

**Colorado River Board of
California
Oral History Project**

LLOYD ALLEN

JANUARY 24, 2005

JAY MALINOWSKI

This is January the 24th, 2005. We are at the Imperial Irrigation District, in the President's Room, and we're talking with Lloyd Allen, currently President of the Colorado River Association and immediate past president of the Imperial Irrigation District Board of Directors. Lloyd, thank you very much for sitting down for this oral interview. We are just going to talk about some of the interesting things and some of the people that you have met and some of the issues that you have dealt with over the past many years. Tell me a little bit about when you came to the Imperial Valley and why you came to the Imperial Valley.

LLOYD ALLEN

Jay, thank you for allowing me to visit with you this evening on this issue of the Colorado River. My family and I came to the Imperial Valley in 1942 from Arkansas. The reason we came to California was because we were hungry in Arkansas, and that's a great motivator. It makes you move places and you get kind of tired of biscuits and gravy for three meals a day, so you try to move on. My family moved to Calipatria and I've

lived there ever since. My mother and father have since passed away. My younger brother was killed in the Korean War, and my two sisters are still alive. Calipatria has been good to us, and California has been good to us. I have enjoyed it and that's where I plan on living the rest of my life. California has been so good to me my weight shows it. I haven't missed many meals since I've been here.

JM

How old would you have been when you moved here in 1942?

LA

I was 13 years old and I was in the 8th grade in grammar school. I came here in February. At that particular time, in the Calipatria area, there were a lot of English peas that were grown. These English peas were grown and packed in the area and about 60 railroad cars a day went out of that little town in the months of December, January and February to all the different areas in the United States that wanted fresh English peas. I was called a pea picker because I came at the time of year when a lot of transients and people moved from Northern California to Southern California to work. So they put me, my sisters and brothers into a school that was an overflow school in the winter times and my parents did not particularly like that. I did not know what a pea was when I came here. I found out what it was all about. I graduated from a Calipatria grammar school, called Fremont School, and then I went on to Calipatria High School and graduated in 1946. In June of 1947, I went to work for the Imperial Hardware Company. I wanted to go to college and so I went to a little junior college here in El Centro for about six months. I did not have a car and could hardly buy one. At that time you had to have your name on a priority list to get a car. You also needed stamps to get gasoline because right after the war things were

kind of short. So anyway, I went to work for Imperial Hardware Company and worked with them for 29 years and retired. After 29 years, I went to work farming full-time. I had a partner and (the store was) getting larger, so I started farming. I am still involved with the Imperial Hardware Company and I am on the Board of the Directors at the present time. I have been affiliated with them now for about 56 years and it is been good to me and I've enjoyed every minute of it.

JM

What did your family do when they moved here? Were they immediately involved in farming?

LA

No. My father was a tractor driver and an irrigator. He had worked in a coal mine in Arkansas, so he knew how to handle equipment and he was good at driving tractors and making sure that the tractors were in good condition. He checked its oil and everything before he started it every day. He was just a laborer. He finally ended up working for the water company and most of his job involved shoveling and digging holes to fix the leaks in the water line for the water company in Calipatria.

JM

When you say the water company, was that a local company? You are not talking about Imperial Irrigation are you?

LA

No, it is a company that is not local. It is Southern California Water Company. They service two little towns, Calipatria and Niland, out of the 32 towns that they serve water to. We just happened to be the two in the Calipatria and Niland. They served water

here and are a private company. He (my father) went to work for them and he retired working for them. But my father was not a farmer or anything like this. He was intelligent, but not educated.

JM

Right now, in 2005, the Imperial Valley is experiencing somewhat of a housing boom, maybe not the same as some cities on the coast but there are a lot people moving into the valley now, non-farming people. Can you give me a little flavor of what this area was like back in the early to mid-late 1940s, as compared to today?

LA

Well, the road systems were different. The local merchants in Calipatria at that particular time had four grocery stores, a couple of restaurants, a couple of bars, a drugstore, a hardware store, a newspaper, and an implement store in town. So business was pretty good because the roads between Brawley and Calipatria were small two-lane roads, and it took you maybe 25 or 30 minutes to get to Brawley. Most people did their local shopping there and that was why business was really good for the merchants in Calipatria. The people who were there at that particular time did very well financially. However, people usually did not go very far because of the transportation costs and things like that. There were not very many new cars in the late 1940s, and once they started manufacturing more new cars the roads got better.

For example, to drive from Calipatria to Indio took about three hours because we had two-lane roads, but the bridges were one-lane bridges for about 42 miles between Niland and Coachella. There was a one-way bridge, so if you were going there you either had to

stop or the other man stopped. Transportation was very, very slow at that time and people really couldn't afford very much of it, especially to buy more than one vehicle. I know we had a pickup for years and years as the family vehicle. So it was entirely different than it is now, and the houses were very, very small. When we came to California, we lived in a small house and it had shutters on the side of it. We would raise them up in the summertime and maybe get a little circulation and air. There were desert coolers and no air conditioning. Most of the houses in Calipatria did not have air conditioning. I think maybe there were a couple houses in the town that had air conditioning. At Southern California Water Company, where my father worked, there was an office that was really insulated because the manager was affected by the heat. He had to have that room quite cool and he really insulated his house so it could be a little bit cooler, but there wasn't much insulation in the houses. Since then, everything has improved and the growth in the area has been quite good. In the last three or four years, government agencies, the immigration officers and the Border Patrol people have come into town, which has caused the housing market to boom. I think people from San Diego come down and buy a home and drive back and forth to work in San Diego. I could probably go from Calipatria to El Centro in the same time that they go from El Centro to San Diego. So transportation was a real problem. I used to ride the train from visiting my uncle up in Richmond, California. I would catch the train in Niland and ride in a passenger train all the way to Oakland, California and enjoyed it very much. Nowadays, it is kind of a thrill to get a ride on a train.

JM

You cannot do that anymore, that is ride a train from Niland to Oakland. Is there passenger service through there?

LA

There's passenger service, but it doesn't stop. I think you have to pick it up either in Indio or you have to pick it up in Coachella. They have the Amtrak down there, but we had a railroad station in Calipatria, where trains come through. And they had agents working over there. But most of the merchandise that moved out of here in the late 40s was a lot of grains, including flax that went out of here by rail cars. English peas all went by rail cars, refrigerated cars that go to large cities all over the whole United States, so most transportation that was out of here was by rail. I think the hay market they had in later years was probably by trucks, but most of it was done by rail.

JM

Did you ever take the opportunity, as a teenager, to go out to the Salton Sea and use that for recreation?

LA

When I first came here the Salton Sea, it was very, very small and Mullet Island was quite a large island out there. There was a road that you could drive out to, but fishing was not any good. There were a few fish there called mullet fish. They were not good fish to eat, they were a bottom fish and people had a little entertainment. In the fall, they would spawn and come up the rivers and people would go out there and try to catch them. I guess it was just entertainment because you could not eat the fish. There wasn't any other fish in the Salton Sea, but there is pretty good duck hunting all over the south end

of the Salton Sea. There were some private hunting clubs and there are still some today. There used to be more then, at that particular time, because there were a lot of ducks. In the late 40s they developed some land in the Calipatria area and started to grow rice. That was a new experience down here. Water was used to leach the ground and wash the salts out. They had a lot of the ducks down in those rice fields, of course a lot of the fields had ponds in them. You would find a few ducks in those ponds because a lot of people pastured cattle in those fields and they would have ponds in there to retain the water. This way they wouldn't have to order water for the cattle everyday.

JM

Was the Salton Sea ever an important tourist attraction or a vacation spot?

LA

The Salton Sea, in the late 50s and early 60s, became very popular. At that particular time, there wasn't too much of a population in Mexicali. Consequently, the water from Mexicali, now with the maquiladoras, is entirely a different quality of water than what it was 50 or 60 years ago. People came to the Salton Sea and water-skied and the fishing got good in the late 50s and 60s. You could go out there and catch a limited amount of large Corvina. I think nine was the limit. You could catch a limited amount of them and they averaged maybe ten or twelve pounds, sometimes all in an hour's time. A lot of people fished in the Salton Sea, especially with all the state parks around the Salton Sea. In fact, sometime around 1950, the Imperial Irrigation District signed a lease with the State of California for a 50-year-lease for the land around the Salton Sea in order to develop a state park. I think they paid a dollar a year rent for that. At one time, as many as four million people either came to visit, fished or bird watched in the Salton Sea area,

but it became much, much larger. Then Mexico('s water use) got larger and the water was a little bit more contaminated. Bad publicity came about from this New River being the dirtiest in the United States. Then water skiing slowed down, and of course, the water got saltier and saltier. The tourist attraction for the Salton Sea was probably, at the most, 20 to 30,000 people (a year).

JM

What is the origin the New River?

LA

The New River originates in the City of Mexicali. It comes into the State of California at the international boundary. It is composed of surface runoff from irrigation and the underground drainage systems that are operating in the Imperial Valley. It generates a lot of water, maybe three to four hundred thousand acre-feet of water a year. That all goes into the Salton Sea from surface runoff originating in the Imperial Irrigation District service territory and the City of Mexicali.

JM

Were you aware of water issues as you were growing up? I know that you did not get involved with the Imperial Irrigation District until a little later in your life (and we'll get to that). What about in the 50s and 60s, was water an issue for you and your family?

LA

It wasn't an issue with me, but I can remember when the people voted to fund the Pilot Knob Power Plant that the District built. It was very controversial, but the voters passed it and they built it. However, they found that sometimes there wasn't enough water to generate a lot of electricity. It has more than paid for itself over the years. The one

thing I can remember when I was a kid, a senior in high school, was that we had cross country running and we would run down the railroad tracks and to cool off we would jump off the trestle about 15 feet into the New River to cool off. You could never tell what was in there because the water was muddy, but we did that all the time. So that was about the extent of my water thoughts. Later on in life one had a vehicle, then you could go out to the Vale Canal, which is the large main canal that supplies water to most of the land between the Alamo River and the New River. They would take a vehicle and tie a rope on it and get on water skis. A guy could water ski for about a mile and a half before he would come to another check and then he could get out and water ski again. We were water skiing with a vehicle pulling it instead of a boat pulling it down the Vale Canal.

JM

That sounds a little dangerous.

LA

Well it was dangerous, but you were young then and it did not make any difference. You were going to live forever, you know? You're not thinking about when something's going to happen to you. You're only thinking about having a good time and we were having a good time. It was different and you kind of made your own entertainment at that particular time.

JM

You have been involved in water and power for at least 25 years, maybe 30 that I know of, as part of the Imperial Irrigation District (IID) and the Colorado River Board. Where did that interest come from? When did you really get involved in water usage?

LA

One time, we had a director from the north and his name was Barney Galliano. He served 16 years on the (IID) Board and he asked me to help him on his campaign the last time that he ran. I helped him. I was in the hardware business at that particular time, but I was getting into the farming business. Barney lost the election and then four years later, I ran for the District Board and I won the election. The reason that I ran for it is I thought it was good to have a farmer on the Board. Barney Galliano, Jack Bryant and Mr. Gruber were all farmers and they'd been on the Board of Directors in the Imperial Irrigation District. It was run by farmers. I just wanted to guarantee that I would have water for my sons and my grandchildren, if I owned farmland when I died. So I thought of it as protecting the water rights and protecting the water. That's the reason I got on the Board and the reason I ran for the Board. I knew very little about electricity and still do not know as much as I should know. But I thought that it was good for me to do because that would be part of my inheritance, what I would give my sons and my grandchildren.

JM

What year would that have been when you first ran?

LA

I first ran in 1981 and I was elected to the Board of Directors for a four-year term. Then I ran after that term was over and was defeated. I was off the Board for four years. I came back on in 1990 and when I finish this term, (I have 2 years left) I will have been on the Board of Directors for 20 years.

JM

When you ran for the Board in 1981 for the first time, were there particular issues of concern or was it just water issues in general?

LA

People came to me and asked me to run because I had been on the City Council in Calipatria. I was a write-in candidate in Calipatria and served about seven years on the City Council, and I was Mayor a couple of years. The man that I defeated, Tony Gallegos, is still my good friend today. I was pretty active in my community and people thought that farmers could serve better on the Board of Directors because their heart was in the water issues. The farm people on the Board of Directors were attentive to the issues of the Energy Department, at that time we called the Power Department. They were interested in the water issues that were pertaining to the water and the water history and water rights.

JM

Then in 1985 you were defeated. And how did that happen?

LA

Well, there was two reasons that I think I was defeated. In 1981, after I was elected to the Board, the voters in the Imperial County had the chance to buy an interest in the Southwest power link, which is a power line that goes from the Palo Verde substation in Arizona up to the San Diego area. We had an opportunity to buy an interest in that and it was put up to the voters of Imperial County because the Board of Directors did not want to take it on themselves to make that move. They put it to the voters and it lost by about

a two-to-one margin. I had only been on the Board a couple of months until the issue came up again. San Diego came and asked us if we wanted to buy a 15 percent interest in the Southwest power link. Our power manager at that time was Hank Legaspi, in Calexico. He had been with the District for probably 40 some years. He said, "We need it, and we need it bad." So the Board voted to go and buy an interest in that, but we had to borrow the money. We went to the rating agencies in New York and we sold what they called Certificates of Participation. You do not have to go to the public to do that. The Board did that and then we had a payout time of 15 years. It is all paid off and it is one of the great assets that the District owns today- Southwest power link and it is paid for. We get a lot of energy from the east because it is less expensive using coal energy than it is the natural gas that we (use to) generate (power). We had a contract with El Paso Electric for many years, for energy coming out of El Paso, and we needed some way to wheel that energy from the east into our service territory. I did that. Then we started negotiations with the Metropolitan Water District in Los Angeles to possibly do a water transfer. That was not very popular and people down here thought that they were going to steal all the water. So we had negotiations with them and that is still a hot topic. Of course, to buy interest in the transmission line was still a hot topic and so the voters voted me out of office.

JM

Interestingly enough, in both cases, the power link went ahead and that was a good thing. Ultimately, the transferred water to Metropolitan went ahead.

LA

Well, after I was off the Board they finished up the transfer with the Metropolitan Water District, which is called the '88 agreement. The '88 agreement detailed certain conservation measures that we had to implement on our system because a local farmer had filed a lawsuit against waste and non-beneficial use of the water. And the State (Water Resources Control) Board had hearings down here and said that we could conserve water and somebody who paid for the cost of conserving that water could get the water use.

JM

Are you talking about the Elmore suit?

LA

I am talking about the Elmore lawsuit. The State Board said we could conserve 100,000 acre-feet of water, and so that is what the Metropolitan Water District did with what we call the 1988 agreement. What they did was, and they could have probably done it better by probably using a few pumps to recover more water, they used the interceptors that we had been thinking about for years. They were all gravity flow interceptors. They put in a series of reservoirs, and prior to that, had built two reservoirs. They had several hundred miles of canals and had completed around 8 or 9 miles of concrete-lined canals. So we have what they call a 12-hour run of water now, meaning you can order water for 12 hours. Prior to that, we only had to run water for 24 hours or 48 hours. They have a committee that looks at all those things today and they have been meeting ever since that 1988 agreement. This committee comes up with, via the process of the 12-hour run, the

interceptors, the reservoirs and the concrete lining. The fact is that we have saved about 111,000 acre feet of water since 1988 agreement, which was finally finalized in 1996. So it was good for our valley, it put a lot of money into it. The pump-back systems and the interceptors and the reservoirs are working well, and the more you use them, the more that you learn about them. So it is been good for our valley.

JM

Your use of term “waste of water”. The Imperial Irrigation District from time to time has been accused of wasting water, contrary to the California Constitution. It’s been a big deal because outsiders make that claim. What are your thoughts about that claim?

LA

Well, I think the water rights that we have date way back to the turn of the century and are very strong. Every day, we have anywhere between 500 and 600 people irrigating fields, and sometimes you have new irrigators and sometimes you have old irrigators. When you take strong water rights coupled with water that you’re going to get to irrigate with, then you put it in the hands of people who have maybe been working one or two days, they try to irrigate and they have to learn. On my ranch, we have two irrigators that have been with us for 35 years. I never have to worry about how they irrigate because they know more about it than anybody else. They are good stewards and they do an excellent job. All they have is a very, very small amount of surface runoff and we need that because we need the percolation into the tail end of the fields to wash the salts out of the ground. But people will make a mistake. If you have 600 people out there irrigating

today or tomorrow, it is easy to find one, two or three people that may make a mistake during the day. They may not shut the water off when it is running and then they may not shut the water off as soon as they should shut it off before it gets to the end of the field. It may continue to run for 20 minutes after you shut the water off. People could look at that and say, “Well, that’s a waste of water.” I look at it as it is doing two or three good things. First, it is irrigating the crops that I have and making a living. Second, it is leaching out the soils, from the head end all the way to the tail end of the field. Of course, the water on that one set may be on there for four hours, so the head end of the field is getting very good leaching and the tail end is not getting a good a leaching. You do not want the tail end of your field, the last 300 or 400 feet to go bad and not get a good leaching so you want surface run off there for a while. People are good stewards down here, but sometimes they make mistakes and it is not uncommon. We try really hard and we have classes at the Irrigation District on how to irrigate better and how to try to be an avid irrigator, how to regulate the fertilizers and all those kinds of things. Sometimes we make mistakes and so I look at those things as mistakes. But sometimes people want to make you pay forever for a mistake that you made for just two hours. And that’s really not fair.

JM

When you say the water flows to the sea, you’re talking about the Salton Sea.

LA

We’re talking about the Salton Sea, the water flows to the Salton Sea. The Salton Sea was designated by the Federal Government and is a depository for surface run off from the whole area. It is below sea level and it extends from the city limits of Mexicali all the

way to the City of Beaumont and Banning. That is about 125 to 150 miles from where we are today. All the way to the mountain tops over into the San Diego. It takes in the Palm Springs and the La Quinta area and all that. So it is a depository for surface runoff, even the underground run off that comes right out of the mountains from the snow. It is a depository because it is below sea level and there is no way for the water to get to the ocean from here.

JM

Let's go back to the agreement for just one minute. You were not on the Board in 1988 when the agreement was signed, but you were on the Board during the early years of discussions with Metropolitan Water District. How would you characterize those negotiations, those discussions?

LA

Well, we started out with an employee with the Metropolitan Water District, his name was Myron Holburt and he was about as tough as they can be. He was a real tough negotiator and the negotiations were not going very well. Finally, we had a meeting with Carl Boronkay, who at that time was the (general) manager of the Metropolitan Water District. I do not know whether he took a liking to me or not or whether he was just being friendly to me, but he said, from now on I'm going to be in on the negotiations. We are going to go forward with what ended up as the 1988 agreement. We hired an engineering firm named Parsons Engineering and they did a study of how much water could be conserved. Chuck Shreves, our general manager at that time, was an engineer and had been with the Army Corp of Engineers. He helped develop all the plans that we

were talking about, as well as the water transfer. He was part of the negotiating team. It took years and years because our community was not ready for that and I can understand it. It is very, very complicated and it takes years and years to get the negotiations right, so that you protect everybody's interests. Metropolitan, as a junior right holder (for Colorado River water), thought that if Coachella did not use any agricultural entitlement they would get it because they were a junior right holder. So it just took a long time to do that, but I think that they were fair. I think they got a good deal out of what has happened here. I think it has been good for Imperial Valley and we have a system that is better today. Again, it goes back to the issue of the irrigator that has been irrigating for 35 years and one that's just been irrigating for one day. You know how to run the system and the longer you run it, the better you get and can have some additional conservation here. The District, through the farmers, in the 1980s got a two-dollar an acre-foot charge to do nothing except concrete lining on the laterals. The farmers would pay 25 percent of all of the costs of putting in the concrete ditch; furnish all of the dirt that was necessary to make the pads for the concrete ditch. They also tried to get two or three farmers together so they could concrete maybe two miles at a time. So today I can go out and find spaces where the farmers participated in the 1970s, '80s and '90s and you will find two miles of concrete ditch and then you'll find two miles of dirt ditch, where the owners of the land adjacent to that dirt ditch did not want to participate. So we never did get that two-mile concrete line, and it is not concrete lined today.

JM

You make reference to people in the valley thinking water as a birthright. Does that mentality maintain today? Do people here still consider Colorado River water. . .; in fact,

I should clarify for the purposes of this tape, where does your water come from for all the farming down here?

LA

Well, it starts way up there in Wyoming. A little trickle of that melted snow comes to start the headwaters of the Colorado River and travels through the state of Colorado where it picks up about 80 percent of the total volume of water for the Colorado River. It then goes into the state of Utah and picks up a little bit of water from the state of New Mexico, and maybe some from Nevada, but very, very little. Then, of course, it comes down to California where we contribute none, but we have the largest allocation on the river of 4.4 million acre-feet (a year). Of course, there are rivers in Arizona that are not counted as far as Colorado River allocations are concerned. The state of Arizona was smart in its younger days and they allocated all those rivers to the farmland and to the growers and to people who lived in the state of Arizona before the Colorado River Compact was ever signed. So they have priority on all those rivers, but sometimes they overflow and they come into the Colorado system. We'll forgive them for that and we'll take the water.

JM

So the Imperial Valley then is virtually totally dependent on Colorado River water?

LA

We have a few artesian wells, but it is not good water. It was used in the early days to fill swimming pools and we had some swimming pools that were quite brown because there was a lot of sulfur in it that turned the concrete brown. But we needed swimming pools and you did not have to heat the pool, since it is about 75 to 80 degrees. Then some

people living in the country heated their homes with artesian wells. They would buy radiators like you would see in the school systems. You know, 50 years ago we had a steam boiler down in the basement and then you had radiators and it heated hot water and that's how you heated the school rooms. Well, they heated their house with that artesian water, but that water just was not good to irrigate with. There's too much sulfur and too many chemicals in it and it wasn't good to drink. But it was good to irrigate some things with and to heat the house, but that was about the extent of it. So, all of our water is Colorado River water and we usually get about two and a half or three inches of rain. We usually get that on the 16th day of August and then it is over with and we do not have to worry about it until the 15th of August of the next year.

JM

So your rainy season lasts one day, right?

LA

Usually, it is one day. Sometimes we get it maybe in a day and a half, but usually it is about two to two and a half inches, and most of the time we get it in one day.

JM

Okay. Now with that background, let's go back to my original question about people here in the Valley, giving some thought that Colorado River water is their birthright. Do you think most people here in the Valley understand the complexities involved in delivering Colorado River water to the Imperial Valley, as well as the other contractors for Colorado River water?

LA

Well, it is so complicated that I do not think that most of the people here locally, really understand that we have this large quantity of water. I think maybe they have some history of why we have it and what our forefathers did. Now I look back at the system, and I just marvel at how intelligent those people were 75, 80 and 100 years ago. Of course, they had as much brains as we have here today and probably even more. I like to think about this water right, as like years ago, when the wheat market was about \$10 a hundred-weight. Farmers were just growing wall-to-wall wheat down here and making lots of money at it. Then they put an embargo on the wheat to the country of Russia. I heard a lot of people say, "Well, I do not want to sell our wheat to Russia," and said, "Oh, you grow wheat? Do you grow?" But that's your wheat that we're selling to Russia, and do not want to sell them Russians our wheat?" Well, the people here have a right to look at that water, and they also have a right to vote to put in the Board of Directors that controls that water. However, the people who have a right to use that water, and the cities, all have a water card, which is a small yellow card that you get from the Imperial Irrigation District. It has the signature of the landowner of a piece of ground. A piece of ground is a legal description for farmable ground, and has a canal that goes by that ground.

Now the people that own those yellow cards can say, "Turn that into the Imperial Irrigation District", and the North End Division, can say, "I would like to get some water on this piece of ground and there's a canal there, and there's a gate there." Now that gate may service three or four farmers, but you can say that it is going to be charged to Lloyd

Allen. That's F canal, like in Frank, canal F-40. However, you can not get that water unless they have that little yellow card with the signature saying that I'm entitled to order that water. So that is where they get the right to use the water. Now, a lot of local people do not understand that. I think that they, like the wheat growers selling the wheat to the Russians, are of the mindset, "Well, we're here, it is our water." That's how you get a right to irrigate that is to grow crops.

JM

So your position and the position of the Imperial Irrigation District is that farmers have a right to use the water to grow a crop, but they do not have any rights to that water beyond that. Is that correct? Or did I misstate that?

LA

To my knowledge, that's the correct answer. They have a right to use that water and they have to use that water reasonably and beneficially. In most cases, that is done correctly, but once in a while people make a mistake. If they do, then somebody wants to look at that and say, "Well, you're wasting water. You're not using it beneficially. You are using too much water." When they talk about using too much water, it also has to do with the productivity of the soil, the climate, and with the farmer. When we irrigate the F canal gate 40 and we put those 80 acres of ground in wheat, we usually get 140 bushel of wheat to the acre. The national average is about 32 bushel of wheat to the acre. So did I use too much water to grow that wheat? They would not have used nearly that much water in Kansas to grow the 80 acres of wheat. But they would only get 32 bushels to the acre of wheat in Kansas, where I'm going to get 140 bushels per acre.

JM

So if I understand you correctly, there are significant soil differences throughout the Imperial Valley, so you might need more or less water on one type of soil than another? The reason I am asking that question is that I think that a lot of people who are not familiar with the Valley may have a sense that it is one place, and that not very many crops are grown, and may not fully understand the farming operation. What you are saying is that the use of water throughout the Imperial Valley is very large and can vary to some degree, from one piece of land to another.

LA

Yes, it is below sea level and when the Colorado River overflows -- since the beginning of time -- it deposit(ed) most of that dirt that came out of the Grand Canyon down into this area. So you have what you would call river bottom land. In most areas of the United States, if you own a piece of river bottom land, it is usually kind of sandy and it is light soil. It has drainage and you can irrigate it or you can just let the Lord rain on it and it will grow good crops. It is not hard soil. But here, you have different types of soil. You have some clay soils that are deposited out of those trenches that have been dug in since the beginning of time in the Grand Canyon and you have some very light soils. You have those all over the Imperial Valley, but most of the time if you get close to the rivers or between the rivers you'll find that you are going to have what I call "sweet dirt." You can just sit down on the ground and take a spoon and eat it, it is so good. That sweet dirt will grow almost anything. We have the climate down here in the wintertime, we can grow anything. Of course, there are some things that germinate in the spring and that is cotton and sudan grass and things like this. But you can grow almost anything you want

to grow down here, from cotton to sugar beets to alfalfa, all the winter vegetables, bok choy and some of the things you have never heard of before and all the grains that you want to grow. The things that we cannot grow are soy beans because of our hot climate. The summertime has a tendency to make the soy beans pop open and they usually harvest themselves before you get a chance to go through with a harvester. They pop open and fall on the ground. Now, we had that for wheat for a long, long time until they developed different varieties of wheat which stayed in the husk a bit longer and the wind blowing would cause them not to shaft too much. You would lose all your wheat on the ground when the winds came along. You can grow almost anything you want to grow down here, but it depends on the time of year that you plant it. Of course, some things germinate in the cold weather; some things germinate in the summer. But in the long summers, we plant cotton early in the spring, maybe February and we do not harvest it until October or November, which is a long growing season. Fabulous yields of cotton down here because of the long growing season, the good ground and the abundance of water to put on the day that you want it, not two days later, or not too much and just the right amount of water. Of course, it takes good farmers to be able to read those crops to tell them how much water to and when to put it on. And these farmers talk to those crops and those crops talk back to them and tell them just when it is time to irrigate and how much to irrigate and how long to irrigate. But you have to know that language and I do not know the language. But if you're a good grower, and you know the language of those crops you can just look at them and tell when it is time to irrigate.

JM

Over the past 50 years that you have spent here in the Valley, have crops and cropping patterns changed? Are there things grown today that were not grown 40 or 50 years ago? Are there things that were grown 40 and 50 years ago that are not grown here today because of the market or whatever?

LA

Tremendous changes in crops have been grown. Like I was saying, that happened in the 20s and 30s, with the English peas. After the Second World War was over, they came out with frozen peas and that was the end of the fresh English pea market. During the war, we had flax and the flax seed was used to make linseed oil and some of the residue from that was used to make ammunition and for the war. Of course, we had acres and acres of barley, which was a grain they used for cattle feed and for other feeds. And lots and lots of cotton, although we still grow cotton today, but not very much. But those are four major crops that I can think of right offhand that we used to grow thousands and thousands of acres of. Some of them were very productive and made lots of money. The English peas made millions of dollars for people in the 20s, 30s and early 40s. Flax was at such a high price during the Second World War that people would buy a ranch and pay for it within one year with a good flax crop. Of course, barley was never a good money maker, but it was very good for the soil because you planted it late in the fall and when it germinated it would clean up the ground so you could plant alfalfa in the summertime or in September, or you could plant sugar beets or things like that. Vegetables even. So this was a good cover crop and it cleaned up a lot of weeds. It irrigated the ground and it

would overcome all the weeds in there because it grew so fast and germinated so fast. So a lot of different crop variations have been grown that are not growing here today.

JM

Okay. I want to talk about what is grown here today and what the chief crops are, but let's take a short break. Okay.

We're back. We took a brief break. We were talking about cropping patterns and shifts in the Imperial Valley. What seems to be the king crop these days? What's really important here in the Valley?

LA

Well, at the present time, alfalfa is the number one crop. That has two customer bases really. There's the private horse industry. There are a lot of horses in California, and you make special hay for horses. They have to be a lighter weight bale. They are usually about 95 to 105 pounds of weight because the wife most of the time goes to the feed store and buys two bales of hay and she brings them home in the back of her car or back of her station wagon and wants to be able to unload them and so forth. So you make light hay. It has to be clean. The horse people want it to be clean, and so you make horse hay, starting in July, August and September. They do not want any weeds in it. Then, we have the dairy hay. They love our hay down here in the months of February, March, April, May, June and part of the July because it has a lot of total dissolved solids in it. That is what they measure it by, and the amount of protein. The amount of protein and the amount of total dissolved solids really determine how many gallons of milk per day that a cow will give. They will pay a premium price for that hay because the cow will

probably give a gallon or a gallon and a half more milk with that high quality hay. So they try to buy that real high-quality hay all year long. They go here first for four or five months and then they will go to the San Joaquin Valley. So alfalfa is a big crop down here. The Bermuda grass is the thing that people get mad at because it gets in their gardens and everything else. They go out there and pull it out and stomp it and everything else. We are the Bermuda grass growing capital of the world. It is about 60,000 acres down here now, and mostly it is harvested one time a year for seed. It goes all over the world, the Bermuda grass seed. You can buy it at the grocery store if you want to seed your lawn. Chances are it came from down here. And then after they have made seed on it, well then they can go back and fertilize it, irrigate it, cut and make hay, at least two times after that. That hay is used in the horse industry. Dry cows, cows that are not making milk, they do not feed them the real high-protein alfalfa and so they like to have another older alfalfa or they like to have Bermuda grass to feed them. So they feed the dry cows the Bermuda grass hay and the low-protein alfalfa hay.

JM

I would think that a lot of people do not realize that Bermuda grass is actually a feed crop.

LA

No, they do not realize that and we had developed that market down here because if you harvest the Bermuda grass at the right time, it makes a beautiful bale. The horse people like it because when they take their horses and go to a horse show they are just feeding

their horses and the horses will eat all of that. There are very, very few weeds in that at all because it is not in the best interest for the farmer to have any weeds in those Bermuda grass fields. They usually take good care not to have any weeds in there. This way the horses eat all of it. That is what the owner of the horse wants and it is also the way with the dairy people, so we have Bermuda grass. Then we have another grass called Sudan grass, which we plant in the spring and most of it is shipped to the overseas markets. It is a regular-sized bale. It weighs about 105 pounds and it is about 3 foot long and about 18 inches wide and 18 inches high. They compress them into about an 18-inch square and put those in those hundred-pound bales. These are the placed in containers and shipped to the Asian markets. They use it for roughage for their dairy cattle and for their beef cattle all over the Asian countries. That sometimes varies from about 20,000 to 50,000 acres a year, just depending on what the market price is.

JM

Tell me a little bit about sugar beets. When you are on your way down here from the Indio area you pass a very large sugar beet refining location. Are they still important here today or are they gone?

LA

That sugar factory was built about 55 years ago. In fact, when I was a kid, I helped level the ground that that sugar beet plant is built on. It was started by Holly Sugar at one time and it grows about 25,000 to 28,000 acres of sugar beets every year. They did not make any money for the factory for years and years because they could not get the productivity out of the ground (and ran) the factory for (only) about 75 or 80 days. The factory has a lot of fixed costs, and it needs to run at least 100 days out of the year. But about 18 years

ago, prior to that, all of the sugar beet germination and all of the seeds had been done by the Federal Government of the United States at a big sugar farm up in Salinas, California. It is a field station for the Federal Government. They made seeds there, sugar beet seeds, for years and years. But the private companies got into that market and they have developed these new varieties of sugar beets seeds. Where we were growing about 22 tons to the acre of sugar beets 20 years ago, now we grow about 45 tons to the acre on the same piece of ground. The same farmer -- and probably with less water because he hugs and kisses those sugar beets because they are making him money. The factory is making money now because it runs about 125 to 130 days out of the year. They can tell us when we plant sugar beets in September and October the day the factory is going to start. It will be on the first of April, give or take two days one way or another. Chances are it is going to finish around the 31st (of July) or the 5th of August. The only reason it will run longer is because there is one thing about the sugar company, they are not like other companies that you grow in a contract with. They will take all your sugar beets, provided they can process them if they are not too rotten. So if they have to run the factory until the 10th of August, if they can make sugar, well they will go ahead and take all your beets. Other things you grow in a contract are things like carrots or onions. After they have got so many tons to the acre, they will say, "Well, we do not need them anymore because we've fulfilled our obligation as far as our client is asking for and so we will not take any more of your carrots." But the sugar beet company, they will take them all, right down to the end so it is a great standard crop for the Imperial Valley. It is making good money for the farmers, but the factories make little money. The sugar business is

probably the toughest, most competitive business to be in, as far as the commodity business today for farmers.

JM

Why is that?

LA

Well, there are a lot of countries that grow sugar cane. Sugar cane is grown in all of the Caribbean islands, in the Philippines, Europe, Mexico and Puerto Rico and everywhere else. They can grow it cheap and they have cheap labor and the government of those countries subsidizes the sugar growers in those areas, as well as whatever molasses they make out of that sugar cane. Then after the molasses is made, they can refine it and make raw sugar out of it. But they get up to the molasses stage of it and a country like the Philippine Islands does not need any more sugar for the people that live on the island. So they have this abundance of molasses that they need to sell and they sell it on the open market and it is cheap. The refineries in the United States will buy shiploads of that molasses and bring it in just to refine it. Now this factory up here, Holly Sugar, they start out with a raw product of sugar beets and end up with a refined, edible product called sugar. But the refinery just takes raw molasses, which is about 90 percent pure sugar and runs it through the refinery which makes it a lot less expensive. You can control the amount, in tons that he is going to process and how many days he wants to run, just by buying the molasses. He comes out with a product of sugar which is the same as cane sugar or sugar beet sugar. When you go to taste them, you can not tell any difference. Some people like to advertise their pure cane sugar from Hawaii, but it may be from sugar beets from the Imperial Valley.

JM

Let me stop you there, we need to change tapes. When we come back let's talk about when you came back on the Board in the 1990.

Start of Tape 2

JM

This is January 24, 2005, Oral History for Lloyd Allen and this is the beginning of tape number 2. Lloyd, we were talking about cropping patterns changing over time. Let's go back though that and get a little more specific about water and water issues. We know that you are on the Imperial Irrigation District Board from '81 to '85 and then you were off the Board for one term; someone had beaten you. You came back on the Board in 1990 and you have been on ever since. What happened in 1990 that got you back on the Board? Were there some issues there? Why did you run again after you had been defeated once?

LA

I did not really care to run because I was busy on the farming operation and with my partner. We were growing and had been successful in the farming business. But a lot of people came to me and said that the young man that was in there was not doing as good a job as he should do. They asked me if I would run and if I did they would support me and they would help me financially so as to get elected to the Board. I was re-elected and on the Board again. That was about the beginning of the Bureau. I think it was (a meeting in) Lake Tahoe where (they) said we need to quantify the Agricultural Entitlement, because we did not know who to get if we over ran the agricultural use in the

Colorado River. Did we have to get after Palo Verde? Did we have to get after Bard?
After IID? Coachella?

JM

Those are all agencies that use agricultural water.

LA

Those are all the agricultural agencies that use the Colorado River water (in California), but we had it on a water right of 3.85 million acre feet of water to use. So long as you use it reasonably and beneficially. None of us had a specific quantity of water to be used in our district or service agency, whatever you want to call it. The Bureau had problems with that, so that was the beginning of the first venture to the Quantification Settlement Agreement which ended up in 2002 or 2003.

JM

How does that link up to the Imperial/ San Diego Water Deal?

LA

In the early 1990s after we were in the process of doing the agreement, Don Cox thought it would be good (he was on the Board of Directors at that time) if we could do a modified irrigation on alfalfa. This would say, irrigate the alfalfa maybe August, September and October, and maybe only irrigate it two times. Regularly we would irrigate it six times. Let's have a modified irrigation of alfalfa and let's have a fallowing program and let's try to set it up to do that for, say two years. It would generate a hundred thousand acre feet of water for the Metropolitan Water District at a price, if we can agree on one. John Carter and Bob Schemp worked a long, long time to try to draw

up the guidelines that we would go by. Chuck Shreves was the manager at that time, and between Don Cox, Chuck Shreves and myself we made the presentation to the MWD Board at least three times regarding that proposal. In fact, we cut it down from two years to one year, if they wanted it, because we did not know what would happen to the alfalfa if we modified the irrigation patterns of it. We did not know what would happen to the land if we fallowed it. We wanted to see what it would do and if we could generate more water. I think it was in 1995 when I was on the Board, a couple people from San Diego- Mark Watten and Chrissie Frahm invited me, Jesse Silva, John Carter, and Ted Lyons over to visit them about maybe doing a water transfer for two hundred thousand acre feet of conserved water. I think that was July 27, 1995. That was the first meeting we had with San Diego. San Diego was interested in doing a water transfer with the Imperial Irrigation District -- not on the basis of the modified irrigation of alfalfa or fallowing, but on water conservation (in the distribution system and on farms).

JM

Okay. So you have this deal cooking with the San Diego County Water Authority, but wasn't there an issue that linked into the Quantification Settlement Agreement. Some of the water agencies were rejecting the deal because it was difficult to account for the how much water you have left?

LA

Coachella said if you were using your water reasonably and beneficially, we would have plenty of water. We would never have to worry about it because they were a junior right holder to the Imperial Irrigation District. They did not want to be caught short, and so they have been very protective of that position for years and years. They said, we are not

going to permit you to do a water transfer with San Diego until we know how much water the Agricultural Entitlement is going to be. Of course, going back to the original meeting, I think in 1990, where the bureau said they wanted a quantification of the Agricultural Entitlement. And of course, Palo Verde and Bard/Winterhaven did not want a quantification of the Agricultural Entitlement because they had first priority and they used all they wanted because the return flows all went back to the river. So they did not want quantification of this water use. So the quantification was really looked at from the Imperial Irrigation District and for Coachella Valley Water Authority.

JM

Right, the Coachella Valley Water District.

LA

Yes, the Coachella Valley Water District. So theirs was a quantification but in the process we had to reach some accord with the Metropolitan Water District which was junior to Coachella and junior to us. They would take any overage or underage for a quantity of water that we agreed upon. That would suffice for the Palo Verde Irrigation District and the Bard Irrigation District. So that is where the quantification settlement agreement came in and so we went from there and it is taken a long, long time.

JM

What were your thoughts about the QSA, the Quantification Settlement Agreement? Did it come out okay? I mean, were you comfortable with it?

LA

I think we came out OK. Is that when we did not sign the QSA by the specified time? I can not remember whether that was 2001 or 2002.

JM

It was December 2002.

LA

Then the under Secretary of the Interior, at that time it was--

JM

David Hayes?

LA

No, not David Hayes, it was the new guy there who (recently) retired.

JM

Oh, the fellow from Wyoming. (Bennett Raley)

LA

Yes. I can not think of his name right now. I will think of it later on. But anyway, he put the pressure on the Bureau to cut out a water order for that coming year of 2000, actually 2003.

JM

For 2003.

LA

Yes, for 2003. We then went to the Federal Court in San Diego and we got that quantity of water overturned. They then came back and gave us our original order for year 2003. We knew that was the beginning (of what would happen) if we did not finish up the water transfer with San Diego and get the QSA settled. We would not have the 3.1 (million acre-foot) cap that we have today, we would subtract that from there. We would have

been 235,000 acre-feet of water short of where we are today. It prompted me to say to myself, it is imperative that we get this water agreement settled and that we get this quantification agreement settled. It was difficult to do because our community was not ready for it. Some of our board members were not ready for it. Our board members are still not ready for it today. They do not think you should transfer water. I look at the consequences of it and say that we had to do it. The Bureau kept reminding us, the under Secretary, that they were determined to have this water transfer go through. The Secretary as the water master of the river had the authority to set whatever quantity of water that she thought we could use.

JM

Now you're talking about Gale Norton, the Secretary.

LA

Gale Norton, the Secretary of the Interior.

JM

Okay. Now let me ask you the same question with respect to the agreement with San Diego County Water Authority, did that come out as you would have hoped that it would?

LA

Well, we couldn't get it settled like we wanted to get it settled. So no it did not. When we first started out it was all conservation. It was system conservation and the agricultural community was going to do this conservation. We were going to do two hundred thousand acre-feet of water and in the process the Coachella Water District ended up getting an additional fifty thousand acre-feet of water. Metropolitan Water District was having some problems with the water for San Diego, and so they ended up adding another fifty thousand acre-feet of water for Metropolitan Water District on this transfer. We did not get it all resolved and so the State of California got involved, and then of course, the environmental people got involved in it because of the Salton Sea. Fallowing land was never an option. We even passed a resolution that we were not going to do this water transfer by fallowing land. That was all our community was talking about, you're going to fallow our land. We never intended to fallow the land, but the people in our community did not believe that. We would not be fallowing land today if it had not been for the environmental issues and the Salton Sea restoration. But I have to compliment the Davis administration that put some people on at the last minute. They held -- the secretaries of all of the water committees, the water board, natural resources and a private person named Richard Katz -- they kept our feet to the fire for months until we got all the issues resolved. We went before the state board and had hearings. We got the issue resolved but it was not easy and it was not what we originally started out to do. What we started out doing was something that could have been very easily done, but the previous administration and the federal government were not going to (make) an issue

(of the Salton Sea) in this water transfer. Well that administration went out of power and the Salton Sea did become a big issue in the water transfer.

JM

While we're on that subject, let's take a look at the future of the Salton Sea. Where would you like to see the Salton Sea go in terms of what might happen to it? Should it be smaller or should it be two separate lakes? Should be a nice recreation area? What should happen to the Salton Sea?

LA

I am probably not a good person to really give you thoughts on the Salton Sea. I look at the Salton Sea as it serving its purpose. The fishing and the recreation we've had in the Salton Sea has been great. It is been a 40-year run of good luck. I look at the Salton Sea and I see what's happening to it today, due the surface run off from the Irrigation District and Mexico. They contribute a tremendous amount of water to the Salton Sea, and this runoff (from the New River) was dubbed the dirtiest river in the United States. I do not know if that is exactly true or not, but it has its problems coming out of Mexico. I just think that the Salton Sea is too expensive to reclaim and it does not have a water right. The people of California need all the water that the Colorado River can generate. There are 18 million people from the Ventura County line to the Mexican border, and probably 40 percent of those people rely on some source of water from the Colorado River. I know this sounds kind of rude, but it just seems to me that we just should have a great big party and we should have a funeral for the Salton Sea. We should take a boat out there and load it full of flowers and just ship it out and push it off to shore and just watch it float away. As far as recreation is concerned I do not see many people using the Salton

Sea. I do not see many people using it and I heard an environmentalist from the Sierra Club make a speech in Monterey about four years ago, in which she said that the Salton Sea is used by four hundred thousand people a year and use it as a recreational area--- sport fishing and water skiing. I went up to her and said, "I travel to the Salton Sea probably 50 times a year and I have a ranch that's right on the shore of the Salton Sea. I can count the number of boats out there fishing on one hand in any one day that I visit there. I go all times of the year and the amount of people who have used the state park are probably five or six, is that what you'd call a traffic jam? The state park has miles and miles of park, probably at least 15 miles, with beaches and toilets there and everything else. And you see maybe four or five trailers or motor homes down there too. They are usually there in the winter time, to use the Salton Sea as a recreational area. Now the people on the shore over by Salton City have people living over there, some of them close to the sea and some of them not so close to the sea. In 1950 the Pen Phillips Company came down here and was selling lots. Of course they had to repossess most of those after about 20 or 30 years because people were not paying for them. But they just did not develop down there and they haven't gone so far as to build a big golf course and big houses. There's a little bit of odor that has to do with the Salton Sea and the water quality there, but it is an inland body of water. To make it part of the Pacific Ocean I think you'd have to talk to Mexico. It will probably cost 25 million dollars just to run the pumps to pump the water down there and let some fresh water flow. I do not know if it would be fresh water, or ocean water flow into the Salton Sea. I call it the second Great Salt Lake. Maybe that's not a good name for it but it is still a salt lake.

JM

Well, that's what it is. Okay. We need to give Bennett Raley his due.

LA

Now Bennett was the Under Secretary, under the present administration, for four years.

Yes, Bennett Raley. Thank you very much for reminding me.

JM

He actually visited Imperial Irrigation District about 8 to 10 months ago, maybe it was longer ago than that. I think it was in 2004 when he came down and visited your board.

Do you recall that? He made a presentation.

LA

I remember him coming down here talking to us about getting the QSA signed and that we had a certain amount of time to get that signed. It was a lot of pressure put on him.

There was a lot of pressure put on him by people in the upper basin states and other areas of the state, as well as by other people who wanted to get water from the Colorado River and get the QSA signed. So I think he was probably doing his job and it was a tough job.

It wasn't easy to do. He would come in and raise all kinds of hell and pick up his marbles and go home.

JM

Lloyd, we talked about some of the huge issues that have been before your Board while you were on the Board, between 1990 when you came back on and today, 2005. So we're talking 15 years. Are there any other big issues that you have had to deal with as a Board member or Board president?

LA

Well, what is going on today, the growth in our area in the energy department, actually started ten years ago. We are a provider of electrical energy for about ten thousand customers at the present time. It used to be about fifty five thousand customers. We're the sixth largest energy provider in the State of California, including the big private companies. So in the energy business we're a big player. We are getting bigger all the time and we service a territory in the Coachella Valley, the City of Indio and some of the Palm Springs areas up there. They are growing and growing and they do not have any representation.

JM

On your Board?

LA

Right, on our Board of Directors. I think that they are going to get big and powerful, because they will probably be about half of our customers and maybe about 40 percent of our load. Now I think they are more than half of our customers and probably 52 percent of our load. We have some big industrial customers that they do not have up there. They are getting so big and they have talked to us at different times. We have tried to figure out a co-op or something, and we have worked on that for a couple years. We just never could get it resolved where we could figure out how to have two boards. The Salt River project over in Arizona has something similar to that. Sometimes I think you are going to have these people go to the legislature and try to figure out a way that they can have some say. I think we pay taxes up there. We do not pay property taxes in Imperial County but we pay property taxes up there. I think the cities up there will want some kind of a

franchise or something. I think it is probably in their best interest and they will at some time pursue it with vigor to try to have a say in the operation of the energy department, or the power department with the Imperial Irrigation District. I do not see the big development around Salton Sea happening. I see the development in the Palm Springs area and all the way down the mountains, over there by the mountains, coming all the way down towards Salton City. We have a big office up there and when we built that office about 16 years ago there wasn't a golf course within a mile and a half and now there are golf courses on all three sides of our office up there and they are building two brand new ones right across the road. So the development up there is something that has never happened before. So we've had to upgrade all of our substations in all of the cities and all of our lines and everything else. We were kind of a sleepy little community for about a 100 years. The last ten or twelve years we spent tremendous amounts of capital money for upgrading all of our lines, because as I had said long before that we maybe had one or two air conditioners in the town of Calipatria. Now all the homes and all the businesses are air conditioned, so we use a tremendous amount of electrical energy in Calipatria and all over the valley. Our peaking is going up every year. Our top peaking has grown about four to five percent which is very good. So since I've been on the board we have bought an interest in a coal mine generating facility called the San Juan plant up in Farmington, New Mexico. We have about 100 megawatts of power coming out of there. We're the big player.

JM

You mean coal fired generation.

LA

A coal fired generation plant in the San Juan plant out of Farmington, Mexico and we bought a generating plant in Yuma, Arizona, a gas fired generating plant. It generates 80 megawatts of energy from Yuma, Arizona. We have renewed our contracts with the Federal Government for the energy we get from Parker-Davis and we bought a little bit of energy from the Palo Verde Nuclear Power Plant. But we did not buy very much and hallelujah for that because it cost a lot of money. That nuclear plant hasn't been very good to the people who are paying the bill, but we bought in an interest in it. So we are very diversified. Now we are in the process of purchasing all of the energy from a new geothermal plant, which is built on the south shore of the Salton Sea. Close to Calipatria there are five geothermal plants we wheel the energy for. Our energy department wheels it all the way from Calipatria to the Mirage substation up the other side of Indio. The Southern California Edison people buy all that energy, but we are buying all of the energy from a new plant that is in the process of being built- 185 megawatts of energy. That is just to keep us up with what we have and that will be part of our base load.

JM

I just want to be clear. That general area that you were talking about, you do not deliver any water to them, right?

LA

No water. Our water service territory is about two million acres in the Imperial Valley and Imperial County alone, although Imperial County goes all the way over to

Bard/Winterhaven over by Yuma. We do not deliver any water over there. We only deliver water in our service territory, about half a million acres of land, give or take 50 thousand acres in Imperial Valley and Imperial County. As a water district in the State of California, you can sell water and you can sell energy. We happen to be a water district; we are not a water authority. But some water districts, and there are several of those in California, do sell energy and we happen to be one of them. We are one of the largest water districts other than the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

JM

Okay. Let's take a little bit of time here, before we run out, and talk about your role on the Colorado River Board of California. It is an issue today, because it is included in a large package of boards and commissions that the governor wants to do away with in a program called the CPR, the California Performance Review. Let's set that aside as hopefully a transitory event and look backward to when you were involved with the Colorado River Board. How did that come about?

LA

I first came on the Board in the 1980s.

JM

On the IID board.

LA

Yes, IID, on the Imperial Irrigation District Board in the 1980s. I was appointed by, I believe at that time, Governor Pete Wilson. Then when I came back on in 1990, Don Cox was the representative to the Colorado River Board. I was appointed as the alternate

on the board. Don Cox had a run in with some of the board members on an issue in 1994 or something like this.

JM

Again the IID Board?

LA

That is right, the IID Board.

JM

Okay.

LA

The IID Board, not the Colorado River Board. Don Cox had a run in with some of the IID Board members and they removed him from the Colorado River Board. He resigned and so I was no longer the alternate, instead I was the director from the Imperial Irrigation District that served on the Colorado River Board. I served there all that time and Ray Rummonds was the president of the Board (when) he passed away. Then, Virgil Jones from Blythe, the Palo Verde Irrigation District, took over as the president of the board. Ray, incidentally, was with the Coachella Valley Water District. He was the president of the Colorado River Board for 25 or 30 years. Then Virgil Jones took over after Ray passed away, then Virgil passed away about three years ago. My friends were gracious enough to give me the job of president of the Colorado River Board and I have had that position ever since. We now have a new alternate, Rudy Maldonado, and I think he wants to give that up to John Pierre Menvielle. He is the new board member. So I have been involved in the Colorado River Board ever since starting way back in 1980, of course not including the time I was off. For the first three months I still served on that

board as an alternate board member until they got somebody else to replace me after I lost the election. But you are appointed by the Governor's office, and they send your name in. If he doesn't object to it then you automatically become a board member.

JM

What do you see as the value of the Board? You have served on it a long time; you have been president for a number of years as you indicated. What is its significance, its importance, its usefulness?

LA

Well the average people in Imperial Valley probably care less and pay very little attention, if any, to the Colorado River Board issues. I've talked about many of them many times in board meetings and about the endangered species in the Colorado River, which is an ongoing process. It started about ten years ago. It is called Lower Colorado River Multi Species Conservation Program. There are four varieties of fish that are endangered, and the Federal government and the environmental groups say you have to do something about that. So for years we have been involved in trying to come up with a plan to save those fish in the Colorado River. There are four native fish in the Colorado River. They are bottom fish, not sport fish. But since the dams have been built in Lake Powell and Lake Mead, the sport fishing has introduced 56 varieties of sport fish in the river systems which are not native. People love those native bottom fish and so they were kind of cleaning them out, but the law says that we have to replenish the native fish. This has been an ongoing process, but it has been a long program to rejuvenate and bring those fish back to life and to get a habitat for them. We have been deeply involved in that and it has taken a lot of time. We are now coming down to the end of creating a habitat

for those fish, so that they may survive and thrive in certain areas of the river. So it is an ongoing program but it is very, very expensive. People do not realize how expensive it is, but it is a \$630 million program over the next 50 years at today's dollars. So it could cost the Imperial Irrigation District annually, starting maybe next year, \$200,000 to \$300,000 a year, every year, for the next 50 years. That is one thing. The second thing is that the agencies that comprise the Colorado River Board, the Palo Verde Irrigation District, the San Diego County Water Authority, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (the Coachella Valley Water District) and the IID, all have contracts with the Federal Government for Colorado River water. The State of California does not have a contract with the Federal Government. In most of the other basin states, the state government has a contract with the Federal Government for water. But here our contracts are with the Federal Government and so that is why we serve on the Board of Directors, for our respective authorities and water districts. We serve on the Colorado River Board to protect our interest and there is not a lot of activity on that board. We have a meeting once every month, but that is just to keep up with how the river is flowing, if it is in flood stages or if it is in a drought stage. We try to manage the waters the best we can and try to be good stewards and good environmentalists. We try to maintain that water because of the dam structures and have been able to capture the flood water for all these years. It is not easy to manage so that we satisfy all the needs for the lower basin states and the upper basin states. They are growing and hopefully they can use their full allocation of water if we manage the river correctly. We are part of a team of big players of the Colorado River basin states that have the Colorado River running through it. We need to be good

stewards and take care of it. I think that is why we serve on that board. I think it is important to have that board because we do have a contract. If we did not take care of those four fish we would not get any water.

JM

Let me ask you to respond to these next questions that are really not questions, but just a couple of sentences. What are your impressions of the water agencies that you deal with? You do not have to go into a long extended explanation, but for example, Coachella Valley Water District. What's your impression of that agency?

LA

I think that Coachella is a tough agency and they know that they have junior water rights up until now. In the QSA they do not any more. But they have had to be tough because they gave up something to get the canal, the All American Canal branch that (went through) the Mexicali Valley years and years ago. So they had to be tough to have the water for their people. Whenever you're supplying water for the people and you go to bed at night, you want to make sure you have water in the morning. If they don't, I guarantee some heads are going to fall. I think the same thing with MWD. I would not want to be the manager of that agency regardless of what they paid me, because when I go to bed at night I would know that there are about 10 or 12 million people out there looking to me for some water to drink or to wash dishes in the morning. I do not know whether I can survive that or not. I do not know whether I could do that. I think that's a great responsibility. We all have an obligation to fight for our water rights, sometimes a little bit of blood is drawn, but most of the time it is just a lot of conversation and a lot of attorneys and it is going to continue to be that way. All of us are learning to be better

fighters and a lot of us are getting a bit older and so we're getting mellower. So maybe we decide it is better to try to get along than it is to fight. I think the QSA and the water transfer to San Diego, if it ever gets settled, may take 50 years. They will say, maybe Lloyd Allen had a little bit to do with that and maybe he kind of helped things out a little bit. And if they do not think that, then they can just say, "well let's go over there and take that tombstone off so there is no marker on his grave anymore."

JM

Well you covered four of the agencies that I was going to ask you about. How about Palo Verde?

LA

Palo Verde is a good neighbor. Palo Verde is first in line and they cherish that, as well they should. They should hug and kiss that every day because that's number one. When you are there in a state that does not contribute one drop of water to the Colorado River system it is a real blessing. They are good people and they take care of it. They do not have to spend a lot of money because they know that nobody's going to go over there and kick them out, or that nobody's going to threaten them because they are first. There's a lot of water for them over there that my friend Virgil Jones, who was the chairman before me used to say, "We (PVID) have an allocation of water of 3.85 million acre feet." I think that that's true.

JM

How about LADWP?

LA

I think that what they like to do is that they do not like to get involved in Colorado River issues too much. I think they want to give that to the Los Angeles, to Metropolitan Water District. They have their hands full with their operations up in the Owens Valley and up in the Bishop area. I think that they just would say well that's one war we're fighting up there. We do not have enough resources to fight two wars, so let's just turn it all over to MWD and let them do that. I think they are good neighbors with the City of Los Angeles and the Metropolitan Water District. I get along with them quite well. I think I get along with maybe most of the other people, but sometimes I do not want to step on them and they do not want to step on me. It is not in our best interest.

JM

What are your thoughts about the Bureau of Reclamation?

LA

They have a tough job. They have a river that does not have as much water as somebody thought it had a 100 years ago or even 50 years ago. They have to make it go as far as they can make it go. They want everybody to do their share. Then they have people who are writing their paychecks, who live in Vermont and who do not know anything about Western water or who do not know anything about the Bureau of Reclamation. They have the Army Corp of Engineers there, but they do not have the Bureau of Reclamation. So they do not fully understand the West. It is just the same as some of my neighbors that are in the retail business in a department store who do not know the issues

on the Colorado River. The people in Vermont or in Massachusetts do not know the issues in the Bureau of Reclamation or the Western United States. But they have been good stewards and if it hadn't been for them we wouldn't have all this productivity that we have. Regardless of what people say about those dams, I'll get down on my hands and knees and kiss them any time. They have made this valley where I live into a beautiful, beautiful green valley. They are making the San Diego area green and beautiful, and they are making the Ventura County line all the way down to the Mexican border a beautiful place to live. If it wasn't for the Colorado River we wouldn't have the eighth wonder of the world. (I call it the eighth wonder of the world because there isn't another area in the world with this many people where the nearest major river is 150 miles away.)

JM

That's an interesting point. I hadn't thought about that. How about the International Boarder and Water Commission?

LA

The country of Mexico gets a set amount of water from the Colorado River. They have been using seepage out of the All American Canal for the last 60 some years and that is going to stop whenever we concrete-line the All American Canal. It is going to disrupt the lifestyle in the Mexicali Valley. I think growth in the Mexicali Valley is from businesses and from our country and other countries making manufacturing plants down there. Maybe they will not need as much water, but they are going to have to do a better job of re-treating the water they put in the New River. They are going to have to use the water that they flow into the New River and return it to Mexico to reuse again in

agriculture, or something that is not consumed by the household. I think that they have to do that. They are getting some help from the United States Federal Government. I think they are going to have to do more of that. They are going to have to conserve a little bit more, maybe grow crops that consume less water. But when they grow cotton down there they only let you irrigate it five times. Now if you irrigate it five times here we wouldn't grow the production we have. So they are putting some restraints on their people. It is an international issue and it is mostly taken care of by the State Department, if a big issue ever comes about. But I hope that we can resolve the issues of shortages and surpluses with the country of Mexico. Sometimes whenever they change the law, it has an effect on all the rivers between Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California and that's bad. But those kinds of things I can not change. It is going to take people a hell of a lot smarter than me to figure out things like this. So I have got enough to take care of with my own business. I want to be sympathetic to the people in Mexico because I they grow the same crops that we grow and they are good stewards and they want to be successful farmers.

JM

Okay, well I have run out of questions. Is there anything you would like to add, cover maybe something I failed to ask?

LA

I just want to thank you for allowing me to do this and hopefully someday whenever somebody looks at the Colorado River a 100 years from now they can see what these people went through. For myself personally, coming from my background, I never dreamed I would be a farmer. I never dreamed that I would be on the Imperial Irrigation

District Board of Directors. I never dreamed that I would be sitting at the same table having dinner with the Secretary of the Interior, or some of the people that I have had the pleasure of meeting in my life. It has all been a pleasure. I'm going to give a speech in Davis the 28th of this month, this coming Friday. I'm going to talk about the Colorado River, and one of the things I'm going to do is thank those people for allowing me to come to the Davis campus. I think it is a State University, isn't it?

JM

It is a UC, University of California.

LA

University of California Davis. I'm going to thank those people for allowing me to come up there and visit with them and make a speech. The next time somebody asks me "Where did you go to school?" I'm going to say Davis.

JM

And that would be true.

LA

That would be true, but I'd only spend one day. I've never been on a campus of a university in my life or college campus, except to see a basketball game or a football game or for a fundraiser. So I did not have the pleasure of going to college, and so I've never been to one of them.

JM

Well I'm not sure if it would have added a lot to your depth of knowledge and your ability to have been as remarkably successful as you have been down here, both as a farmer, a hardware guy and a public policy guy. You have done a lot for the valley, I

know that. I'm not sure college would have helped you. Anyway thank you very much
Lloyd. That concludes this interview. Again, this is January 24, 2005, talking to Lloyd
Allen.

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