

TWO GENERATIONS
WORKING IN THE OWENS VALLEY

THOMAS CRAIG POOLE
Interviewed by Dick Nelson

One of a series of oral histories covering the growth and development of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power as seen by the participants - its employees.

Produced by

Special Projects Section
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Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

1990

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Biographical Notes

THOMAS CRAIG POOLE

Born at Lone Pine, California, November 7, 1933.

Parents: William Craig and Bessie (Ball) Poole.

Married Dolyann Dawn Harris, January 29, 1954.

Three children: Teresa Lynn, Thomas Craig Jr., and Sheryl Lou.

Tom has two grandchildren.

Tom entered Department of Water and Power service June 24, 1952, as a warehouseman at Independence, California. He retired December 1, 1988 as a Senior Storekeeper.

Former Club and Organization membership:

American Legion (Finance Officer, Service Officer, 1st and 2nd Vice Commander, Commander)

40 et 8 (Chef de Gare, 3 yrs.)

Aviation certificates, accomplishments:

Aircraft Maintenance Technical Instructor

Commercial Pilot's Certificate

Certified Flight Instructor

Approximately 6,000 hours flight time

Approximately 4,000 hours flight instruction

Teaching Background:

Instructor Cerro Coso College, Bishop; 4 years

Aviation

Supervision

Management

Purchasing

Business

Completing requirements for Lifetime Community College teaching credential.

This is to certify that I have reviewed this transcript and attest that it is true and accurate. Also, by my witnessed signature below, I grant the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, or its designee(s), sole right to use this material in any way, and for any purpose, it deems appropriate.

Thomas Craig Poole 7-1-90
Thomas Craig Poole date

Dolyn D. Poole 7-1-90
witness date

1472 Rocking W Dr. Bishop
witness address

TAPE NUMBER: 1, SIDE ONE

THOMAS CRAIG POOLE

GIVEN FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1990 AT HIS HOME IN BISHOP,
CALIFORNIA

THE INTERVIEWER IS DICK NELSON

NELSON: Tom tell us a little bit about where you were born, where you grew up, schooling, things like that.

POOLE: I was born in Lone Pine, California, November 7, 1933. At that time my parents lived in Independence where my dad

worked for Department of Water and Power. I grew up in Independence and actually spent most of the first 50 years of my life in Independence. I went to Owens Valley schools. An interesting thing..I started the first grade with five other students and two of us went through all the grades and graduated together and she also was a member of a DWP family. After graduating from high school I went to college at Valley Community College in San Bernardino, California for one year and studied business management.

In growing up we all considered ourselves to be DWP family. Independence was basically a DWP town. There wasn't much other than DWP in the town. I remember one instance back in 1941 when I was in the third grade. It was my first encounter with the former General Manager of DWP, Robert V. Phillips. I was in my third grade class which was in the Methodist Church because of the overcrowding of the schools and my teacher was Mary V., who was Bob Phillips' wife. My impression of him and the other students in the class was sort of overwhelming as he walked through the door and had to duck. I had never seen a man have to duck going through a door before. He had on laced boots that came practically to his knees. He worked as a surveyor and the other thing that was sort of impressive was the vehicle that he had pulled up outside in. I can just picture this completely as one of the few things that I can really picture from way back, but I can picture this vehicle, which was an old Ford "woody"

station wagon. The whole thing was just so impressive that he wasn't an important man as far as I was concerned, but he sure was impressive as he walked through the door.

NELSON: You mentioned growing up in Independence and the DWP family, where did you live at that time? Were you in DWP housing? Exactly where did you live and what was the type of home were you in at that time?

POOLE: That was sort of an interesting thing. My family built their own home in Independence and then a few years later the Department bought almost all the private homes in Independence, basically for the water rights. So the folks sold the home to them. Apparently we rented it for a short time and then my parents repurchased the home from DWP less the water rights. That was sort of an interesting thing.

NELSON: Was that a good financial deal for your folks? Did they make money on that transaction?

POOLE: I am sure they did but I never really heard the details of it.

NELSON: Did you, in later years, mention to Bob Phillips about the impression he made on you?

POOLE: Yes, I think so. Within the last ten years, Mary Vee mentioned the impression that I made on her in my sort of childish antics with my pocket knife that she had to take away from me.

NELSON: You were not the honor student in department at that time?

POOLE: I would say not.

NELSON: Talking about that school, you mentioned overcrowding. Why was there overcrowding at that time? Do you recall? What triggered the influx?

POOLE: I am not really sure except that we had really a large student population, probably over thirty which tended to overcrowd the small school.

NELSON: Was this a one teacher type of elementary school?

POOLE: No. Apparently they had several classes together but this particular one they had to move out. And I am not real sure if it was the third and fourth grade that we were in or if it was strictly the third grade. A lot of the classes we had were two grades together.

NELSON: You had some recollections, as you have related, about the time period 1941, did you remember or take notice of construction of Manzanar, the camp there?

POOLE: Oh very definitely. The impressions we had were that the Japanese are very bad people and they were down there so you had to learn to fear them and just don't have anything to do with the Japanese person. I remember one summer my parents had an opportunity to rent my room to someone that was working down there. It was quite a boom for Independence as far as rentals and things and I moved out into the grape arbor for the summer. It was quite an experience for me really to be able to..

NELSON: Sleep under the stars.

POOLE: Sure, right.

NELSON: Do you remember the construction at all, or the internees arriving or anything? Does that register with you at all?

POOLE: Yes to a small extent. I don't remember seeing the large quantities moving in or anything like that, but I remember definitely the time and watching the construction.

NELSON: Were the feelings in the community one of kind of

general fear or avoidance of them that they were there and that they had done something wrong or were to be stayed away from?

POOLE: Yes that was my impression. That they had actually done something wrong which seeing it now it is sort of sad.

NELSON: Did you have occasion to see them later on during the war years? I understand they were allowed at times, with supervision, to leave the camp.

POOLE: I can't really recall that. Of course we, from time to time went to the camp for various different tours and things like that and I can remember very interesting about their farms and their food processing plants, actually going into their food processing plants and really being impressed by that.

NELSON: You say you went through the Independence School District?

POOLE: Actually it was called the Owens Valley School District in Independence.

NELSON: And graduated then from Independence High School?

POOLE: Owens Valley High School.

NELSON: Oh, okay.

POOLE: The Manzanar situation when the Government moved out in the late 40's, they turned the gymnasium over to us, Owens Valley High School, to use. We utilized it mainly for sports and basketball and it was really quite a gym. We had previously played basketball in the Legion Hall in Independence which was not a regulation court. It was a very small court, but we played against teams that normally played in large gymnasiums until the time that we moved to Manzanar. All of my junior high and high school days we played basketball at Manzanar.

NELSON: Was that short court an advantage or disadvantage to you?

POOLE: The long shots that the other teams would shoot would end up hitting the ceiling or the lights, so it was probably an advantage to us.

NELSON: You graduated from Owens Valley High School in what year?

POOLE: 1951. There was 16 in the class.

NELSON: A graduating class of 16. That was a pretty typical class?

POOLE: That was one of the largest classes. There has only been one class larger than that since. And there was never any larger than that before.

NELSON: Then you came to the Department the next year, in 1952. What was your college period?

POOLE: It was in 1951-1952.

NELSON: You went down to San Bernardino. Did you have a particular major at that time?

POOLE: Yes. It was business management. It's sort of an interesting thing, going to college. I didn't pass the english entrance exam, so I had to take bone-head english. I lived with former chalfant editor, George Savage. So I had him help me considerably. He spent a lot of time helping me with my writing and I still failed my bone-head english. I used to have him read my essays and things and he would help me out and everything and I thought it was sort of interesting that I still failed with some real expert help. But he was a real editor. I mean he really did quite well in the newspaper business.

NELSON: It goes to show we can all persevere when we try. When did your interest in aeronautics come to the fore?

POOLE: In 1953 I took a four year leave of absence from the Department to serve in the United States Air Force. This was during the Korean conflict and I was in an aircraft maintenance school and eventually became an instructor. Even though I wasn't into the flying, I was around a lot of airplanes and really quite interested in that. I only flew once during the four years that I was in the Air Force. I was mostly involved in instruction and construction of performance and written examinations.

NELSON: You say aircraft maintenance. Is that a mechanic?

POOLE: Yes, actually I was an aircraft electrical repairman.

NELSON: So your wealthy uncle gave you that training?

POOLE: Right. Actually I had the technical training, but most of my instruction was involved in other areas rather than in the electrical area. I did teach some electrical work too, but it was mostly in other areas.

NELSON: When you got into flying itself, after you came back?

POOLE: Yes, actually it was not until 1965 that I got into flying and there was a schoolteacher, as I find out now, who didn't have an instructor's license, but he was learning to get his instructor's license so he was teaching a lot of us to fly. When we found out later he really didn't have his license, he had to get somebody else to come sign us all off, another instructor. He eventually became a licensed instructor.

NELSON: So you soloed here in the Owens Valley?

POOLE: Yes, in Independence. We soloed, of course, before we were legally able to solo and an interesting thing about the solo, one of the Department Power System employees was an instructor and he was assigned to Independence temporarily. So my so-called instructor engaged him to legally sign us off for solo. Well he was quite a heavy person and we had a very small little airplane, in 1965 a 65hp airplane, an Aeronca Champ, and it would not get off from the Independence Airport with both of us in so I actually had to fly the airplane by myself down to Manzanar to pick him up so he could fly with me and okay me for solo flight.

NELSON: Do you recall his name?

POOLE: McNighter was the last name and I can't recall the first name. He was an electrical patrolman.

NELSON: Since that time you've put a few hours, I guess, in the air.

POOLE: I have almost 6,000 hours and almost 4,000 of that is in flight instruction which I am almost ashamed of that. That's a lot of time going around and around and around the traffic pattern.

NELSON: When you came to work for the Department in 1952, you came as a warehouseman. What exactly did a warehouseman do in 1952 in your job?

POOLE: It was mostly maintaining the warehouse and the yard facilities and loading and unloading trucks and issuing and receiving materials. We had no forklifts or any help in assisting us in loading and unloading trucks. We did it all by hand. We handled a lot of very heavy material.

NELSON: What were the range of this material that you handled? From what to what?

POOLE: From very heavy transformers down to nuts and bolts, but we had transformers, drums of oil, lumber, steel. Transformers we loaded and unloaded from an old wooden dock and transformers that might weigh several thousand pounds, we actually man-handled just by using rollers and as many as six people moving those transformers from the truck to the ramp or vice versa.

NELSON: Your responsibility then pretty much ended when the crews came to get that equipment. You were basically the warehouse, inventory, that sort of thing--keeper of the supplies?

POOLE: Right.

NELSON: How many people were down there at that time in that particular function?

POOLE: There were probably five warehousemen and a storekeeper and a senior storekeeper.

NELSON: Do you remember who those people were?

POOLE: The storekeeper I remember very well. He was my supervisor, Ralph Bell. He retired from the Department after about 40 years. There was a gentleman by the name of Rider, Ray, and there was Emery Little and a short time after I went to

work, a close friend of mine, Bill Lewis, who was also a Department brat, went to work in the warehouse with me. My father was a senior storekeeper at that time. There was an Olive Reynolds who was a female warehouseman.

NELSON: Did it cause you any problems having your Dad as your "big boss" so to speak?

POOLE: Yes, very definitely. It was not good in a lot of ways. Of course he felt that I should excel more than everyone else.

NELSON: Do more than your share.

POOLE: Then everyone else felt that I was given special privileges and it was definitely not a healthy situation.

NELSON: How long did you work with your dad?

POOLE: Probably 2 years, in that neighborhood, but quite a bit of the time I had a supervisor in between, Ralph Bell.

NELSON: Your entire Department career was spent in the Owens Valley?

POOLE: No. In 1960 I was promoted to Storekeeper in the General Plant Division at Main Street. I spent six months there and then another eight months at the Wall Street facility for the Power System. Then at that time my former supervisor, Ralph Bell, retired and I was able to transfer back to his position.

NELSON: Were you married at that time?

POOLE: Yes.

NELSON: Did your family go down with you?

POOLE: Yes they did. We went down and we purchased a house and we were there to stay because we had figured it would be another five years before Ralph Bell retired, but I think his hobbies got to working on him and he needed to get to them full time.

NELSON: I guess there was a little bit of a contrast between the DWP facilities at Main Street and the facilities in Independence.

POOLE: Yes, very definitely. In the office that I worked in upstairs over the store's facility in Main Street, there were 100 of us in the office.

NELSON: That about equals the Water System in the Owens Valley, person for person.

POOLE: Yes.

NELSON: You were happy to get back?

POOLE: Yes I really was. I really enjoyed the work in Los Angeles. Probably enjoyed the work more than I did ever in the Owens Valley and the people, but I was really glad to get the family back in Owens Valley because I really felt it was a beneficial place to raise children.

NELSON: When and where did you meet your wife?

POOLE: I met my wife in Illinois when I was in the Air Force and we were married in Kankakee, Illinois. Our first child was born on the Air Force base, Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul, Illinois.

NELSON: Your wife was a native?

POOLE: Actually she was born in southern Illinois and raised in Arkansas. She had spent a little time in the Bellflower, California area before moving to Kankakee, Illinois and that, of course, was where I met her.

NELSON: When you brought her back from the Air Force, you came back here and resumed your Department position in Independence and so you had to find housing and that sort of thing. Was there any culture shock to her coming into the Owens Valley?

POOLE: No. She was very impressed with the Owens Valley. In fact she came out four months before my being discharged from the Air Force and we purchased a house from some distant cousins of mine that had lived in the house for probably fifty years at that time.

NELSON: Where was the house located?

POOLE: The house was located in Independence on Washington Street.

NELSON: Still standing?

POOLE: Still standing, yes. We had remodeled the house when we came back from Los Angeles in 1961.

THOMAS CRAIG POOLE

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NELSON: Maybe you can give us a little more detail on when you brought your wife and family back into the Owens Valley. Had the three children been born at that time?

POOLE: Only my oldest daughter who was born in Illinois when we were in the Air Force. Right after we had moved back into the valley, my son was born in Bishop. It wasn't until 1962 that my youngest daughter was born in Lone Pine.

NELSON: So two out of the three are Owens Valley born?

POOLE: Right.

NELSON: I understand that your mother had lived in the Owens Valley prior to meeting your Dad.

POOLE: Right. She graduated from Owens Valley High School just like myself and my children did.

NELSON: And she has lived in the Owens Valley since?

POOLE: About 1923.

NELSON: In raising your family here in the valley, what type of recreation and entertainment was available? What did you folks do for fun? The Department was a smaller department at that time, a more family type of department, were there activities that the Department employees enjoyed as a whole?

POOLE: Yes. I think so. We definitely did a lot of fishing and hunting and picnicking and this sort of thing. One thing that I really remember family oriented with my children and especially as I was growing up, was the picnic sponsored by the Department. These picnics mostly were on Department-owned land at Keough's Hot Springs and Manzanar. There usually was around 1,000 people at these picnics and they used to bar b que, that's the buried pit bar b que-about 1,000 pounds of beef. These were very highly organized picnics where they had trap shoots, pistol shoots, all types of games, horseshoes, entertainment, dance. This lasted a whole day and it was completely funded by the Department. There was all the soft drinks and hard drinks and food was all provided by the Department. It really was a thing that everybody looked forward to every year. The contest the people entered year after year, the family spent quite a bit of time practicing for it. The horseshoes, the trap shoots. I

remember as a child competing, not only with other children, but with adults, Department employees, and doing quite well against adults because I had really practiced.

As far as raising my family, of course we had Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. They were involved with the Methodist Church which actually happened to be across the street. I can remember my son going to Sunday school on Easter Sunday which was a lot of times on his birthday always snow being on the ground. Which we haven't seen much of that lately at Easter time. The kids were all involved in sports. My son in baseball and basketball. My youngest daughter was four years on the high school's basketball team. They were small school championship contenders I think all four years of her basketball career.

NELSON: Did they have a longer court?

POOLE: Yes, they had a longer court. About 1950 the high school built their own gymnasium in Independence. Before of course we had to use the Legion Hall or the Manzanar gymnasium. My youngest daughter was involved in 4-H along with other things. Raised sheep and, of course, father got involved in that quite a bit. One memory of that was in her last year of sheep and 4-H she thought it would be nice to get a very young lamb, newborn lamb, and raise it on a bottle and then bring it at fair time. So it was my job to locate the lambs and I

finally located some up in Dayton, Nevada so her and I took off in our suburban carry-all, which was just a truck like station wagon and we went up to end up with this lamb and she fell in love with a set of twins. Then the person that we were buying the lamb from said, "Gee it would sure be nice if you took the ewe home then the ewe could nurse the lambs and it would be much better than doing it by hand." So we took the ewe and the two lambs home in the back of this carry-all.

NELSON: You could say you had a "ewe haul."

POOLE: Right. Okay. I never thought of that before. Of course, this was about a 200 mile trip from Dayton, Nevada to Independence and it got quite smelly by the time we arrived. We kept the ewe and the two lambs until fair time and then of course we had to take the ewe back home. They had just loaned us the ewe which, of course, we had to feed all this time. But that was one of the interesting things I remember when the kids were growing up, but this was something that was unique to a place like Owens Valley. You couldn't do that in Los Angeles.

NELSON: Going back to the picnics. How were they organized? I imagine that this took almost year around planning for the next extravaganza like that. Were Department committees formed?

POOLE: The committees were very large and it took a lot of productive time away from the Department by having employees do this and in fact I think that is why they finally quit having them because it really got out of hand. It was top priority, more priority than the water running down the hill.

NELSON: What year was the last one staged?

POOLE: I really can't remember, but I think it was in the early 1960's.

NELSON: You say around 1,000 people, these were primarily the DWP employees in the valley and their families. Was it strictly Water System or Power System?

POOLE: No this was Water and Power.

NELSON: So DWP employees in the valley and then some brass would come down from L.A.?

POOLE: Yes.

NELSON: Those picnics were happening when you came aboard. So they date back to the..

POOLE: 1930's. At least they had started in the 1940's.

NELSON: When do you remember them, back as a kid?

POOLE: In the 1940's.

NELSON: You were participating at that time?

POOLE: Right.

NELSON: One of the other areas, and I know it has been difficult for the Department to tell it's story, and this is particularly true in the Owen's Valley where we have a number of employees, and many are all involved outside the Department in civic activities. The Department is one of the, if not the largest, employer other than the federal government and I guess the mine when it is operating. We are looked upon, and called upon by various agencies and good causes to provide good works. You have been around long enough probably to see a lot of those good works done, can you describe what we have done in some of those areas and maybe the variety of things the Department has done and have we gotten the credit we deserve or have we not or what do you think about this?

POOLE: I feel that the Department definitely has not gotten the credit that they deserve, but they didn't really want the

credit I think is the reason why they didn't get it. A lot of times would even say don't bother to acknowledge what we've done for you. The things that they have done with their men, equipment, supplies, you know they work with the Boy Scouts, the American Legion, the VFW, Chamber of Commerce's, the community Christmas decorations, they still spend a considerable amount providing the labor to install the community Christmas decorations. They have spent a lot of time and money on the Fire Department's, the Little Leagues, golf courses, the hospitals, that sort of thing. People have just got use to Department participation over the years I feel. I think it was probably more prevalent in the earlier years, the 40's, the 50's, the 60's, than it is now. The Department was very supportive of community activities.

NELSON: I assume that Department employees individually, and beyond their work assignments, have integrated into the community, engaged in a whole lot of community service outside of the Department or outside demands the Department may make on them.

POOLE: Very definitely. I, for instance, spent nine years on the Owens Valley School Board and probably about 15 years on the Independence Fire Department, including later years serving on the Board of Commissioners.

An interesting thing about my serving on the school board the same time that I served on the Owens Valley School Board, Paul Lane served on the Big Pine School Board. Of course, Paul eventually became our general manager.

NELSON: What happened to your School Board?

POOLE: I didn't become general manager.

NELSON: You mentioned you served on the Fire Department, was that on a board or were you a volunteer fireman?

POOLE: I was a volunteer fireman originally and then finally became a member of the Board of Commissioners. I was a fire fighter, an engineer and eventually when I retired, was a Captain on the fire department.

NELSON: The skills that were learned there also benefitted the department.

POOLE: Very definitely. In fact a good part of our fire protection was on department property.

NELSON: I guess this is a question I ask everybody in the Owens Valley, the perception anyway. What we read down in Los Angeles is that this hostility and antagonism by Owens Valley people

toward the Department and toward Department people up here. What has been your reaction and your experience over the years and that of your DWP family?

POOLE: I think it's really mixed emotions and it really causes quite a bit of stress in a way. I never really felt much hostility towards me as a person as a Department employee. The hostilities were mostly towards the Department. I think people really respected the Department employees in the Owens Valley, especially the so-called local employees. Over the years most of our Northern District Engineers were more or less of a transient nature.

NELSON: They were flatlanders?

POOLE: Yes. They were really, in most cases, not very well accepted, but of course, former General Manager Phillips was accepted because he was somewhat of a local person.

NELSON: Was he in your opinion the one that was the most accepted of the Northern District Engineers that you are familiar with?

POOLE: I would say so, but I really don't have too much of an opinion on that.

NELSON: That big entity out there is the City or the Department, and that's kind of a convenient target and I guess even employees can get mad at the City and the Department. But individually you are Tom Poole and you are viewed on what you contribute. If you are a person who contributes, you are accepted in the community.

POOLE: An interesting thing along that same line, my wife who is still a Department employee and I really have some heated arguments at the present time over the water controversy that is going on right now. She is very supportive of the Department position and activities and I tend to sort of go the other way. I don't know if it's suddenly I've retired and I can think another way or what, but we really get a little hostile at each other sometimes.

NELSON: Has your opinion changed, has your thinking changed?

POOLE: I think it probably has and I don't really know why. I just feel that now that I am retired I can look at it some other way.

NELSON: Or don't have the influence?

POOLE: Yes. Right.

NELSON: We all get caught up and we are around it eight hours a day or ten hours a day and I guess most of us become a team player so to speak and that's not a negative term at all. You are influenced by your environment and you take offense when people throw bricks at your environment too. It is a personal attack against your integrity. Well then, the big question was the Department guilty of all the crimes that have been alleged against it?

POOLE: You have to realize that the Department was charged with a very important job to provide water and electricity for a growing city and they have been able to do this because of their activities. They definitely been very successful in this and it's been a costly process, but it has been very worthwhile. The city had to grow, it had a lot of potential and I feel it has hurt the Owens Valley, has hurt people, but what you have to realize is 10,000 people important or is several million people. Which is the most important? We are going to get the monies worth out of our resources and if we get the monies worth out of the resources, we are going to be hurting some people.

NELSON: What about loyalty to your employer and things you believe in and loyalty to the community? I understand that you

are familiar with a Department employee who kind of faced that. He worked as a Department employee and worked as an Inyo County Supervisor too.

POOLE: Right. We had Earl Hurlbut, a Department employee, and eventually he became a supervisor for the Department. He had served many years on the Inyo County Board of Supervisors and this, of course, would be unheard of now while he was an employee because you really have some substancial conflicts of interest and conflicts of feelings.

NELSON: During the last decade he would have had to excuse himself from about every meeting. When did he serve generally? Was that after you had come aboard?

POOLE: Yes. He was still serving then, but he served in the 40's and 50's I think.

NELSON: Was he on the water side?

POOLE: Yes.

NELSON: Is he alive?

POOLE: No, he is not. His daughter, Mary Jane Fisher, still lives here, she's on the City Council.

NELSON: You talked about Northern District Engineers and/or managers here. To some of them I think it's true, this was a management position which was, in many cases, a step up the rung in the Department Water System. Several men who served here as Northern District Engineers went on to a higher position in the Department. I guess there are differences in styles as to how these Northern District Engineers handled the shop. There are probably considerable differences in management style between some of the earlier Northern District Engineers and how it is operated now. Do you have any examples of maybe of how things worked in the past versus present-day operations?

POOLE: Yes I remember our first Northern District Engineer, Sid Parratt, while he was serving on the Owens Valley School Board, which a lot of Department employees did, was involved in some very heated community politics involving other employees. The Department's head man used discriminatory tactics with other employees involved in the controversies. I remember one comical situation that used to come up quite often in staff meetings and other work-related discussions. There were two brothers. One involved in the politics and one was not. Every time the last name came up, Mr. Parratt used to ask, "is that the good Denny or the bad Denny?" That didn't just happen once or twice, it was a regular thing and I think probably the employees got to talking about it a little bit and maybe made more of it than it really was.

NELSON: You're kind of saying in the "old days" if you took a position different than the Department's position, you faced more adversity here?

POOLE: Well really I don't believe that was the Department's position. That was just the individual who happened to be managing the Northern District.

NELSON: Who felt that the employees should show 100% loyalty on each directive he put out or Department directives or what he felt they should tow the line totally and if there is any deviation you were suspect?

POOLE: Yes.

TAPE NUMBER: 2, SIDE ONE

THOMAS CRAIG POOLE

POOLE: Dick, one other thing that I can remember about Sid Parratt, our first Northern District Engineer, was sometimes he would stand on the corner of a main intersection of Independence with his watch and his notebook and make notes of people going to lunch and coming from lunch and their coffee breaks and he made quite a point of reminding their supervisors when they were three minutes late or took an extra five minutes for lunch.

NELSON: Would he or the supervisors go beyond that with disciplinary action?

POOLE: A lot of them thought it was sort of funny and made light of it and would even tell the employees, "ha, ha, ha you got caught by Mr. Parratt today," and really didn't do much in the way of disciplining for that. It was sort of a joke.

NELSON: How long, roughly, was Sid up in the Owens Valley?

POOLE: I really don't know, but I would guess in the neighborhood of ten years.

NELSON: Did he retire from Owens Valley, or did he go back to Los Angeles?

POOLE: No, he retired from Owens Valley.

NELSON: Did he live here after retirement?

POOLE: No, he moved away almost immediately. I don't think he was very well liked in the community.

NELSON: I have heard talk from sources about a supposed connection between the DWP and Masonic Order up in the Owens Valley. Can you shed any light on that?

POOLE: Well I think in the early years, maybe up to the 1970's, the Masonic Lodge appeared to have an influence on hiring, job assignments, promotions, etc. in the Owens Valley. I think it was sort of just assumed by a lot of people that that's the way it was and it was that way. I think they definitely made a definite effort to break that up eventually.

NELSON: There were, up to the 70's, a number of DWP employees who were Masons?

POOLE: Yes. Especially in the higher areas of supervision.

NELSON: Let's move on and talk a little about you dad. He came to work for the Department in the mid 1920's?

POOLE: Actually it was in December of 1926. He went to work initially as a laborer and then as a mechanic, then a warehouseman and storekeeper and in 1943, he was promoted to Senior Storekeeper. You heard the designation of mechanic there, actually they used this designation for a more skilled person. They started out as laborers and the more skilled person they promoted to mechanic. Before they got regular job classifications, I think you were either a laborer, a mechanic or a foreman. The mechanic might be someone that was nailing the roof on or that might be, in his case, someone that was running the stockroom.

NELSON: Had he come directly to the Department as a young man? Where had he been employed prior to the Department?

POOLE: He was born and raised in Santa Barbara and initially worked on ranches in the Santa Barbara area. He came to the Owens Valley, he worked for the California Department of Agriculture as an Agricultural Inspector. Then he became undersheriff for Inyo County. He worked directly for the Sheriff. That was previous to his time that he went to work for the department in 1926.

NELSON: What is an undersheriff? Is that like a deputy?

POOLE: Actually the undersheriff is the assistant sheriff. An interesting thing at that particular time there was only two in law enforcement in the entire county. The sheriff and the undersheriff. So they handled law enforcement for the entire county. At this point they probably have 50 people doing the same thing.

NELSON: What qualified him at that time to become undersheriff? Did he have law enforcement work or was it at that point an undersheriff was needed and he fit the bill and was hired?

POOLE: Yes, I think that was it. He fit the bill. He did have some law enforcement experience to a certain extent as being an agricultural inspector. They did some law enforcement type of work.

NELSON: Was he involved in any of the incidents involving the Owens Valley versus the Department of Water and Power property?

POOLE: I think some, but the main things that I recall really was the bootlegging. He was involved a lot in the apprehension of bootleggers. In fact, my mother has a picture which I sure would like to get a copy of, picturing him out in front of the

courthouse with a Moon automobile which he had captured from some bootleggers who were coming out of Nevada into the Big Pine area. They captured it and he used that vehicle as his law enforcement vehicle from then on.

NELSON: I understood that your mother met your father in his official duties.

POOLE: Yes, my mother was a graduate of Owens Valley High School and during their graduation ditch day, they had gone to Keoughs Hot Springs, which was sort of a tradition even as late as when I graduated from high school, to go to Keoughs for a ditch day, he was dispatched to round these truants up and return them to school and my mother was one of these so-called "truants". Of course it was several years later after my mother had graduated from college that they were married.

NELSON: Were they married here in the Valley?

POOLE: Yes, as a matter of fact, they were married in what eventually became my living room in the house that we had purchased from a distant cousin of mine. Because my dad had lived in their little guest house previous to that.

NELSON: When did your dad retire?

POOLE: My dad retired in 1965 after about 38 1/2 years.

NELSON: Was that all in the Valley?

POOLE: Every bit of it was in the Valley, yes.

NELSON: Did you recall any incidences that your dad might have related to you, things that happened here, things that happened in the Valley, why he worked or things that involved him?

POOLE: Not really. I can remember that in the warehouse as a child growing up, he had duties on the weekends to check the inventory and things and one of the things that he did check was the supply of guns and ammunition that the Department had. They provided this to certain employees to protect their interest, mostly the aqueduct.

NELSON: These were the Winchester repeating rifles?

POOLE: No these were pistols and ammunition for them and there seemed to be a lot of ammunition for rifles too.

NELSON: I know you were just a kid at the time, but do you recall any of the security measures taken up here during World War II?

POOLE: No, I really don't Dick. I remember the main thing my dad a lot of times was given the duties of meeting dignitaries and tutoring them around the valley. One of the things that he really got interested in especially in later years when the Department started disposing of property, he was involved in selling a lot of buildings to be removed from Department property. These were residences in the towns, they were farm houses, hotels, motels, restaurants, service stations, houses of ill repute even that he was involved in selling. Bunkhouses and shower houses and he really spent a lot of time and really enjoyed doing this because there was a lot of history involved. Being able to do a little digging into the buildings before he sold them. He really prided himself in doing quite a job in describing the houses when they put them up for sale.

NELSON: So in addition while he was a storekeeper this sounds like he performed a lot of function of what we call the land division in Los Angeles.

POOLE: Well not really. I think initially the salvage sale function is a storekeeping function and the buildings were considered to be property rather than real estate.

NELSON: These buildings were sold with the proviso you either dismantled them or you block them up and cart them to your lot or wherever you plan to reestablish it?

POOLE: Right. And, of course, this created a lot of junky type of things being built and moved and things because they were already at the point that they were no longer useful to the Department so eventually instead of, course he sold thousands of them, but eventually instead of doing this, they just bulldozed them down to keep from creating unsightliness all over the valley.

NELSON: Did you ever have the opportunity to live in Department housing, one of the subsidy houses?

POOLE: No. I sure didn't. My family always owned theirs and I always owned my house. Of course I knew of a lot of people that did. We had neighbors all over town who lived in Department owned houses.

NELSON: You had mentioned earlier that you had worked in Los Angeles down at Main Street for awhile through, of course, Department procedures and correspondence and all that, you were familiar with how the system is to work, did you find that the storekeeping system that was used in Los Angeles and worked up here or did you have the Owens Valley spin on it?

POOLE: I think probably there was an Owens Valley twist, but I know when I became in charge, I tried to standardize everything, pretty much along the same lines as they were doing in Los Angeles. I basically had all of the storekeeping functions in this area, the procurement, the salvage sales, both water and power, so I was able to take the existing storekeeper functions that were being operating in Los Angeles and really put them to work here. I really prided myself in trying to keep things run the same way here as they were in Los Angeles.

NELSON: So under your procedures and paper work someone in Los Angeles's storekeeper know exactly what you're doing was pretty much standardized?

POOLE: Right. We did converse a lot with the stores operations in stores and purchasing operations in Los Angeles and I encouraged my employees to do this.

NELSON: Did you have an opportunity to go to Los Angeles on occasion just to meet with the other storekeepers and supervisors and the management side?

POOLE: Yes sir, I did that quite often over the years, Dick and I didn't really care for going to Los Angeles, but I really enjoyed meeting with the people that I talked to almost every day on the telephone.

NELSON: You didn't feel left out or the tail end of the dog as far as the function up here? You think you were pretty adequately informed and kept abreast of what was going on?

POOLE: I think so. I really believed that I was.

NELSON: What about through civil service? Are the opportunities and the information passed on up here on a pretty regular basis or do you have to do a little more scratching up here?

POOLE: I think especially in the later years they really made a definite effort to try to encourage people to take promotional exams and really did some schooling to aid people in doing well in competitive examinations.

NELSON: How many people did you supervise at the time that you retired?

POOLE: About ten. I supervised several warehouse workers, several storekeepers, because I had branch warehouses in Lone Pine and Bishop and operated a stockroom for the shop in Independence, separate from our main warehouse. I also had clerical staff working for me.

NELSON: You worked out of independence, a warehouse there?

POOLE: Right.

NELSON: I guess your dad saw, when he was storekeeping, animal transportation too. Not only vehicles, but he was having to take care of mules and horses and whatever equipment that they might need?

POOLE: Right. And when they got rid of their animal fleet, or whatever you might call it, he was involved in the salvage sale of those animals. Which is sort of interesting and some of the vehicles that were towed by the animals.

NELSON: And a lot of those animals stayed in the Owens Valley?

POOLE: Oh I am sure they did, yes.

NELSON: I assume there are a lot of descendants here. Okay Tom in wrapping this up why don't you tell us a little about Lynn. I understand that she is a DWP employee.

POOLE: Lynn's been a Department employee for over twenty years and she is looking forward to retiring in probably about a year. She is presently secretary to the Northern District Engineer in the valley here. She had worked in hydrographic and engineering previous to this. She is a Senior Clerk Stenographer.

NELSON: You were telling me earlier that you don't always agree politically on Department's policies. You both disagree from time to time with each other?

POOLE: Yes. We get into some quite heated discussions. In fact not too long back it got so stressful that she finally had to tell me, "Hey lay off," because she had to work. One of my favorite sort of sayings to her when we have a discussion is, "you know you've worked with the "G__ D__" engineers so long that you begin to talk like them and act like them."

NELSON: Okay, how about your kids. Do they all live in the valley or are they spread around?

POOLE: My youngest daughter lives in the valley. She has worked in banks and presently works for a travel agency and she and her family live here. Her husband is an aircraft mechanic that has a little shop at the airport. My grandson is in his third year in the Bishop school system.

NELSON: How about your other children?

POOLE: My son works for California State University in Fresno. He is a geology instructor and curator of the Geology Department. He is quite happy at it of course he spends a lot

of time in the Owens Valley because his field is geology and there is a lot of geology here. Two summers while he was going to school, he worked for the Department as a student engineer.

NELSON: And your other?

POOLE: My oldest daughter is in the Los Angeles area. She works as a manager for an engineering firm. Initially when she was in high school, she worked as a student trainee for the Department. She was able to work one semester that they allowed that opportunity for quite a few of the students.

NELSON: With Lynn retiring possibly next year, who is going to carry on the Poole tradition?

POOLE: Well, I doubt if there will be anyone. I sure my son is very interested in the water situation and hydrology and soils being one of his main things, it's very possible that he could be involved in the water situation sometime in the future, but probably not as a Department employee.

NELSON: Well so in wrapping up 37 years?

POOLE: Over 36. 36 years, five months.

NELSON: Okay 36 1/2 years, would you do it again?

POOLE: Actually I would of preferred to have been out and done a lot of other things first, but it has worked out real well. I was able to retire early enough that I could do my other things now. I am definitely not through doing that yet. I have a lot of things that I am going to be doing, a lot of things I am going to be pursuing as far as employment. I am presently working as a flight instructor, I'm teaching several classes in aeronautics and management at the local community college. I am going to be pursuing a lot more of that and I'll be doing other things in the way of employment along the way even though I do have a very adequate pension from the Department.

NELSON: Well Tom you see, what goes around, comes around. For a guy who had difficulty with english in the classroom situation, you are now teaching at the local community college.

POOLE: And actually I am struggling this semester with a class in communications, both written and oral communications, so I really have to dig to make it work.

NELSON: I think you do pretty well in communications. Thank you.