

REMI COUSSENS

TAPE 1, Side 1

July 25, 1996

M.O'R.: So I guess we might as well get started. Today is the 25th of July, and this is an interview with - Remi Coussens; is that how you pronounce your name?

R.C.: That's correct.

M.O'R.: Okay. - taking place on his farm in Hillsboro.

As I said, we're just interested in collecting the history of people who live here in the Tualatin Valley. I was - I guess you told me that you were born on the farm, but not this farm. Is that right?

R.C.: That's correct. I was born just south of Cornelius about two miles.

M.O'R.: Okay. And that was your family's farm at that time?

R.C.: No. No, my parents were immigrants, and they had just arrived there, and they were working on a farm - working for the - hired out to one of my mother's cousins. So they were both milking cows at that time and working on the farm.

M.O'R.: And they were originally from Belgium?

R.C.: That's correct.

M.O'R.: So what are your earliest memories of life on the farm?

R.C.: Well, they farmed - then they leased a farm after about a year and a half, and then - so they were very close to here because we lived four and a half miles north of Hillsboro on - it used to be known as the North Plains Road, but it's now called

Glencoe Road; about a mile and a half north of here. We were on what's known as West Union Road, so I made my first grade in what's known as the Jackson School, which is at the intersection of Jackson and West Union Road. That's where Jackson School was. No longer, of course.

But we used to as youngsters - now, you've got to remember this - I mean, pretty young because we'd go - we were small enough we couldn't open a gate when we took the cows out to pasture, but the neighbor would open the gate for us so we could get the cows. And I'm talking about - these are little fellows - I mean, five, six, seven years old. By the time I was seven, why, they moved away from there and moved over to a town called Lycee.

But anyway, eventually, why, I married.. And my wife lived here, and she was an only, and her father wanted to sell the farm, and so we wanted to farm. And of course the thing of it is we used to go - before that, why, we used to go swimming in McKay Creek. As kids we were swimming in McKay Creek, and then they had - Camp Ireland was in there, and then we'd go to Camp Ireland.

M.O'R.: Let me back you up just a little bit. So you said you weren't big enough to open the gate to the pasture for the cows, but you were big enough to take care of them once you got them out into the pasture?

R.C.: Well, the cows knew where they were going. The main thing was we had to cross a railroad track, and so in case a train would come, why, we'd try to head the cows - one of us would go ahead of the cows, and the other one would follow up at the rear. The cows knew where they were going.

M.O'R.: But you'd stop them if there was a train coming?

R.C.: That's correct. That only happened on one or two occasions.

M.O'R.: How would you stop the cows?

R.C.: Well, you'd just stay in front of them and wave your arms, and they'd stop.

M.O'R.: And the Jackson School, was that a one-room school-house kind of situation?

R.C.: That's right. That was a one-room school.

M.O'R.: And how many grades were you combined with?

R.C.: Eight grades.

M.O'R.: All eight?

R.C.: With one teacher.

M.O'R.: One teacher. What was that experience like? That seems really unusual to somebody like me, who grew up in a public school in Portland, or went to school at a public school in Portland.

R.C.: Well, it was a great education because the teacher would hold class for her first graders, and her second graders, and then she'd hold class for the next ones. And of course children progressed quite rapidly under that scenario because of the fact when a teacher had the other ones up in class, why, many times you'd overhear what was going on, and consequently you'd learn from that.

And of course learning wasn't quite that simple for me because of the fact when I hit the schoolhouse door I couldn't speak a word of English and neither could my parents. Eventually you learned, and so did they.

M.O'R.: So you learned English mostly in school or at home or both?

R.C.: No, at school.

M.O'R.: But your parents also learned just by interacting with neighbors and society at large?

R.C.: Yeah, and the children. But that's very common in those days, because people from - immigrants from all countries over there in Europe, many of them came and they settled in all parts of the United States. So I mean, there was German settlements and Belgium settlements and Polish settlements and Irish settlements and so on.

But anyway, so we would swim in the - getting back to the part we were living along McKay Creek, and we'd go swimming there, and of course we grew up - those days they used the horse and buggy to go to Hillsboro. That was an all-day trip, to go shopping in Hillsboro.

M.O'R.: From ...

R.C.: From North Plains. And then in those days they used a walking plow and the steam engine when they were harvesting. So we've seen the transition all the way along.

M.O'R.: And you were involved in all of those activities, too, as you grew up, no doubt?

R.C.: Oh, yes. Started milking cows by hand, and so on and so forth. But then nevertheless that doesn't relate to the rivers that you're interested in.

M.O'R.: Yeah, well, as I say, we're also interested in just generally the history of the farming community and other communities out here as well.

What was Hillsboro like in those days?

R.C.: Well, of course that - when Mother and Dad went with the horse and buggy, why, they'd usually have somebody there to take care of us little kids, and us little kids didn't go.

M.O'R.: Oh, so you didn't go into town that often?

R.C.: No. No. So I don't recall going into Hillsboro then. But by the time I was in the second grade, why, we would go into Hillsboro, and in third grade, then, I went into Hillsboro because we lived at Lycee.

M.O'R.: What was your memory of Hillsboro then? I assume it was quite a bit smaller place than it is today.

R.C.: I think the town was about 3,000 back then, about 1927 or '28. But anyway, as time went on - and of course then after - you know, why, we seen this thing go from the horse and buggy to the year of the automobile, the tractor and the - and from the mowing machine and a binder and the hay wagons to - instead of threshing machines we went to the combine and - to the combine harvester.

And so everything - and then from the old silage chopper that would blow - you'd haul the corn to it and put it into the machine, and it would blow it up into the upright silos and - to the field choppers and the hay balers, the portable hay balers - I mean, with the pickups on them. So everything went from the hard way to a lot easier way because of mechanization.

But also in the agricultural end, we were used to - when I started farming in about 1947 for myself, I was interested in irrigation because I'd seen how some of these fellows had flood irrigated, and about that time sprinkler irrigation started. So of

course we were involved with water rights. The sprinkler irrigation I was very interested in because in the summertime, why, if you had a good legume pasture, why, you could get more feed for your animals, for your milk cows.

But it then became a problem.

M.O'R.: Can you explain to me what the difference between flood irrigation and sprinkler irrigation is?

R.C.: Oh, yes. Because you'd have to have your land quite level, and it would take an awful - a lot more water.

M.O'R.: And the idea is you - what? - just let the river or the creek just flow in over your lands?

R.C.: The water would flow in over the land when they'd flood irrigate.

M.O'R.: And only people that were right on the river or on a creek could do that?

R.C.: Well, yeah, because they're the ones that had access. Even though it was public water, why, if you had access to the creek, why, you were fortunate.

M.O'R.: And your land, I assume then, would have to be fairly low, too?

R.C.: Well, fairly flat. And those that flood irrigated generally were on a flat area. And so anybody that had any amount of slope, why, water would run too swiftly, and it would run off more. So now ...

M.O'R.: And then how would they get the water out of the creek and ont to the land?

R.C.: Well, they'd pump.

M.O'R.: They'd pump. Okay.

R.C.: Oh, yeah. And of course we were irrigating here. And this was - the water in the creek, you know, if your neighbor irrigated up above you and another - a couple or three of them, and you were irrigating, first thing you know there wasn't any water left for the fellow down below.

M.O'R.: Right.

R.C.: So here comes the Water Master, said you've got to shut off. Well, you do these things, but there just wasn't enough water. And then eventually, back in the 50's there was litigation by the ironworks down at Lake Oswego who had a water right, and they won their case in court, although they weren't pressing the people to get their water; they were pretty good about that. But nevertheless, if they decided they needed their water, why, everybody else was out, or practically everybody.

So that's when we went to work to try to get some water - "We'll get the dam built."

M.O'R.: Up there - the one that was eventually built ...

R.C.: Yeah, well, they worked on that for about 15 years or a little better, maybe 15 to 20 years. People said, "Well, we don't need that much water for irrigation."

Well, I said, "No, perhaps not, but if we don't need it for irrigation we're going to need water for the people." Because there were times that the Tualatin River was - you could stand there and straddle the Tualatin River in the summertime. It was nothing more than a ditch. And it was just like a sewer.

M.O'R.: Well, you know, that was one of the questions that came to mind when you talked about flood irrigating. It doesn't sound like you could do much irrigation in the summertime that way?

R.C.: Well, there just wasn't enough water. And so of course the cities needed water, and sewer agency needed water, of course; we've got to flush that stream somewhat. And so consequently, why, in 1966 we got an authorization through Congress for building Hagg Lake.

M.O'R.: Right.

R.C.: And then a year or two later, I think, we got the funding.

M.O'R.: Before that happened, though, how did people handle the water shortage? Was there real competition between farmers for the water or were there bad feelings about the ones that had access to it and the ones that didn't?

R.C.: Well, a lot of times they'd have a part-time Water Master, who would go up and down and see. He was kind of - had a farm background.

M.O'R.: Who was it in those days?

R.C.: Well, we had one fellow named Bob Lipshot, who - well, he was a pretty - he kind of knew what was going on along up and down McKay Creek, you know, and some of the other streams. And he'd say, "Your neighbor down here has got this crop, and he needs about another day or two to finish his job. Why don't you hold off a little bit?"

I said, "Okay." So you'd let your neighbor finish, and then you could go, or the neighbor up above you, or another guy further on down the line, and you know, rather than come in and say, "Well, now, by god, that guy needs water; you shut down," or the other fellow, he'd have - he didn't have a good enough right that he'd have to shut off and not get his crop finished, you know. So there

was a lot of - a little give and take, but there wasn't enough water to do a job for anyone, really.

M.O'R.: And so the Water Master sort of helped negotiate between ...

R.C.: Yeah. And he kept good will up between the people. But the times have changed, and so ...

M.O'R.: And back in those days, then, nobody really - except, well, you said by the mid-50's the ironworks in Lake Oswego won the case, but ...

R.C.: I don't know just exactly what year they won that lawsuit.

M.O'R.: But before that no one had any real ironclad legal right to the water, in terms of the farmers out here? It was just more a question of who had access and who didn't or ...

R.C.: Well, a lot of it was that, and then of course when the natural stream flow was down, why, then they'd just go up and river and said, well, your rights is about 1954 or '55, well, anybody prior - '55 or later couldn't pump, or you'd get even down further than that.

M.O'R.: So did the shortages of water in those days affect your own ability to grow crops and carry on your operations?

R.C.: Well, you got to the point that you just didn't pay too much attention. You just said, "Well, we'll irrigate when we can, but there's no guarantees that we can irrigate." So you can't grow crops that you know you have to have water for.

M.O'R.: So you're restricted to just certain crops, then?

R.C.: Yeah, basically forage crops, and if they - if you didn't have the water, they just didn't grow well, or they died,

like grass does in the summertime. But now that we've got water coming into the area from Bull Run and also from Hagg Lake and Barney Reservoir, and more people, and the USA doing a good job of putting - cleaning up their water, we're getting water in the creek. And so now we no longer depend on water from McKay Creek because there just isn't a dependable flow. There's some irrigating out of that creek, but we're getting our water basically from Hagg Lake and the pipeline. And that's a dependable source.

M.O'R.: How long have you been here at this place?

R.C.: Fifty years.

M.O'R.: Fifty years. So we're talking really about this farm here when we're talking about your own personal problems with water?

R.C.: Mm-hmm.

M.O'R.: So McKay Creek is right here ...

R.C.: On the property. But there's many times we could pump it dry. So therefore when your pump goes dry, why, you don't have water.

M.O'R.: Right. Well, tell me a little bit about your own involvement with the project to get the dam built up there at Hagg Lake and how that all unfolded.

R.C.: Well, there were some of these oldtimers out here, you know, they approached me and they said, "Well, are you interested in getting some water and irrigating?"

I said, "Sure I am." I said, "I can't irrigate very much because I don't have the water supply."

"Well, we're trying to get this going, you know, and so would you sign up for some water?"

"Why, surely."

M.O'R.: And who were the people?

R.C.: Well, we had Henry Hagg and Bert Haysacker, Ed Caruthers, Lee Putnam. And at that time the young County Agent was Palmer Torvend, and this was before Lloyd Baron came to town, even though Lloyd got very involved with this thing. Let's see. Oh, Curt Ritchie. Let's see. There was Ritchie, Haysacker, Caruthers, Putnam - and I got involved with them. And so that started about - in the early 50's.

M.O'R.: So it was these people - come of these people, then, that came and talked to you about it?

R.C.: Yeah. So then I got involved with them, and then for a while we had a five-man board, Tualatin Valley Improvement District, and then for a little while there it was a three-man board, and then I wasn't with them, but then it went back to a five-man board, and then I've been on that - involved on that board ever since.

I was chairman of the Irrigation District Board for 14 years, 14 or 15, and my term is up this year, and I think I'm going to - and I'll be 76 years old when my term runs out, and I think that it's time for me to - they've got a good board of young people, and so I'm not going to run again, as far as that's concerned, but ...

But the Tualatin River has been - since Hagg Lake has been there there has been a dramatic improvement. The Tualatin River is great. Some of the tributaries in the fall of the year they look like sewers because of all the decaying vegetable matter that's laying in the streams, but not the Tualatin.

M.O'R.: And so you formed this board, or this group of interested people in the beginning, and then it took until - what? 1966, is that what you said? - when Congress first authorized it?

R.C.: Mm-hmm.

M.O'R.: What was that process like in terms of getting this actually to the point where Congress could take action on it?

R.C.: Well, of course, it's like anything else, it takes quite a little political action. I wasn't the politician in there, but Henry Hagg and Curt Ritchie and Palmer Torvend were the main political force. And Wendall Wyatt was our Congressman, and he had that bill put through Congress to authorize the project.

M.O'R.: So your conversations in the beginning were with Wendall Wyatt? Was that your contact with the government, then?

R.C.: Mm-hmm.

M.O'R.: Did you sit in on any meetings with Congressman Wyatt?

R.C.: Yes, I did.

M.O'R.: Do you remember any of the specifics of those meetings?

R.C.: Well, not the details, no.

M.O'R.: Do you remember the first time you sat down with him?

R.C.: Oh, yes.

M.O'R.: Well, why don't you tell me what you do remember about that encounter? Did he seem interested in the farmers' problems?

R.C.: Well, he was interested in it because it wasn't only the farmers' problems. It was a community problem. It was for all the people in the area, and that's where his interest was, you see.

It was not only for agriculture, but also for all the populace of the area. But the agriculture was the spearhead of this project. And then of course we got the cities to go along, the cities, and also the sewer agency, and so that involved all the populace of the area, and that's what made it fly.

But the Congressman was very interested in it at that time.

M.O'R.: And in terms of getting the different groups together, the City and the sewerage agency - well, USA wasn't around in those days, so it must have been ...

R.C.: Well, I don't know what they called it at that time. Well, we had it for - let's put it this way: There is a portion in the bill for water quality control, and that's where the USA comes in, even though it wasn't USA at that time. We had flood control, water quality control and M&I, municipal and industrial use, and agricultural use.

M.O'R.: So Wendall Wyatt went to bat, then, it sounds like, for the project?

R.C.: That's correct.

M.O'R.: And then you continued to keep working on it from this end in terms of continuing to push it with him and make some of the decisions that needed to be made?

R.C.: Yeah. Well, see, then the Bureau of Reclamation took this over. It came under the Bureau of Reclamation.

M.O'R.: And what were the, you know, key decisions that had to be made along the way in terms of getting this off the ground?

R.C.: Well, the key thing to get it off the ground, first of all, was to get the project authorized. That's - if you don't get an authorization, you're not going to get anything done.

M.O'R.: Right.

R.C.: Secondly, being the Bureau was involved, there are studies made as to where they might put the dam and so on and so forth, how big the project might be, how big the interest was amongst the agricultural people. If we'd known back then what we know today, we'd have had two dams in up there.

M.O'R.: Right. You said the first problem was to get the authorization?

R.C.: And then the funding. And then of course the size of the project had to do with the feasibility of it. I think if I recall correctly they were only going to cost about 25, \$30 million, and I think it finally wound up costing about 55.

M.O'R.: Uh-huh. Not too unusual in terms of public construction projects, although maybe more unusual in those days.

Well, in terms of getting the authorization, what kinds of things did you need to do there?

R.C.: Well, we wrote letters to the Congressman, you know, and also when they had the hearings on it, why, the group of Hagg, Torvend and Ritchie, I think - and I don't know if Haysacker went with them at that time or not, if they went back, but I thought there was about three of them went back for the Congressional hearings.

M.O'R.: And so they gave testimony?

R.C.: Yes.

M.O'R.: There probably were hundreds or maybe even thousands of similar situations, you know, across the United States at that time, and I'm just wondering what kinds of things you needed to do to get Congress interested in Washington County?

R.C.: Well, it's just like anything else, when you have your representative over there, he's supposed to go to bat for his constituents. And so that's how things happen.

M.O'R.: And do you think Wendall Wyatt was fairly effective in that way?

R.C.: Absolutely.

M.O'R.: I guess it took a while, but I guess ...

R.C.: Well, he was effective because I think at that particular time the Senator or representative from Colorado, Floyd Domini, he was a big wheel there, and of course Wyatt had to - they brought Domini out here, and he looked at the project, and he gave it his blessing, also. So that - so he was the whip back there, and so he liked what Wyatt had presented, so they got the job done.

M.O'R.: Did you meet Mr. Domini, then?

R.C.: Oh, yes.

M.O'R.: And when did he make his trip out here?

R.C.: That I couldn't answer, but he was out here.

M.O'R.: And how would you describe him?

R.C.: Well, he was a positive individual. If he didn't like the project, it wasn't going to happen. So that made it - when he said, well, he liked it, why, that gave us a good feeling.

M.O'R.: It made you feel like maybe you were halfway home?

R.C.: Yeah. But the thing of it is is all the bureaucracy, the wheels turn slowly. From the time we got - you see, you work on it for 15 years or so to get the project authorized ...

[end of side one]

REMI COUSSENS

TAPE 1, Side 2

July 25, 1996

M.O'R.: Okay. I think I missed that last sentence. So you were saying -?

R.C.: I said it takes about 15 years before you can get something authorized, and then maybe another year or two, and maybe you can get it funded and maybe you can't. If you get it funded, after you get it funded, then it will take you another 10 years before something will really happen.

So in other words, from 1950, I think 1976 or 1977 is when we first started getting water. So that's 25 to 27 years. That's damn near a generation in life.

M.O'R.: That's right. That's true.

R.C.: It's more than a generation when you're in the military.

M.O'R.: And how would you describe Wendall Wyatt in those days?

R.C.: Oh, he was a young, aggressive representative.

M.O'R.: And did you generally agree with him? It sounds like he did a good job on the irrigation project here, but did you generally agree with his political stance in Congress?

R.C.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: And what did you think of him personally? What sort of person was he?

R.C.: I think he was a very kindly gentleman. He was a young attorney at that time. By young, I would say he was probably - he wasn't 40 years old, or around that.

M.O'R.: So anyway, finally you got the authorization - oh, but first of all, I was going to ask you, you said that once that the Bureau of Reclamation got involved then you had to answer questions such as siting of the dam. I understand there was more than one site under consideration?

R.C.: Well, yes. There was a site up on Patton Valley.

M.O'R.: In the main stem of the Tualatin?

R.C.: Yeah.

M.O'R.: Is that the site that would have flooded Cherry Grove had it been chosen?

R.C.: That's right.

M.O'R.: Did you have any feelings yourself as to which was the better site, Dairy Creek or ...

R.C.: You mean Scoggins Creek?

M.O'R.: Scoggins Creek, rather, yeah.

R.C.: No, I didn't. I think it was selected because it was probably cheaper to build, more economical.

M.O'R.: And the selection was made by BLM, then?

R.C.: Bureau of Reclamation.

M.O'R.: Or Bureau of Reclamation, right. Right. So then the dam was built, and you finally had water in '75 or '76, you said?

R.C.: Mm-hmm.

M.O'R.: This changed things, though, a little bit in terms of the way farmers used the river; at least that's my understanding.

You didn't actually have to pay for the water you took out of McKay Creek here in the old days; is that right?

R.C.: No, you didn't, because it's all public waters.

M.O'R.: But once the dam was constructed, then ...

R.C.: Then we had a repayment contract. The District signed a repayment contract, and at that time they had a Regional Director here named Rod Vissia, and so when they came for the repayment contract he said, "Well, we'd better tie Phase 2 in with Phase 1." Well, Phase 2 hadn't been authorized, and nobody knew if it would be. So he said the Commissioner of the Bureau wouldn't sign it, the project, I mean, the contract - he wouldn't sign the contract unless we had Phase 2 tied into it.

Well, I said to Rod, I said, "How do you know?" I said, "You haven't tried him, have you?"

"Well," he said, "No."

"Well," I said, "We don't want to go for that with Phase 2 tied to it because," I said, "you're going to - we go back to our constituency, and they'll hang us by the nearest oak tree." So anyway, he took it back to the Commissioner, back to Washington D.C., and I think the Commissioner at that time was Gil Sam, and Gil signed it. So that ended that part of it.

All in all - at first, why, we've had an awful lot of trouble because there was - the inspectors didn't do their job when they put the pipeline in, and then people didn't know how to handle the water. We had water hammer, and it would blow the pipes out here and blow the pipes out there. So now ...

M.O'R.: Water what, now? Water hammer?

R.C.: Yes.

M.O'R.: Can you explain to me what that is?

R.C.: Well, water is not like air; it don't compress.

M.O'R.: Right.

R.C.: And so if you have a - well, say, you've got a six-inch pipe, and that flowing through there at a certain velocity, and you shut it off in one impact, why, you've got all this force coming up there, and that will back up back and forth, and it will magnify up to 14 times. Now, John Manville has a film on water hammer, and that's what happens in the cities at times. You know, they'll say a water main broke. Well, there might have been a water hammer caused by somebody shutting down a volume of water too quickly.

M.O'R.: And then it sets up a shock wave in the water?

R.C.: Well, I can relate to water hammer, because if you had cows in your barn, and they used a drinking cup, which you've seen. A drinking cup? Have you seen a drinking cup that a cow can get her own water?

M.O'R.: No, I haven't.

R.C.: Well, anyway, she'll press down on this, and a little water will come, and when she lets up, it shuts that water off. Well, that shock wave will go clear to your house if you don't have someplace for an air chamber to relieve that.

But anyway, so now it's going along pretty well. And during the time, the ten years, why, we were assessing everybody a little bit, and so we was able to build up a reserve. So now the District is sitting in a good financial situation.

M.O'R.: I understand that not everybody signed up for that water when it was first available; is that right?

R.C.: That's right.

M.O'R.: What do you think was the difference between those that did sign up for it and those that didn't?

R.C.: Well, they didn't want to pay for something. We've had meetings on this, and one of the fellows said, "Now, I only pay for the water I" - we're paying for a service, you know. And so the guy said to me, he said, "Now, I only want to pay for the water I use."

I said, "That doesn't fly." I said, "I'm a dairyman, and you're a farmer, and you've got a hundred ton of hay over there." So I said, "I'll take that hay. That's my hay." Okay, but it's an open winter. So I say, "Well, I only used 50 tons. You keep the rest." Can you make your operation run that way?

And that's the same situation on the water. We're contracted for so many acres, whether we use the water or if we don't. If we use over, we have to pay extra. But if we don't use the water, we don't get a refund. But that's all right. The community that likes to play on the lake, you know, for the boating and the fishing and swimming, the County took care of that, but we - the thing of it is, why, they thought, well, there would be so many days, you know, for lake use days up there, and heck, it doubled the expectations right off the reel, right away.

M.O'R.: You mean there were twice as many people up there using it?

R.C.: Yes. The usage up there has been twice as high as anticipated. And of course if there's any extra water left up there in the dam, the people just love it. They don't want that draw down.

M.O'R.: Oh, yeah. Sure.

R.C.: We could irrigate more land, but the contract with the Bureau is for 17,000 acres, and that's all we are allowed to irrigate.

M.O'R.: I hear some people still talking about Phase 2 of the project. Do you think that it will ever come to pass, that they'll build that second dam?

R.C.: If it comes to pass, it won't come in my time, but if it does come to pass, it will come because of the people. Irrigation, agricultural irrigation will just be minimal. It will be for people's needs, not otherwise. It will be municipal and industrial because the cost of the project would be so high that agriculture couldn't participate very heavily.

M.O'R.: I see. So the cost to build these days would just make it out of sight, then?

R.C.: That's correct.

M.O'R.: Also I imagine there's less and less agriculture going on all the time than there used to be?

R.C.: Well, everything has grown. With the water, the water has been used -- why, to help intensification - in other words, nurseries, row crops, specialty crops.

M.O'R.: What difference did it make to your operation to all of a sudden have that water available from the mid-70's on?

R.C.: Well, we didn't really get to use it much till about in the 80's, you know.

Of course, I was in the dairy business, so it didn't affect me that much, because by that time the animals weren't going out to pasture, we would bring all the feed to them, and of course we had the land, so we didn't - we were concentrating more on the dairy

than we were doing on the intensification out on the field. But now my son is using the water quite a bit, so he's going into some of the row crops and so on.

M.O'R.: I wonder - this is backtracking a little bit in time - well, actually first of all let me just ask you a couple more questions about Scoggins Dam up there. The lake, of course, bears Henry Hagg's name. Would you identify him as sort of the most important person with respect to getting this off the ground?

R.C.: Yeah, he was the kingpin. His dream was to stand up there and cut the ribbon on the dam, but unfortunately, he didn't quite live long enough.

M.O'R.: I guess his brother Oscar got involved a little bit?

R.C.: That's right. Oscar took Henry's place.

M.O'R.: A couple of people have told me that Palmer Torvend also was a real key mover in this?

R.C.: That's correct. Palmer and Henry and Curt Ritchie and Bert Haysacker, Ed Caruthers, Lee Putnam. Those guys.

M.O'R.: Now, Palmer was the Water Master? No, he was the County Extension Agent, I guess?

R.C.: Right.

M.O'R.: So he sort of represented farmers' interests in that role?

R.C.: Oh, yes. He did a magnificent job.

M.O'R.: And why do you say that?

R.C.: Well, he knew his way around the political arena somewhat and with Henry working on that, why - and I think Ed Freital was another one I forgot to mention. But Palmer worked on it very heavily, and very interested in it, and I would imagine - Palmer

has a bunch of memoirs about that, but then unfortunately Palmer doesn't know anyone at this point. He's got Alzheimer's, and he's in a rest home in Forest Grove. I don't know if he knows his own wife anymore.

M.O'R.: I know. I originally found out about him and was thinking of interviewing him for this project, but I was told by his wife - Nordith? - that he wasn't capable any longer.

R.C.: As a matter of thinking about it, you might - for the Historical Society, what about Palmer's memoirs about the Scoggins project? Would Nordith give them to the Historical Society?

M.O'R.: I don't know. I should talk to her again. I did talk to her, you know, many, many months ago and she recommended some people to me that I might talk to, but she didn't mention anything about the memoirs, so maybe I should ask her about that.

R.C.: Now, I don't know for sure.

But then there's another thing about the thing, did you - how much information did you get over at the Tualatin Valley Irrigation District office?

M.O'R.: I haven't actually made contact with them yet, but I plan to. I assume that they would have some things over there, as well.

R.C.: Oh, there's all kinds of stuff over there. I think if you're going to look at the - well, there's all kinds of stuff about the dam, and there's all kinds of photos around there, old photos.

Oh, yeah. I forgot to mention another guy that was involved around there, Chet Wooler.

M.O'R.: And what was his involvement?

R.C.: He was a farmer out there.

M.O'R.: Okay. And he was involved in the dam project?

R.C.: Yeah. You see, those - let's see, Chet, Henry, Bert, Curt, Caruthers. Those oldtimers are all gone. They're all dead. Even what involvement Oscar had, Oscar's dead.

M.O'R.: That's right. Just a couple of years ago now.

R.C.: Yep.

M.O'R.: And you mentioned Haysacker, too?

R.C.: Haysacker's dead.

M.O'R.: Right. And he was a farmer, also?

R.C.: Oh, yeah. Very interested in irrigation.

M.O'R.: Were all of these crop farmers, then, or were ...

R.C.: Well, Hagg had a dairy, but then Haysacker was a crop farmer. Wooler was a crop farmer. Putnam had cattle. They had Jerseys. All those guys, those oldtimers that helped build this thing and helped put this thing together are all gone. I happened to be the kid on the block, see, so I'm still here, fortunately.

M.O'R.: I wonder, when you were putting the project together, all of you, can you recall any snags along the way? Anything that went wrong that had to be fixed in order for things to go forward?

R.C.: Well, I can't right offhand.

M.O'R.: Okay. Also I wanted to ask you, there was a project that involved the federal government - it might have been the - I've forgotten now whether it was the Bureau of Reclamation; it might have been the Bureau of Reclamation - that was proposed in the early 50's, I believe, to straighten out the course of the Tualatin River and improve the banks?

R.C.: Well, that was the Corps of Engineers.

M.O'R.: Corp of Engineers. You're right. That's it. That's right. You must have been around when that was being discussed ...

R.C.: Oh, yeah.

M.O'R.: ... here as well. So what do you remember about that?

R.C.: Well, they were going to - they thought that - well, the problem was that the water was getting so blooming stagnant down there, and they was trying to increase the flow so it wouldn't take quite so long to get the water out of the river. That was the purpose of it.

M.O'R.: It never got off the ground, though?

R.C.: No, it never got done.

M.O'R.: Do you think it was a good idea?

R.C.: I couldn't answer that.

M.O'R.: I know a lot of people weren't too - especially people that actually lived on the river I don't think were too excited about it.

R.C.: Well, I don't know who was behind it or who was pushing for it. But anyway, they were - I know they were trying to get that reef out down there, what they called a reef.

M.O'R.: Now, I see here in my notes that you had told me earlier that the heavy irrigation out here in the Valley began in the 50's?

R.C.: Yeah. It kept increasing. We were irrigating here in the late 40's.

M.O'R.: On this farm?

R.C.: Mm-hmm.

M.O'R.: And you just pumped from the creek, then?

R.C.: That's correct.

M.O'R.: And so you were using flood irrigation?

R.C.: No, we were sprinkling.

M.O'R.: Oh, you were sprinkling. And you also mentioned the condition of the creek in the summer, that it would get pretty clogged up with rotting vegetation. Was this mostly pollution, then, from just natural sources, from natural vegetation that would be?

R.C.: That's correct.

M.O'R.: What do you remember about either the creek here or the river in terms of the condition of the water generally and what were some of the problems - I mean, besides the low water flow in the summer, what other kind of pressures were there on the waterways out here?

R.C.: Well, when you've got no water, you've got no water. I used to make the statement that even the crawfish were carrying canteens.

M.O'R.: Yeah, I'm just thinking in terms of the way people used the river. I mean, nowadays of course there's all these - there's a - well, let's say an elevated environmental consciousness, and there are certain things that you can and can't do now with respect to the river, but back in those days, you know, there wasn't this consciousness, nor were there the same number of people, you know, living on the river or near the river. And so it was a lot more laissez faire, let's say. I mean, people could use the river in whatever way, and I've heard stories of people - well, some of the canneries and other operations, farming operations in the valley, you know, dumping their wastes into the stream rather

than taking care of them other ways. What do you remember about, you know, the ways in which people used the river and the way it might have affected it back in those days?

R.C.: Well, of course in the fall when the cannery over here was running their broccoli and cooking that stuff, why, there was a lot of that stuff probably went into the river. They probably screened it as much as possible, but they didn't have the equipment to do the job in those days.

M.O'R.: Sure. That's the other thing that's happened, too, of course, is technology has marched forward, too.

R.C.: Right. And the south half of Hillsboro smelled like cooked broccoli.

M.O'R.: What about your own operation here, have you had to make, you know, improvements or do things here as a result of the ever-tightening sort of environmental restrictions?

R.C.: Well, if we'd have continued in the dairy business, definitely we would have.

M.O'R.: What kinds of changes would you have had to make?

R.C.: Well, number one, you'd have had to put in a lagoon where they put all their - the liquid from the animal facility would go into the lagoon. They would screen out the solids; you've seen that in some of these operations, I'm sure?

M.O'R.: Well, actually, I haven't. You mean just the wastewater and other things from the dairy operation ...

R.C.: ... go into the lagoon.

M.O'R.: Instead of being dumped straight into the creek.

R.C.: Oh, absolutely. And then they'll pump that out onto the land for irrigation.

M.O'R.: So that way you reuse the water, and you also let it - you get the solids out because it percolates down through the ground?

R.C.: Right - well, the solids - they screen out a lot of the solids. No, it doesn't percolate. Those lagoons are generally sealed. They seal themselves.

M.O'R.: Oh, I see. Anything else that you would have had to change?

R.C.: Oh, in general you change the whole operation, that's all. I mean, our facilities were getting obsolete.

M.O'R.: So what do you do here on the farm now? I guess your son is farming it; is that right?

R.C.: He's farming it, and I'm just doing a little yard work and go fishing, play a little golf, take care of my business, and sometimes I - well, I was a realtor for a little while, and now I'm - well, you know, what does a retired man do? He just keeps busy. He's always doing something.

M.O'R.: And your son is farming what kind of crops out here these days?

R.C.: Well, he's got - he planted some blueberries, and he's got corn and red clover, crimson clover, grass seed, wheat. I think that's about it.

M.O'R.: What's been the economic picture in terms of the farming business here on this farm over the years? Has it always been a fairly profitable operation, or how has it been for you?

R.C.: Well, I wouldn't say that the farming was always a profitable operation, but a combination of the dairy and the farming has always been on the plus side.

M.O'R.: So some years it's better on one side than the other and ...

R.C.: That's correct.

M.O'R.: ... it sort of balances out?

Well, the other thing of course that happened with the Tualatin was the dam up there, and that increased the flows and generally solved a lot of the problems that existed with the river, both in terms of the amount of water that was available, but also in terms of the condition of that water. But we had - I think it was in 1970 - prior that time, of course, there were all these little sewerage districts from the various communities. Some of them were small, some of them were a little bit bigger. And then in 1970 the State cracked down and slapped a building moratorium on the whole county, and shortly after that we had the formation of the Unified Sewerage Agency that consolidated all the sewer districts into one. Do you remember much about that, and what was your own feeling about those events at the time?

R.C.: Well, it didn't involve me directly, so I probably wasn't too interested because we aren't - we're septic here, we're out in the country, we're not on the sewer.

[end of tape]