

CAP Oral History

Bonnie Leverton (Q): Okay, I'm Bonnie Leverton. It's June 6, 2005. We're interviewing Cecil Andrus in Boise, Idaho. First off, just tell me...we're going to do like a general background on you and everything else. Where and when were you born?

Andrus (A): I was born in Hood River, Oregon, in 1931, August 25. I moved by about age three or four moved into Mohammand Valley was raised during the depression out west of Junction City, Oregon. Graduated from high school in Eugene. Went to Oregon State. That's how I got started.

Q: What did you take in college?

A: I was an engineering student. I did not complete the course in that. The Korean War, as you may recall, started in 1950. I was at the right age bracket where Uncle Sam decided they needed me and a few other men to go over and settle that dispute. And I flew in a Navy patrol bombing squadron in Korea. Came back home and then I had a wife and an infant child and an old Chevrolet car I was making payments on. Uncle Sam gave me \$300 and ushered me out the door with my discharge papers. I was unemployed. I had a job offer in the northern part of Idaho, Orofino, Idaho.

And my wife and I moved there and then I became what you might call a political accident. And then I became embroiled in some local controversies, was elected to the State Legislature at age 29. I was the youngest State Senator in the history of the state at that point in time. Ten years later I was elected Governor and after that I went...well in 1970 the freshman class of Democratic Governors were Jimmy Carter, Rubin Askew of Florida, myself, Wendell Anderson of Minnesota, Michael O'Callahan of Nevada, and it seems like there was another but anyway, I got to know President Carter then Governor Carter. He asked me to serve as his Secretary of the Department of the Interior, be a member of his cabinet. I did that. And came home after that stint in Washington DC, lied to my

wife by saying to her that I'm all through with politics, and I meant it at the time. I went back into private practice. Then ran for governor again in 1986 and was elected and reelected in 1990. Finished up my fourth term as Governor of the State of Idaho in 1995 in January and that's ten years ago.

Q: And no one else has ever been elected governor four times right?

A: That's correct.

Q: Did you mean to get into politics?

A: No. I was a political accident like I said when I went to college; I'm an engineering type student, mathematics. I've never taken a speech course. I took Freshman English because it was required. I had no intention but when we moved into Orofino, like I tell people, I'm a lumberjack and a political accident. I was working in the woods in the mills there. My wife and I had a young daughter starting into elementary school. And there was a controversy involving education and I became embroiled in it. The incumbent State Senator was a five-term Republican who told us at a meeting at the school house he said, "Well this school feels good enough for me, that's good enough for them." Well I pointed out to him that it wasn't even good enough for him.

Well some people said well then you've got to run against him and I ended up doing that. That's why I'm a political accident. I've never taken a political science course. I had no intention what so ever, but I enjoyed it. I worked at it. We did make some corrections in the distribution formula for the funding of elementary schools in rural areas within the state. I won't bore you with all the details. Like I said, ten years later why I had the opportunity to become the first Democrat elected Governor of this state in twenty-four years back at that point in time. My career progressed from there.

Q: What were your feelings when Carter asked you to be his Secretary of the Interior?

A: Keep in mind my age and I was raised during the Depression. I've always had a strong feeling that when the President of the United States points his finger at you and says I want you to do this. You do it. I mean that's the way I was raised. And that's how I ended up going to Korea, although I was a volunteer, I wasn't drafted. Well when the President of the United States or President-elect asked me to serve, I didn't feel that I had any choice. It was a challenge. It was intriguing and it gave me the opportunity to put some of my thinking to work.

The Carter Administration probably without question had the greatest conservation reputation and legacy of any Presidential administration since Teddy Roosevelt. But at the same time, we opened up the coal mining, the off-shore oil leasing. We got a grazing fee through that was fair to the cattle industry that also protected the lands. We accomplished a lot.

I remember the Central Arizona Project and some of the other dam building projects that were on the so called "Hit List" as the media called it. And some of them really were dogs. Mo Udall said when we were arguing on the point, he said, "You're absolutely right; some of these projects out there are a waste of taxpayer's money. The cost benefit schedule doesn't meet up and everything but I resist the conclusion of the great Central Arizona Project being thrown in with all those dogs." But it was necessary. There were a lot of projects that were dogs. And they didn't deserve to be funded by taxpayer's money.

Q: On his so called "Hit List" and everything else when things were listed and everything else I would assume as Secretary of the Interior you would look at them and study them. What was your first feeling about the Central Arizona Project?

A: Frankly, I didn't know very much about it, but I knew that to get water in the Tucson area that it needed for growth, you had to bring it out of the Colorado Basin. And it had been allocated. The problem with the Colorado River Basin Allocation was that the politicians in Congress back in 1920 something when they allocated that. They allocated about seventeen and a half million acre feet of

water as mean flow, when the Colorado really only produces about fourteen million acre feet as mean flow. There was an allocation to give everybody what they wanted which was the political way of doing things in Washington DC in those days. But the states did not use up their qualified amount, their allocation. And the Central Arizona Project was one of the later projects to get Arizona their entitlement as the Congress had given them before. But there were a lot of other water wars involved. California, for example, had been sucking up this surplus that hadn't been used by the other states. And then all the sudden, the states started using their allocation and California had to look for some other place to stick the straw in in order to bring water into the Los Angeles area. And then we also had the treaty with Mexico that we had to provide so much water of proper quality. We were dumping saline type water into Mexico. And we were not living up to the treaty. Well, that was an expensive change to give them their allocation of water and also the quality of water that they had been guaranteed by our government.

So a lot of things took place, but there were a lot of battles in the Congress about people with, you know there was Fruitland Mesa, there was the Savory-Pot Hook projects up in the Colorado area that were truly dogs. The one up in North Dakota that was real dog, it took more land out of production for agricultural then it put in with irrigation purposes. Destroyed a lot of mud filled water fowl habitat and everything else; they're still fighting over that same project. It's crazy. Tennessee Tombigbee Project was another expensive thing. But the pork that we taxpayers are paying for what Congress is allocating was rampant then and it is rampant now. It's something we have to live with until we get somebody who is strong enough from a fiscally responsible position to say we're going to put a halt to this.

The most recent one that was on the news media was that in Alaska they were going to pay \$10 billion for one mile road on an island or something. It shows the clout that the chairman of their committees have when they pork up. West Virginia, Bob Byrd, has a reputation of devouring more pork then I think any other Senator. But Ted Stevens he runs a pretty good shop up there in Alaska, he doles out the money when it's needed.

Q: When Carter listed the CAP as one of his projects to really take another look at and everything else, who showed up in your office the loudest and the most...

A: I think the irrigation districts and ag districts who had a special interest in various projects were the ones that were coming in to beat us on the nose. There were 16 projects that were deemed to be unqualified. The arguments went on for each one of those. It was a mistake made by our administration to create that so called "Hit List." I suggested to the President in a Cabinet Meeting that maybe we'd pick out one or two of the real dogs, otherwise there would be a coalition built against us. I remember Fritz Mondale, Vice President, sitting across the cabinet table says this President ceases his right, yeah but the press got a hold of this book. You know what history had did to us. The very coalition that I said would be forthcoming was put together. I had hair before that battle started; you can see what happened to me there. They called me up before every committee in the Congress saying Mr. Secretary how dare you dah dah dah dah dah. Frankly, it was a lesson learned. And a lot of those dogs now came to fruition. And I think most of the good water projects have developed. So we saved the taxpayers some money.

Q: Looking back, would you have included Central Arizona Project still or did you do something to make...

A: The Central Arizona Project was not one of the big items on this so called "Hit List." It was an expensive item but how else were we going to give to the southern part of Arizona or to the State of Arizona, the water that they had been allocated, if you did not create the project. And Mo Udall was absolutely correct when he said, "Don't you put my fine project in with all those dogs." And we didn't. Then we also...there's a lot of wasted water in all of the arid states and Arizona did not have a groundwater law. And the then-Governor, who later became Secretary of the Interior also, and I were friends. He used me as a whipping boy to cause the Arizona Legislature to pass a groundwater law. He would call me up or we would meet at a meeting and he'd say, "I want you to say this or do that so that I can use you as a club to beat on the Legislature to get them to pass the water law."

When Mt. Saint Helen's erupted, and you remember the famous picture showing it blowing its top, I had an enlargement made of that photo and framed it and signed it to Bruce Babbitt. And I said, "Bruce this is what you looked like when you were talking about me to your Legislature to get a groundwater law passed." In later years, I've asked Bruce I said, "Where is that picture?" He said, "I think it's hanging in my bathroom." (Laughing)

Q: Let's go back a little bit, tell me you said you're friends with Bruce Babbitt. How did you become friends with Bruce?

A: You know I can't remember. I think we served...I can't remember whether he served at the same time I did during the first time I was governor. Both of us were Democratic Governors, colleagues, and then Secretary of Interior. I had a lot of friends in Arizona in the Democratic Party that I got to know. I can't recall my first meeting but I can remember the Central Arizona Project meetings. And then later on when he was Secretary of the Department of the Interior holding the same post that I had held in one point in time. We again conversed. We've met with some differences of opinion but...Bruce is a very intelligent, educated individual who was usually thinking way ahead of his constituency which didn't always make him that popular. But he knew the scenario that had to be played out in order to get the groundwater law enacted and I was the foil that he used as he flashed his way through the Legislature.

Q: Did you mind that?

A: Oh, not at all. He had my consent. He'd write up some of the statements that I should make about if we're going to do the Central Arizona Project, we've got to have some control over the groundwater, dah, dah, dah, dah, dah. And then he would take my comments that he had put together, go back to the Arizona Legislature and say you see what that so in so Andrus is going to do to us down here. If we don't do it, they will. I won't say that's the only reason he did it. The

thinking people knew it had to be done. But he used me as an appliance to help it get done, with my consent.

Q: What was his explanation to you about why he wanted to use the groundwater as the...

A: If you're going to allocate surface water, you also have to have some control over the groundwater that is used in agricultural irrigation situations and domestic water supply. We learned that throughout the arid west that you can't let one of them run wild when the other one is regulated. Otherwise you deplete the underground aquifers then there's not enough surface water to pick up the slack. So there's got to be a balance there. And that's what Bruce understood. But if you look at Arizona, I haven't looked at it in some years now, but probably upwards of two thirds or more of water in the Central Arizona Project is allocated to agricultural irrigation. And so, and that water is cheap when you compare it to water that is for M&I purposes. But as Arizona grows, the demand for culinary uses of water will increase dramatically. The only place that they can go to is to acquire by purchase or condemnation or whatever purpose they choose to use some of the ag water. Pay off the farmer who retires as a rich individual and use the water. See water for M&I purposes, the domestic water that we have when we turn on the tap out there, that water can be worth \$2,000 an acre foot easily. But if you are applying it on the crop land, it would be pretty tough to pay more than about \$25 per acre foot. So you can see the value; water is the controlling resource for the growth of the Western United States. Now water is renewable on a yearly basis but it is finite in any one given year. There's only so much that can be used. It's a pretty, not only important for sustaining life; it's a pretty important resource.

Bill: I'm going to bounce back to something else. In the allocation of the Colorado River water, why is it that the people who made the original allocations to the upper basin and lower basin and all the various entities that require to have water, why is it that they over allocated the river?

A: (Laughing) It's called greed. It's a situation where everybody wants more water. So they were demanding more water and each of the states in the areas had a right to request it. When you added it all up, it came to 17.4 million acre-feet of water. The members of the Congress in the United States at that point in time, didn't have guts enough to argue with anybody and they wanted to give them whatever they wanted. And so they allocated that amount. They knew, the Bureau of Reclamation knew, that they over allocated it. But that's just like the budget deficit. Those spineless people back there right now are spending. I think John McCain from Arizona said like a bunch of drunken sailors. Well, I was a sailor and even if I was intoxicated, I wouldn't spend money the way they spend it. I took that as an unkind remark about we members of the U.S. Navy. They can spend money back there because they know somebody else is going to have to pay the bill and it won't be them. And they did exactly the same thing with the water.

Bill: Didn't anybody try to measure the flows or see if there was some annual flow that could be expected from the...

A: Yeah and the Department of Interior had flow charts that indicated that there wasn't that much water. But the politicians seldom pay much attention to science and facts. You know the first thing that they want that's important to them is to be elected to the Congress. And then after they're elected, the next most important thing is to be reelected. And the constituency in the arid west is to give them the water that they think they need regardless of what a scientific study would show.

Q: Actually that fight is not even over yet?

A: No, that fight is going to go on forever probably. There are other sources of water in the arid west other than the Colorado. And so...like in my home state of Idaho, we have the allocation system here, first in the line, first in right to put the water to beneficial use or lose it. The arguments go on every day.

Q: If you would've known back then when you were the Secretary of the Interior and you knew then how massively huge the southwest was going to grow and that the Colorado was going to have to take care of a lot more people, would you still have the same feelings about the Central Arizona Project? Or would you have done something stronger or less strong?

A: We anticipated a tremendous growth in the west. The snowbirds amplify it but the residents and the industries and the businesses there are large enough and demanding enough to require the water...no we probably didn't. We probably underestimated. But then again, they were entitled by the allocation to that much water. And it would've taken an act of Congress to change that and there's no way that you were going to have the members of Congress vote to do that. Because if you start playing with that allocation then you have to take it away from somebody else and the dominos start to fall and the politicians run for cover. The easiest thing for them to do is to vote "aye."

Q: It's my understanding that they're getting ready to start another big fight about who's going to be allocated the water and that the Central Arizona Project is actually one of the newer, newer ones that get some of that water. They'll be the first ones they take it away from. Do I understand that correctly?

A: No I don't believe you do. I'm sorry. I have to respectfully disagree with you. I think that it means the clout of the good old boy club and the United States Senate will prevent that from happening. I don't see a reallocation coming into being unless it affects all of the states then you might get something done. But to follow up on your statement that they would pick on Arizona first. They want to do it in alphabetical order.

Q: Do you think that they may try to reallocate with all the states involved because the upper basin right now I don't think they use all their water.

A: Some day they may come to it. My guess is that they'll probably work around it by transferring the uses of water. And taking the agricultural use, diminish that and apply it to the M&I uses of water. It'll be easier to do that then to start a water war between the states. You start that and...you have to be very careful or you'll end up like Custer.

Bill: What were some of the intricacies that maybe people generally don't know about the ins and outs of bringing the CAP to fruition and once it was on paper then getting it actually moving into construction? What was behind the scenes?

A: Basically it came down to funding. You had to fund these projects through the Congress and through the Presidential budget process and OMB and getting the money allocated and that became a political maneuvering situation in itself. All of that had to be done then you can authorize projects, but then the allocation for the budgeting of money to implement it becomes another hassle.

Q: Besides the groundwater bill, other things came out. There was a lot more looking at the Colorado River and Central Arizona Project from an environmentalist state. Was this a good thing to have so many entities involved in this?

A: Well we haven't even discussed the Native Americans rights to some of the water. That was very, very important. You say was it good to have that many entities squabbling? No. The more entities you have squabbling, the more allocations that you've got to make internally. That was, it was our job at the federal level to see that we provided Arizona the opportunity to enjoy their congressional allocation of water out of the Colorado River Basin. Now the fact that they took water away from California who were using it illegally you might say or inappropriately, that's somebody else's problem. Be we, the administration, had the responsibility to fulfill Arizona's right. And we tried to do it. We did it. You see areas bloom along the Central Arizona Project that would not have, if it had not been for that project. At the south end, what would Tucson have done without the Central Arizona Project? Mo Udall, probably more than any other single person, was responsible

for seeing that he kept my feet to the fire sort of speak at that time. We were friends of course. Mo was a strong willed individual.

Bill: The Indians were a whole different can of worms in all this.

A: If you mean the Native Americans were sometimes difficult to deal with, you're absolutely correct. They had treaty rights and part of that was their right to certain water. Too many years have gone by for me to start naming each and every one of the tribes in Arizona but man, there's a passel of them. Let me tell you, you don't want to start that war all over again. There would have been a lot of Custards out there.

Q: Where you involved with when the Indians were fighting to get there...

A: Oh yeah, many times.

Q: Tell me about that a little bit would you.

A: They, like everyone else, wanted to make sure they got their share. You take an individual tribe; they had a treaty that would say you're entitled to this or that. They didn't care about the total allocation of the state, just to make sure that they got what they had coming. But that played a part of the overall use of that water. I have found that, with one exception of a Native American leader in that part of the world, all of them were very, very reasonable, strong, and determined. They were very, very well represented with legal counsel. And they conducted themselves properly. And I think for the most part, they were satisfied with what came out of that allocation.

Q: That didn't necessarily badly affect the rest of the people who were getting, I mean the Indians got their share and everything else as far as like Central Arizona Project they didn't?

A: No. The aqueduct is running full. Now Mother Nature is going to control how much more comes down then we humans.

Q: Talk about when you thought of Central Arizona Project, you were saying that Mo Udall was one of the main ones really pushing to have it brought into Tucson and stuff like that. Anybody coming into your office saying, "good idea, let's get rid of it."

A: I go back, I guess all of them from that area, I singled out Mo but keep in mind I was there just four years. It was complete at that time. We did the preliminaries, we got it started. But I'm sure the other members of Congress never also had their ore in the water sort of speak. But Mo and I had a personal relationship that boy he'd pick up the phone and say, "Cec I didn't save the amount of money that I thought was necessary in the President's budget." And I said, "Mo, you must've missed a zero in there some place." He was on my case, but Mo and I were colleagues in many other battles, for example the Alaska Land's Bill. If it hadn't been for John Seiberling and Mo Udall in the House; Scoop Jackson and Frank Church in the Senate and we never wouldn't have passed legislation.

Q: Do you remember Kathy Ferris?

A: Yes.

Q: We interviewed her a couple of weeks ago and she was saying that without...if you and Bruce Babbitt hadn't done the thing with forcing the Groundwater Bill, that without the Groundwater Bill there probably wouldn't have been a CAP and then what happens?

A: That was one of my fears and one of Bruce's fears that we had to break that stalemate or they might hold up that project. During the time that I was there, we were determined to see that the Central Arizona Project would be completed. But she was absolutely correct when she said that it was an important ingredient in

bringing it about. And that is why Bruce, like I said, used me for foil with my concurrence. I've been used before. (Laughing) Like they say out here, I'm obviously been rode hard and put up wet a long time.

Q: She said she had an awful lot of fun with that whole thing. She understood what the importance of all of it was.

Bill: What do you think President Carter's feelings about the west and all the allocation of water into the CAP project? Did he ever express to you any thoughts about the CAP or how he felt?

A: One of the reasons I think that President Carter selected me to be Secretary of the Department of the Interior was that I was a westerner. He knew that I understood the culture of the west. He understood that I had environmental sensitivities but also I knew that it took things to make the economy grow. We had mutual respect and trust I believe. The budget was a big, big item with President Carter and water projects are expensive. The Bureau of Reclamation is one of the departments of the Department of the Interior and it was my responsibility. He...I don't recall, I may be missing it, but I don't remember that he talked about any individual project except two or three of the big dogs. Like the Garrison Project in North Dakota; I remember some discussions with that. He and his domestic, Stuart Eizenstat, who headed up his domestic party, were involved in that. The Tennessee Tombigbee Project there was discussions in that area. But he didn't get down into the like Savory-Pot Hook, Fruitland Mesa, all of the smaller projects. Auburn Dam in California, I do recall discussion there. That was on the safety portion. And I called a meeting that we had in the West Wing of the White House evolving around safety of some of the existing projects and the Auburn Dam had been started. But he, without question, is one of the most intelligent men to serve at President in modern history; he's quite a fellow that guy.

Bill: Do you think the CAP was a project that was a success? Was a success of its time in history? Would it have ever happened before or after do you think?

A: There are a lot of people that thought it should've happened before. But the constraints of financing the massive building that made it possible to bring that water down there were just prohibitive to having it done earlier. As to whether it would have ever been accomplished, I would have to say to you that yes it would have. Because that was a law that had to be followed but by the same token, it's a tremendous budgetary item. I don't remember now, it's been too many years, how many hundreds of millions dollars we shaved out of the budget simply by not building some of those projects. But the Central Arizona Project was not one that was designated for amputation. Couldn't be, couldn't do it.

Q: Were you involved with the 1980 CAP Water Allocation? Were you involved with setting that up and stuff?

A: No. People within the Bureau of Reclamation worked in that regard. It was my responsibility as Secretary to see that we had that project built, the construction of it. The allocation was more an Arizona allocation then it was a federal allocation.

Q: What do you see as the future of something like the CAP, Arizona, and anybody using that water? Everything has grown so hugely. There are lots of cities, a lot more metropolitan areas; do you see it as adequate? Is it adequate?

A: We humans don't have any control of that. It depends on the amount of water that Mother Nature provides us with as to how you can manipulate it. So will there be an increase need? Absolutely. The amount of water, or the availability of water, will control the growth in the western United States. It always has.

Bill: I the other thing I wanted...I think one of the reasons for this, the CAP wanting this interview, is some of your insights that people might not have been aware of. Some of your thinking people might not have been aware of this as you went through this process. Some of your thinking now, what did you do wrong? Did you do anything wrong?

A: If I did anything wrong, I wouldn't sit here and tell you about it. I don't know who you are used to talking to but you got the wrong cat if you think I'm going to look into that little lens right there and said oh yeah I made a big mistake (all laughing). Not on your life.

Q: Okay, what did you do absolutely right?

A: We built Central Arizona Project. We approved it. We put it in the budget process and it went. But we also did a lot of the others and we cleaned up the water quality. We made the water available to fulfill our treaty with Mexico. The other projects and allocations within the Colorado River Basin were very, very important and integral to making the water available at the border for Arizona. What did we do right in the four years? We built the project, started the project. I don't have any regrets. It was a four-year learning process for me while I sat there as the Secretary of the Department of the Interior. But we did a lot of other things in those four years besides the Central Arizona Project and the Colorado River Basin.

Bill: What would you say the CAP...what significance is the CAP going to play in history as history unfolds?

A: I'm not sure I understand where you're going.

Bill: Well, I guess my question is what if we hadn't, as opposed to that we did? What if we hadn't, then what is the significance a hundred years from now, how do you think people...

A: If the Central Arizona Project had never been constructed or finished, you would not have been able to sustain the growth that you enjoy in Arizona. You wouldn't have the snowbirds coming down there to play golf and to wash their dirty clothes and to mix their bourbon. It takes water. You would not have enjoyed the economic development and the diversity that you have in Arizona if you didn't have the Central Arizona Project. It's quite simple. But you still are wasting a lot of

water in Arizona in some of the fountains and in some of the irrigations of massive golf courses that...now the people building the new ones, you know, they're making the fairways more narrow and they're using natural vegetation and stuff. So maybe you got to be a better golfer to play some of those courses. But Arizona has used that water like there is no tomorrow. Now they're realizing hey, that is our tomorrow.

Q: Let me ask you a question about the groundwater, when you and Babbitt were involved in this thing. Did you think that the Groundwater Bill that they were having that is was thorough enough, that it was going to make enough rules?

A: I honestly don't remember the intricacies of that. You can ask Bruce Babbitt. He would probably remember more vividly than I because he and his crew had to sell at home. To get one on the books, thus the big ticket, the big item going in and we were able to accomplish, they themselves were able to accomplish it. I was just the bad guy. You have good cop, bad cop. Bruce was the good cop. I was the bad cop. Every time that somebody would say well we don't need to pass this, he'd say but that damn Andrus he's going to come right at you! It worked.

Q: I think you really had to trust Bruce though right.

A: Um, yeah. I knew that you had to have it. If me being the bad cop helped bring it about, why not?

Q: I kind of asked this but it is useful to ask for background and memories about the 1980 CAP water allocation and the decision to allocate to and contract with Indian Tribes before the allocation process for non-Federal water users was complete. They're saying all of this was done just before you guys left office.

A: It was. As I indicated earlier in our discussion, we had to make certain that one; that the Native Americans Tribes were treated fairly and they received what they had been promised in the treaties. And that water really had to come off the top.

And once that had been completed, then it was easier to fulfill the rest of the allocations. You asked earlier about President Carter's concern of the water priority. President Carter has always been and continues to be an advocate for the Native Americans. I guess we had our marching orders from him, although it wasn't necessary, to see that we did fulfill those promises. The only, like I said, Peter McDonald is the only Native American leader in my memory that I had difficulty dealing with. And frankly, I was right and he went to jail.

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