

EARLY DAYS IN LOS ANGELES STEAM POWER GENERATION

WILLIAM C. POE

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.

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Biographical Notes

WILLIAM CHARLES POE, III

Born in Los Angeles, California, August 4, 1908.

Parents: William Charles Poe, II, born in Ohio, June 1882. Mable DeEtta Metzler, born in Ohio, April 1878.

Brothers and Sisters: None.

Married: Marie Alice Labourdette, October 22, 1932, Long Beach, California.

Children: William Charles Poe, IV, 52, married Marilyn Moore.
Thomas Frederick Poe, 49, married Sherry Hubert.
James Robert Poe, 45, married Paula Wheat.
Sandra Lynn Poe, 43, married Thomas Blumenthal.

Grandchildren: Nine.

Greatgrandchildren: None.

DWP History: Entered Steam Plant Service, January 30, 1930. Employed at the Seal Beach Steam Plant for seven years. First superintendent at Haynes Steam Generating Station, 1961. Retired April 1, 1973.

Schooling: Anaheim High School, 1922 - 1926.
Santa Ana Junior College, 1926 - 1929.
Long Beach Adult Ed., 1930 - 1936 (nights).
Southwestern Univ. School of Law, 1936 - 1942
(nights).

Significant Experience: Assistant Fuel Engineer, Los Angeles Civic Center Building, 1942. (Took over oil wells and tank farm on Alameda Street near Pacific Coast Highway for DWP - Pumped fuel oil into Harbor Tank Farm and first fuel oil into storage at Harbor Steam Plant).

Worked as Plant Engineer at Harbor Steam Plant. Assistant Superintendent, Seal Beach Steam Plant; Assistant Superintendent Valley Generating Station; Superintendent Scattergood Generating Station, 1958 - 1961; Superintendent Haynes Generating Station, 1961 - 1973.

Affiliations: Member of Los Alamitos Elementary School Board, 1933 - 1937; Licensed Steam Engineer, City of Los Angeles, 1943 to retirement; Engineer's and Architects Association, 1940 - 1943; I.B.E.W., Local 18, 1943 to retirement; Life member Los Alamitos Chamber of Commerce, 1950 to present; California State Bar Association, 1947 to present; Registered Professional Engineer (Mechanical, California), 1948 to retirement; Member Board of Directors, Los Alamitos County Water District, 1950 - 1954 and 1970 to present.

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.

William C. Poe July 5, 1991
William C. Poe date

William C. Poe Jr. July 6, 1991
witness date

4761 Green Ave, Los Alamitos, CA
witness address 90720

TAPE NUMBER: 1, SIDE ONE

WILLIAM C. POE

GIVEN THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1990

AT

HIS HOME IN LOS ALAMITOS, CALIFORNIA

THE INTERVIEWER IS DICK NELSON

NELSON: Okay Bill why don't you start off with a little capsule of where you were born and growing up and schooling.

POE: Fine. I'd be glad to do this Dick. I might be a little repetitious from one of the other tapes, but it's good to have it on here because this is where it really belongs.

I was born in Los Angeles on August 4, 1908. My father was a civil engineer and shortly after I was born he wound up at the American Sugar Beet Company in Oxnard. He had before that, worked for the Lowell Iron Works in Los Angeles. He helped erect a big bridge at the Edison Plant in Long Beach. He went to Oxnard and was there until 1914 at which time he took a job in the Los Alamitos Sugar Company as a chief engineer which necessitated us moving to Los Angeles. There was very little housing. The population of Los Alamitos was 400 at that time and it was all workers in the sugar factory. It was a seasonal thing. They made sugar about three months a year and the rest of the year they worked growing the beets and harvesting them and overhauling the plant for the next campaign.

My mother and I had to live in Long Beach for about three months before we could find a house in Los Alamitos. We stayed in a hotel for a couple of weeks before the house was available. I went to kindergarten in Oxnard. Then I went to the first grade in Long Beach and then while I was in the first grade we moved to Los Alamitos and I completed my elementary school education in the Los Alamitos Elementary School. I graduated in 1922.

The only high school in the area at that time was in Anaheim. The school kept a bus in Los Alamitos and started at this end

every morning and took a load of kids to Anaheim and then brought them back to Los Alamitos in the evening and I did that for four years, from 1922 - 1926 after which time I could have gone to Fullerton Junior College or to Santa Ana. I elected to go to Santa Ana and went there for three years - from 1926 to 1929 at which time the stock market crash occurred and made things rather bleak for me. I liked to play football and I turned down a scholarship in Nevada, I thought I had one coming up in Denver because Jeff Cravath, brother-in-law to Bill Cook who was at Santa Ana, was a coach there in Denver at the time.

But I went to work at Seal Beach. It just happened that there was a fellow that had decided to quit and go north and work for Pacific Lighting in San Francisco so that job in the laboratory in Seal Beach became vacant in January, 1930. I had just been puttering around wondering what I was going to do with my future at that time, and when this job turned up, it looked rather desirable. The man whose place I took, started at \$140 a month and then in two years had gone to \$175, which in those days seemed kind of lucrative. I never really thought I would stay, because roughnecks in the oil fields were getting \$200 a month. I remember when I went to work for \$140 I thought I was giving myself away.

NELSON: What was your major in college, Bill?

POE: Well I didn't really know. My dad was a civil engineer and math and science was my good shot and I was terrible in English.

I completed math through calculus. I took all of the physics and chemistry and things like that that they had at Santa Ana College that set me up pretty good for the job at Seal Beach. I got a job as an assistant chemist. They didn't have any chemist because at that time it would have required more money so I was assistant chemist.

Los Angeles Gas and Electric Corporation was a private company.

NELSON: What exactly did an assistant chemist do?

POE: Those were pioneer days. Feedwater chemistry in boilers was just beginning because a lot of people were operating these boilers without any chemical treatment and the metals would deteriorate real fast and you'd have a lot of repair work so they found out that by chemically treating the boiler water and feedwater, they could preserve the metals in the boiler and get a lot longer life out of them.

So that was one of my jobs, treating this boiler water, testing it daily to maintain its sulphate carbonate ratio they called it which preserved the metal. That was a daily task. Then I maintained all the instruments in the plant. That was more of a mechanical thing, but something I had to learn on the job.

NELSON: What type of instruments, for example?

POE: On the boilers we had what they called a CO₂ analyzer. It was actually a mercury pump that would draw 100cc's of Flu gas from the boiler exit. It would put the 100cc's sample through the instrument and it would alternately burn the 100cc's through one cycle and the next time it wouldn't. If there was any CO in the gas, it would be burned into CO₂, and if there was no CO, the volume of the CO₂, would remain the same. Each sample (100cc) went through a caustic solution and each cycle would be absorbed and get a certain percentage. If you had CO (incomplete combustion) the CO would be converted to CO₂ and greater absorbtio;n in the caustic would result in shorter lives. When it was completely burned, you had about 12 percent. If you had less than that you had CO in your Flu gas so the legs would get long and short when you were not firing properly. The operators would look into the porthole in the boiler, and look at their flame to see if the burners looked clear. This CO₂ was the one that they actually fired by. (To determine whether to adjust the gas or air or whatever was required for the load to see if they were burning all their fuel.

NELSON: There's quite a contrast then, I take it, between control room, circa 1930, versus the Haynes control rooms?

POE: There's no comparison. It was altogether different. I wasn't in steam operation then. This was kind of a white collar job in the laboratory. As I say, the stock market crash came. I had intended to go back to school, but that didn't materialize.

They had an adult education course in Long Beach so I started nights at Long Beach and I took courses and everything that I could for about three or four years including diesel engines. I went back, took a review course in calculus. I took electricity a couple years. Had just about a little bit of everything.

I still wasn't happy. I wanted to complete my education, more or less, so Southwestern University in Los Angeles had a branch down in Long Beach about that time so I signed up for law school. I got about halfway through and the branch folded up and then I had to go to Los Angeles, which I did. I continued going until I completed 81 units. I didn't get a degree because some of my pre-legal credits weren't right, but I passed the bar exam in 1946 and was admitted in 1947 to the California State Bar Association as an Attorney of Law. The school, (Southwestern) wrote me a letter and told me well any time I ... I had a B+ average in my law, did pretty good and I liked it, so they told me if I ever came back and made up the pre-legal units, they would give me my degree. I got so busy with the law (part-time) I didn't have any time to get that degree. I was so busy practicing law or moonlighting that I couldn't worry about my education. It was ridiculous.

NELSON: How did you actually get the job with Los Angeles Gas and Electric?

POE: At the other end of the street in Los Alamitos where I lived, there was a gentleman that lived there by the name of

Harold Thompson. He had the job of Combustion Engineer for the Los Angeles Gas and Electric Corporation and came and told me about this fellow who was going to quit and go to San Francisco. The Los Angeles Gas and Electric had two power plants. They had an old plant at 5th and Alameda in Los Angeles and they had this new plant in Seal Beach. It was built in 1924. It was still practically new in 1930 when I went down there.

Harold told me there was going to be a vacancy and I went down and made an appointment with the superintendent and told him I had first hand information about this guy leaving and that I would like to get the job. He interviewed me a little bit about my chemistry and I guess he decided I was the guy for the job so he hired me. I went over and got my physical exam and the next day I went to work. The WPA came in and in 1933 we had the NRA. We were working 48 hours a week in those days as a regular work week. The NRA came in and they cut our work week to 42 hours and made it a five day week working it out to balance so it was still amounting to 42 hours. I think maybe we still worked a half a day Saturday and eight hours a day for 40 hours and then two hours on Saturday. Maybe we worked 8 1/2 hours a day. (Anyway, we worked 42 hours a week instead of 48). They cut our pay proportionately, cut me from \$140 to \$122.50, I'll never forget that. Then, that was really bad. This continued into the depression, I had married in 1932, but didn't have any children until 1938 when the first one was born. It was really bad financially for us to get by on \$122.50 a month. (That first child was William C. Poe, Jr. who is

now Assistant Superintendent of the Harbor Generating Station, May, 1991).

NELSON: Where were you living at that time?

POE: Right across the street from where I am now. I've only lived in four houses since I came here in 1914 with my father. Two of them, prior to my marriage and then two after my marriage. One across the street when I was first married and then, when my wife went to the hospital to have our second child, I bought this place in 1941 and I've been here since 1941, 50 years.

NELSON: How did you commute to work? Did you have a car?

POE: Car. In those days there were just dirt roads. I started with an old Dodge roadster and it used to get cold in the mornings. There was a dirt road and no stops or anything, I could drive to Seal Beach in about 15 minutes. It was only about five miles.

NELSON: Where was the road laid out?

POE: It was substantially the same as it is now. I would go straight south on Los Alamitos Boulevard, Garden Grove Boulevard then, but it did not run through to Long

Beach in those days, but there was a little jog from Los Alamitos Boulevard over to Seal Beach Boulevard and then about a mile south, on Seal Beach Boulevard and then jog up over the hill of Hellman Ranch, down into Seal Beach, then over to the plant. It was at First and Ocean in Seal Beach.

That was another thing. That plant belonged to Los Angeles Gas and Electric Corporation and that didn't make any difference to the private corporation where they were located. But Water and Power didn't particularly like their plant in Orange County because they got some tax advantages in Los Angeles and Los Angeles County that weren't available in Orange County.

NELSON: So that was one of the considerations in sighting or acquiring the site of the Haynes Generating Station.

POE: Yes. In acquiring and building the Haynes plant. We were talking the other day about why they went to the Haynes plant and that location and one of the considerations, I'm sure, was the tax matter.

NELSON: Do you remember who your first supervisor was there in the laboratory?

POE: H.E. Thompson was my supervisor, but he was the supervisor over the lab in both plants, Alameda and Seal Beach so I was the top man when he wasn't available at Seal Beach. They called me an assistant chemist and the assistant I had was Russ Alexander

and he had the title of combustion engineer helper. When we were taken over by the City, they didn't have any steam plants so this was a new thing for the DWP. They didn't have any titles to fit steam plants so they just arbitrarily went through anything they could find. When they tacked a title onto me they called me a Water Chemist, they found that in their rolls somewhere. We were blanketed into Civil Service. But Russ Alexander, my assistant, I was making \$5 a month more than he was at that time and that was a big difference. But when we came out with these two titles, they called him an assistant mechanical engineer instead of a combustion engineer helper. He wound up right away making a lot more money than I was, although he was supposed to be my assistant.

NELSON: And that was just due to the fact of the title change?

POE: Yes. I was one of the few that worked in all of the power plants in the department before I retired.

After 1958 I was still at Seal Beach and I finally went to the Harbor, but I had passed the bar in 1946 so I was doing great at Seal Beach. The activity was slow and I could moonlight real fine out here. I more or less concentrated on probate law and Friday was probate day in Santa Ana. I could re-arrange my schedule when necessary, as Monday was probate day in Long Beach and Friday was probate day in Santa Ana. I didn't have to take time off from my job and I didn't have any job interference because probate work is very few court appearances.

It is mostly paperwork and not too much courtroom practice. Anyway I did some moonlighting. I had a decision to make, when Russ Alexander was going to go to Valley Steam Plant as superintendent, they needed somebody to take his place as plant engineer at Harbor and I wanted to stay at Seal Beach. I didn't want to go to Harbor, but the superintendent at Harbor at that time, wanted me over there so he told me to make any schedule I wanted. He knew I had this law practice. Everybody knew it. He made my schedule so that when I had probate work in Long Beach on Monday, I could take Sunday and Monday as my two days a week off and then when I had to go to Santa Ana, I could take Friday and Saturday off as my two days a week. Just change my schedule whenever I had this court time coming up.

NELSON: Do you recall his name?

POE: Oh yes. How far back do you want to go? Hawley T. Duplice was the superintendent of Harbor at the time. He was a swell guy. When I went to work at Seal Beach, I didn't know him personally, but they had a superintendent by the name of Leefeld and everybody was still talking about it because of the stock market crash, he lost his life savings in the stock market. And even though he had his job, it was a private corporation, they received a substantial salary in those days, he committed suicide. He couldn't take that financial loss.

So we had a new superintendent when I was hired by the name of Frank Knight. He was a swell guy too. There was a chief

engineer by the name of Charles Zeise. They were good supervisors. I got along well with everyone so I had a good job for many years there at Seal Beach.

NELSON: What was the size at the time you went to work for Los Angeles Gas and Electric? You mentioned they had basically two plant, two fossil fuel plants.

POE: They had some hydro plants, but...

NELSON: What was the size of the system. Do you recall the capacities of the two plants?

POE: I don't remember Alameda particularly, but it was lower than the Seal Beach plant, but Seal Beach had two units. I'd say about 80 megawatts. I think they were about 40 megawatts each -- the two generators. One was a Westinghouse and one was a General Electric, the second unit.

The Seal Beach plant had made plans to expand before they were taken over and during the depression they had invested in a new subterranean set up for our cooling water to come into an addition of four units at Seal Beach. They were going to make it a six unit plant and they had all of the foundations in for the four more units, all the subterranean work and everything and they even bought the steel for the building and had it on the premises when the DWP bought them.

So as I say, that was a big factor to junk by the DWP in reference to that site at Haynes. They could have built four more units there at Seal Beach without creating that new site, but they elected not to do it. But the foundations were there and the units were newer by the time they had already built Haynes and the design was different.

NELSON: Would they have been able to, in your opinion build to the same capacity at Seal Beach you think?

POE: I don't think so. That was probably one of the things that they were just built for lower capacity units. The foundations were in there for smaller units.

NELSON: What was the fuel at Seal Beach?

POE: Oil and gas.

NELSON: Did they use both?

POE: No they didn't. You see the L.A. Gas and Electric Corporation was a Pacific Lighting Subsidiary and Southern Counties Gas Company and Los Angeles Gas and Electric Company and several companies were under one holding company, Pacific Lighting. So they were taking money out of one pocket and putting it in the other. All of our gas came from Pacific Lighting. I used to help calibrate gas meters and things and

they told me that actually we paid \$.09 a thousand cubic feet for gas. Now I don't know, it's high, but they told me at that time they were really giving us the gas, the only thing we were paying for was the cost of transferring it from the wells to the plant.

NELSON: So primarily the plant would use natural gas unless it was not available?

POE: We had one big storage tank at the plant and that held 55,000 barrels of fuel oil. Under this Combustion Engineer I became one of the oil experts in water and power after we were taken over so I was really familiar with that. I was the pioneer.

We had a 55,000 barrel tank at Seal Beach, only one tank for the two units, but we never burned oil, but it was always full of fuel oil and the oil companies were glad to put the oil in there and keep the tank full just for the storage. It was on consignment. So we never had to pay for any fuel oil unless we burned it which was good for the gas company and good for the oil company too. That made a good arrangement.

NELSON: So if the oil company ran into a shortage, they could come and take some of their oil back out of the tank?

POE: No. It never happened. I don't know that they couldn't have. It was their oil and we never ran into a problem until

World War II came along. I don't know if you want to get into that yet or not, but.

NELSON: Well let's back up a little bit and get to World War II a little later. In 1933 there was the great earthquake in Los Angeles...

POE: March 10, 1933. I was working at the Seal Beach plant. I was at home when it happened at 6:10 p.m. I remember that well. And I rushed down to the plant right away. The laboratory was in shambles. All of the chemicals slipped out of the cupboards. One unit had actually severed the steam connections so it was out of service completely. The other unit was still operable. The boilers suffered some damage but they were mainly operable. The whole plant was off the line, but in about a weeks time we had all the necessary or sufficient repairs made to get the one unit back in service. The other unit, it was off about a year because of major damage to our turbine where it had actually moved a little and done some damage to the turbine and the boilers. It gave us time to repair some of the brick work and none of the other boilers were damaged. We had enough to keep going with one unit and then as I say, I don't remember now, I'm just guessing, but it seems to me it was about a year because we had to take the turbine all apart and realign it.

NELSON: Did you have some problems with the stack down there?

POE: Not in the earthquake. It cracked half way up. It was 400 some feet above sea level at the top and it's stack was the tallest stack in the world, built on top of a building. It didn't go down to the ground, they built a great big concrete pad on the roof about 100 feet in the air and then they built the stack from there up. Because all the breaching from the boilers, (the exhaust gases from the boilers went into the base of the stack) they didn't want to waste all that stack 100 feet down to the ground so they started from the roof up. It was a darn good thing.

It had four big lights on that stack mounted on the building roof, and the power required to light those lights required the amount of generation of the L.A. Gas and Electric Corporation when it first started generating in the City of Los Angeles. That stack cracked halfway down and we operated that way for quite a while, but there was some concern that that stack was hazardous. There might be another reoccurrence that might cause the thing to crumble. So they decided to lower the stack. They just took the top half off. The reason for all of the height on the stack is because the higher it is the more draft they can get on the boiler, the more air flow they get through boilers and the more fuel they can burn. So when they cut that stack off, it reduced the capability of the plant quite a bit. So they had a problem there. What they did, they went to the top with hooks on that thing and filled the bottom of the stack with rubber automobile tires and they went up and they started

chipping concrete off the stack and broke it inside so that it dropped to the base on those rubber tires. They really did a neat job cutting the top off that stack without affecting the outside at all.

NELSON: During the earthquake, it had cracked and proven that it was not structurally sound, but it caused a great deal of damage during the earthquake, the stack?

POE: No. It didn't cause any damage except by being up there. It waived, it busted heck out of the building. It was a brick building. It had some reinforcing steel, but that steel was really buckled. The brickwork was shot, but the steel was there. It held it all right. The stack was still okay. The building was more or less okay so that we could still operate. But as far as the repairs and rebuilding, repairing the earthquake damage, they put a lot of reinforcement plates on the inside of the building and then they replaced the walls with reinforced concrete, then faced it with brick so that it still looked the same on the outside, but they actually had a reinforced concrete building after the earthquake.

NELSON: You say that took about a year to complete?

POE: That was after March, of course, in 1933. That took quite a while. They had left it that way for a long time before they decided to cut it off.

This is another phase in the department. It didn't have any steam design section in those days or any steam design engineers. They hired a university professor (Dr. Rouse) as head of the design and he was all they had. Then a few engineers were hired. I became real familiar with them because our problems were somewhat mutual. That's after the department had taken the Gas Company over and they decided to do something about the stack - to restore the plant capability. I helped design the size of the fans that they put in the base of the stack to replace the loss of draft. They put fans running all of the time in the bottom just to create the draft for the boilers.

We got the load back to where it was supposed to have been originally and it worked fine. That was a pretty good project in itself.

NELSON: In 1930 you started with them as an assistant chemist. When did you get a title change?

POE: I don't know how they heard me, but I hollered so loud about it after that. That's after the department took us over. That's when that all occurred later on. My assistant was my, he wasn't really my boss, but in transferring around, why it wound up that he wasn't my boss immediately, but in different plants and in different positions, he was my boss.

NELSON: So you remained a chemist the entire time you worked for Gas and Electric?

POE: Yes, an assistant chemist. They did not have a chemist classification for steam plants. What caused all the trouble was when the DWP took us over. Salaries were low. The first increase we got after the department took us over, we started getting some raises. We'd been indoctrinated against municipal ownership early by this private corporation how bad it was and everything, but we soon learned that gee, it wasn't such a bad place after all. The salaries, anyway, were much better in the department than they were with the gas company.

NELSON: Was there quite a bit of animosity between the private versus the city?

POE: No. Because they didn't have any steam facilities. They only had hydro generation in the DWP. They didn't have any steam generation, so this was all new to the department. We kind of had the inside track there at the start because those of us that were kept, had to have a year's seniority to be blanketed into civil service, to be kept by the City of Los Angeles. They would have been in a bind if they hadn't had enough of us to keep to try to operate that place. They didn't have anybody in the DWP that was qualified to operate the steam plant because a lot of people thought you could just bring people in off the street. It took two or three years to train a man so that he'd be able to do that safely.

NELSON: Do you recall how many people were transferred or were retained by Water and Power from the L. A. Gas and Electric plants?

POE: I'd say all of them except they didn't retain anybody that hadn't had a year's service. They didn't retain aliens. You had to be citizens. We had a boiler repair foreman that did a lot...brick work as a supervisor in the replacement of the furnaces. We didn't have water-cooled furnaces in those old boilers so the brickwork, when the walls were overheated and cooled, would just crumble. They'd have to realign the furnace with brick. He was a foreman over a brick gang, you might say, that did all the brick work. He was laid off when the City took us over because he was a Mexican national. He didn't have any training except that steam plant so immediately when he was laid off and out of work, he went and obtained his citizenship then later he was rehired at the Harbor Steam Plant, I guess he was a maintenance mechanic.

He was a lower class than that foreman that he'd been, but he had a job and he stayed until I don't know whether he died or retired, but one way or another he left the department. He was a Mexican and at Seal Beach, I have to tell you this to be, or put it in the record...he used to bring tortillas to work in his lunch which his wife made and I guess they were delicious. I don't recall. I didn't participate in it. Other employees liked these tortillas also so this brick mason would put his tortillas on the headers on the boilers prior to lunch so they'd

get hot for lunch and the other workers would find out where he was hiding them and they would go steal his tortillas and eat them themselves. This Mexican, of course, he'd complain, but they would bring desserts of different kinds and make a point to see that he'd got pie and cake and things like that to replace the tortillas. So it made a pretty good arrangement and it finally got so that he'd look forward to somebody swiping his tortillas so he'd get cake and pie and stuff.

NELSON: Do you recall his name?

POE: Richard Segobia. I knew them all very well. Just like one big family.

NELSON: Talking about him being laid off, nowadays corporations lay people off and there is talk of severance pay. Were there any provision for any of the LAGTE employees who were laid off?

POE: No, not to my knowledge. That's one of my big beefs. I never got anywhere. I did write a few letters. Nothing was said of it. The Gas Company didn't have any pension plan at all, but prior to the takeover by the City, they came up with a terrible pension plan. They only had it about a year before the City took us over. So they dissolved that pension plan that the Gas Company had and I got back about \$100 that I had contributed, so when the City took us over, in effect, we didn't have any insurance or anything because the DWP didn't have any

retirement plan until October, 1938. They took us over on February 1, 1937 so we were City employees for over a year before they had a pension plan.

When the City of Los Angeles came up with that pension plan, they only credited us from the time of the takeover, February 1, 1937 and I went to work in January, 1930. So in that takeover, upon my retirement, I lost seven years of retirement seniority for that prior service. I got from February 1, 1937 instead of from 1930 anyway. It made a big difference in my pension though.

In 1922, the department had taken over some Edison employees up in Vernon, but they didn't have any pension plan either and those people got seniority for all of their Edison seniority. In the Seal Beach plant, when they took us over, the only thing that changed in my job was the City Controller signing the paycheck whenever it came out. The job was just same. Same supervision, the same everything. It was a little different than I think it could have been if we'd actually changed jobs.

NELSON: During between 1930 and 1937 did you spend any time at the Alameda Plant?

POE: No. It was after that. I spent time at the Alameda plant after the Department owned us. In 1942 I spent a year as an assistant fuel engineer in Los Angeles. The fuel engineer, all of a sudden, didn't show up one morning and nobody knew where he

was or anything. Ruble was one of the big shots in Los Angeles in the downtown office and he contacted me. I knew him then and he knew I worked with Thompson, the fuel engineer. So he called me because I was the only one doing anything about the oil business then. So he asked me if I would come to Los Angeles and take over for Thompson until they found out what happened to him. So I went to Los Angeles in 1942 and Russ Alexander was still at Seal Beach so that left him alone there.

Russ Alexander was in the Merchant Marines for World War II and when that came up, he left and went back into the Merchant Marine so I was alone at Seal Beach for awhile. When he came back from the Merchant Marine, that's when I went up in 1942 to the Fuel Engineer's office.

NELSON: What exactly did the fuel engineer do?

POE: While I was up there the Department had bought the fuel oil for the Harbor Steam Plant that was just under construction and they bought a tank farm and they bought some pumping oil wells and they leased a tank farm from people, getting ready for this Harbor Steam Plant. They had a contract for a million barrels of oil from Shell. I went out in the field and I made all the arrangements for this fuel oil, buying it, pumping it, transferring it into our own storage over there and then transferring it. I pumped the first oil in the Harbor Steam Plant through this tank farm that we built or acquired and rebuilt.

NELSON: Where was that located?

POE: On Alameda Street just north of the Harbor plant. Up there just south of Pacific Coast Highway.

NELSON: Is it in existence today?

POE: Yes. They are using it right now. You said how many oil wells we had, but they covered up some of the oil wells and then the other oil wells, I kept pumping them and accounting for the oil. It was not very profitable, but the fuel oil, I pumped it right in with the crude oil or not the crude oil, it was crude oil I pumped in with the fuel oil. Now they're using it as fuel. It was relatively small in amount.

NELSON: You mean the Department had it's own oil wells that it maintained?

POE: Yes -- there at this tank farm site that they acquired.

NELSON: It maintained and pumped them?

POE: Yes. I even hired an oil contractor. One of the shafts broke one time and on the weekend, I got a repair crew out and actually employed them to pull this well and repair the pump shaft and get the thing back in service so we could pump some more. The production was only about 20 or 30 barrels a day per

well so they weren't really profitable. But oil was cheap in those days too.

TAPE NUMBER: 1, SIDE TWO

WILLIAM C. POE

NELSON: Bill, going back to that oil tank farm, the storage facility that exists today, is that owned by the Department today?

POE: Which one are we talking about now?

NELSON: We're talking about the one that you originally had in the early part of the war.

POE: We only had one tank at the Seal Beach plant. That's all entirely gone now and cleaned up. Apartment houses have been built at the tank site now. Seal Beach is still trying to acquire it and the Department still owns that property, eight acres there and they're going to get a fortune for it, I guess, unless they've already guaranteed Seal Beach an option, but Seal Beach doesn't have any money, but they want the land. It's very valuable so I don't know how it's going to end.

During the war, while we were still operating, somewhat on a standby basis, the army took over the plant and the first thing

they did was to black out all of the windows in the plant so that we could continue to operate but not be visible from the outside. They turned off the lights around the stack. That place was actually nonexistent as far as the outside world was concerned other than it was a landmark on the navigation maps, that stack. So it was really pretty well fixed on everybody's maps.

The army moved in and they put a big gun installation right on the point by the plant overlooking the ocean and they were manning these big cannons, is what they were. I don't know anything about firearms, but I know it was a regular installation of guns and they were looking for submarines. The Japanese submarines were supposed to be coming in. So the personnel was in the plant and they lived there and maintained this big gun facility, but while they were in the plant, they carried guns and our operating procedure tried to continue unaffected, but it was affected quite interestingly.

One thing, I mentioned this brick mason that was laid off during the takeover. When the army moved in during WWII and actually had a barracks here and this brick mason, he liked his sweets as I mentioned earlier too, the people that swiped his tortillas and then they'd give him pie and cake and things, well first thing he did, he got in good with the cook in the army mess hall. They had a big army mess hall and they'd feed all their personnel, but he managed to get a pie or two off the army baker every once in a while and boy, that was a big thing in his life.

When WWII started, the gas company came in and they took out all of our gas connections to the plant and left us without any gas burning capabilities. All we had then was fuel oil and it had been so long since our operators had burned any fuel oil, that they didn't know how. Well I wrote a pamphlet about that, "How to Operate a Fuel Oil Gun," or something. I made a drawing and the instructions for the operators, how it worked and gave that to them, but the superintendent assigned me the job on shift, more or less, just to live with these operators and teach them to burn oil, because that was a different setup altogether. In other words you had to pump this oil, preheat it, get it into the furnace through manifolds and get the guns in there, I think there were 12 burners to a boiler, so there was a lot of manpower required to put them in and take them out. It wasn't automatic.

Then they had to keep these guns clean and see that they didn't plug up and it was quite a job. They finally got so that we were starting up and shutting down, more or less, but the oil had to be hot too. It had to be preheated and that was one thing. We had to shut down and everything went cold we had a heck of a time getting that oil hot so that we could start up. So we actually got torches right out on the headers and heated this oil that was coming in, just enough to get us started. So we had some steam. Those fuel oil heaters were heated with steam heaters and if we didn't have any steam, then we couldn't heat the oil.

NELSON: Going back to the military, did you have guards at the gate? What was the security arrangements?

POE: That's how their presence was known, but I think you had to identify yourself to get in. There was a fence all around the property and all the employees had a master key to the gate lock, but I think they maintained a patrol, that's all it was. An armed patrol around the clock on that gate, around the whole fence, all around the plant.

NELSON: Your oil wells that the Department owned and you pumped?

POE: That was at the Harbor tank farm later.

NELSON: Are those oil wells on DWP property?

POE: I think they abandoned them all now and covered them up with tanks. They bought some more tanks and built them on the tank farm.

NELSON: All right, that's the tank farm. That's the site of the present tank farm?

POE: Yes, the Olympic tank farm. I don't think there are any wells there, they are all covered up and abandoned.

NELSON: So what did you, in late 1936, or whenever you heard about the possibility or probability of the DWP taking over Los Angeles Gas and Electric, what were your thoughts, what were the thoughts or feelings of the employees? Were you initially for it, against it?

POE: I don't remember any, no that was the depression period and we were all just lucky to have a job. So I don't think that was an issue, we were just happy to be able to be retained and have a paycheck every payday.

NELSON: And in the same location, etc?

POE: As I said, nothing changed but the signature on our paychecks. From the City Controller instead of somebody at the Gas Company.

NELSON: Did you have a lot of "brass" down there? These facilities were the first...

POE: We were self-contained. We had personnel to overhaul our own units. At Haynes when we were talking about that the other day, there was some discussion about us having these department units available to come in now with mechanical personnel who do a lot of the overhaul work and maintenance work where in the days of the Gas Company, we did all our own, there was steam plant personnel. Our machine shop had a foreman, we had our own

personnel that we put to work taking a turbine apart, doing the rebricking of the boilers and whatever was needed. All self-contained and not too many employees either. They knew their job and were well organized and usually had standby.

In other words we had only two turbines, but we'd take one down at a time and have the other one going, so it worked out alright that way. We had six boilers and we fired five of them after the stack came down. After we put the fans in the stack, we'd be able to get by with four boilers.

NELSON: As the steam side of the power system grew, were those former Gas and Electric employees the nucleus of forming the crews at the new steam plants?

POE: I was involved in all of that, yes. That was really important. That's why I said at Haynes, the more plants we built, the more stable our work force was by being able to transfer these employees from one plant to another. Getting trained people, because as I say, I told you earlier it took at least three years to train an operator in the technique of operating one of these boilers and even today we have those training shops now so our operators are trained actually before they are made responsible for operating the units. In those days they operated by the seat of their pants. They had to look into the furnace and recognize what they saw as the quality of the combustion and adjust their fuel accordingly. We had this one instrument that was a gas analyzer that would tell them if

they didn't have complete combustion and they'd go by that. That was my job, trying to keep those instruments working. About half the time, the instruments wouldn't work.

NELSON: Basically your visual inspection was it? And based upon your experience and analyzing it, that's the way you did it. So you were the chemist all the time you were with Gas and Electric?

POE: I was really an assistant combustion engineer. Chemist just happened to be a title and I was doing some chemical work, but it finally wound up that I was doing more mechanical work than I was chemical work. Russ Alexander, he used to do the chemical work and I usually had assistants that did all the chemical work.

NELSON: When did you finally let go of that chemist title?

POE: After complaining a long time, they had a hearing uptown and they did it voluntarily, changed my title from water chemist to mechanical engineer assistant. I think it meant about a \$50 a month raise for me, just that change in title which made a big difference because I was getting about \$50..where I was getting \$5 a month more than Russ Alexander with the Gas Company, I wound up getting about \$50 a month less than he was and he was presumably my assistant.

NELSON: What was the nature of the job in the early 40's then? What were you doing after the Department bought out Gas and Electric?

POE: Until we got the Harbor plant going, why everything was the same at Seal Beach, but then when the Harbor plant came in...in 1942 I went up for a year with the fuel engineer and then the combustion engineer and I had a squabble. That was Thompson. The fella that I had gotten the job with in the first place. We were good friends, but I wasn't really a complainer but things seemed to work against me sometimes. When the word came out the plant automatically went on a six day a week schedule and they were all getting a day's overtime every week and when I was working with the combustion engineer uptown, I had to drive from here to Los Angeles, which was an hour each way and I was eight hours on the job, but no overtime and I was only working five days a week where all the people in the plant were working six days automatically, so I didn't like that. I complained a lot. Finally, there was no change in title. I was still on this payroll in Seal Beach. You see I was just up there, I don't know why, but I volunteered to go up there when they asked me. My foreman, Thompson, liked and worked with Russ Alexander and Russ was a radio buff and they had this interest in common. I didn't complain about that at all because Russ and I were good friends up until he passed away. Our friendship never deteriorated because of differences in pay and things. We always worked together fine.

My boss and I had this little altercation. He told me one day if you aren't happy in this job, well why don't you go back to Seal Beach? I said that was great with me because they are working six days a week and getting paid for it and I'd be happy to go back to Seal Beach because I'd save that two hours a day traveling time too. So I went back, but in the meantime, he called Russ Alexander and asked him to go up there and replace me which Russ Alexander did and he was up there a little while. Part of our job while we were on that was operating this tank farm because we didn't have an operator yet at that time, so I actually fired a boiler that was converted to a heater, but when they converted it they forgot to take the soft plugs out and they had centrifugal pumps so you had to watch it pretty close when you were transferring oil. So after I went to the plant, that became Russ Alexander's task and I don't know what happened one night, but he got a vapor lock in the centrifugal pump so that the flow stopped in the pumps and when it stopped that stopped the flow and the boiler overheated and melted those softplugs and the whole thing burnt down! Boy, it was a mess. I don't remember how it came out, I don't know how it was explained even, I never got involved in that.

Russ Alexander went back into the Merchant Marine and when he came out instead of going back with Thompson up in Los Angeles and that job that was there, he went to the Harbor plant as plant engineer. I had already pumped oil in there while I was up there so it was a going plant then just getting started. So Russ went there and I stayed at Seal Beach. Then when the

Civil Service exam came up for Superintendent, I didn't take it, but Russ did and he passed number one I guess or two anyway and was called to go to Valley plant as the first superintendent when they built that and they wanted me to go to Harbor and I said, "Nothing doing! I'll stay at Seal Beach, I don't want to go to Harbor."

They had some people in Los Angeles that I didn't particularly care for at that time and that personnel changed in the meantime and finally they got a fellow up there in a supervisory position that I liked that came down one day to see me along with Duplice, the superintendent I mentioned earlier. This Duplice as I say was a swell guy and they knew I was an attorney, so he made the schedule flex so that everything worked out fine and I agreed to go over to Harbor so that Russ could go to Valley and I went to Harbor as plant engineer and when exams came up for Scattergood plant, that's when I took the superintendent's exam, was on the list, and about that time the assistant superintendent at Seal Beach died all of a sudden. So I got the appointment as assistant superintendent under Duplice to come back to Seal Beach though and administer the affairs there.

I went to Valley then when they had Scattergood completed, but I was only there three months then I went to Scattergood as a superintendent. It all worked out fine. I was at Seal Beach, there was no Haynes plant then. Just Seal Beach. So I was having a good time there at Seal Beach as assistant superintendent under Duplice at Harbor and hardly any

responsibility at all because Seal Beach was practically down by then, but there was still enough activity that we were on standby and needed supervision there.

I was assistant superintendent at Seal Beach after Russ Alexander had gone to Valley as superintendent.

NELSON: That was in the late 50's?

POE: Yes. That was 1958 when I went to Valley as assistant superintendent. Russ Alexander came down but in the meantime, Filbrook was going to retire and they decided Russ Alexander was going to be the engineer of generation. So instead of actually taking the superintendent's job, although he had that title at Scattergood, they put him in Los Angeles as a break-in period for that engineer of generation and I went up there for three months and then they moved me to Scattergood as superintendent although I think I was probably still assistant superintendent until Russ could get the title as engineer of generation and then they moved me to superintendent down at Scattergood.

NELSON: Russ never left downtown after that did he?

POE: No. Although he went as head of the Design and Construction Division from the engineer of generation. Yes he did alright for himself.

NELSON: Why didn't you take that superintendent's test originally?

POE: I really didn't feel qualified. Primarily for a long time there you had to be an operator. Come up through the operating ranks and actually on paper, for reference, I was never an operator. I was in the lab or an engineer or something but when I went to Harbor in 1943, I did go to the trouble. Los Angeles City requires the Steam Engineers license and I went up studied, took the exam and passed it so I had my license to operate boilers in the City of Los Angeles which at Seal Beach that was in Orange County. I didn't really need that when I was at Seal Beach, but I felt when I went to Harbor I needed that in 1943 and I went and got it. I had that until I retired from Haynes. I kept that current every year.

NELSON: This is license 1504. It says, "City of Los Angeles Board of Building and Safety Commissioners, Steam Engineer. This is to certify that William C. Poe has been dully examined by the Board of Building and Safety Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles as to his qualifications as an Engineer of Steam Boilers and Engines and is hereby licensed to act in such capacity unless license shall have been suspended or revoked by the Board. This license is invalid unless an annual renewal certificate has been obtained." And it is signed by the Secretary, Board of Building and Safety Commissioners. Signed

by W. B. Quinlin, signed by Bill Poe, date of original issue, June 23, 1943 and you say you kept that valid?

POE: Haynes was in L.A. County and I figured that was good for a Superintendent to have one of these.

NELSON: You mentioned there are superintendents, assistant superintendents and plant engineer. What does a plant engineer do that the assistant superintendent or superintendent might not do?

POE: Solve problems in the plant of an engineering nature more or less. Or having to do with the design of some of the apparatus or something that needed revision like the engineer did all of the current footwork and legwork, then presented whatever he came up with to the superintendent. So it was just a delegation of some of the problems that came up in normal operation.

NELSON: He was primarily the technical expert? His primary job was to keep the plant operating technically.

POE: We had a maintenance foreman all the way through in all of the plants, but at Haynes they've got one for every unit. This plant engineer sees that they get the answers to all of their problems of a maintenance nature during the normal operation of the plant. The design of new facilities or replacement of

facilities usually comes from the design section in Los Angeles office engineering section. But plant problems that require replacing machinery or something, we have pre-access to our own planning to take care of that.

NELSON: You went from Seal Beach plant, you spent a little time at Alameda, then your next assignment was at the Harbor Generating Station. To go into the new steam plant with sophisticated technology versus probably the teens technology of Seal Beach, was that quite a culture shock?

POE: I was scheduled to be the man that went to Harbor on the initial start-up as the one in charge of the laboratory and instrument shop, but in the meantime, the combustion engineer had disappeared, the fuel engineer asked me to go to Los Angeles, and I was up there all involved in this other thing when the vacancy really had to be filled and the fella that took that job originally instead of me was Wayne Hague whom I'd worked with in the Gas Company labs. He was at Alameda and I was at Seal Beach. So when I couldn't go, why he took that job then at Harbor.

NELSON: Well you did get to Harbor though?

POE: As a plant engineer. Finally they talked me into going and replacing Russ Alexander so he could go to Valley and that's when I took the exam for superintendent when I was at Harbor.

When the assistant superintendent at Seal Beach died, I'd been at Harbor quite a while and that's when they asked me to come back to Seal Beach and take the place of the other assistant superintendent under Duplice. Duplice was superintendent of both plants.

NELSON: At Harbor Generating Station you had a modern control room? There was quite a difference in operating that I'd suspect?

POE: But we still didn't have the centralized control like we did at Valley and at Scattergood and Haynes. At Harbor, the electrical end was separate from the steam end and they were operated separately. They had electric operating personnel and we had steam operating personnel. Same at Seal Beach. They were separate entities. They didn't cross over their boundaries. They took great pride in their work. One was an electrical operator and one was a steam operator. Valley is the first time they combined the operating position into one that included both responsibilities. Which worked out fine.

NELSON: Was Valley the first one too, that started reducing the size of operators in these combined control rooms?

POE: You might say. We had one control operator for a unit or a pair of units depending on what the control board design was.

At Valley we had four units and we had two units to a control room. We didn't have four units on one control board when we finally got to Haynes. We still had a control room for each pair of units.

NELSON: You had worked basically at Seal Beach, a coastal plant, at Harbor, a coastal plant, went to Valley, which is used as cooling water and recirculating....

POE: Well Alameda did too. I might mention that. They had cooling towers there. More elaborate than those at Valley even.

NELSON: Did that cause any problems?

POE: Not that I know of myself. There were problems, of course, along with cooling towers, maintenance and that, but as far as operation was concerned there were no problems, it worked fine.

NELSON: You've mentioned Russ Alexander. Do you remember, and you've mentioned a couple of others, some of these superintendents down through the years, you probably knew them all.

POE: Oh yes. There is a couple at Alameda, in fact, that I knew real well because some of them came to Seal Beach when Alameda started folding up. One by the name of Albert Patterson

was at Seal Beach along the line from Alameda.

In 1942, when I was up with the combustion engineer, when he disappeared and I was up as the assistant fuel engineer, you might say, transferring all this fuel oil and operating the tank farms, Ivan Ball, the fellow in charge of the laboratory at Alameda, likewise was off sick all of a sudden, so while I was in the fuel engineer's office, I went down to Alameda for three months while the other fellow was off sick and I stayed there.

It was a cold plant. There wasn't much to do, just be there and see that everything was all right. My exposure to Alameda plant was for that three months only while the other fellow was off sick. Otherwise I never had a regularly assigned position there. I was still working there as assistant fuel engineer when I stood by.

NELSON: Well Haynes was the last, to this date anyway, of our basin generating plants that were built. It was the largest, about the capacity of Hoover Dam or a little more or a little less. You were selected as its first superintendent. That must have been quite an honor or accomplishment?

POE: Well Floyd Goss and I went around and around about that. I think he was just kidding me all along, but knowing that I lived here in Los Alamitos, you'd know one would want to get back close to home. I don't think there was any question in his mind, but he ran me ragged during the construction of Haynes

while I was still in those other plants. He'd come and get me and we'd come over together and look things over.

NELSON: What capacity was he in at that time?

POE: Maybe engineer of generation. He might have been...no Russ Alexander was still there so. I think the lowest down there, when I met Floyd Goss, I think he was engineer of generation, above the engineer of steam generation. He was over electric, but he might have been engineer of steam generation for a little while there.

NELSON: You say you went around and around with Floyd? You had your differences?

POE: Yes. After he passed away, I met his wife at a function one time and she told me, "Floyd thought you were a swell guy." But he never told me that. I had the job and I did a lot of work. I used to get down there at five o'clock in the morning and go home about five o'clock at night. All off the record, I used to like to go through the plant before other personnel got there and go through all of the control rooms and see what was going on by the time the uptown people and other local office personnel came to work, why I was right on top of the conditions at the plant. And I like to do it like things are different. Ken Bosworth's (Haynes Generating Station Superintendent) job has changed. He is strictly administrative now and he has

little to do with operations. Where I used to try and keep my finger right on top of operation. Like Monty Moore has mentioned. We only had one assistant superintendent and he was held more for operation although I was familiar with it, I gave him that responsibility and I took over the responsibility for maintenance a lot.

TAPE NUMBER: 2, SIDE ONE

WILLIAM C. POE

NELSON: Who was your first assistant at Haynes, Bill?

POE: Monty Moore.

NELSON: Did he come from Gas and Electric too?

POE: No. I first met him at Harbor. He was an operator then he went to Valley and I met him again there. When I went to Scattergood, Monty came as a foreman from Valley as an operating foreman. I was pretty well satisfied with Monty as a quite knowledgeable steam practical operator. When it came time for me to go to Haynes, I was presented with a real problem because the plant engineer at Valley came out number one on the superintendent's list and Monty came out number two and usually they like to have you take people in order unless you've got a real good reason and I liked the number one guy only thing is he was a plant engineer at Valley and I was an engineer, more or less and I wanted Monty as a guy with a lot of operating experience with me at Haynes so I picked him. They let me have

this choice for some reason, they backed me up, let's put it that way. Somebody else made the actual selection, I guess.

NELSON: Who was that number one man, do you remember him?

POE: Yes. He was Roy Pettus. He quit as a result of that and went to work up in the state of Washington. They lost a good man there. So Monty came over with me. I had Lloyd Flynn as my assistant for awhile at Haynes. I don't know what happened. Monty went to Harbor. I guess Duplice retired or died and they took Monty to Harbor and I got Lloyd Flynn. That was it, when I retired, Monty came and took my place at Haynes he retired in seven years, so he's still a relatively young man. That's when Bosworth came into the picture.

NELSON: And Flynn, in the meantime, went down to Scattergood. He replaced...

POE: Oh yes, he got into some trouble there. Did you hear about that?

NELSON: Was that the...?

POE: Lobster deal. I don't know the details, but Lloyd Flynn was a good man. Guess he was really a good supervisor and he kept the operating people lined up in good shape.

NELSON: He was one of those guys who came from pressure vessel steam stuff on ships.

POE: I think so. He even taught classes in steam operation in the public schools for awhile.

NELSON: He attended the Maritime Academy and was in the Merchant Marine.

POE: He was real good. When we were talking about Haynes the other day, we were talking about the fallout in Leisure World and Lloyd Flynn was my expert, I used to send him to talk to those people rather than me. He did a good job of it. I went over with him a couple of times where we had a big group at night and talk to them. Questions and answers, etc.

NELSON: Well you've been around to all of the plants and, of course, probably emotionally your allegiance is with Haynes, the one that you were....?

POE: Scattergood is a gold-plated plant. It's wonderful. I hated to leave there, but just because of my home I wanted to get back to Haynes, because Scattergood was only two units when I left. They put the third one in after I left and here you had these six big units. It's a lot more responsibility.

NELSON: You liked Scattergood? Easier plant to operate?

POE: Yes. You didn't have any problems there at all relatively speaking.

NELSON: You mentioned gold-plated and I've heard over the years not particularly in relationship to steam plants, but into a lot of activities of projects the Department's been involved in that we gold-plate a lot of ours more than Edison and other utilities.

POE: By gold-plated what I really mean is they buy the best in equipment and everything like General Electric and Westinghouse and things. They don't break. What we wound up with Brown Bovari units from Switzerland, but they turned out to be alright.

NELSON: Basically they went for reliability?

POE: I think so. But that's been all of the way through, I think, more or less. Haynes is well-built. I don't know of any corners they cut there either. They have gone to stainless steel instead of iron for the oil heaters and things like that that cost a lot of money, but it makes them more reliable.

NELSON: Are you familiar with this repowering project at Harbor? Rebuilding, repowering it?

POE: No. When I retired 19 years ago, they forgot me. I just didn't exist any more.

NELSON: That sometimes tends to be the case, doesn't it? But you've kept in close contact with the plant?

POE: I don't know. I have a son. I don't know whether you've heard of him yet or not in these conversations. He and Bosworth got into trouble at Haynes. He was working there at Haynes on this one strike they had after I was retired and somehow or another there was a disagreement. My son was a shift foreman and he was in charge one day during the strike here, but he and Bosworth got...in other words Bosworth accused him of some acts that he wasn't responsible for and my son hardly ever got over that, but I think he finally did. He finally passed his superintendent's exam and he went to Scattergood as assistant superintendent and now he is downtown in an office. Just kind of working with the engineer of steam generation, I guess, I don't know what he does. I don't talk to him that much, but odds and ends and studies that they want to know about all of the plants, they give him an assignment and he researches it for them. Which he doesn't like. He'd rather be in the steam plant turning the wheels. He's 52. He's got over 30 years of service so he'll be able to retire before long.

NELSON: He probably pulled a lot of...turned a lot of wheels as a kid too at those plants going around with you.

POE: Duplice is the one that when I was at Scattergood, my son got married and so I figured he had to have a better job, so Duplice put him to work at Harbor. I was at Scattergood and finally when I came to Haynes, I got him here because he had operated at Seal Beach and we were taking over the operation. Our first personnel at Haynes, why we had to have people on emergency that we could send over to Seal Beach and start up that plant. He was one of them. But he's got over 30 year's experience himself now. And I made it a point, by me being a superintendent, it worked against him for a long time and I just went out of my way to see that he didn't get any breaks from me. Everything he's got, he earned.

NELSON: You've put in how many years with the Department, Bill not counting the first six?

POE: I think I've got 33 1/2 years or something like that or 36 something like that. 36 I guess. There's a thing on the wall for 40 years of service which was more than my pension, you see. That included the gas company seniority, that 40 years.

NELSON: Was that including the Gas Company? But when you retired, you had more than 40 total?

POE: Oh yes. From 1930 to 1973, 43 years.

NELSON: You went out about in the Arab oil embargo? The first one? That was in 1973, 1974?

POE: I went out in April 1973. I went eight months early actually. Boy that stress was getting me down and we had a personable fellow by the name of Ray Harris who was on the superintendent's list and it was about to expire and he was going to thereby get a chance for promotion, so that helped me make up my mind to retire too, so they picked him up as assistant superintendent when I retired. He has retired too, but it helped him in his retirement quite a bit and I was happy to get out eight months early.

NELSON: So in effect he was acting superintendent for a short period of time at Haynes?

POE: No. Monty stepped right into my position and then we had Lloyd Flynn in there when Monty went to Harbor.

NELSON: Then you just have the one son?

POE: I have three sons and a daughter.

NELSON: Only one with DWP?

POE: Yes.

NELSON: What are the other's occupation.

POE: Huntington Beach Fire Department. One's a Battalion Chief. He was drafted for Vietnam and he almost missed it, but they came in about eight months, he was picked up one night and taken to Vietnam and he served there until his two years was up and then he came back home fortunately in one piece. Number three son also went to the Huntington Beach Fire Department and he is an engineer and he's happy to stay there. He's on a fire truck where he does a good job, but there's no nepotism there or anything between my two sons apparently. They get along in the organization real well.

NELSON: And your daughter is nearby?

POE: Yes. She lives in Cypress and teaches at La Habra High School. I shouldn't really take time out for this, but its occupying my mind so I might as well show it to you. That's my daughter.

NELSON: She teaches volleyball there?

POE: Yes, La Habra. She's been there ever since she graduated from Long Beach State. That was her first job and she's been there about 20 years, I guess.

NELSON: Is coaching a championship girls volleyball team.

POE: State championship last year and they are only Class III or something like that.

NELSON: The point they make is that most of these championship volleyball teams come from schools that are along the beach and big schools.

POE: She just entered a tournament, it tells in there, last week with Laguna Beach and Costa Mesa and all those Class A schools and she entered the tournament with this low class team and she won the tournament. So she was telling me yesterday she's got to take all her students to Catalina. She promised them if they won the tournament, she'd give them a trip to Catalina and they won!

NELSON: Okay, in summing this up on this session, how would you sum up your career with the Department?

POE: It's hard to sum up. I'm just a victim of circumstances. My career, I think, was quite satisfactory. It enabled me to do a lot of things that I otherwise couldn't have done. Gave me a steady job and steady pay all those years. I raised four children and got nine grandchildren now. I did quite well. I don't know whether it was worthwhile for all the schooling I had the hard way rather than the easy way. My wife raised the children and I went

to school all the time and when I retired and even before after I passed the Bar, why all my friends were Department employees and they'd get served with a summons and have a law suit and all the evidence against them and then they would bring me the summons and I'd have to file an answer to the complaint and if I could, handle it. But I had a lot of legal experience on a moonlighting basis that didn't really interfere with my job. I tried to organize it so it didn't, but I had a lot of friends in the Department and I handled cases for an awful lot of them. You'd be surprised how much work I did do. Then last I specialized in probate work and that was mostly just paperwork and not too much court time.

I took a vacation one year and spent a week in eminent domain action when they were building the streets through Stanton over here where there was a sort of semi-freeway that Highway 39. Had a lawsuit. I'd offered to settle with the State for a piece of property. Things were cheaper then. I offered to settle for \$18,000 and they offered me \$14,000 for a corner lot in Stanton. We had a week's trial and one of the ex-district attorneys was one of the attorneys against me in this jury trial. I took a vacation from the plant so I was on vacation during the trial, but spent a whole week in court and I finally got a judgment for \$18,000, what I'd offered to settle for in the beginning that they wouldn't come up with. I wasn't too happy. I felt like that was just a week wasted because I knew it was worth \$18,000 all the time.

NELSON: Not everyone agreed with you obviously.

POE: It was things like that. I got a lot of experience. When I was doing a lot of divorces and a lot of adoptions. One kid that I handled an adoption for when he was a baby, was drafted for Vietnam when he was about 18. They sent him over there and two weeks after he got there he was killed. That was an awful blow on that family.

NELSON: I guess there is no question, but that you had the most seniority as a superintendent of a power plant with the Department at the time you left? You'd been a superintendent, when were you first...?

POE: No. I don't remember when Tuttle died. Tuttle and I were from Santa Ana when I was going to school over there so we'd known one another and he worked at Seal Beach. Then he went into the Navy during the war and when he came back, he passed the superintendent's exam and he was Russ Alexander's assistant at Valley. His wife wouldn't let him retire early, but he was superintendent at Valley from it's start so I think he might have had more, he worked until 65, but he was only retired a short time and he passed away. That's what happens to a lot of people. Here I am 19 years later and still giving them a bad time.

NELSON: Okay then. I thank you very much, Bill for your comments this morning.

POE: Maybe when I get it back I might slip you a few more comments in there. I've really enjoyed doing this. I think it's way overdue.

NELSON: Thank you.