . . . ”	47
Responding to Questions Raised During Hearings Before Congress	49
“ . . . generally we had about 250 questions from the members that needed to be added to the transcript. . . . ”	50
“So we went out then <i>to</i> the regions, and we only had	

three days to answer them. . . . had to go through water and science . . . Then it goes to the Secretary's office and then O-M-B. . . . It took a lot of work and a lot of tracking . . . If O-M-B made a change, for instance, then you'd have to go back and kind of have other people look at it, especially if it was a big change. So you had to really know a lot. There was generally three of us working on that. . . ."	50
"The hardest thing was . . . tracking it within Washington. . . ."	53
"I say three days, but . . . I think we took more like maybe five or six when it was all said and done. . . ."	53
Dealing with the Budget Process for Three Years at Once	54
Montana Area Office Now Has a Call Letter to Begin Preparing the 1999 Budget	55
Reclamation's 1998 Budget Is in the Department of the Interior and Will Go on to OMB	55
The 1997 Budget Is in Congress but Reclamation Worked on it Two Years Ago	55
Needs at Reclamation Change as the Budget Process Develops	56
A Resource Management Plan Is Needed at Canyon Ferry Dam, Powerplant, and Reservoir	56
". . . Reclamation somehow has not put high priority on resource management plans. But if we're going to be good managers, we need those. . . ."	57
Priorities Change over Time	57
Living and Working in Washington, D. C.	57
Work in the Area Office as Compared to Previous Jobs	59
Served as Budget Chief in Washington, D.C., for	

Two and One-half Years	60
Moved from Being Budget Chief to Being the Region’s Liaison in D.C. and Then Returned to Billings as the Regional Planning Officer	61
“I kept track of all the F-T-E [Full-Time Equivalent] for Reclamation when I was there in Washington. . . .”	61
Took the Liaison Job Thinking it Might Eventually Result in Her Coming Back to Billings . . .	63
Work of a Regional Liaison in Washington, D.C.	64
“One of the important things in that job is having connections out in the region. You really need to know <i>who</i> to call to get what you wanted. . . .”	64
The regional liaison job “was really one of the most boring jobs I had. It was the least challenging job I’ve ever had . . .”	65
“The planning officer job was vacant and Neil asked me if I wanted it. . . I did decide to take it. And I was only in there for three months and then he put me over here. . . .”	68
Changes in the Regional and Area Offices While Working in Washington, D.C.	70
Montana Area Office Manages Two Powerplants	70
Empowerment of the Area Managers	72
Being Involved in Reclamationwide Decisionmaking Takes Time Away from the Work in the Office	73
“. . . some area managers are getting deputies, because it’s a full-time job managing this here. . . . If you’re away . . . running off to different meetings doing whatever . . . away from your job here . . . you can’t concentrate	

on your job.” 74

“I think our office really should probably be in Helena . . . because Yellowtail is the only one that we have close. Most of our work is in the other part of the state. . . .” 75

“When I’m in the office, I like it better . . . I try to keep my traveling down to visiting somebody from the state or going to meetings, going just where there’s hot spots. . . . I traveled maybe 50 percent of my time, you know, sometimes, but that’s too much. You’re not gelling with your issues here when you travel that much. . . .” 75

“My goal is I really analyzed if I need to go or if I could send someone else, and I always try to cut down on it. . . .” 76

Between Attending the Regional Leadership Team Every Month, the Area Managers Meeting in the Region Each Three Months, Serving on Task Forces, as Well as Reclamationwide Meetings, Travel Is an Issue 76

To Get the Work Done in the Area Offices You Have to Work Long Hours and Some Offices Are Appointing Deputy Area Managers 77

“One thing about this job is you need to know everything. . . . a new initiative comes down, you *have* to take the time to read it and to know what it is, and then you give it to your people. . . . You don’t have much time during the day . . . So you have to do it before, early in the morning, or your have to do it late at night. . . .” 78

“I’ve *learned* to make real wise use of my time. I only generally now deal with something once. . . . I don’t need to go into depth on every issue . . . And that’s helped me on my time

management.”	79
Issues the Area Manager Has to Deal with	79
Decisionmaking must Take the Public and its Views into Account	81
“ . . . we start this title transfer initiative for . . . Lower Yellowstone Irrigation District. . . . We’re starting the NEPA process. . . . all of a sudden there’s this Sportsmen Club . . . <i>fighting</i> this initiative to turn title over to the irrigation district. They are fighting all initiatives in Montana to turn public land into private. . . .”	82
Thoughts Regarding Title Transfer	83
“ . . . talking about our more complicated projects . . . our reservoirs, it’s gets to be a pretty complicated . . . it’s probably going to take . . . six years. . . .”	83
“ . . . some of them really want title. They don’t <i>want</i> to deal with Reclamation anymore. . . . But, the liability is an issue with some of them. They’re afraid that it might cost them more. If you’re going to get rid of it, there must be a reason why you want to get rid of it. . . .”	84
“ . . . the most interesting meeting that I had, though, was the <i>very first</i> irrigation district that I met with on title transfer. . . . ‘Yeah, the government does spend too much money.’ They talked about the rules, they talked about NAFTA, and then they said to me, ‘When we’re talking about less government, we didn’t mean you guys.’” . . . ‘Not you guys. It’s those other guys we’re talking about.’ . . . I had at least three irrigation districts tell me that.”	84
“ . . . I think the distribution systems . . . should go in	

their name. The reservoirs, that’s another story, because you have so much public use on your reservoirs now . . .” 86

Area Manager Does Not Deal Much with Negotiations with Labor Unions 87

Yellowtail and the Apprenticeship Program 88

“ . . . almost two years ago, Jack Bayers and Neil Stessman went down to visit . . . the president of the Crow Tribe, and asked them if they would be interested in *exploring* the possibility of the Crow Tribe . . . doing the operation and maintenance on the facility. . . .” 90

“Neil Stessman and Jack Bayers did that without telling me . . . They should have asked me before they went down there. And they told me two days later, and that has been *real* problem for me for a lot of different reasons. . . .” 90

“ . . . it took us about six months to sort of react to that initiative. It’s not that I don’t *support* that idea. . . .” 91

“We got to a point . . . about the *authority* issue . . . can we negotiate with them to do it without giving other people a chance? . . .” 92

Yellowtail Does Provide Water on the Reservation 93

Water Operations in the Montana Area Office . . . 93

Power Users Notified Reclamation That They Also Wanted to Be Considered for Operation and Maintenance of the Yellowtail Powerplant 94

“ . . . the employees . . . formed a corporation called the Bull Elk Corporation and said they wanted to compete to manage it . . . So it got to be a real complicated issue. . . .” 94

The Union Didn't Become Involved in the Discussion about the Crow Tribe O&Ming the Powerplant	96
Montana Area Office Budget Is about \$10 Million, about Half of Which Is the Two Powerplants	96
Funding Operation and Maintenance of the Powerplants	97
“ . . . Congress is very clear . . . they don't want you spending <i>a dollar</i> without them telling you can do it. . . . it's a real problem for me here in area office because I don't have an incentive to collect more money. . . . ”	97
Recreation Fees at Fresno Dam and Cabin Sites at Canyon Ferry as Examples of Possible Sources of Increased Revenues	97
Issues at Canyon Ferry Cabin Sites, Including Cabin Owners' Desire to Buy Their Sites	99
State of Montana returned Canyon Ferry because “. . . they were sick of it. We offered them, actually, \$300,000 a year to keep it, and they wouldn't, plus keeping the revenues . . . ”	101
Grazing Lease Issues on Reclamation Lands	102
Not Renewing Cabin Leases in Order to Put in a Boat Ramp	104
Withdrawn Lands	105
Sinkhole in Willow Creek Dam	105
Indian Water Rights Settlements in Montana . . .	107
Reclamation Has a Member on the Indian Water Rights Settlement Team	108
Participation in Women's Programs Inside and Outside Reclamation	110
Plans for Retirement	113

(Intentionally blank)

**STATEMENT OF DONATION
OF ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW OF
KATHERINE JABS**

1. In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms, conditions, and restrictions set forth in this instrument, I, Katherine Jabs, (hereinafter referred to as "the Donor"), of Billings, Montana, do hereby give, donate, and convey to the Bureau of Reclamation and the National Archives and Records Administration (hereinafter referred to as "the National Archives"), acting for and on behalf of the United States of America, all of my rights and title to, and interest in the information and responses (hereinafter referred to as "the Donated Materials") provided during the interviews conducted during the week of September 16, 1996, at the Montana Area Office in Billings, Montana, and prepared for deposit with the National Archives and Records Administration in the following format: cassette tapes and transcripts. This donation includes, but is not limited to, all copyright interests I now possess in the Donated Materials.
2.
 - a. It is the intention of the Archivist to make Donated Materials available for display and research as soon as possible, and the Donor places no restrictions upon their use.
 - b. The Archivist may, subject only to restrictions placed upon him by law or regulation, provide for the preservation, arrangement, repair, rehabilitation, duplication, reproduction, description, exhibition, display, and servicing of the Donated Materials as may be needful and appropriate.
3. Copies of the Donated Materials may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the National Archives, including the Bureau of Reclamation. Copies of Donated Materials may also be provided to researchers. The Bureau of Reclamation may retain copies of tapes, transcripts, and other materials.
4. The Archivist may dispose of Donated Materials at any time after title passes to the National Archives.

Date: 9-18-96

Signed: 
Katherine Jabs

INTERVIEWER: _____
Brit Allan Storey

Having determined that the materials donated above by Katherine Jabs are appropriate for preservation as evidence of the United States Government's organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, and transactions, and considering it to be in the public interest to accept these materials for deposit with the National Archives and Records Administration, I accept this gift on behalf of the United States of America, subject to the terms, conditions, and restrictions set forth in the above instrument.

Date: _____

Signed: _____
Archivist of the United States

Introduction

In 1988, Reclamation began to create a history program. While headquartered in Denver, the history program was developed as a bureau-wide program.

One component of Reclamation's history program is its oral history activity. The primary objectives of Reclamation's oral history activities are: preservation of historical data not normally available through Reclamation records (supplementing already available data on the whole range of Reclamation's history); making the preserved data available to researchers inside and outside Reclamation.

The senior historian of the Bureau of Reclamation developed and directs the oral history program. Questions, comments, and suggestions may be addressed to the senior historian.

Brit Allan Storey
Senior Historian
Land Resources Division (84-53000)
Policy and Administration
Bureau of Reclamation
P. O. Box 25007
Denver, Colorado 80225-0007
(303) 445-2918
FAX: (720) 544-0639
E-mail: bstorey@usbr.gov

For additional information about Reclamation's history program see:
www.usbr.gov/history

(Intentionally blank)

Oral History Interviews
Katherine Jabs

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, senior historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing Katherine Jabs, the area manager of the Montana Area Office, in her office in Billings, Montana, on September the 17th, 1996, at about 4:30 in the afternoon. This is tape one.

Miss Jabs, where were you born and raised and educated, and how did you end up at the Bureau of Reclamation?

Born and Raised in Hardin, Montana

Jabs: I was born and raised in Hardin, Montana. I was born in 1936.

In 1974 Went to Work in the Secretarial Pool in Reclamation's Regional Office in Billings

And I went to work for the Bureau of Reclamation in 1974, after my divorce. I was looking for a job, and I was a secretary at the time. I went to work as a GS-3 in the secretary pool.

Earned a Business Management Degree at Eastern Montana College

Realized at some point that I didn't want to be a secretary, and so almost immediately I went back to school, went to night school at Eastern Montana College, and got my degree—took me five years. I got a degree in business management.

Moved into the Realty Section in Various Jobs

At that time, when I got my degree in 1981, I was a GS-9, and I was a land—I think technician was the name of the—at that time, I was a realty technician. That’s what I was. At that time, I was thinking about staying in lands, in the Realty Section within the Bureau of Reclamation. I worked for two men. Each of them had forty years’ experience with Reclamation, and they taught me everything about lands that there was to know. They retired while I was working there, and those two guys took *so much* information with them. One was Bob Stong and the other one was Merlin Archibald. One was a GS-11 and the other one was a 12. They taught me everything they knew or everything I could learn.

“ . . . when they retired, I took over their jobs. I was doing both of their jobs. . . . ”

So when they retired, I took over their jobs. I was doing both of their jobs.

Storey: When would that have been?

Jabs: It would have been in about 1981.

Storey: When you got your degree, about the same time.

Jabs: About the same time. Or 1982, right in that era.

Storey: What was the title of the position?

Jabs: It was a realty specialist. Both of them were realty specialists, and I was a technician. I had

worked up from a GS-3 to a GS-9 in those years, 1974 through 1981.

Storey: About seven years.

Jabs: That was a goal I had, yeah, to be a GS-9 when I graduated from school, and I did that.

Storey: What was your next goal?

Jabs: Well, my goal was to become a realty specialist. You know, I liked that work. I was good at it. I moved as a secretary into that position, and even while I was a secretary, the technician taught me what he was doing. And he retired. Jack Yoshakawa [phonetic],¹ I think was his name. He

1. A note on editorial conventions. In the text of these interviews, information in parentheses, (), is actually on the tape. Information in brackets, [], has been added to the tape either by the editor to clarify meaning or at the request of the interviewee in order to correct, enlarge, or clarify the interview as it was originally spoken. Words have sometimes been struck out by editor or interviewee in order to clarify meaning or eliminate repetition. In the case of strikeouts, that material has been printed at 50% density to aid in reading the interviews but assuring that the struckout material is readable.

The transcriber and editor also have removed some extraneous words such as false starts and repetitions without indicating their removal. The meaning of the interview has not been changed by this editing.

In an effort to conform to standard academic rules of usage (see *The Chicago Manual of Style*), individual's titles are only capitalized in the text when they are specifically used as a title connected to a name, e.g., Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton as opposed to Gale Norton, secretary of the interior; Commissioner John Keys as opposed to John Keys, "commissioner." Likewise formal titles of acts and offices are capitalized but abbreviated usages are not, e.g., Division of Planning as opposed to "planning;" the Reclamation

(continued...)

retired, and when he retired I was already doing his job, even though I was a secretary.

“ . . . it was advertised, I think it was advertised as a 5. I went into it, and while I was doing that job, I went up to a 9, because I kept taking on more and more work. . . .”

So then when it *was* advertised, I think it was advertised as a 5. I went into it, and while I was doing that job, I went up to a 9, because I kept taking on more and more work.

“When the two realty specialists retired . . . management . . . would move me into that realty specialist job as a GS-9 . . . So what I told management was that I could compete with *anybody* . . . go ahead and advertise it a GS-11/12 and I would apply for it. . . . they . . . basically told me that I should be happy that I got a GS-9 because I was a woman. . . . advertised it as a 9 and I did not apply. It was that moment that I decided to leave that division. . . .”

When the two realty specialists retired—they retired within a short period of time of each other—I then was issuing all the special-use permits and licenses and everything that they were doing. So I was excited that they were retiring and that I had a *chance* to move into their *jobs*. They were only going to fill one those jobs. So management talked to me at that time and asked me if I—that they would move me into that

1. (...continued)
Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992, as opposed to “the 1992 act.”

realty specialist job as a GS-9, and then I wouldn't have to compete for it and at some later date, after I was in there a while, they would promote me to a higher grade. So what I told management was that I could compete with *anybody* for a GS-11 or 12, whatever they decided to advertise it as. I think the job certainly was rated as a GS-11/12,² and I wanted them to go ahead and advertise it a GS-11/12 and I would apply for it.

At some point, they got themselves into a hole and basically told me that I should be happy that I got a GS-9 because I was a woman. You know, for a GS-9 to be a woman was nothing to balk at. So I should be happy to have that job. And I said, "You advertise for the job and I'll apply for it." They wouldn't do it. They went ahead and advertised it as a 9 and I did not apply. It was that moment that I decided to leave that division. I decided not to stay there.

“ . . . good years for me . . . I was excited . . . I liked Reclamation. . . . I learned a lot. And what was really sad about the whole thing is when I left, there was no one that knew anything about realty . . . and whoever they took in there now was a real novice and had to learn it from scratch. . . . ”

2. Referring to a position advertised as a “banded position.” Using a GS-9/GS-11 example, generally the new employee is hired as a GS-9 but with promotion potential to GS-11 without further competition. Or, sometimes, the new hire, if qualified, may be brought in at the GS-11 level. Generally this personnel approach is used for positions where it is expected the learning/training curve the first year will be quite high and will result in professional growth and experience justifying promotion at the end of one year.

So, those were good years for me, though. I was excited about my job. I liked Reclamation. Like I said, I learned a lot. I learned a lot. And what was really sad about the whole thing is when I left, there was no one that knew anything about realty, because I had left and those two guys had left, and whoever they took in there now was a real novice and had to learn it from scratch.

Took a Downgrade to Move to the Planning Division as a Budget Technician

From there, then I applied for a job in planning. They were looking for a budget technician. It was a new position. So I applied for that. It was a 7/9. So I took a *down*grade and moved into the 7 and left Water and Land Branch. And then I was there for two years working for Bob Madsen [phonetic] as a land technician, and that was an exciting job, also. I created that job. They had a bunch of needs, and I was able to meet their needs. I got along really well and did a lot of good things, I felt, in that position.

Moved into the Program Division as a Budget Analyst

Then I applied for a budget analyst job in programs, and then I went into budget work as a GS-11 in the Program Division here in Billings.

“ . . . I’m a person who likes numbers. . . . I was good at my job. I could see things that most people wouldn’t see, and it was an exciting time for me. . . . ”

That was an exciting job, too, because I'm a person who likes numbers. The one thing I can say is I've liked *every single job*, except maybe one, and that was an exciting job, too, because I'm good at numbers. I was good at my job. I could see things that most people wouldn't see, and it was an exciting time for me.

After a Couple of Years Moved to Washington, D.C., as Assistant to the Budget Chief

And I was there a couple of years and then I applied for a job in Washington, D.C., and then I went to Washington, D.C., and worked as assistant to the budget chief there.

“ . . . I eventually became the budget chief for Bureau of Reclamation, and I was in Washington for about six and a half years. . . . ”

And I eventually became the budget chief for Bureau of Reclamation, and I was in Washington for about six and a half years. Then I came back to Billings and eventually became the area manager, which is the job I'm at now. So that's my career in a nutshell.

Storey: Okay. Well, let's crack the nutshell. (laughter)

Jabs: Okay.

Storey: In '74 you came to work for which office of Reclamation?

Working in the Secretarial Pool in the Region in

Billings

Jabs: There was a secretarial pool.

Storey: In the region?

Jabs: In the region. In Billings.

Storey: In the project office?

Jabs: In Billings. The regional office in Billings.

Storey: In the regional office here in Billings.

Jabs: Billings.

Storey: Who was your supervisor? It doesn't matter if you don't remember.

Jabs: Millie? Millie. I can't remember her last name.

Storey: What was the technology like in the typing pool at that time, and how was work assigned?

Worked on Electric Typewriters

Jabs: Work was typewriters, and, I don't know, I think all—

Storey: Manual?

Jabs: Oh, yeah. Manual.

Storey: Or electric.

Jabs: Electric. Electric typewriters, yeah. And the

work was assigned, you know, by the woman who was the head of that division, and I think all the branches brought their work into that secretarial pool. And I was only in there about four months.

Storey: What happened for you to leave?

Moved as a Secretary to the Water and Land Division

Jabs: I went into the Water and Land Division as a secretary and moved up.

Storey: That was a promotion?

Jabs: Yeah, I believe it was. I think I went from a 3 to a 4.

Storey: To Land and water, to the lands people, I gather.

Jabs: Uh-huh. Land and water. It was a 420 branch.

Storey: Who's the, what, division chief? Branch chief?

Jabs: The division chief was Jim Rawlings and the branch chief was Leland Tigges.

Storey: What were they like?

“ . . . I moved . . . and *became* a technician and started making decisions, I did have some problems with management. . . . going through college at the time and knew that I had the ability to manage or the ability . . . not to be where I was at . . . ”

Jabs: Well, I think as I moved up the ladder, I think when you're a secretary that you look at things one way, and then, if you're in another job, you look at things another way. As I moved out of that secretarial field and *became* a technician and started making decisions, I did have some problems with management. And I think it's that time I realized, "I'm not too sure I like the way they make their decisions, and I think I could run this division and make some good decisions."

That's when I kind of—I was going through college at the time and knew that I had the ability to manage or the ability, you know, not to be where I was at, that I had other qualities. So I did have some problems with Jim, especially.

Storey: With Jim?

Jabs: Jim.

Storey: Did going to school cause you a lot of problems? I presume you were working full time, also.

Reclamation Supported Her Going to College but Paid for Only One Class

Jabs: Yeah. They were very helpful. They were very receptive to me doing that. I went to night school and took classes like at lunch hour up until the last year, and I took about two days a week off in the last quarter and I took annual leave to do that. And they were very, very supportive of me. Absolutely. No question. They paid for one algebra class. Other than that, they did not fund any of my education. I funded it all on my own.

Storey: Did you see it making a difference in your work?

“I just didn’t want to be where I was at. . . . wanted to be somewhere else, and I was willing to take the energy that it needed to do that. . . .”

Jabs: Probably so. Probably so. I just didn’t want to be where I was at. You know, I wanted to be somewhere else, and I was willing to take the energy that it needed to do that.

Storey: Did you have children or any other impeding things?

While Working for Reclamation Raised Three Children

Jabs: I had three children. Uh-huh. I had three children.

Storey: At the same time?

“. . . my daughter and I graduated from college at the same time. . . .”

Jabs: Uh-huh. You know, they were starting to be in high school and adults. I think my daughter and I graduated from college at the same time. She went to Bozeman and I was going here. Yeah, I had a lot of energy then.

Storey: You must have had an *awful* lot of energy.
(laughter)

Had a lot of energy “And a lot of passion. . . .”

Jabs: And a lot of passion. That's what you need, I believe.

Storey: How did you transition from being a secretary to being a tech?

Evolution from Working as a Secretary to a Lands Technician

Jabs: I think I was a 4, and then there was a job *in* the same branch. I think it might have been 430 or something, that was looking for a person to help them. They were still buying property in North Dakota. So I went in there as a—again it was called a clerk, some kind of a clerk, like lands clerk, to help them plot properties they were buying on the plats and then working with the title company to get the title transferred from private to the government. I was working as a clerk and doing that type of work. And then I went from that. I think I was a 5 in that job, and then I went into the technician job. I think it was a realty clerk is what I was called, and then from a realty clerk into a lands technician.

Storey: What's the difference in what you were doing?

Jabs: What?

Storey: Between being a realty clerk and being a real estate technician?

Jabs: Oh, lots. I mean, I was dealing basically with legal papers when I was a clerk, you know, just processing them.

Storey: You mean typing them?

Jabs: Not so much typing them as I was working with the title company and I was working with deeds and recording them and working with the solicitor's office, you know, approving them. When I became a land's technician is when I really started helping with special-use permits.

I'll take that back. I wasn't plotting. I wasn't plotting as a clerk. It was when I was a technician. All the land that we would buy I would plot them on these big, huge map, you know.

Storey: On the USGS maps?

Jabs: No, we have our own plat books. Reclamation has their own great big, huge plat books.

Storey: Okay. So you would have to figure out what land we had to purchase?

Jabs: No, no, no. Someone else did that. I was just handling the paper after it was—

Storey: Figuring out what we *had* bought.

Jabs: Uh-huh. And plotting them on the books and getting them recorded. That was pretty much it.

Storey: So if I'm hearing you, somewhere in the regional office there are these plat books that *should* show us everything Reclamation owns.

Jabs: Oh, absolutely.

Storey: OK. How long were you doing that?

Jabs: I was in there about four years.

Storey: And then you transitioned over to the—was it programs?

Moved over to Planning

Jabs: Planning.

Storey: To planning. Tell me more about—is it Bob Stong?

Learning Lands While Working with Bob Stong and Merlin Archibald

Jabs: There was two realty specialists that I worked for in 420. One was Bob Stong.

Storey: S-T-O-N-G?

Jabs: Uh-huh.

Storey: And?

Jabs: And the other one was Merlin Archibald.

Storey: Uh-huh. And I take it they were very good at this.

Jabs: Oh, yeah.

Storey: They'd built up to this and then spent a lot of time in their forty-year careers doing this.

Jabs: Um-hmm.

Storey: What did it take to be a *really good* realty specialist? I take it both of these were really good realty specialists.

Jabs: Yeah. I would say so. They knew Reclamation. They knew like in Reclamation you have two types of land that you deal with. One is fee, that you purchase in fee, and the other one is withdrawn lands that you withdraw from public, you know, you withdraw it from BLM [Bureau of Land Management]. It's really land that's never been in private ownership. And a lot of Reclamation land *is* withdrawn, because we built our projects in the early 1900s. So we withdrew a lot of land from public entry.

So they knew lots of nuances to the withdrawn land and how it affects Reclamation's use of it, and the reservations that we have on withdrawn land as opposed to fee land that has been in private ownership.

Storey: And then we purchased.

Jabs: Uh-huh. Because then, you know, it affects the minerals. You might not get the minerals if you purchase it in fee, whereas in withdrawn land, you were able to keep the revenues from the minerals. So it's actually very complex, more complex than you realize.

Storey: Tell me more about it. Tell me more about these reservations and things.

Jabs: Well, when Reclamation withdrew land, generally there was *no one* there with a prior right, and

that's the key to withdrawn lands. Reclamation has the first, you know, right on that land, whatever it might be. Most generally you do. I mean, each withdrawal was different, but most often that was what they taught me was-because we were thinking about revoking some of those lands, and they fought every step to do that. They said, "No, no, no. Don't ever do that." Because once you give it back to BLM, you lose those reservations. And if Reclamation were to ever use that land, it would be ten times harder to get what we wanted.

Storey: Interesting. It must be a mare's nest of complications.

Jabs: Um-hmm. There are.

Storey: Did we ever run into situations where we wanted fee title and we couldn't get everything that we needed?

Jabs: Well, you could always go into the right of eminent domain and just . . .

Storey: Condemn the property.

Jabs: Yeah, condemn the property.

Storey: Did you ever get involved in any of that kind of work?

“ . . . it was generally the realty specialist out in the field who dealt with people, and I only dealt with the paperwork. . . . ”

Jabs: I just handled the paperwork. I personally did not. You know, it was generally the realty specialist out in the field who dealt with people, and I only dealt with the paperwork. And I don't remember that, anything about that.

Storey: You were in a division, right? A branch in the division?

Jabs: I was in a branch.

Storey: How did the branch and the division relate to one another? Do you remember anything about that?

Jabs: No.

Storey: How much did the division chief become involved in the branch chief's work and so on?

Jabs: The only thing I can remember is that there were several divisions. You know, there was the 420 Branch, which I was in, and we were lands. And there was a 430 Branch and a 440 Branch and a 450 Branch, and they all had different functions. I don't remember really dealing a lot with everybody else.

Storey: Was planning one of those branches?

Jabs: No, that was a different division.

Storey: Uh-huh. Okay.

Jabs: That was the **700** Division.

Storey: Tell me what Merlin Archibald and Bob Stong

were like.

Merlin Archibald

Jabs: Merlin Archibald, the thing I remember about him, he was a Mormon, and I was a feminist. But we got along wonderfully. He just was a really dear man and I loved him. He knew Wyoming. I swear he knew every inch of Reclamation land in Wyoming, and he could tell you about any piece of land, what kind of land it was, the history of that land. We had settled some of that land under the Reclamation law, and the land didn't hold irrigation. So they had to buy the settlers out and give them back their money and quit farming that land. He could tell you every inch of what happened in Wyoming.

Storey: Is he still around?

Jabs: He was from Billings and he moved to Idaho, I believe. And he would be a *wonderful* person to talk to. He could tell you more about Reclamation. You could probably talk to him for hours and hours and hours.

Storey: Do you know what part of Idaho?

Jabs: I could find out where he's at.

Storey: That was Mr. Archibald. What about Mr. Stong?

Bob Stong

Jabs: Mr. Stong is here in Billings. He's retired and I see him once in a while. So he's available.

Storey: What was he like?

Jabs: Of course, he knew a lot about lands, everything there was to know also. Personally, I felt he was sexist and racist. He used to tell dirty jokes, and I used to say—at that time, I don't think you got support from management not to do that, so I said, "If you're going to tell a joke, just let me leave the room. And when you're done, I'll come back." That's the way I dealt with it. But he knew Reclamation. He told me a lot of things about withdrawn land, which I still use those in my job here.

"He used to say that, 'You realize, of course, that the irrigation districts could have title to their facilities after they're paid, *any* time they want it, and all they have to do is go to Congress and get authorization to get title to their facilities.' But the reason they didn't is that we had a lot of free programs for them. . . ."

For instance, the one thing that he used to tell me is that Reclamation built the projects. Reclamation, you know, built the projects, and we built the irrigation projects. At that time, we had a real active what we call an SM&C, Soil, Moisture and Conservation Program. We had *millions* of dollars in that. We used to help the irrigation districts with their soil and moisture conservation. He used to say that, "You realize, of course, that the irrigation districts could have title to their facilities after they're paid, *any* time they want it, and all they have to do is go to Congress and get authorization to get title to their facilities." But the reason they didn't is that we

had a lot of free programs for them. They got a lot of benefits from Reclamation programs.

“Now that we are in this initiative for a title transfer, it’s becoming a very complicated process, because we do have to go through NEPA to do that, whereas years ago it probably would have been pretty simple to do. . . .”

Anyway, he said that more than once. Now that we are in this initiative for a title transfer, it’s becoming a very complicated process, because we do have to go through NEPA to do that, whereas years ago it probably would have been pretty simple to do. The law basically says that the irrigation districts could have title, but they would have to go to Congress to get it.

And I think that was always the intent of Reclamation is to give title to the irrigation districts after they were paid. I can’t find that anywhere except for one contract we have with Greenfields Irrigation District that actually says that. But I think that’s kind of an unwritten something.

Storey: Possibility, maybe.

Jabs: Possibility that was the intent of Reclamation to give title to the irrigation districts after they were paid out. And he always used to say that.

Storey: Um-hmm. Now who was the head of the branch?

Jabs: Leland Tigges. T-I-G-G-E-S.

Storey: And what was he like?

Jabs: I got along with him fine. I mean, I had no problems with him.

Storey: Um-hmm. Did you actually become a realty specialist?

Jabs: No.

Storey: That's where you decided to jump divisions, as it were?

When she changed divisions "... they were ... real mad. ... And I could understand why. But I was mad at them, too, so- ..."

Jabs: That's right. That's right. And they were mad at me when I did that. They were real mad. They were not happy with me. And I could understand why. But I was mad at them, too, so- (laughter)

Storey: Mr. Archibald and Mr. Stong had been 11/12s, had they?

Jabs: I think Stong was an 11 and Archibald was a 12.

Storey: So they were going to replace two people with one person at a lower grade than either of them had been?

Jabs: That's right. That's right.

Storey: Did you know somebody over in the Planning Division?

Move to the Planning Division

Jabs: No. I mean, I knew them, but I didn't have any connections.

Storey: And you got this 7/9 job over there.

Jabs: Uh-huh.

Storey: Working for whom?

Jabs: Working for Bob Madsen. He was a planning officer.

Storey: What was he like?

Jabs: He was a real hard driver.

Storey: This would have been about '81?

Jabs: '81-'82.

Storey: What were you planning? What was in the works?

She Was Hired to Keep Track of Money Spent on Planning

Jabs: Oh, they had a real active planning program. At that time I think there might have been forty people in that division. One of his first charges to me in that job was, "I have forty people in this branch and I have X amount of dollars." I don't remember how much. It might have been several million. I don't remember. "And at the end of the year, I don't know where my money went. You

know, I have money left over and I don't know what's happening to my money. You know, I don't have anybody keeping track of my projects and where we're spend our money, and I need to know that. And that's why I'm hiring you to do this."

"I went and I researched every single person who worked in that division and for the last two years where they charged their time. I did an analysis of that. Took me maybe two or three months. He was really impatient . . ."

So I did that. I went and I researched every single person who worked in that division and for the last two years where they charged their time. I did an analysis of that. Took me maybe two or three months. He was really impatient and he kept thinking I should do it sooner. I just kept saying, "You know, it's a pretty big charge here." And then I got what he wanted.

"What we ended up doing . . . was to start . . . a division charge, and I think that's the first time it ever happened in Reclamation. The people who weren't working on a specific project now charged into a general expense, and that money was allocated to just his projects, GI projects. Since then it's become pretty common now for people to do that. . . ."

What we ended up doing after my research was to start what they call a division charge, and I think that's the first time it ever happened in Reclamation. The people who weren't working

on a specific project now charged into a general expense, and that money was allocated to just his projects, GI³ projects. Since then it's become pretty common now for people to do that. And we were all happy.

Storey: What kind of records were you having to do research in?

Jabs: For this work?

Storey: Yeah.

Jabs: I went down actually into the finance records.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 1. SEPTEMBER 17, 1996
BEGIN SIDE 2 TAPE 1. SEPTEMBER 17, 1996.

Jabs: When I made this five o'clock appointment, I really should have looked at my calendar.

Storey: But these weren't computer records, I take it. Were these paper records?

Jabs: They were paper records, yeah.

Storey: So these were the time sheets or something?

Jabs: Yeah, I think they were. Uh-huh.

Storey: So you went down and analyzed all of this.

Jabs: Um-hmm.

3. General Investigation projects.

Storey: For forty people.

“... I *love* working with numbers. . . . I was really into my element, and that’s why I was good at the job, because I *liked* what I was doing. You know . . . I sort of created the job. . . .”

Jabs: And I *love* working with numbers. It was great. I was really into my element, and that’s why I was good at the job, because I *liked* what I was doing. You know, this was creative and I sort of created the job.

Storey: So basically you were creating for Mr. Madsen a management tool to know where the money was going and so on, which projects.

Monitored Expenses During the Year and Helped Develop Budgets

Jabs: And then I monitored the expenses throughout the year.

Storey: Did you also help develop budget?

Jabs: Yeah. I gave them a lot of suggestions, you know. I would talk to him regularly and look at the numbers and say, “I think, you know, you might be having a problem here,” or “This is working, this isn’t working,” and “You’re not going to spend your money here. You’re going to overspend it there.” Things that he just never had. He was never able to get a handle on his budget. So I was really good at what I did.

Storey: Well, why don’t we pick up here tomorrow,

because I know you have a five o'clock. Let me ask whether or not you're willing for people to use the information on this tape and the resulting transcripts for research.

Jabs: It's okay. I don't mind.

Storey: Good. Thank you.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 1 OF 1. SEPTEMBER 17, 1996.
BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 1. SEPTEMBER 18, 1996.

Storey: This is Brit Allan Storey, senior historian of the Bureau of Reclamation, interviewing Katherine *Jabs*, Montana Area Office Manager, in *her* office in Billings, Montana, on September the 18th, 1996, at about ten o'clock in the morning. This is tape one.

After we quit, you said there was something you should have talked about about your clerk's job.

**“There was a clerk's job I was in for a year . . .
That's the only job I didn't like working with
Reclamation. . . .”**

Jabs: There was a clerk's job I was in for a year, you know, and that's all. That's the only job I didn't like working with Reclamation.

Storey: Oh, okay.

Jabs: I didn't. And if I wouldn't have left there, I probably would have—I was thinking about leaving the Bureau. I think from there I went into

the technician job. (Storey: Right. Okay.) So that's all.

Storey: Tell me about—you went over and became a budget tech. What we talked about yesterday was keeping track of the budget and the way it was spent, but I'm assuming, or jumping to the conclusion, maybe I should say, that they probably started you on putting together budgets for the division, too.

Jabs: Um-hmm.

Storey: What kind of transitioning did you have to make in order to do that, to develop budgets? What kinds of skills did you have to acquire?

“Of course, I'm good with numbers. But I think it was more analytical skill that they needed, being able to take a lot of kind of nebulous things that were going on and put them together in something that people could understand. . . . it's an analytical mind that's important for a budget analyst. . . .”

Jabs: I had good analytical skills, and that's what they needed. Of course, I'm good with numbers. But I think it was more analytical skill that they needed, being able to take a lot of kind of nebulous things that were going on and put them together in something that people could understand. So I think it's an analytical mind that's important for a budget analyst.

Storey: Uh-huh. Now for instance, you mentioned that there were about forty people in this division.

Were you budgeting to the point where you knew what each individual person was going to cost each year, or were you saying, "Well, on average, everybody's going to cost us X, and there are forty of us," so you figured—see I don't understand budgeting. I need to get you to tell me about it.

For each person in the office I looked at how ". . . much they earned, how much they cost . . ."

- Jabs: It's interesting, that's one thing I'm going to do before I leave here as area manager. People in this office keep saying we need more people, and so I'm going to do an analysis of our work force here in the Montana Area Office, and where everybody charges, exactly what they do, how much they're paid, what their benefits are, and try to make a recommendation to the new area manager before I leave. So, yeah, we put everybody down, what their name was, what their grade was, how much they earned, how much they cost, what projects they were working on. Yeah, I mean, I did a lot of detail.
- Storey: And what kinds of figures went in? You said what they were paid and what they cost, two different things, and there's a variation. What makes up that difference between what they are paid and what they cost Reclamation?
- Jabs: Well, it costs you to sit there, it cost you to have this room and, you know, that's all overhead. I think we figured out how much each person actually cost. I mean, I've forgotten, but it seems we added on, like, \$12,000 for their cost of sitting

at that desk.

Storey: And this would have been about what?

Jabs: Early eighties.

Storey: Early eighties. That was probably as much as most of them were making.

Jabs: Oh, no.

Storey: Is that right?

Jabs: Oh, no.

Storey: No?

Jabs: Oh, no. 1980s, I don't think so. I think you're talking more like \$30,000. They were engineers, you know.

Storey: So that would have been, maybe, a third, 33 percent overhead?

In this study in the early 1980s "It seemed like we came up with an average of \$50,000 per employee.

. . ."

Jabs: It seemed like we came up with an average of \$50,000 per employee.

Storey: And then what other kinds of things had to be added on? Travel and . . .?

Jabs: Well, we were doing planning studies, so you have a lot of studies that you needed other people

to help you with. Denver costs—work that Denver did for you. Fish and Wildlife Service. I mean, you did a planning study for each study you were doing, and we determined what needed to be done.

Storey: And how was this done? On big spreadsheets on paper, or were you computerized at that time, or how did this work?

Jabs: We were just starting to be computerized at that time. But most of those planning studies were done by, you know, the planning officer or his staff, and I just put the pieces together.

Storey: How many planning studies? Do you happen to have any idea?

Jabs: I don't remember. I would say, you know, right now that planning, there really isn't even a Planning Division over there anymore.

Storey: I think that function was moved to Denver in '88, wasn't it?

Jabs: Some of it, yeah. It's interesting. I eventually became the planning officer for the Bureau of Reclamation before I got this job. But I don't know, there might have been thirty. There was a lot. More or less. But now it's—it's not the same office now, because we have our own planning here in this area office.

Storey: I would always be nervous about unexpected things coming up. How did you plan for that?

“Things come up that have higher priority, something you’d rather be doing for a lot of different reasons. You simply . . . ask for a change of funding from here to there. . . .”

Jabs: Well, unexpected things, even today you deal with that. Priorities change. Things come up that have higher priority, something you’d rather be doing for a lot of different reasons. You simply ask for a change in programs. I mean, you ask for a change of funding from here to there.

Storey: So it’s shuffling around the funding you already have.

Jabs: Yeah. Right.

Storey: You didn’t build in a contingency fund or anything?

Jabs: You always had a lot of money at that time, for some reason.

Storey: What happened to your grade after you went in as a 7/9 budget tech? When were you promoted and how?

Jabs: I was promoted within a year.

Storey: To?

Jabs: To a 9.

Storey: Which is where you had been before.

Jabs: Uh-huh.

Storey: What about the next step increase?

Moved from Planning into Programs

Jabs: My next step increase was when I moved from that planning down *into* programs, and I received an 11 there.

Storey: How did that change happen?

Jabs: I applied for the job. It was a position that was open and I applied for it, and competed for it, and got it.

Storey: What was the position?

“ . . . I was in charge of all the O-&-M budgets for the Great Plains Region. . . . ”

Jabs: Well, I was in charge of all the O-&-M budgets for the Great Plains Region.

Storey: O-&-M. So this is just sort of expanding the job.

Jabs: Uh-huh.

Storey: Were there new kinds of challenges to be faced in there?

Jabs: Yeah. Yeah. You know, I learned the PABS system.

Storey: P-A-D-S?

Jabs: P-A-B-S. PABS.

Storey: PABS. Oh, okay.

Jabs: PABS, Program and Budget System. I learned how to operate that.

Storey: Was that computerized?

Jabs: Um-hmm.

Storey: So you were sitting at a computer terminal then?

Jabs: Um-hmm. And I had O-&-M budget meetings with, you know, the different areas, offices in the Great Plains Region. We used to have those a couple of times a year come in to try to talk about everybody's budget. You know, you had one dollar figure for the whole region, and you had to bring all the offices in to work on budgets, you know, out years, current year.

During that time I also headed a monthly meeting on contracts, you know, to make sure that people were—what did we call that?

Storey: You were tracking the contracts.

Jabs: Tracking the contracts, yeah. That was a Great Plains Region-wide meeting. I developed a spreadsheet for that, and I received an award for that, to better track those.

Storey: Now, you say Great Plains Region. That would have been what, the Upper Missouri then at that time? Yeah.

Jabs: That would have been the Upper Missouri Region

at that time yeah.

Storey: So how many projects, do you suppose, were involved?

Jabs: They haven't changed much from then to now.

Storey: For that area, yeah.

Jabs: Yeah, you know. I would say about the same we have now, and I don't know what they are. Forty or fifty. I don't know.

Storey: Was this construction contracts also, or just O-&-M contracts?

Jabs: O-&-M. I just dealt with the O-&-M. They had a person who dealt with the construction budget.

Storey: I *have to* believe that every once in a while you came in and said, "Oh, my, we've spent a million dollars on a half-million dollar contract," or something, or that you *needed* more money to spend on a contract. How were those kinds of issues dealt with?

Had Trouble Convincing One of the Project Offices it Was Going to Be Short about \$800,000 for the Year

Jabs: Well, I had one situation that I think is probably typical. I don't know if it's typical, but I think it's—what I did is I kept track of the O-&-M budget and I kept track of like the Loveland office. The Colorado-Big Thompson and Fryingpan-Arkansas were two of my projects that

I monitored, two out of whatever I had, thirty or forty. And I always analyzed, you know, how many people they had in their office, what work they were going to do, you know, what kind of contracts they were going to let that year.

So I called up the project manager at that time, which was Ray Willms, and I said, "Ray, I think you're going to be short about \$800,000 this year."

He said, "Oh, no. I don't think so." He goes to their budget analyst and their budget analyst at the Loveland office said, "No, I don't think so."

And I said, "Well, I mean, the figures are here, you know. You've got this \$250,000 contract and you have another contract, and you just *don't* have enough money to make it through the year." This was fairly early on in the year. It was like maybe April. I think it was in spring. So you still have April, May, June, you know, six or seven months to go with that.

And they said, "No, I don't think so."

So I went to Dan Lauver [phonetic], who was my boss at that time, and said, "Dan, I think they're going to be short about \$800,000 this year."

He trusted me and said, "Well, what should we do about it?"

I said, "Well, they don't believe me." And

I said, “I want to make a record of it, because I’m *so sure* that they’re going to be short.” Because like I said, I’m good at numbers. (laughter)

So I wrote a letter to them and signed it, and Billy Martin signed it, because he was the regional director at that time, and sent it to Ray and said, you know, “I have analyzed your figures and I—“ whatever. Sort of like, you know, covering yourself here. Ray got it, and he was really mad. (laughter)

Storey: I can imagine this.

Jabs: So they sent me then to Loveland, and for three days I sat with their budget analyst and went over the figures over and over. I think what Ray said, “I can’t be that far off, you guys. There’s something wrong here, because I don’t make these kind of mistakes.” Or not a mistake but, “I can’t be that far off and you guys have to support me,” I think is what he told his people, because they were trying to do everything that they could to convince me that they weren’t.

And even after three days in their office, I finally said to them, I said, “You know, if you want to go forward and say you still are not going to be short, that’s okay, but I am *still* taking the position that you’re going to be short. And if it’s your job or my job, then it will be my job, you know, because I don’t see that your figures are showing me that you’re going to have enough money.” It is a lot of money, you know, \$800,000, and \$800,000 is not that easy to find. You know, you can always find little money, but

that's a big chunk.

Well, anyway, that was part of my job, and probably an extreme example, but I did that all the time with little projects, too. Yellowtail always had extra money. I'd always ask for money and that project manager there at that time or the Superintendent, Del Adams [phonetic], and I'd finally say, "Del, I'm taking it. I'm just taking it from you."

He said, "Well, *go ahead.*" (laughter)

But, anyway, to make a long story short, at the end of the year they were short that much money. Between then, and it was that fall that I moved to Washington, D.C., so I wasn't actually there at the end of the year. But they were short between, I don't know, \$795,000 or something.

Storey: How does Reclamation deal with that kind of an issue? What happens?

Jabs: Well, I don't know. I guess for me, it was important for me as a budget analyst in my job to know that I needed that money from somebody and somewhere, and we should get it as early as possible. I don't know. I think the managers were trying to, you know, listen. Who else would know more than me?

Storey: Well, that's true, but what did you do to get the money, or did you?

Jabs: You go for a request for a fund transfer to Washington.

Storey: Did you do that before they came up short?

In the End the Office Came up Short, but We Had the Money Ready to Cover the Shortage

Jabs: No, I left. Let's see, when did I leave? We went in for a fund transfer. We did, as I recall, somewhere in the summer, maybe.

Storey: So even though they came up short, you had already covered it.

Jabs: Yeah. Yeah. We got the money in there.

Storey: So tell me why project managers have to budget properly if you're going to take care of them that way?

“ . . . there was a time when the regional office used to nurse them . . . that's one of the major changes you'll see in Reclamation, the area offices, you know, like *I* now am responsible for my budget, and it's up to *me* to monitor it. There's nobody in the region that monitors my budget like they used to . . . ”

Jabs: Well, I think they quit doing that. I think there was a time when the regional office used to nurse them, if you will. But that's one of the major changes you'll see in Reclamation, the area offices, you know, like *I* now am responsible for my budget, and it's up to *me* to monitor it. There's nobody in the region that monitors my budget like they used to when I was in that job.

Storey: Oh, really?

Jabs: Yeah.

Storey: So that's one of—

Jabs: I think that's a major change.

Storey: Okay.

Jabs: A big major change. It's my responsibility and if it was today—and I think that office has always traditionally having trouble meeting their budget. You know, they just never really had a good handle on it.

Storey: The Eastern Colorado Office?

Jabs: Yeah. Yeah. But now we're responsible and we're accountable also, and that's the way I think it should be. There's nobody in the regional office that knows, you know. I would be uncomfortable giving them that same power, whatever, as they had been today. I just wouldn't do that.

Storey: Of course, you're a little bit different than most project managers in terms of your training aren't you?

Jabs: Well, that's true. I mean, budget is my background. But still I think the other area managers would say the same thing. It's our budget, it's our projects, we're responsible for it, and we should know what we're spending or not spending.

Storey: When did that transfer come about from the

regional office to the area office, that responsibility transfer?

Jabs: Well, I think it was always supposed to be the area office's responsibility. But I would say you have to ask the people in the budget, but I would say it's been doing that for maybe five or more years.

Storey: Hmm. How would you describe that relationship between your office and the region and the area offices? I don't understand who had which responsibilities for the budget.

Regional Office Budgeting When She Was There

Jabs: Well, I think that the regional office used to have a *lot* more responsibility, like I said, than they do now, and they were pretty much the gurus when it came to the budget. I mean, they made decisions on where money should go and where it shouldn't go and who got it. I think that has really changed, though, today.

Storey: And that system would have been where they had the program session, I believe. They would get together. The regions would go in and they would support their own budgets. Then, for instance, if you were cut in the program session, was it the region's responsibility to decide how to distribute those cuts out to the area offices?

Jabs: Well, there was always—

Storey: I mean the project offices in those days.

Jabs: Yeah, we had meetings. I mean, they would come in and we'd sit down with them and we'd discuss it.

Storey: And work it out.

Jabs: We would work it out.

Storey: Sort of a mini-program session.

Jabs: Yeah. We would work it out. Yeah, we would work it out. And there was always some give and take, yeah.

Storey: How long would those meetings last? A week?

Jabs: Oh, no.

Storey: Day?

Jabs: No. More like a day. A lot of those meetings depend on how organized you are. You know, if you had the spreadsheets there and what each office had and all the replacements and additions lined up and you had a picture of what you needed to do, and this is the money we have and this is what *you* have and these are all the "X," then you determine what's your base budget and then all your work you're going to do, and then you start cutting from the bottom, prioritized all of the replacements and additions and then start cutting them.

Storey: Who would participate in these meetings? Are we talking about the project managers or are we talking about their budget folks?

Jabs: Well, at that time, they generally had their O-&-M person there.

Storey: So that person would have been responsible for figuring out what could go and what couldn't go out of the O-&-M program.

Jabs: Right.

Storey: But not the project managers?

Jabs: I didn't work with the project managers on a one-on-one basis, not too often. I mean, I got to know them all. I mean, I worked with them to some extent, because I knew them all and talked to them quite a bit.

Storey: Well, O-&-M is one component of what we did.

Jabs: That's right.

Storey: So does that mean there was also a person for GI and a person for—

Jabs: Construction.

Storey: Construction. GAE.

Storey: And GAE. In your office also?

Jabs: Um-hmm.

Storey: You didn't double up on this? You were specialists?

Jabs: Pretty much. We could go back and forth and

help people out, but pretty much had our own responsibility there, yeah.

Storey: So what else would have been done in your office besides those specific kinds of budget? Anything else?

Jabs: Well, I think we handled the hearings, you know, questions. Anytime there were hearings in Washington on the budget, we handled the questions that came from the committees.

Storey: You would respond to those.

Jabs: Well, we would, you know, see that they got answered. It was handled in our office. You called the people up, that needed to answer.

Storey: How long were you doing this?

Jabs: I think I was in there about four years.

Storey: Did you have any special assignments during that time? Did they pull you out and send you to Washington or send you to Denver or send you to another region?

Jabs: I was, yeah. I did a couple of things like that.

Storey: What were they about? Where were they?

Sent to Boulder City on Special Assignment

Jabs: I remember going to Boulder City, Nevada, working on a special assignment. I think what it was is just to review their budget, just to see how

they were doing it, as I recall. They used to do that at that time. And then someone would come to our region and kind of go over what we were doing. I did that. I can't remember at that time.

Storey: Now, how long were you budget tech in planning?

Jabs: Two years.

Storey: From about?

Jabs: I should have brought my—

Storey: About '81 to '83, maybe?

Went to Washington, D.C., in 1987

Jabs: Could be. I kind of lose track at times. Probably about that, '81-'83. I went to Washington, D.C., in '89.

~~Storey: And you left as a GS-11 O-&-M budget manager, did you?~~

~~Jabs: Uh-huh. Or did I go there in '87? I must have went in '87.~~

Storey: So that would be about four years, then.

Jabs: Um-hmm. Yeah. I went to Washington as a 12/13.

Storey: Now, who was your supervisor?

Jabs: In programs?

Storey: Yes.

Jabs: Roger Floser [phonetic].

Storey: What was he like?

Jabs: What was he like? He was a—I have a hard time talking about people, you know.

Storey: Well, then we'll skip that.

Jabs: Yeah. I mean, he's okay, you know. I was a take-charge person, and he appreciated, you know, me just kind of taking over. I didn't need much direction. So, you know, I was okay with him.

Storey: That's the kind of thing you need, really.

Jabs: Yeah.

Storey: How did your move to Washington come about?
Born and raised in Montana.

“They were looking for a budget analyst from one of the regions. . . . I thought, oh, I'd never have a chance. But they were calling all the regions and asking if there was anyone who might be interested in coming to Washington for that job. It was for the assistant budget chief . . .”

Jabs: Yeah. Yeah. They were looking for a budget analyst from one of the regions. You know, they liked to have people come in. Of course, at that time, I thought, oh, I'd never have a chance. But they were calling all the regions and asking if

there was anyone who might be interested in coming to Washington for that job. It was for the assistant budget chief, I think was the name of the title.

I applied and decided it might be a good thing to do. And so I went, yeah. And I think I drove into Washington, D.C., on Labor Day weekend, on a Friday night. I think everybody in Washington, D.C., was coming out and I was going in, because there were these six lanes of traffic coming out of Washington, D.C., and I thought, "Oh, my God! What have I done?"
(laughter)

Storey: Uh-huh. It's quite a change from Billings to D.C.

Jabs: Yeah, it is. I had been there a couple of times before on business.

Storey: And so they put you to work doing Reclamation's budget.

Jabs: Uh-huh.

Storey: A whole different perspective on the budget process, I would expect.

Jabs: Um-hmm. Um-hmm.

Storey: How did your perspectives change?

**The Budget Job in D.C. Dealt with Many Different
People on a Different Level than Regional Budget
Work**

Jabs: Well, it was different in the fact that so much of my job was dealing with different people. You know, you dealt with the Department of Interior, and you dealt with O-M-B, and you dealt with the Congress. So one of my jobs, one of my first jobs there was to work on what they call hearings, you know, the outside witness, the outside witness hearings, and the hearings. And I dealt with the transcript from the budget hearings. I went to all the hearings.

Storey: You dealt with it. You mean you edited it?

Jabs: Yeah. I worked with the staff, you know, the subcommittees, and I got to know them really well. That was arranging for the hearings and make sure that we had the witnesses that we needed and getting the witness papers ready for the hearings. Our office did that. Briefing the commissioner and the secretary. So it was really different than my job here. It was more of you sort of dealt with, like I said, up. My job that I had dealt more with, like I said, Department of Interior, O-M-B and . . .

[Visitor Interruption. Tape recorder turned off.]

Storey: Anyway—

“It was really exciting. I loved it . . . thought it was the greatest place in the world, and I really had fun . . .”

Jabs: It was really exciting. I loved it there. I was there six and a half years, and I thought it was the greatest place in the world, and I really had fun at

my job.

Storey: Tell me more about the transitioning. You've talked about the *kinds* of things that you did. Give me some examples of the kinds of adjustments you had to make. Dealing with Congress, congressional staffers, for instance, are there any specific things that come to mind?

Jabs: I think the first time that I went up there, for instance, the man who was the head of the staff, and he had been there for years and had a lot of power, and I think I recognized that there's a certain aura about that, those people and the people on the staff.

For instance, I remember wearing a long dress that day and the guy, head of the staff, said, "Well, a girl like you with legs like you," you know, sort of said something really disparaging to me.

And I go back and I said, "I'm just furious. I am just furious."

And my boss says to me, "Well, you didn't say anything, did you?" You know, to me. And like, you know, he's one guy you don't-

Storey: You don't talk back to.

Jabs: You don't talk back to, yeah. And that was really kind of disappointing to me, but I learned how to deal with this guy, you know, as I got with him more and more.

I mean, it's exciting to be there. You know, it's exciting to be part of that whole—the hearings were exciting, you know, being a part of it, actually working at them. The committee has only so much staff, and so anytime they can have somebody kind of help them do anything, they let you do that. That was a real big part of my job, the hearings in the spring, both the outside witness hearings and the hearings for our budget.

Storey: I've heard from other people about the orchestration of the Budget Committee hearings. Were you involved in any of that?

Jabs: Oh, yeah. Oh, absolutely.

Storey: Tell me about it. Maybe you have a specific example.

Responding to Questions Raised During Hearings Before Congress

Jabs: Once you had the hearings set up, then you would have the hearings.

END SIDE 1, TAPE 1. SEPTEMBER 18, 1996.
BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1. SEPTEMBER 18, 1996.

Jabs: . . . hearings they would ask questions to the commissioner and the secretary. But after the hearings, they would always hand you a series of questions. "I also have a bunch of questions that I want you to answer for the record." Like

[Member of Congress] Tom Bevill,⁴ who was the chair at that time, *always* had a bunch. He always had maybe a hundred questions. And his staff is the one, of course, who would go through our green justification book and study it, and they're the one's who asked the questions. I mean, you just sort of know that they're going to ask.

“ . . . generally we had about 250 questions from the members that needed to be added to the transcript. . . . ”

So my job then after the hearings was to go out, get these questions, and all the members would submit questions. Most generally we had about 250 questions from the members that needed to be added to the transcript.

“So we went out then *to* the regions, and we only had three days to answer them. . . . had to go through water and science . . . Then it goes to the Secretary's office and then O-M-B. . . . It took a lot of work and a lot of tracking . . . If O-M-B made a change, for instance, then you'd have to go back and kind of have other people look at it, especially if it was a big change. So you had to really know a lot. There was generally three of us working on that. . . . ”

So we went out then *to* the regions, and we only had three days to answer them. So we had a process where we sent those out to the regions to answer, come back, and then go through a process

4. Tom Bevill (1921-2005) was an Alabama Democrat in the House of Representatives from January 3, 1967 until January 3, 1989.

a getting those reviewed within Washington. They had to be reviewed, you know, within our own office, Reclamation. They had to go through water and science, because *everything* that reclamation *does* has to go through water and science.

Storey: That's the Assistant Secretary's office.

Jabs: Yes. Assistant Secretary of Water and Science. Then it goes to the Secretary's office and then O-M-B. So once the people out in the region answered the questions, they had to go through an internal review of Reclamation, water and science, the secretary's office, O-M-B, and *then* we could put them in the record.

So it was quite a deal to get all that done in three days. It took a lot of work and a lot of [tracking], and, like you say, kind of like an orchestra. You had to kind of keep track of who was answering what. If O-M-B made a change, for instance, then you'd have to go back and kind of have other people look at it, especially if it was a big change. So you had to really know a lot. There was generally three of us working on that.

You had to do a lot of judgment calls there of when you thought it was important, the change was important enough to go back through that whole series and even back out to the region to make sure that the change was okay. And there were always maybe a *dozen* that had a *lot* of changes, changed the whole context of the answer.

Then once you finished that process, by that time you got the transcript back, then you had to review the transcript and edit it, and then insert the questions *in* that transcript in appropriate places and then give it all back to them.

Storey: Did you just send this to the region or was there a specific *person* in the region?

Jabs: Say again?

Storey: When these questions came in, “Oh, this is a question for Lower Colorado,” is there a specific contact that you went to?

Jabs: Oh, absolutely. Oh, yeah. We had that all set up before they started, because you were dead if you didn’t. Everybody *knew* that this was happening and this was coming and they needed to respond in a short period of time.

Storey: So. “You’ve got to be in the office these days.”

Jabs: That’s right. Absolutely, yeah.

Storey: Who typically was there? Not the regional director, I take it.

Jabs: Somebody in programs, budget.

Storey: Seems like it would be almost impossible to do.

Jabs: Oh, it was challenging. But it’s doable.

Storey: Especially in the age of computers, I guess.

“The hardest thing was . . . tracking it within Washington. . . .”

Jabs: Yeah. Now it’s great. I finally had a system to track. The hardest thing was to track, you know, tracking it once it got into Washington, getting it from the regions. They were responsive. They had been doing this for years. So it was tracking it within Washington. With everybody’s changes, you know, you had six or seven changes to one question and to try to, you know, put those all together and not lose the meaning of what the answer was, was the hardest part of that whole thing.

And then you had to have a typist in Washington and getting the help there was—sometimes that was my biggest hang-up if I didn’t have good secretarial backup. I think we had like three people working just on the computers to back us up.

Storey: So typically how would this have worked? One day for the regions to respond?

Jabs: Generally, maybe two days.

Storey: And then a day to circulate through internal Reclamation, assistant secretary, secretary, and O-M-B?

“I say three days, but . . . I think we took more like maybe five or six when it was all said and done. . . .”

Jabs: Yeah. I say three days, but I think it’s more like—I

think we took more like maybe five or six when it was all said and done.

Storey: I can see where that could get a little complex with 250 different questions.

Jabs: Yeah.

Storey: Two hundred and fifty different answers, and everybody wants to edit.

Jabs: Yeah.

Storey: I know it's a natural tendency.

Jabs: And the different regions, too. And all the different regions. And in all the different committees, all the members, too. I mean, you had seven members asking these questions, you know, Mike Myers would ask twenty, and Bevill, and then you had to keep all of those somehow organized, too, and put them where they belonged. Yeah, it's a pretty big job.

Storey: The hearing is just one small part of the *whole* budget cycle.

Jabs: Oh, yeah. Absolutely.

Storey: Can you run me through the budget cycle and how it worked and how it overlapped? How the *years* overlapped, I mean. Because I think you're working on about three years at once, aren't you?

Dealing with the Budget Process for Three Years at Once

Jabs: Right.

Storey: It must get very complex. How does all of this fall out? Is it really logical, or is it just a madhouse, or what happens?

Montana Area Office Now Has a Call Letter to Begin Preparing the 1999 Budget

Jabs: I mean, it's probably easier just to explain in our own context *here*, because every office deals with the same thing. Like *right* now we've got a call letter for the 1999 budget. So we've just received a call letter, and I think that has to be in—our first numbers, I believe, have to be in sometime in October.

Reclamation's 1998 Budget Is in the Department of the Interior and Will Go on to OMB

Then you go back one, 1998, our budget is still within the Department of Interior. It's gone through Reclamation, you know. Reclamation has finished their work on their 1998 budget and has told the department, "This is what we want to do." So it's kind of sitting there. I believe it's in the department. I don't think it's gone to O-M-B yet. It might have gone to O-M-B. I've already forgot. It's about the time it goes to—so waiting for them to submit it to Congress.

The 1997 Budget Is in Congress but Reclamation Worked on it Two Years Ago

And then, of course, our '97 budget is, you

know, in Congress by now, and it's about ready to be signed, *our* budget, the Energy and Water. It sounds like a lot, but, you know, '97, we did that two years ago.

Storey: But doesn't that cause Reclamation a problem? Because things change.

Needs at Reclamation Change as the Budget Process Develops

Jabs: Oh, they do change. You know, I used to think, "Well, why would they change that much? Because you have your projects. You *know* what you need to do." This used to be my thinking. I've changed since I've been area manager. But things change. They change.

Storey: What causes them to change? What are the kinds of things that are acting on you?

A Resource Management Plan Is Needed at Canyon Ferry Dam, Powerplant, and Reservoir

Jabs: Well, like for me in my job here now as the area manager, a couple of things have changed since they did the '97 budget two years ago, and I probably was involved in it two years ago. We have decided because we have some big issues at Canyon Ferry, cabin owners up there are giving us some fits, and other things have happened, and we *really* need to do a resource management plan there. It's way, way overdue. It needs to take some priority because there's all sorts of these problems coming up. So that priority has changed since we did the '97 budget.

“... Reclamation somehow has not put high priority on resource management plans. But if we’re going to be good managers, we need those. ...”

I also have a big issue on grazing up on the high line here in Montana, and I need to do a couple of mini-resource management plans for a couple of areas up there, because Reclamation somehow has not put high priority on resource management plans. But if we’re going to be good managers, we need those.

Priorities Change over Time

So our priorities have changed in two years. We’re into ‘97 and what they were thinking then, I say my managers or even myself, it’s different today than it was two years ago in what I need to do. So they change. They do change. There’s no question about it.

Storey: Tell me more about your job in Washington. Did you enjoy living in Washington?

Jabs: I loved it. I thought it was great.

Storey: Did you get a lot of visitors?

Jabs: I got *lots* of visitors. (laughter)

Storey: From Billings, huh?

Living and Working in Washington, D. C.

Jabs: Yeah, I had lots of visitors when I was there. And

that was fine. After about the sixth time of going to the Arlington Cemetery, I decided that people could go on their own. (laughter)

I liked it there. I liked the energy there. There was a lot going on, you know. I liked it.

Storey: Well, Washington is different, say, than Billings. One of my colleagues who used to work in Washington described it as the Great Chocolate Fudge Factory on the Potomac. Did that take any adjusting to? I mean, they don't even think the way we do out here in the areas, in the regions. Or do they?

Jabs: What I've noticed is a different work ethic. You know, I came from the region, and I had a different work ethic than people in the office. I can remember going to meetings and it was like four o'clock in the afternoon and people would just get up and leave.

Storey: Where now?

Jabs: In D.C. And I thought, "How can they do that?" And then after I was there a while, I realized that people were in carpools, you know, and they needed to get their carpool or else it would be a really big problem getting home. So I think that kind of lifestyle was different for me. And I understood it after *being* there a while, that it's not that easy to just jump in your car and go home or stay late. Here it's no big deal, but there it's a big deal because most people live out far and the transportation is an issue.

Storey: Anything else? I would think the people in the Washington office, for instance, think differently, because they have a different perspective on what Reclamation is than do the people in the regions or in the area offices.

Work in the Area Office as Compared to Previous Jobs

Jabs: Well, I would say that since I'm here in the area office, even me, who had all this experience in the regional office and then went to Washington and then came out to an area office, I had no idea of the work involved in the area office. When I consider that I was a GS-14 in Washington and I come here and I am a GS-14 here as an area manager, the work that I did there is *nothing*, is *nothing* compared to what I do here. And the responsibility that I have here and what I had there is nothing. I mean, I just think there is no comparison whatsoever.

Even though I was responsible *for* the entire budget for Bureau of Reclamation and responsible for getting it through all these hoops when I was the budget chief, you know, getting all this stuff done, it still does not compare to the responsibility that I have here.

Storey: You're saying it was less responsibility?

Jabs: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. It's just a different type. It's a different type, a different type of work. That's more like paperwork, and this is just really—I don't know, it's just different.

Storey: You said you went as a 12/13, I believe.

Jabs: Uh-huh.

Storey: And did you get your 13 after the year?

Jabs: Oh, yeah.

Storey: In that position you were the assistant to the budget director?

Jabs: Uh-huh.

Storey: The chief of the Budget Division, is that what it was?

Jabs: Right.

Storey: How long was it before that job came open?

Jabs: The Budget Chief?

Storey: Yeah.

Served as Budget Chief in Washington, D.C., for Two and One-half Years

Jabs: I think I was in that job about four years. And then I was a budget chief for two and a half before I came back here.

Storey: You said you also were the planning officer. Is that the same thing?

Moved from Being Budget Chief to Being the Region's Liaison in D.C. and Then Returned to

Billings as the Regional Planning Officer

Jabs: No. What happened is Neil Stessman called me and asked me if I'd be interested in the liaison job. So I actually moved from the budget chief to the liaison job, and then from the liaison job I came back as a planning officer, and then as a planning officer I came to here.

Storey: You came back to the region as the planning officer.

Jabs: Right.

Storey: Oh, not as Reclamation's planning officer. Oh, okay.

Jabs: As the region's planning officer.

Storey: So you were in the liaison position for about a year, were you?

Jabs: Uh-huh.

Storey: Is there anything else about budgeting we ought to talk about before we talk about liaison?

“I kept track of all the F-T-E [Full-Time Equivalent] for Reclamation when I was there in Washington. . .”

Jabs: I kept track of all the F-T-E [Full-Time Equivalent] for Reclamation when I was there in Washington.

Storey: Tell me about F-T-E. F-T-E is one of these

things, “Oh, you can’t go over F-T-E,” and then you see people going over all the time. Is it *real*?

Jabs: I did so much work. One thing I did a lot of work. The department is always asking for stuff, you know. I did more work on F-T-E than—that was probably wasted. I mean, I was on a couple, maybe even three different task forces to determine what our F-T-E should be while I was in that job. I kept track of it, gave it to the department, and compared it with other people.

It’s just a number. I got to be real cynical about it. You know, the National Park Service would go over three or four hundred F-T-E, Reclamation was always under. You do all this work and I think, “Why are we doing this? It’s just a number on a paper.” I’m real cynical about it today. You know, people say we need more F-T-E in this office, and I said, “Well, if we need them, I’ll get them. I don’t care what anybody says.”

I mean, I know how that F-T-E works, because I’ve been there, done that. But if I’m out here doing my job, and if I need a couple more F-T-Es, I mean, I’ll ask for them. I wouldn’t think they would deny me if I have the money and the resource, you know, if I need them for whatever reason. I mean, I think that’s what it should be based on, what are your needs.

Storey: And the money. So do you see F-T-E as an artificial way of keeping track of what’s going on in the agency, or what? I don’t quite . . .

-
- Jabs: It's supposed to somehow keep a lid on things, but we sure spend a lot of energy on it, I'll tell you.
- Storey: Um-hmm. So Neil came to you and said, "Would you like to be the liaison for the region?"
- Jabs: Yeah.
- Storey: Had you known Neil before when he was in the region?
- Jabs: Not well. I just knew *of* him. I applied for the position and then got it. But I did. He just asked me if I might be interested in it, and I applied for it and got it. And I had a lot of mixed feelings about that, because I liked my job, I was good at it, too, you know, as a budget chief there, and I liked Washington. But for whatever reason, I decided to make that change.
- Storey: Did you have a plan? Were you looking to return to Billings, for instance?

Took the Liaison Job Thinking it Might Eventually Result in Her Coming Back to Billings

- Jabs: That's the reason I did it, because I thought I would eventually come back, because I have a lot of roots here in Billings. There's a lot of reasons for me to come back. But it wouldn't have hurt me to stay there until I retired, either.
- Storey: Well, tell me about the liaison position. What does the liaison person for the region do in Washington?

Work of a Regional Liaison in Washington, D.C.

Jabs: Well, they just handle all the issues, you know, that come to Washington. I remember the first thing I had to do when I went there is the South Dakota delegation was coming in to visit the commissioner. So I scurry and hurry to find out what's going on in South Dakota, you know, and I spent three or four days doing all this research. So I'm ready for these people from South Dakota to come in. And I walk in there and, of course, you know, I introduce myself and the commissioner talks to them and it lasts about an hour, and I didn't say one word. So all that preparation I did was like for naught.

I always have a tendency to over-prepare for everything anyway. But I'm not sure if it was for naught, because they were there for a couple of issues. They were trying to get a couple of their projects *through* Congress, Lewis and Clark Rural Water Development, and I did study those and I got familiar with them. I wouldn't say it was for naught.

“One of the important things in that job is having connections out in the region. You really need to know *who* to call to get what you wanted. . . .”

One of the important things in that job is having connections out in the region. You really need to know *who* to call to get what you wanted. That was the one plus I had because I was the O- & -M chief, you know, when I was out here, and I still knew everybody out in the area offices, and that was a real plus. Anybody who goes there that

doesn't know those people, I think it would be harder for them to do that job.

The regional liaison job “was really one of the most boring jobs I had. It was the least challenging job I’ve ever had . . .”

The other plus I had is, of course, I'd been in Washington and I knew O-M-B and I knew the people in the department. So it was easy for me. And actually, I thought it was really one of the most boring jobs I had. It was the least challenging job I've ever had, because you really have basically *no* responsibility of your own, and it was a job I had the least satisfaction from.

Storey: In Reclamation.

Jabs: Uh-huh.

Storey: But my impression is that that position is, generally, a stepping stone to a promotion within the region from which you're appointed.

Jabs: Well, it could be. One thing, I'd been in Washington, so I knew the ropes already. I think someone who went there to learn all those things that I already knew from my talking to everybody, it's more of a learning experience for them. I didn't have that much to learn, I think is the reason I didn't like it. I wouldn't say I didn't really like it. It was like a sabbatical. I mean, you know, here I was a supervisor before, supervising seven people. I go into this job with basically *no* responsibility except, you know, just . . .

Storey: Gathering information.

Jabs: Yeah, gathering information, going to hearings, giving it to the right people. It was an easy job, I thought.

Storey: So you went from a 14 as budget chief to a 14 there?

Jabs: Uh-huh. And then a 14 out here. So I haven't really—

Storey: Well, you mentioned seven people on the budget staff. Was that three secretaries and then four staff, or how did that break down?

Storey: No, we just had one secretary. But I had an assistant and then I had a person who took care of the hearings. I must have had five analysts.

Storey: So it was seven professional staff and a secretary, I guess.

Jabs: Um-hmm.

Storey: Interesting.

Jabs: Yeah.

Storey: What kinds of things does the liaison do besides gathering information from the region? Is there anything else?

Jabs: Well, you go to hearings, you know, if there's anything affecting the region. You prepare a lot of briefings for the commissioner.

Storey: So that he'll be prepared for his meetings.

Jabs: Right.

Storey: Does that involve face-to-face or written, for the most part?

Jabs: Briefings, both.

Storey: Which commissioner was this?

Jabs: Dan Beard was there when I was there, and then the one before him was—

Storey: Dennis Underwood.

Jabs: Yes.

Storey: So you worked with two of them.

Jabs: Uh-huh. Then before Underwood was . . .

Storey: Dale Duvall.

Jabs: Right.

Storey: And Joe Hall was acting, I guess.

Jabs: Um-hmm.

Storey: Well, how did it come about that you moved from Washington back to Billings?

“The planning officer job was vacant and Neil asked me if I wanted it. . . . I did decide to take it. And I was only in there for three months and then

he put me over here. . . .”

- Jabs: That was just a reassignment. The planning officer job was vacant and Neil asked me if I wanted it. It wasn't a job I really wanted, but I did decide to take it. And I was only in there for three months and then he put me over here.
- Storey: When was that that you made the move back to Billings?
- Jabs: 1994. It was April of 1994.
- Storey: So after the liaison position. I think those are about a year generally, aren't they, sometimes two years?
- Jabs: Sometimes two years, yeah.
- Storey: What was going on in planning?
- Jabs: Nothing.
- Storey: My impression was that most of the planning had gone away.
- Jabs: There wasn't much going on there, and they didn't fill that position after I left, either. There wasn't much going on there. They had given all the responsibility to the area offices, and they were monitoring the people around this area, in the region, you know, the groundwater recharge program and two or three other ones. But it wasn't much. It wasn't much at all. It was not challenging. I wasn't there long enough, but I could see right away that it wasn't anything that I

would find interesting.

Storey: But let's see now, if I'm *tracking* this. When you became the liaison officer, then you became a regional employee again. Is that right?

Jabs: That's right. That's right.

Storey: And then Neil just lateraled you into the Planning officer. Had you gone in and said, "can't stand this, there's nothing to do," or how did the lateral over here come about?

Jabs: I hadn't got to that point yet, actually. I mean, I was still trying to figure it out. I was still trying to figure it out, and then he asked me if I'd be interested in this job. And I said, "Well, maybe." (laughter)

Storey: And here you are.

Jabs: Here I am.

Storey: You went from seven staff to zero staff to how many in planning?

Jabs: I don't even remember if there was . . .

Storey: And then into Montana [Area Office], how many folks?

Jabs: About ninety-five.

Storey: Ninety-five people in the area office.

Jabs: Um-hmm.

Storey: By that time, I guess, the area office would have been in the process of transformation.

Changes in the Regional and Area Offices While Working in Washington, D.C.

Jabs: Right.

Storey: What kinds of changes did you see from when you left Montana to when you came back, in the responsibilities and delegation of authority and so on to the area office?

Jabs: Oh, I think there's big. I can remember being in the region. I don't think the area offices had much status. I don't think they were given the status. They were sort of like, "Oh, the area offices," and they were just sort of like people out there. They [didn't] ~~don't~~ have the status then that they do today, or they're not getting the attention then that they do today. And I think the other thing is they're just being more responsible. The budget is one thing. It's your program. You're responsible. Nobody in the region should be responsible for it, because it's your job. And I see that happening in everything. I certainly have a different view of Reclamation, sitting here.

Storey: Tell me about it.

Montana Area Office Manages Two Powerplants

Jabs: In one of my first wake-up calls, when I became area manager, I visited the two powerplants. I have two powerplants under here, one at Canyon Ferry and Yellowtail.

Storey: A larger powerplant, yeah.

Jabs: And so I went out and introduced [myself to] them. The complaint that both of them had is that, "People don't know we're out here. You forget that we're even here. We are out here running these powerplants. These are the core of—it's half of my budget here, you know. "We're the ones who make Reclamation, basically." I mean, it was sort of they're telling me, "Without us, you know, you wouldn't even have an office in Billings, probably. You're only here because we're here, and you do not respect or notice us out here."

They're the ones who are really running Reclamation, you know. I mean, they're out there. Our field offices are out and people who are keeping Reclamation going. I really got to thinking about that, and it's really true. I mean, I even forget about them sometimes, you know. I know that they're there, of course, but they don't get much attention. The thing about the area offices, this is where Reclamation is happening. This is where the work is being done. The regional office, you know, it's just kind of they're doing things, but they're not out in the field. Denver office. Washington office. Whole new different worlds within Reclamation, distinct worlds.

Storey: In what way? Now, remember, you can be honest. You're leaving for China next month, and these tapes aren't even going to be transcribed by then. (laughter)

Jabs: Well, it's just that I don't think people . . .

END SIDE 2, TAPE 1. SEPTEMBER 18, 1996.

BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2. SEPTEMBER 18, 1996.

Storey: . . . interview by Brit Storey with Katherine Jabs on September the 18th, 1996.

. . . responsibility of keeping two dams.

Jabs: Two dams.

Storey: Yellowtail is a *big* dam.

Jabs: Big dam. You have a lot of land problems. Just a big responsibility.

Storey: How does your time get allocated as area manager? Where do you spend a lot of your time? You know, there's that rule of thumb, you get 90 percent of your product out of 10 percent of your time, and then you spend 90 percent of your time on 10 percent of your product. How does it work out for you as an area manager?

Empowerment of the Area Managers

Jabs: Well, the one thing that I think is happening, because the area managers are being empowered, if you will, or getting more involved in what's going on Reclamation-wide, because you have a tendency to be isolated here, and I could see that, I could see why the area offices have been kind of isolated, because they have an area of responsibility, and you have to spend a *lot* of time and energy on that area.

Now, I think what's happened, you know, when Dan Beard came on board was, you know, to give area managers not more responsibility, but basically more attention, or whatever it is that you call it. Because he *recognized*, for some reason he recognized that the area offices are the ones who are out there. That's the core of Reclamation, right here. It isn't in the region or it isn't in Denver, it isn't in Washington. This is what keeps Reclamation going, and they should be recognized more and have more say-so, and just be more involved in the greater decisionmaking, policy-making of Reclamation.

**Being Involved in Reclamationwide
Decisionmaking Takes Time Away from the Work
in the Office**

And I support that idea, and I think it's good and we need to. In the same hand, it takes me away from my area here. When I need to be home, when I need to be home because there's stuff going on here that I need to be involved in, people need me to help them get through some of this stuff, I'm off. I'm off at Reno or someplace to one of these meetings, and it does take away from your office. I should only speak for *myself*, but I don't think I've come to terms with that yet, and I think that if I were to stay I think I'd try to do something different, because there's things here that aren't getting done, that seems like they only get done if I'm here. I don't remember what your question was.

Storey: I was asking about how the area offices changed.

“ . . . some area managers are getting deputies, because it’s a full-time job managing this here. . . . If you’re away . . . running off to different meetings doing whatever . . . away from your job here . . . you can’t concentrate on your job.”

Jabs: Yeah. I think that’s changed, and I think they’re still evolving. I think some area managers are getting deputies, because it’s a full-time job managing this here. If you’re away, you know, a week, a month, or whatever, running off to different meetings doing whatever, it takes away from your job here, and you can’t concentrate on your job.

The other thing I found out is because when I first started, I’m an advocate of teamwork, and, of course, like any new manager, we were trying to reorganize the office and get us into teams. I spent a lot of energy working internally here trying to do things, and then I get so involved in your issues then, and then this part of your job kind of is pushed aside because you’ve got other more important things to do. So it’s a real juggle of time.

As a matter of fact, I went to visit one of my offices here a couple of months ago, and I hadn’t been there in two years just because there wasn’t any trouble spots there so I don’t go.

Storey: How many offices are there?

“I think our office really should probably be in Helena . . . because Yellowtail is the only one that we have close. Most of our work is in the other

part of the state. . . .”

Jabs: We have Yellowtail, Canyon Ferry, Babb, Clark Canyon, and Helena. Five, I guess. I think our office really should probably be in Helena, you know, this area office, because Yellowtail is the only one that we have close. Most of our work is in the other part of the state. So we do a lot of traveling in Montana. That’s kind of another issue.

“When I’m in the office, I like it better . . . I try to keep my traveling down to visiting somebody from the state or going to meetings, going just where there’s hot spots. . . . I traveled maybe 50 percent of my time, you know, sometimes, but that’s too much. You’re not gelling with your issues here when you travel that much. . . .”

There’s just not enough time, ever. When I’m in the office, I like it better because then when people come in and they know I’m available, and it works better for them if I’m here more. And I don’t travel. I tried to cut down on my travel a lot. Like I say, our managers and the people go out, and I try to keep my traveling down to visiting somebody from the state or going to meetings, going just where there’s hot spots. So I didn’t travel a lot. I mean, I traveled maybe 50 percent of my time, you know, sometimes, but that’s too much. You’re not gelling with your issues here when you travel that much.

Storey: Did you have sort of a goal? I’ve met people, “Well, I’m only going to travel one week out of the month, or 50 percent of the time,” or

whatever.

“My goal is I really analyzed if I need to go or if I could send someone else, and I always try to cut down on it. . . .”

Jabs: No. My goal is I really analyzed if I need to go or if I could send someone else, and I always try to cut down on it. If there was *ever* a chance I didn't have to go, I would always go on a chance. I would always go on not going, you know, I would lean that way rather than go, because it gets to be too much, too much travel.

Storey: It could be a lot of travel.

Between Attending the Regional Leadership Team Every Month, the Area Managers Meeting in the Region Each Three Months, Serving on Task Forces, as Well as Reclamationwide Meetings, Travel Is an Issue

Jabs: Like I say, the other thing, too, is we have a leadership team within this region of all the area offices, area managers, plus a couple of people from the region. We were meeting once a month. The area managers were meeting every three months. I was on a task force, you know, and another task force, and that took me away. Plus my traveling here. It gets to be a problem. It really does.

Storey: However, you mentioned a little while ago that the area offices are where the action is, in effect.

Jabs: Oh, yeah.

Storey: How do you convey what's important to the area offices if you don't go to meetings like this?

Jabs: Well, I think you're right. I mean, I think that that's true. When I grew up in Reclamation, I think the area offices were kind of forgotten. I don't think, my own thought process, from what I remember they were not given a lot of credibility, basically. It's sort of like, I mean, they weren't given the status I think they deserved. I think that's changed.

Storey: I think in return for that, though, they sort of got an immunity. They weren't responsible either.
(laughter)

**To Get the Work Done in the Area Offices You
Have to Work Long Hours and Some Offices Are
Appointing Deputy Area Managers**

Jabs: Yeah, right. Right. But I think there has to be a balance there, and I think you need to be, and I like it. I think Reclamation is heading where they need to head, and you do need that involvement, but I think you have to change your structure here in the area office, and I haven't done that. You can't do that and you can't do this both and be effective unless you're working long hours.

Storey: In the area.

Jabs: Unless you work long hours. Because you just don't get your work done. And I think some people are having deputies now.

Storey: Have you thought about doing that?

Jabs: Well, I thought about it, yeah. I'm not too sure I would have ever done it. I think there's other options, too, like having an office manager would be another—I have an administrative officer, but another type of person or a deputy. But I think the new area manager is going to—I haven't really talked to him about it in length, but unless he's a workaholic, I think the area managers need a different structure because of that.

Storey: Well, tell me. Are you a workaholic? Come in at six, leave at ten at night, all that?

“One thing about this job is you need to know everything. . . . a new initiative comes down, you *have* to take the time to read it and to know what it is, and then you give it to your people. . . . You don't have much time during the day . . . So you have to do it before, early in the morning, or your have to do it late at night. . . .”

Jabs: I do if I need to, if there's issues that I need to. One thing about this job is you need to know everything. I mean, a new initiative comes down, you *have* to take the time to read it and to know what it is, and then you give it to your people. But you can't give it to them until you know it. Whatever it is, you need to know it, so you need to take the time. You don't have much time during the day, because people are in and out of my office all day, almost always. So you have to do it before, early in the morning, or your have to do it late at night. And so you make your choices.

“I've *learned* to make real wise use of my time. I only generally now deal with something once. . . .”

**I don't need to go into depth on every issue . . .
And that's helped me on my time management. . .**

I've *learned* to make real wise use of my time. I only generally now deal with something once. I read something. I used to say, "Well, I'll look at it later." Now I take the time to get what it is I need from that and then move on. There's so much information out there. I mean, there's so much stuff going on. And then I finally realized you can only know so much of it. I don't have to know everything like I used to, you know, like the South Dakota thing. I don't need to go into depth on every issue that comes on board. You need to know a certain amount. And that's helped me on my time management.

Storey: How would you characterize what you're doing as manager? What is it that an area manager does?

Jabs: They lead. (laughter)

Storey: (laughter) Well, that's the stock answer. How do you do it?

Issues the Area Manager Has to Deal with

Jabs: You give direction.

Storey: Is it a lot of personnel management?

Jabs: Some. Some.

Storey: Is it a lot of politics? Is it a lot of dealing with irrigation districts? Where are the areas where

you're focusing energy?

Jabs: All of the above.

Storey: All of the above.

Jabs: All of the above.

Storey: All of the things that percolate up to you from below?

Jabs: Yeah. There's personnel problems every once in a while, but that hasn't been too much of a big issue. But there always is some, not only here, but in the powerplants, because you're dealing with union people.

Politics, I guess, a lot of politics, a lot of political things in this office, more than I had ever anticipated, not that I anticipated much, but there's—and I've learned how to work with political people. You know, I visit with them pretty regularly. They know who I am. I know who they are. Whenever I have an issue coming up, I call them and tell them it's coming or what I'm working on. I found that it works a lot better, and you become a person then, you know, not just a bureaucrat. I'm not too sure that my predecessor did that. I don't know, but it works. Anytime we do a press release, I let them know, not only in Billings but in our outlying congressional delegations, Helena, Great Falls, Glendive, throughout the state. I've gotten to know the staff and work with them regularly, because if you don't, they'll come and bite you, almost. I've learned the hard way.

Storey: Yes. And, see, that's the kind of thing that the lower level staff don't realize goes on. They have no idea that you have to keep the congressmen apprized so that they aren't blind-sided by an issue. And, actually, this leads me into my next question, and that is, you've been here two-, three years now as project manager. Where would you, from your experience, say are the areas that are a problem and are a danger, if you will, for project managers, area managers, where they could make a misstep and find themselves in difficulty?

Decisionmaking must Take the Public and its Views into Account

Jabs: Well, politics *and* the public. I mean, the public is a real big factor here. It's sort of a lecture I give my people is that, you know, they're out there and they have all the technical answers, but you can't always just do something because of technical reasons. There's always the public opinion and there's the politics, and you always need to factor those three things in in your decisionmaking. I do, and you guys need to think about that also.

The public is a big factor. I think a good example is we started an initiative on title transfer, to transfer our irrigation districts, you know, irrigation projects to the users. So I made a *trip* around Montana. I have twenty-three irrigation districts, and so I start on this trip and I put 1,600 miles on that week, and I visited the irrigation districts. I did this when I first started, but on this initiative I go around again and it's, you know, part of my job. "We have this

initiative of title transfer. Are you interested?”
And, I’m an advocate of that. I support that title transfer. I think it’s just something that we need to do and it should have been done.

“ . . . we start this title transfer initiative for . . . Lower Yellowstone Irrigation District. . . . We’re starting the NEPA process. . . . all of a sudden there’s this Sportsmen Club . . . *fighting* this initiative to turn title over to the irrigation district. They are fighting all initiatives in Montana to turn public land into private. . . .”

So, anyway, we start this title transfer initiative for one of our projects called Lower Yellowstone Irrigation District. And we had a meeting with them, and we did have a public meeting. We’re starting the NEPA process. Somehow we didn’t get to everybody that we needed to get to, and all of a sudden there’s this Sportsmen Club that pops up and is now *fighting* this initiative to turn title over to the irrigation district. They are fighting all initiatives in Montana to turn public land into private.

Even though we worked really hard to get all the publics involved, there was one public there we didn’t. They just got wind of it through somebody other than us. And that’s the type of thing that comes back to you. We’re meeting with them next week in Great Falls to tell them about our issue. But the public does have something to say about what we do. They’re interested in what we do in addition to the congressional.

Storey: You say you support title transfer. Are you saying everything in the Montana Project Office should be transferred into private ownership?

Thoughts Regarding Title Transfer

Jabs: No. I just support the concept of there's certain districts that, you know, they've been paid out for years, and they operate it. We see them once every three years.

Storey: We do an O-&-M review.

Jabs: We do an O-&-M review, yeah. And there's some projects that are really, I think, ready for that.

“ . . . talking about our more complicated projects . . . our reservoirs, it's gets to be a pretty complicated . . . it's probably going to take . . . six years. . . . ”

But, no, when you start talking about our more complicated projects, you know, our reservoirs, it's gets to be a pretty complicated issue—more complicated than I had imagined. I mean, I was real optimistic and said, “Oh, we can probably do this in six months.” You know, it's probably going to take more like six years.

Storey: So you're thinking in terms of transferring canal systems mostly? Is that what it is?

Jabs: Um-hmm. Yeah, distribution systems.

Storey: What are they saying on the other side? Are they

saying, “Yeah, we want it,” or are they saying, “Wait a minute, if Uncle goes away, so does the Federal money”?

Jabs: Yeah.

Storey: What are the issues there?

“ . . . some of them really want title. They don’t want to deal with Reclamation anymore. . . . But, the liability is an issue with some of them. They’re afraid that it might cost them more. If you’re going to get rid of it, there must be a reason why you want to get rid of it. . . . ”

Jabs: Well, I think some of them really want title. They don’t *want* to deal with Reclamation anymore. They don’t want to deal with our laws. But, the liability is an issue with some of them. They’re afraid that it might cost them more. If you’re going to get rid of it, there must be a reason why you want to get rid of it. (laughter)

Storey: I can see these farmers and ranchers.

“ . . . the most interesting meeting that I had, though, was the very *first* irrigation district that I met with on title transfer. . . . ‘Yeah, the government does spend too much money.’ They talked about the rules, they talked about NAFTA, and then they said to me, ‘When we’re talking about less government, we didn’t mean you guys.’” . . . ‘Not you guys. It’s those other guys we’re talking about.’ . . . I had at least three irrigation districts tell me that.”

Jabs: Well, I think the most interesting meeting that I had, though, was the *very first* irrigation district that I met with on title transfer. So I go to them and I say, “This is part of reinventing government. It’s an issue that’s coming down from the President. They want a government that costs less—and works better and costs less. Title transfer is one of the initiatives that’s coming down from the Department of Interior. If you’re interested in title to your distribution systems, we’re willing to work with you. Even though we *don’t* put any money in your project, you do all the operation and maintenance *yourself*, it still costs us money in our office because we have to do this, you know, the title is in our name and we have to do this review.”

What they told me, I’ll never forget it. The first I heard about, “Yeah, the government does spend too much money.” They talked about the rules, they talked about NAFTA, and then they said to me, “When we’re talking about less government, we didn’t mean you guys.”
(laughter)

Storey: (laughter) That’s wonderful. Because that’s the way it is throughout the government.

Jabs: It was a quote. I’m not making it up. “Not you guys. It’s those other guys we’re talking about.”

Storey: “The ones that aren’t giving us subsidies are the ones we’re talking about.”

Jabs: That’s right. That’s right. And I had at least three irrigation districts tell me that.

Storey: Really.

Jabs: That was interesting.

Storey: That's interesting. Have we completed any title transfers through this office?

Jabs: Not this office, no.

Storey: Are we getting close? I mean, are there interested groups?

Jabs: Yes. We have two of them who are *very, very* interested. Before we transfer title, we have to do a cultural survey, and we're in the process of doing that on two of our districts. When that is completed, we'll be more in a position to transfer it.

Storey: But you think it's going to happen?

Jabs: I think so. Probably a few, yeah. Maybe not as many as we think.

“ . . . I think the distribution systems . . . should go in their name. The reservoirs, that's another story, because you have so much public use on your reservoirs now . . . ”

But I think the distribution systems, you know, the canals and laterals, I mean, I'm a supporter that should go in their name. The reservoirs, that's another story, because you have so much public use on your reservoirs now and that is a big issue, that continued public use.

The reason we're having this one problem with the Sportsmen Club is that even though this irrigation district pumps from the river, they do have an intake structure and there's fishing access at that structure. Because of the intake structure, the fishing is good and people use it and they want to maintain that public use. And that's what they're concerned about, and they're valid concerns and we have to listen to them.

Storey: Yes. Yellowtail you mentioned earlier. There are a couple of things I'd like to talk about. First of all, the union, which you've already mentioned. I'd like to talk about the kinds of issues that that involves Reclamation in. Those are *union* employees *of* Reclamation, right?

Area Manager Does Not Deal Much with Negotiations with Labor Unions

Jabs: Well, they're union. They belong to the I-B-E-W, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

Storey: But they're Reclamation employees.

Jabs: Yes.

Storey: What kinds of issues does that raise for you as an area manager?

Jabs: Well, you know, I don't really get personally involved in—I think only one that I've gotten involved with, you know, a personnel issue. In my position, I don't. We negotiate a new contract with them every year on what we're going to pay them, and that's basically my involvement,

personal involvement in it.

Storey: Does that cause problems?

Jabs: No. No.

Storey: It's gone smoothly?

Jabs: Uh-huh.

Storey: *Why* has it gone smoothly? You know, all I ever hear about unions is they're striking because the contract isn't acceptable.

Jabs: I guess they get what they want. And I don't know. But I don't even get involved in that. This year I didn't sit in on the negotiations at all.

Storey: Somebody in your office does that?

Jabs: I have a power chief who does that and somebody from the personnel office in the region. We depend on the region quite a bit.

Storey: For that kind of thing.

Jabs: Yeah, we do.

Yellowtail and the Apprenticeship Program

Storey: The other issue about Yellowtail that I've heard about is Indians. I understood, I think it was maybe a year and a half-, two years ago, that there was an initiative because Yellowtail is on a reservation, I believe, that the Indians wanted to take over the powerplant, and they wanted to put

Bureau of Reclamation History Program

Indian operators in there and all that kind of thing. Do you know anything about that, and can you tell me what was going on and whether it's been resolved and all that good stuff?

Jabs: Well, we have an active apprenticeship program at Yellowtail and have had one for six or seven years, and the apprenticeship program down there is working with the college at Crow Agency. We have put maybe eight or nine Native Americans into the powerplant through that apprenticeship program. Over half of our people at Yellowtail are Native Americans. And that apprenticeship program has been an *astounding* success, because we do have half of the people out there are Crow Indians from the reservation. The one thing nice about that is that they are good workers, they live close, we have less turnover, because Yellowtail is an isolated spot and people don't stay there very long.

Storey: They are what the Park Service would call homesteaders.

Jabs: Yeah.

Storey: They're working there because it's right near home.

Jabs: Right. Right. And we just finished our last, I think, apprenticeship person is finishing up, I think maybe, this month, you know, the last person through that program, and we're starting to research it and decide what we need to do. Because you need to kind of figure out what your needs are in the future and then get a program

going, to get a couple more going. But it's been really successful.

“ . . . almost two years ago, Jack Bayers and Neil Stessman went down to visit . . . the president of the Crow Tribe, and asked them if they would be interested in *exploring* the possibility of the Crow Tribe . . . doing the operation and maintenance on the facility. . . .”

What happened is it's almost two years ago, Jack Bayers [phonetic] and Neil Stessman went down to visit Clara Nomee, who is the president of the Crow Tribe,⁵ and asked them if they would be interested in *exploring* the possibility of the Crow Tribe operating the facilities or managing it, doing the operation and maintenance on the facility.

“Neil Stessman and Jack Bayers did that without telling me . . . They should have asked me before they went down there. And they told me two days later, and that has been *real* problem for me for a lot of different reasons. . . .”

Neil Stessman and Jack Bayers did that without telling me they were doing that, and that has been a real problem for me. They should have asked me before they went down there. And they told me two days later, and that has been *real* problem for me for a lot of different reasons. It

5. Clara Nomee served as chair of the Crow Tribe from 1990 to 2000. She was the first female chair, and she was the third woman official of the Crown Tribe. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crow_chairperson at about 12:15P.M. on July 25, 2011.

was a real big issue I had with Neil Stessman, and I don't know if I should put this on the tape or not. But they did do that.

Since then, I heard about it two days after the fact, and it caused us some major problems within *my* office and the Yellowtail office. The employees were real threatened by that.

Storey: They were really concerned about their jobs and so on.

“ . . . it took us about six months to sort of react to that initiative. It's not that I don't *support* that idea. . . . ”

Jabs: Um-hmm. Um-hmm. So it took us about six months to sort of react to that initiative. It's not that I don't *support* that idea. I think the fact that we have half of the people there are Native Americans and one of our foreman is a Native American, and he knows as much about that plant as anybody, it doesn't have anything to do with them not being able to do that. But I think it really set us back, even. If we would have sat down and talked about the initiative and what can we do, you know, to work toward that, I think we'd be a lot further ahead than we are today.

Of course, the employees then called ~~at~~ the *Gazette* and the papers and the Chamber of Commerce and all the Sportsmen's Clubs. So we did a lot of reacting to the public on that initiative. And it was just exploring the possibility of them taking over the operation and maintenance. It isn't that we really promised that to them. We

were just going to explore the possibility.

“We got to a point . . . about the *authority* issue . . . can we negotiate with them to do it without giving other people a chance? . . .”

So I appointed a team together to study the issue, to get an MOA together with the Crow Tribe to determine how we’re going to work together as we explore this possibility. We got to a point where we were—about the *authority* issue, do we have the authority to contract with the Crow Tribe to do the operation and maintenance, now because Reclamation has specific laws when it comes to authorities. You know, you need to compete. You know, a lot of different ways that you can have somebody operate your projects. But it has to be through a competitive process. So the authority issue became can we negotiate with them to do it without giving other people a chance?

So we went to the solicitor to get an opinion, and he basically said, “I don’t think you have the authority, but you might. You might *have* it. But I’m not willing to say that you *have* it.” What we need to do is go have the commissioner ask the solicitor in Washington if we have the authority to do it, because if we do have that authority to contract directly with Indian tribes, it would affect a lot of projects within Reclamation. So it might set a precedent. So we’re proceeding a little more cautiously. What we’re doing in the meantime is to try to kind of work with the—you know, it’s on the reservation. It’s a good opportunity to work with the tribes

down there, because there's a lot of possibilities of what we can do.

Storey: Does Yellowtail provide water to anybody?

Yellowtail Does Provide Water on the Reservation

Jabs: Well, it provides the water to the B-I-A. There is a canal there. And, of course, the river.

Storey: But there isn't a repayment contract, then.

Jabs: No.

Storey: So we don't have that—

Jabs: We don't have an irrigation, no.

Storey: —way of dealing with it.

Jabs: No.

Storey: Interesting.

Water Operations in the Montana Area Office

Jabs: I think it's doable. I mean, the whole idea is that, you know, a good idea. It gets to be really complicated, because, you know, I have a whole branch here that does the operations, you know, that keeps track of all the water in *all* of our reservoirs, when it's released and when it's not, and how do you deal with that aspect of it.

Storey: Do they tell them when to release and all that?

Jabs: Well, we have some responsibility in some of our reservoirs, yeah. How much is coming in, how much is going out. You know, we monitor that daily. So I mean, it gets to be . . .

END SIDE 1, TAPE 2. SEPTEMBER 18, 1996.

BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 2. SEPTEMBER 18, 1996.

Power Users Notified Reclamation That They Also Wanted to Be Considered for Operation and Maintenance of the Yellowtail Powerplant

It gets to be complicated no matter who's managing it, you know, the power users then now are interested in—when they found out we were thinking about, you know, contracting with the Crow Tribe, the power users came in and said that, “If you're going to contract, we want to be right there, and we're interested in managing it, too.”

“ . . . the employees . . . formed a corporation called the Bull Elk Corporation and said they wanted to compete to manage it . . . So it got to be a real complicated issue. . . . ”

And then the employees got together and formed a corporation called the Bull Elk Corporation and said they wanted to compete to manage it, too, if we were going to go out and get somebody to manage it. So it got to be a real complicated issue.

Storey: I can see where it would. A lot of different interests involved.

Jabs: Right.

Storey: There's a lot of money in the power, I imagine.

Jabs: Um-hmm.

Storey: I think it was Ken Vernon, who was Regional director from '47 to '53, who told me about sponsoring the construction of Yellowtail and how important it was in the electrical *grid* for the area and that kind of thing.

Jabs: Yeah.

Storey: Did the Crows who are working at the powerplant now join this corporation that the employees formed?

Jabs: Um-hmm.

Storey: They did? Interesting.

Jabs: See, I guess what they were afraid of is that the money would go, that they would now be working for the Crow Tribe instead of the Federal Government. They would rather stay working for the Federal Government than for the Crow Tribe. I believe that was one of their—

Storey: Well, it affects pensions and all kinds of things.

Jabs: Right.

Storey: Benefits.

The Union Didn't Become Involved in the

Discussion about the Crow Tribe O&Ming the Powerplant

Jabs: And the union, too, we never really got the union involved in this. But if we were to seriously start, you know, renegotiating with the tribe, we would have to make sure the union was involved in our negotiations.

Storey: So things right now are on hold because of the issue of—

Jabs: Authority.

Storey: Reclamation's authorities.

Jabs: Um-hmm. Um-hmm. There's other options we could do to try to get even more Native Americans working there.

Storey: What size budget are you managing here out of the Montana office now?

Montana Area Office Budget Is about \$10 Million, about Half of Which Is the Two Powerplants

Jabs: About \$10 million.

Storey: So is it largely personnel?

Jabs: Um-hmm. About half of that is the powerplants, a little over half.

Storey: What about the revenue from the powerplants? Does the Montana office receive any benefit from that?

Funding Operation and Maintenance of the Powerplants

Jabs: No.

Storey: But you use appropriated funds for O-&-M?

Jabs: That's right.

Storey: And then the revenues go into some fund or another in the Federal Government.

“... Congress is very clear . . . they don't want you spending *a dollar* without them telling you can do it. . . . it's a real problem for me here in area office because I don't have an incentive to collect more money. . . .”

Jabs: Well, that's the one thing Congress is very clear on. They want to be able to tell you what you can spend and what you can't spend, and they don't want you spending *a dollar* without them telling you can do it. I mean, I know that through my budget, but it's a real problem for me here in area office because I don't have an incentive to collect more money. I mean, I think it's hard. For instance, if I could use some of that money, I would think I would have a better incentive to collect it, you know.

Recreation Fees at Fresno Dam and Cabin Sites at Canyon Ferry as Examples of Possible Sources of Increased Revenues

For instance, Canyon Ferry. We took over management of Canyon Ferry. The state managed

the Canyon Ferry cabin sites and recreation since Canyon Ferry was built. Reclamation took it back just before I came in 1994. And they were collecting fees from the cabin sites. They were collecting about \$120,000 a year for cabins, 265 cabin sites. They tried to raise it to fair market value in 1986, but because of politics, they just couldn't. So I come on board, and the first thing I'm going to do is I'm going to change the world and I'm going to get fair market value for everything we're doing.

So I go through an appraisal. I do an appraisal of the cabin sites at Canyon Ferry. The cabin sites' lease fees increased, according to the appraisal, by **450** percent from what they were paying. So if we were collecting fair market value, we would be getting \$700,000 instead of \$120,000. Well, the cabin owners are appealing it right now, so I'm not too sure we'll ever get fair market value. But I'm kind of going off the subject.

Storey: No, you're not. This is important.

Jabs: And the same way with collecting fees at recreation areas. Now, we have to take all that money and we put it in the Treasury and then Congress tells us what we can do. The same way with our powerplants. I guess, you know, it needs to be that way. Sometimes I get frustrated. But somehow it seems like we should get some credit if we do go out and look for fair market value. If we were to get fair market value, collect \$700,000 now instead of \$120,000, and it's all going to go into the Treasury, my appropriations is going to

be the same, you know.

Storey: Your political problems are going to be increased.

Jabs: Yeah. They already have increased because we're doing this. (laughter)

Storey: Are there other resource problems at Canyon Ferry other than the fact that we haven't been collecting fair market value? The *tendency* that I've watched since I started working for the Federal Government in '74 is that we're removing people from in-holdings, we're eliminating leases because of the management problems.

Jabs: Oh, yeah.

Storey: Is that a problem at Canyon Ferry, also?

Issues at Canyon Ferry Cabin Sites, Including Cabin Owners' Desire to Buy Their Sites

Jabs: They're a big problem. We have problems up there. I could talk to you *all day* about the problems we have, cabin owners, you know, trespassing and wanting this, wanting that, sewage.

Storey: Well, we have a few minutes anyway.

Jabs: Yeah. A big problem. They want to buy it. They want to buy those lots. That's their newest initiative now, and they've gone to the congressional delegation and trying to work with them to introduce legislation for them to buy it. And that is going to be a big deal.

Storey: What's Reclamation's perspective on that?

Jabs: Well, they keep asking me that, and I won't tell them. I mean, they want me to say either we will support it or we won't support it, and what I tell them is that—and they ask me that over and over and over again, hoping that I will answer it. But I say that we've gone through an analysis, you know, that if you *sell* those lands, it's going to be a lot of problems. You know, you have sewer. If you think you have sewer problems now, wait 'til they become private and they expand and more, you know, close to the reservoir, and we're trying to deal with those issues.

You're going to have in-holdings within public land, you know. You're going to have *water* issues. Where are you going to get your water? You're probably going to—you know, water. More people. Roads. I mean, *big-time* issues. I mean, they are issues now, but if they become privatized, they're going to be—and we have to deal with all those issues on anything, you know, if you come forward with legislation, and the public has something to say about it. It's not us. The public is going to make the determination if we should sell those or not, because recreation is increasing by leaps and bounds at these reservoirs. There's some areas there with the cabins that probably should be public use, you know.

So, big time. You know, there's going to be a lot of issues involved into your selling. We're going to have to go through a legal process, public hearings, and then we would go forward

with the recommendation, you know, alternative to the commissioner and water and science, the secretary, and O-M-B. *They're* the ones who would either support it or not support it. I can't do that here. The only thing I could do is deal with the issues and say, "Okay, you want to sell it? These are the issues. This is what we need to do." I can't say, no, we wouldn't support it or, yes, we would, because I would get into trouble. I mean, you know, it's just something I can't do. So it's not a cut-and-dried issue.

Storey: I take it you have sent them a bill for the fair market lease value, however.

Jabs: Well, no, I was not able to, because they appealed to the commissioner and they have until November first to appeal our decision.

Storey: Were they notified that there would be an increase or something?

Jabs: Oh, yeah. I notified them two years ahead. Oh, yeah. And they were notified and they were given what it is. But we sent out bills and they were due August thirty-first, and we just billed them for their old lease, average of \$500 a year.

Storey: Why was this taken back from the state of Montana?

**State of Montana returned Canyon Ferry because
". . . they were sick of it. We offered them,
actually, \$300,000 a year to keep it, and they
wouldn't, plus keeping the revenues . . ."**

Jabs: Well, they were sick of it. We offered them, actually, \$300,000 a year to keep it, and they wouldn't, plus keeping the revenues that they were keeping—the \$120[,000]. We offered them about a half a million to keep it, and they wouldn't do it.

Storey: Rather than take it back.

Jabs: They just didn't want to deal with it.

Storey: Were there any other big issues like this going on in your area?

Grazing Lease Issues on Reclamation Lands

Jabs: Grazing.

Storey: Tell me about grazing. Nobody has ever talked about grazing before.

Jabs: Really?

Storey: What kind of issues does Reclamation have with grazing?

Jabs: Grazing. I have grazing. We have grazing leases around our reservoirs. I do in Montana. And we have an area around Tiber Reservoir where we lease that land for grazing. We have like, maybe, quite a few units. Forty-five. We have it blocked off in units, forty-five different units. Some of them we lease for grazing, and others we have for fish and wildlife purpose, we don't graze, and others we have for campgrounds. But we do have quite a bit. Only twenty-three grazing units.

Now, a lot of those grazing units we negotiate with the adjoining landowner and we let them have it, because there's no public access to that area. A decision was made in the eighties to do that. And other areas, we go up for bids. We bid it and the highest bidder gets it. Even the ones we negotiate with, we do an average of a fair market value—they pay the fair market value.

Anyway, we went out for these bids, and one woman who did not get the bid that she traditionally has gotten for the last four or five bids thought our grazing policy should be that she would have the chance to match the highest bid. In Reclamation, generally, like I say, we go out and we advertise in the paper and people bid, and we always give it to the higher bidder. Well, she is a very politically astute person in that area and well known. So she, of course, got the congressional delegation involved, and I went up there to a public meeting that she called. About 150 people showed up saying that our policies were not fair, you know, that we should do like the state, we should do like BLM, we should do this, we should do that.

So I have a big initiative now to look at our grazing policy within Reclamation and should we change it. Do we need to change it? The bids come up. These same areas will come up for bid in about three years, and when they come up for bid again, we need to have that in-place.

Storey: How often are they bid?

Jabs: Every five years.

Storey: Every five years.

Jabs: One thing they want is they want ten years instead of five years, and then they want to be able to match the highest bid, I think are the two things that they really wanted.

Storey: In other words, they see this as a property right rather than as a pure lease arrangement?

Jabs: Right. Yeah. So if we come up with this idea that if you had the lease before, you'll be able to match the highest bid, well, the person who has it now should be able to keep it then forever if they keep matching the highest bidder.

Storey: And the competition will say, "Well, it doesn't matter what I'm going to bid, she's going to get it anyway."

Jabs: Yeah, right. So they quit doing it. I had somebody actually who saw that, you know, a bunch of stuff in the paper about it and called me up and said, "You know, because the state lets you match the highest bid, I just got discouraged and quit bidding." Eventually, the bids go down. So that's one of the cons for that. But that's the big issue in Montana that I'm dealing with right now is grazing.

Storey: Any others like that? That's a very interesting one, actually.

Not Renewing Cabin Leases in Order to Put in a Boat Ramp

Jabs: Well, I think one thing that's coming up is in Fresno one of our reservoirs that we have, we have two cabin sites in a bay, in a cove.

Storey: This is Fresno, Montana?

Jabs: Montana.

Storey: We have another Fresno in Reclamation.

Jabs: Actually, it's not a town, it's a reservoir we have. But there's a nice little bay, a nice little bay up there that has two cabins on it. Our cabin leases always say that when this land is needed for public purposes, you know, we're not going to renew it.

Well, it turns out that that bay is really perfect for a boat ramp that we need to put in. Our boat ramp that we have there now is eroding into the lake, so we need to find a new place for a boat ramp. It turns out it's a good place for a boat ramp. So just this week we decided that we were going to write and we think we're not going to renew those two leases, and that's going to be real controversial. The new area manager is going to have to deal with that.

Withdrawn Lands

There's going to be others. Withdrawn land is a big issue here.

Sinkhole in Willow Creek Dam

We recently had one of our reservoirs, you know,

had developed a sinkhole in the crest of the dam, the Willow Creek Dam, so we're in the process of repairing that. That's taken a lot of our energy in the last couple of months.

Storey: And concern, I imagine.

Jabs: Yeah. And that was kind of interesting, you know, going through the process of—we have an emergency action plan for all of our reservoirs, and we have someone here that works on that. It's pretty much his job. It was kind of interesting to have to go through that process.

But we have an irrigation district that has a lot of withdrawn land that they lease out for grazing and keep the revenues, and the Bureau of Land Management has their eye on that land, and they want it back. There's a question if we could keep that land for that irrigation district if it's needed for project purposes. So we're kind of having a battle with the Bureau of Land Management on that issue.

Storey: Is there some reason we *wouldn't* want to turn it back to BLM?

Jabs: No.

Storey: It could go back, in other words?

Jabs: It could. Yeah, it could easily, I think. Some of it's even outside of the boundary.

Storey: Of the project?

Jabs: Of the project. So I think it's probably--

Storey: Well, that bring us to waterspreading when we talk about boundaries.

Jabs: Yeah.

Storey: Do you have any waterspreading issues?

Jabs: Um -hmm. I think we do. We do on the Milk River Project. I couldn't speak specifically about them. I mean, I've forgotten. I'd have to be briefed on them. But we do have some.

Indian Water Rights Settlements in Montana

One of the biggest issues this office is going to be dealing with is the Indian water rights settlement in Montana. We have this Milk River Project. That has a junior right to the water right of the Blackfeet, of the tribes up on the high line. If they were to settle their water rights, it's going to affect this project, and it's going to be a real major big issue when that comes about. It probably will be sometime, you know, within the [next] five years or something.

Storey: Do you have staff working on that?

Jabs: We go to all those negotiations, and the irrigation district people go to the water rights negotiation meetings. Everybody's aware of what's going on, you know. We're just sort of kind of waiting.

Storey: It sounds to me like Reclamation isn't doing this negotiation.

Reclamation Has a Member on the Indian Water Rights Settlement Team

- Jabs: No. We're on a team. We have a member on the team.
- Storey: Who's running the team, then?
- Jabs: The team is run from, you know, the office in Washington, from the secretary's office.
- Storey: Oh, from the secretary's office.
- Jabs: Uh-huh. It was run from John Duffy [phonetic]. Duffy's office.
- Storey: Let's see. This is Indian water right--
- Jabs: He was a solicitor.
- Storey: Oh, so this would be a secretarial responsibility basically, I guess, under B-I-A?
- Jabs: Not really. No.
- Storey: Just a secretarial responsibility?
- Jabs: Yeah. And then they have on the negotiating team--like they have a member from the Justice Department in Denver, and then we have a member from Montana, who happens to be like Mike Whittington, and they have somebody from the state, somebody from B-I-A, and the solicitor's office. You might have somebody from the Fish and Wildlife on there. A team of about five or six people.

Storey: But the expectation is they're going to say that the Blackfoot or Feet—?

Jabs: Blackfeet. Well, there's more than the Blackfeet. There's three reservation up there that have some interest in the same water that we deliver.

Storey: So they would be entitled to this water, is that what I'm hearing you say?

Jabs: Um-hmm.

Storey: Or do you suppose they would work out some other solution that wouldn't give them the water, but would give them cash and new water or something like that?

Jabs: Boy, it could be anything. Yeah.

Storey: And we're just sitting here watching to see what happens?

Jabs: Um-hm. And I don't know what you could do beforehand, you know. But everybody knows that it's going to come down, and how you solve that once that happens.

Storey: Anything else like that?

Jabs: I should look at my to-do list. (laughter)

Storey: Well, gee, you've been here about twenty-two years with Reclamation.

Jabs: Uh-huh.

Storey: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about?
Any other issues, any topics?

Participation in Women's Programs Inside and Outside Reclamation

Jabs: Well, you know, the other thing I was thinking last night when I went home is when I was—you know, going back to my early Reclamation, you know, going to school, I was really active—they had a real active Federal Women's Program at that time, and I kind of headed that up. They had a Federally Employed Women's Group outside of Reclamation that I belonged to. There was a lot of stuff going on at that time, and I think Reclamation was real supportive of making changes.

You know, the E-E-O program was just brand new. I don't know how long they've been in there. But I think Reclamation was really trying to make changes. You know, I think the E-E-O program was forced on them, and some managers really resisted that. But a lot of them were really open and receptive to that.

So I've seen some major changes in the attitude of managers in Reclamation. I've seen a change in the managers of Reclamation throughout the years. I think they're more participatory. I think when I started they were like, you know, "This is what you say. This is it. This is what I say, you know, that's what you do." So I've seen a change in the culture of Reclamation, I think, in those years. Being a manager myself, I might be blind to certain

things, but I think I've seen change. I don't see a lot of women, though, and minorities, even in my own group here. You know, I don't see a big increase in that, I don't think. Overall, maybe you do, maybe you don't.

Storey: Well, did you enjoy it?

Jabs: Oh, sure. I mean, you know, I like challenges and I like new things. I think being creative is what I tell my people here. I like being a manager, because I like to think I might have *some* influence. But I think it's important for all of us to feel like we're contributing, that we're creative. Once you quit being creative in your job is when it becomes boring, and I like to think that in almost all my jobs I've been able to always learn something new, be creative, do things, you know, that work. And I think Reclamation has given me that opportunity.

I've had a couple of mentors in my career, this Merlin Archibald that I was telling you about, and one other, who helped me along, and I think without those mentors I'm not too sure I would be—I probably would, but I think mentors are important for a person.

Storey: Who was this other mentor?

Jabs: My mentor was Lois Russell. She was the E-E-O counselor at the time that I started. She was really a supporter of me and a supporter of going to school. There was a group of us women who got together and talked about careers, and that was really helpful to me. I'm not too sure I see that as

much in Reclamation [now] as there was back there.

Little issues like when I first started going back to school, I had a big sign on my desk, and I wished I still had it, "I am not a girl." Everybody would come to my office and think that that was a big issue. What's wrong with being called a girl? And I said, "Well, it's really important to me not to be called a girl, because a girl implies, you know, that I'm immature, that I'm, you know, a lot of different things."

You had a support group that you could go and talk to about, "Yeah, I want to be called a woman. I'm not a girl. It's okay for you not to want to be called a girl, and it's okay for you to say I don't want to be called a girl." And that kind of support group for whatever issue you might have. There was always somebody there to go talk to, and I think that's *so* important.

I was in this Federally Employed Women Group and there was five women. They were all from other agencies, and we met after hours. But I still am in contact with five of those women. They have all progressed in their careers, and I know it was a real core group there where we supported each other, and I think we still need that support today, you know, not only when you're just kind of working through the system.

Storey: I sense that, for the most part, you enjoyed working for Reclamation.

Jabs: Um-hmm.

Storey: And I think you enjoy being an area manager and find it very challenging. So this leads me to my last question. Why do you want to retire? You're still a relatively young woman.

Plans for Retirement

Jabs: Well, you know, I'm going to be sixty this year, and that's time to retire. I mean, I don't know, time to retire. Without the early-out I might have stayed a couple more years. I might have. Probably would have. But I'm ready to move on. I have a lot of challenges outside of my job.

Storey: Do you have plans?

Jabs: Not to work.

Storey: Just things you want to do, huh, like going to China.

Jabs: Exactly. I'd like to do some volunteer work. I'd like to give back to the world and the community some things that they've given me. You know, I'm ready to do something different. In a lot of ways I know that I've been here two and a half years, and I could really start getting into some of these issues, you know, grabbing hold of them, because there's a lot of complicated issues. But I'm ready to let that all go.

Storey: Anything else you wanted to talk about?

Jabs: Not that I can think of, no.

Storey: Oh, okay, well, I appreciate your spending time

with me today and yesterday. And I'd like to ask you again whether you're willing for the information on these tapes and the resulting transcripts to be used by researchers.

Jabs: Yes.

Storey: Good. Thank you very much.

END SIDE 2, TAPE 2. SEPTEMBER 18, 1996.
END OF INTERVIEWS