

An Interview with  
Bruce W. Kuebler  
Manager, Water Quality and Distribution Division  
Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

April 2, 1998  
at  
Los Angeles, California

The Interviewer is Dick Nelson

NELSON: Bruce, why don't we start off by telling me where you were born, growing up, schooling, and we'll go on from there.

KUEBLER: Alright, I was born in Buffalo, New York, in 1941. My family moved to California in 1948, where we lived in Westchester for three years, not far from Los Angeles International Airport (LAX).

In 1951, we moved to Mar Vista, a West Los Angeles community, where I grew up and spent the rest of my youth. I attended Beethoven Elementary School, Mark Twain Junior High School, and Venice High School, which is now winning all the science awards, and where I graduated in 1959.

I then attended U.C.L.A. where I graduated with a degree in civil engineering. Actually, at that time they didn't have a specialty, so I earned an Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering in 1963.

Upon graduation, I took a job with the Los Angeles Department of Water

and Power (Department). During the summer, while I attended UCLA, I worked for the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) in downtown Los Angeles. They were working on groundwater issues, one of which was to create a computer model of the L.A. coastal plain. So for three consecutive summers I entered data and drew water level elevation hydrographs of key wells in different parts of the basin so that people would be able to tailor the digital model to the actual performance of the groundwater level so that they could create this model of the L.A. coastal plain.

**NELSON:** Let me go back a bit. What did your Dad do?

**KUEBLER:** He worked for the Postal Service. Initially, he worked sorting mail at LAX. When he moved down to San Diego in 1964, he became a letter carrier.

**NELSON:** When did you decide you wanted to be an engineer?

**KUEBLER:** My youthful aspiration was to become a doctor, a brain surgeon, in fact. I was very much impressed with the neuro system of the human body and wanted to become a surgeon, but my brother, who was two years older than me, and is a brilliant guy in terms of engineering and physics, had an influence on me, so I gravitated more towards the engineering side rather than the medical.

**NELSON:** Had you made the engineering decision before U.C.L.A.?

**KUEBLER:** Yes, in my high school days.

**NELSON:** You wanted to build bridges and highways?

**KUEBLER:** No. When I started engineering, as I said, there wasn't

a specialty at U.C.L.A., so it was general engineering, in which you were exposed to a lot of different things. Because of my experience with DWR during the summers, I got involved with the water side and civil engineering from that standpoint. Actually, when I was approaching graduation, my two choices were either going into the civil engineering corps of the Navy, or going to work for the Department.

I heard that the Department was a good place to work, and that they hired the best people and paid well. Jimmy Powers, who was a couple of years ahead of me, was involved with the local chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers at U.C.L.A. He had gotten a job with the Department and spoke highly of the organization. So, I decided I would try the Department.

**NELSON:** How did you get into DWR? Did they recruit on campus?

**KUEBLER:** I had a special medical condition for which I received some guidance and counseling from Venice High or U.C.L.A., that helped find a job for me. That got me into DWR.

**NELSON:** How did you get into the Department?

**Kuebler:** I submitted an application and was interviewed by Ben Girlando. I received the job offer from the Department before I really got serious about applying to the Navy, so I never did go through the process of becoming a "SeaBee."

I think my initial Department assignment was based upon the experience I had gained at DWR. I began my DWP career, June 17, 1963, with the Project Development Group, Water Engineering Design Division. My immediate supervisor August Niemann, Jr. Byron Weinstein, a Waterworks

Engineer, headed the group. The Senior Waterworks Engineer was Toshio "Toe" Mayeda.

**NELSON:** What was the mission of the Project Development Group?

**KUEBLER:** We did miscellaneous studies. The first big thing I got involved in was the Baldwin Hills Dam failure in December 1963. As a result of that we began developing flood control, or inundation maps, for all of our city reservoirs. Byron had Joe Yamagawa and me working on that. It took a year or so to draw the maps for, like, Stone Canyon Reservoir, the Van Norman (L.A.) Reservoirs, Green Verdugo, and the like. Then we put this material into a book for future reference.

**NELSON:** I don't imagine management would be wildly excited about the wide distribution of a book of inundation maps for the city reservoirs.

**KUEBLER:** They were not too excited. The information was pretty closely held at that time. Eventually, it became state law that inundation maps be prepared. Now they're public knowledge.

In the case of Baldwin Hills Reservoir, we used the actual flood area of Baldwin Hills to check our analytical method to see how closely they correlated.

The real benefit of the inundation maps and the staff work we had done was when the February 1971 earthquake hit out in the Sylmar-San Fernando area. Because of the work I had done on the Van Norman Reservoirs, I was assigned to the LAPD command post at Knollwood County Club to advise LAPD and the other emergency agencies there on the evacuation areas, as the reservoir's water level kept lowering.

**NELSON:** The inundation maps were prepared from topo maps?

KUEBLER: Yes. Basically, we used U.S.G.S. quad sheets and then plotted the flood path, based upon various flow characteristics. For example, we assumed a dam of a certain height would empty in a certain period of time. If a dam was two hundred and fifty feet high, it might empty in as little as an hour. So, whatever the volume of the reservoir, was what we had to content with. If the dam were higher, it would empty faster, because of a greater "head" on it. This is what we worked on with Byron doing a lion's share of developing the theory and approach.

NELSON: What other big project's were you involved with?

KUEBLER: The other major project was designing blow-off valves for each of our large reservoirs in order to drain them more quickly if the dams were threatened. This was another follow up to the Baldwin Hills situation. Most of my work in the in the Project Developemtn Group had to do with small tracts and subdivisions. We got involved with Acreage Supply Charge Districts. This was in area's of the City where we had to supply services at higher elevations, like in the Santa Monica Mountains. There wasn't sufficient pressure built in the water as it flowed by gravity across the San Fernando Valley, so, we had to develop a pump tank system to push the water up there.

The developers had to pay the cost of those facilities up front. As the area developed the original developers are proportionally reimbursed for the pump tank system by newer developers.

NELSON: How long did you work in the Project Development Group?

KUEBLER: Until 1967. Actually, I was still in that general area, but I had become an Civil Engineering Associate. I became involved with governmental liaison dealing with regional water issues with

Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MET). I attended many MET Board meetings, and prepared summaries for management review. I also became involved in a waste water reclamation study, the feasibility of reclaiming waste water in the City. This focused on water available from the Hyperion Sewage Treatment Plant, west of LAX.

**NELSON:** Was this during the time the Department had the carbon column test equipment at Hyperion?

**KUEBLER:** I believe this set the stage for that. We also had something out at the Valley Settling Basin, which is near Travel Town in Griffith Park. We saw one of the uses of reclaimed water being groundwater recharge. We wanted to see how the quality of the water would change as it percolated down through the soil zone, before reaching the water table. So, we placed a test column there where we could spread water and take samples from various depths to assess the water quality impact.

**NELSON:** Who was working with you at that time?

**KUEBLER:** Don McBride.

**NELSON:** Don pretty much spent his career in Water Quality.

**KUEBLER:** I think the highlight of his career was being project manager for the Los Angeles Aqueduct Filtration Plant.

**NELSON:** Were you involved in the Second Los Angeles Aqueduct project?

**KUEBLER:** Not until I moved up to the Aqueduct Division in 1969. Then I became involved in the groundwater pumping issues and the whole controversy.

Another interesting project I worked on under Duane Georgeson's

direction was in late '64, or somewhere around there. Sam Nelson had been invited to author a chapter for inclusion in Frederick Merritt's "Standard Handbook For Civil Engineering." Sam's chapter was on water engineering. He asked Duane to head up a group which included Duane; Civil Engineering Associate, Larry McReynolds, who had just transferred over from Power System; Don McBride, Ted Bakker, and myself were the three Assistants and Ken Kia was our draftsman who did the plates and that sort of thing.

We spent about six months working on the chapter and the book was published in 1966 or '67.

**NELSON:** The chapter was under Sam Nelson's name.

**KUEBLER:** Yes. I don't know how much it cost the Department to produce the chapter.

**NELSON:** How were you selected for the "writing" group under Duane?

**KUEBLER:** I don't remember. This was before I began doing the liaison work on regional water issues, like the State Water Project, between 1967 - '69.

**NELSON:** What did you think about the Snake-Colorado Project?

**KUEBLER:** Pretty visionary. It appeared to be physically possible, but politically, I don't think it had a chance.

**NELSON:** In 1969 you moved over to Aqueduct Division?

**KUEBLER:** Yes, I became Staff Engineer to Paul Lane, who was the division head. I replaced Jack Graham, who, I think promoted and moved over to Airports Department.

I had two Civil Engineering Assistants working for me, Frank Salas and Bob Pagan.

**NELSON:** How were you selected for the job?

**KUEBLER:** I had an interview with Paul.

**NELSON:** Were you ready to move?

**KUEBLER:** It was probably time to move on, I think. I had been involved with the liaison work for a couple of years, but thought it would be interesting to get involved with aqueduct operations. I didn't know much about the Aqueduct Division at that time.

I can't remember now how I heard about the opening, or what role Paul played in my getting the job.

**NELSON:** Had your years in the project group given you a pretty good grasp of the water system?

**KUEBLER:** Yes, except for the Aqueduct Division, and I hadn't gotten involved in the operating side either. New Civil Engineering Assistant's were asked to work in different areas, so I spent some time in the drafting room, under Jack Pohl, who tried to acquaint us with water service maps and how the facilities were plotted and tracked. I was also assigned to work with Ross Fields, who took care of water flow charts, which kept track of the pressures in the system. Once a month we put out a chart which indicated how the system was performing, based on pressures and hydraulic grades in different parts of the system. I got involved in collecting some of that information for him, which meant going down to Ducommun Street (Central District Headquarters) and obtaining data from the

people there. So, I got a smattering of some of the operations at that level. The aqueduct was something I didn't know a whole lot about, except for things I heard or read about in the material you are given as a new employee.

**NELSON:** What was the function of a staff engineer?

**KUEBLER:** Whatever Paul wanted or needed to support his activities. At that time it was mostly dealing with the tule elk up in the Owens Valley. Beaula Edmiston and her friends were trying to get a tule elk national wildlife refuge or preserve, or something similar established. That controversy had started in '67, when Paul Lane was Northern District Engineer. So, I got involved in that. There were also a number of land management issues, mostly dealing with leases, and that kind of thing.

Paul liked having lived in the Owens Valley, and especially enjoyed the countryside and scenery and wanted to do things that would help preserve it and keep it as a real quality resource for tourists, besides protecting the City's water source and quality. A land management plan for Owens Valley was also being developed at that time. It was to be a cooperative watershed management plan.

The withdrawn land legislation was another big issue. We had a lot of land that we owned and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) owned lands that were surrounded by our lands making inefficient land ownership patterns. In the early 1900s, federal lands had been withdrawn from public entry to protect our water supply development. The withdrawn land legislation was an attempt to consolidate, or release the withdrawal of the lands we didn't need to protect our water rights or quality, while strengthening the protected status of the lands that were needed.

So, the idea was to get rid of those irregular ownership patterns, little islands of different ownership, and basically clean up ownership.

There were some Indian lands that would be moved so they would be closer to towns and have a better opportunity for economic development, and things like that to help the tribes.

At this same time, 1970, Paul was working with his friends from the other agencies in the Owens Valley to establish the Inter-Agency Committee on Owens Valley Land and Wildlife (Committee). It was a cooperative group of state and federal agencies, plus Inyo and Mono county representatives, who met on a monthly basis to coordinate programs that had some commonality between them. Paul was the first coordinator for the group. I was, in effect, its first secretary.

**NELSON:** What was the purpose of the Committee?

**KUEBLER:** The agencies were all working on programs that had similar goals and outcomes, so we wanted to make sure we didn't interfere with each other. A major objective was to enhance the recreational potential and use of the valley. That was one thing Inyo County wanted. Tourism was their lifeblood. The Committee was a way to enhance that tourism, because Inyo was always complaining about not having enough revenue and money, not enough growth, etc.

The Committee built the Inter-Agency Visitor's Center south of Lone Pine, at the intersection of Highway's 190 and 395. A tule elk viewing point was constructed west of the dam at Tinemaha Reservoir.

The Inyo Conservation Corps had a facility out in Round Valley and so they were a part of the Committee too. In all, I think there were as many as fourteen agencies in the Committee. We started with eight or nine and grew.

**NELSON:** Was the Committee needed?

**KUEBLER:** I think so. As I said it kept the agencies informed and put them working together on mutual projects. Paul had established contacts with the lead people in each agency when he was the Northern District Engineer. So, it was kind of a natural outgrowth of that. Joe Radel from Forest Service, and Lou Boll from BLM, were among the initial representatives.

We generally got the highest person responsible for their agency's activities in the valley to attend the meetings. The job of Committee coordinator rotated on a yearly basis.

**NELSON:** The Department I think, as has happened more than once, was caught in the middle of the tule elk controversy between the ranchers and Ms. Edmiston. What did it do?

**KUEBLER:** We contracted with Dr. Dale McCullough to advise us on the tule elk. He had done a study as part of earning his doctorate from, I think, the University of Michigan. He had done the work in Owens Valley, because that is one of the few places they exist. They once had ranged in the San Joaquin Valley, but had been reduced down to a few in the Tupman area, and a few had been transferred to the Owens Valley in 1932, where they prospered.

McCullough had unique experience in what was going on in the valley and the conditions there. What I think Ms. Edmiston had in mind was the creation of a refuge almost to the exclusion of any conflicting activities. That could be the ranchers, of course, maybe tourism, by restricting access to the land so as not to "spook" the elk, and so on.

We were trying to create some balance and have some scientific basis for our position and statements we might make on where they were, their range habits, what conflicts occur or could occur between the elk and ranchers and cattle and other interfaces.

**NELSON:** The elk was a nuisance to most ranchers, weren't they?

**KUEBLER:** I don't know if I would say most. I think they were a nuisance in some areas where they would get into the alfalfa fields. They would break down the fences, causing the ranchers to spend money on repairs. Once in the field they would eat the alfalfa and trample it down which interferes with its value. The land management system we developed where you have people pay you for the price of their lease based upon the market value of the harvest. We shared in the risk of that. The ranchers didn't want something like the elk that might exclude their livelihood.

Obviously, things can become distorted. Ms. Edmiston made it look like the elk were not a problem. The ranchers would say it was a terrible trouble, and as with most things, the truth was somewhere in the middle.

**NELSON:** How did the Department make out in the elk controversy?

**KUEBLER:** I think we came out of it OK. I think we benefitted from the Interagency Committee because it was a way for all the agencies to coordinate positions. We met with legislators at both the state and federal level. Ultimately, there were bills in the California Legislature and Congress to create some sort of protection for the tule elk. I think that because we had an ongoing coordinating committee where we could deal with resource issues like this and developed a plan that encouraged that kind of protection for the

elk, it wasn't necessary for either the state or federal government to come in heavy-handed and impose something because we had a group who was sensitive to the issue and supportive of doing the right thing in a balanced way.

I think the ultimate plan was reasonable and called for protecting the herds so as to maintain two thousand statewide as a minimum as well as selective culling to keep the various populations in control because you didn't want to have the herds grow so large where they would come into one giant herd, because there is always the risk of anthrax. If that happened the whole herd could be wiped out. So there was a need to keep the various herds separate.

**NELSON:** During your involvement in the first years of the Interagency Committee, who impressed you among the members?

**KUEBLER:** The person who stands out the most is Phil Pister. He was the Fish and Game, Fisheries Biologist. He was a very high energy guy who put together a tremendous slide show on the fishes of the Eastern Sierra. He was a strong advocate for the protection of the pup fish by the creation of a sanctuary for them at Fish Slough and out at Warm Springs on the eastern side of the valley. He was a very unique individual because of his energy and his commitment to the area.

**NELSON:** Can you tell us a little bit about the pup fish?

**KUEBLER:** The pup fish, a tiny, fresh water fish, was a remnant of the Ice Age. At one time all the lakes in the Great Basin, from Mono Lake, Owens Lake, south to China Lake, and Searlessp?), and Panamint ultimately drained into Death Valley, Lake Manley and were all connected. As the fresh water receded because of climate changes, the

remaining big lakes became saltier and saline. The pup fish evolved from these conditions and have been found in a few locations, mostly in the Owens Valley and Death Valley.

The pup fish, an endangered species, has been found in some fresh water springs at Fish Slough, north of Bishop. The Interagency Committee was helpful in protecting those areas by fencing to keep people away. Also the area at Warm Springs on the east side of the valley, east of Big Pine.

At Ash Meadows, just across the border into Nevada, is another remnant pup fish population. It's interesting because they are in a fresh water cave and there was concern about development in the valley because any groundwater demands for agriculture would lower the watertable which is particularly critical to the pup fish because its algae food is on a natural shelf inside the cave barely submerged and lit by sunlight.

There was concern that if the water level dropped because of pumping, the shelf wouldn't be submerged anymore, the pup fish would lose their food, and die off. Agricultural development was actually prohibited in the area.

**NELSON:** Let's go to billboard on Highway 395. What do you know about their demise, at least on non-private lands?

**KUEBLER:** Paul Lane started that program, which was before my time in the Aqueduct office, or in the division. It was one of his pet projects for a more scenic highway through the Owens Valley. The project, I think, became one that Interagency Committee members worked on.

**NELSON:** In 1969, you moved to Aqueduct Division executive office. How long did you work with Paul?

**KUEBLER:** I worked there until 1972, when Paul moved up to head the Water System. Duane Georgeson replaced Paul in Aqueduct. I stayed in Aqueduct until 1985. From Associate Engineer, I promoted to Water Works Engineer with responsibility for groundwater and water rights, and reported again to Byron Weinstein, who was the Senior Engineer, and responsible for the Hydrology Section.

At that time we had three Senior Engineer positions in Aqueduct Division, Northern, Southern and Hydrology, who reported to Duane as Aqueduct Division head. I replaced Al LaMonte, who had promoted to Senior Water Works Engineer and moved to Water Engineering Design Division.

Being responsible for groundwater and water rights got me involved with the Owens Valley groundwater Environmental Impact Report (EIR), as well as the completion of the San Fernando groundwater litigation.

In 1972 the Court had ruled in favor of Los Angeles on the San Fernando matter, so we had to prepare the final judgement and enter it. The groundwater and water rights responsibilities included both the Owens and San Fernando valley's.

**NELSON:** Paul Lane, what kind of person was he?

**KUEBLER:** Very creative, a good strategist. Had tremendous rapport with people. Very open and caring. He didn't seem to be a strong technical engineer. Of course, when I first met him, he was above the point where one would be doing technical engineering. He was a manager who was a leader, and I think he was very good at that.

**NELSON:** How about Duane, was he similar to Paul?

**KUEBLER:** He was a lot different. I would say he was more threatening

because he was so smart. They were both smart, but Duane seemed more calculating and he was out to get what he thought was necessary and important. You knew he was going to succeed, because he had the strategies and by the time he talked to you, he probably had his mind made up. Paul might have been that way some too, but he was smoother about it. Paul was maybe disarming, where Duane wasn't as much disarming as threatening. Duane had the keen insights and a broad perspective and spectrum of activities. Duane was able to use information and data. He had a tremendous appetite for reading and knowledge. He would read reports and data and ask questions and send notes and all that. He knew the nuts and bolts. He knew what was going on.

I've read Rage For Justice, a biography of Phillip Burton. The key to Burton's success was his command of the situation by his knowledge of the details. When an issue came up while he was in the State Legislature or Congress, he knew more about the subject than anyone else. When he was drawing up boundaries for voter districts, registration, and things like that, or any type of Bill, he knew the details. I think Duane was like that. He knew issues and details.

I think Paul was more on the political side, where Duane had both.

**NELSON:** Walt Hoyer was in the picture for a number of years. Some Department people thought of him as Duane's prodigy. Was he?

**KUEBLER:** I guess he saw himself as that.

**NELSON:** Where were you about 6:05 am, February 9, 1971?

**KUEBLER:** I was at my home in Canoga Park at the time getting ready to drive into the office when it hit. I didn't have a direct role in

the earthquake initially, but because of my experience in preparing the Van Norman inundation map I was sent out to the Command Center.

I went to the LAPD Command Post at Knollwood Country Club. We were trying to pull the reservoir water level down when the Corps of Engineers brought in their pumps, which was a big joke because they didn't do much compared to the volume of water there. Their pumps were just a drop in the bucket.

**NELSON:** I was out there that morning too and remember Water Operating crews throwing sandbags up where the inside face of the dam had slumped away. Did those sandbags do anything?

**KUEBLER:** I think they played a significant role. What had to be done because of the way the dam slumped down was to keep the water from spilling over the top. If it had it that would have been the end. By placing the sandbags there it provided a little bit of freeboard. There wouldn't be much pressure against the sandbags when they were right at the top. But, it was enough to keep the water from spilling down the face and eroding it. If it had, the dam would probably have gone.

**NELSON:** So, back to hydrology in the Aqueduct Division. What happened next.

**KUEBLER:** We had received the (state, fed?) Supreme Court decision on the San Fernando case and entered the final judgement in 1975. That wrapped up the case.

**NELSON:** Who worked for you at that time?

**KUEBLER:** Louis Sanchez was in charge of water rights and Mel Blevens was in charge of groundwater.

**NELSON:** What was the point of the San Fernando litigation?

**KUEBLER:** Whether or not the City of Los Angeles had the pueblo rights to all the native water in the Los Angeles River drainage area. The City alleged that the King of Spain, when the pueblo was established, granted to the pueblo all the watershed, to the exclusion of others. In 1954, L.A. sued Burbank, Glendale, and San Fernando because they were pumping groundwater in the San Fernando Valley, which the city alleged belonged to it. The Supreme Court found in the City's favor, except, the other cities had a right to the return flow from water that they had imported, like from the Colorado River, and used within their boundaries. Some of that water would normally percolate back into the groundwater basin, so they were given the right to pump that return flow of the imported water, about twenty percent. But they had no right to the native water. We were forced to provide a physical solution to them, acknowledging their investment in their wells: that we just shouldn't cut them off, but we should allow them to continue to pump if they reimbursed L.A. for what they took.

**NELSON:** This leads us to the completion of the Second Los Angeles Aqueduct, which was completed on June 26, 1970, or before the passage of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). How did we become involved in preparing a groundwater pumping Environmental Impact Report (EIR)?

**KUEBLER:** Basically, it was a creative judicial system. In November 1972, Inyo County filed a lawsuit against the City alleging that we had

violated CEQA, and that the groundwater pumping that was part and parcel of the completed Second Los Angeles Aqueduct needed a EIR and public input.

One third of the Second Aqueduct's water supply was to come from increased groundwater pumping in the Owens Valley, a third from increased diversion from the streams tributary to Mono Lake, and a third from more efficient water use practices on the City's lands.

The County was attacking the groundwater pumping portion, although they probably didn't like the cutback in use on City lands either. They said that our pumping was going to dry up the springs, kill off the native vegetation, and create "dust bowl" conditions in the valley, thus dispoiling the environment.

So they filed, saying the groundwater pumping, because it was not a completed project, even though it came before CEQA, had not reached that point of finality so that the EIR process would be meaningless. If they were successful in making us apply the EIR process to our project, although it predated CEQA, there could still be some meaningfull result and the environment could still be protected.

The suit was filed in Inyo County and then transferred to Sacramento Superior Court. Judge White heard the case. His rulings were favorable to the City in those early decisions.

Inyo County appealed the decisions to the U.S. Third District Court of Appeal. Inyo found a very sympathetic panel up there to the delight of the county. The Court believed that the intent of CEQA was to have full knowledge and disclosure and that was more important than worrying about the retro-activity of the law, even though it was true that CEQA became effective after the Second Aqueduct had begun operation.

We tried to say that the pumping was part of the project that was

completed at the time the Aqueduct began operation. The Court didn't think that was as important as having information out so that people could understand what the likely consequences would be of various actions. The Court believed there was a higher standard attached to government than there was for private individuals. I think that's the way it evolved.

**NELSON:** Did Inyo County have better representation in Sacramento, or with the Court, or did the City step into the environmental climate of that time?

**KUEBLER:** The City has never been of one mind on environmental issues. That was part of the problem facing us. The other thing was the image in some minds of the City having taken advantage of the Owens Valley. Lots of people believe that, including people living in Southern California. Probably most Northern Californians believe that, notwithstanding what the facts may have been. So there was a sensitivity and receptivity to the plight of Inyo County, regardless of what the official representation was. It was just for the good of the people.

This, I suppose was similar to the interpretation of the Public Trust Doctrine that was made by the California Supreme Court in the Mono Lake case. They more or less said Mono Lake was an evolving continuous issue where hard boundraies couldn't be drawn, nor could a date close off further discussion. We are a fluid society and we need to be continually open to new ideas and the need to periodically reevaluate things and get the best for the most people. I think we were a victim of that kind of thinking.

**NELSON:** Do you think the outcome would have been different if the City leaders could have gotten behind the Department early on?

**KUEBLER:** I think the outcome might have been different if they would have been of one mind. Even the City Attorney's Office was not together on this. Jan Chattan-Brown, who worked for Burt Pines was pro environment. That was her personal philosophy and she was suppose to represent the City and she was an advocate for the environmentalists against the City's interests. Obviously, that's my perception. She seemed more sympathetic to our accusers than to the City's needs. She did not seem supportive of the legal basis for what we were doing. I think she was connected to the green movement that was developing at that time.

**NELSON:** The City was changing leadership at that time too. Tom Bradley replaced Sam Yorty. The Department Board of Water and Power Commissioners began changing. It was an unsettling period while the new team took charge.

**KUEBLER:** It sure didn't help. But, the bottom line was that the Court really wanted to do something to help the Owens Valley. So they intepreted things as broadly as possible to give Inyo County the benefit of the doubt. Because the EIR is an informational document, that's what they always came back with, it was an informational document, that's all it is, it's not substantive, it's just an informational document, they would say. We knew and learned better as time went on.

**NELSON:** I heard over the years that the Department is arrogant. Was the Department arrogant in dealing with the Court or in preparing the Groundwater Pumping EIR?

**KUEBLER:** Oh, I think the Department was protective of it's trust and

responsibility to the citizens of Los Angeles, who had invested so much over the years to develop the water supply. If you look at the way things evolved, the development of the water supply, the overall picture, the things Paul had begun with the Interagency Committee, the sensitivity he had shown to protecting the recreational resources and the beauty of the area, and that kind of things, I don't think it was that way at all. It wasn't high and mighty on our part.

I thought the EIR was very considerate and logical. Arrogance certainly wouldn't apply to Paul Lane and his approach. It might have applied at the beginning when Mulholland went up there and brought down the water, but arrogance was probably needed at that time in order to pull the whole thing off.

**NELSON:** Can you recall your first inkling that you were going to do an EIR?

**KUEBLER:** Yeah. I didn't know how it was going to turn out. We had a huge area to do. It was going to be a tremendous challenge because the question was what effect would this pumping have on the vegetation on the valley floor. It was a huge area with very little information on the kinds of species and how many acres of different crops there were. How would we figure the effect.

After doing some quick literature searches, it didn't look like there was much information at all on the effect of varying soil moistures on plant survivability, health, and that kind of thing.

So just to be able to do it in any practical manner we would need to do some remote sensing and try some different approaches, which we did. We began the EIR in early 1973.

**NELSON:** This EIR was the first one prepared by the Water System, and the whole CEQA was, I guess, a work in progress.

**KUEBLER:** CEQA evolved from the Friends of Mammoth lawsuit over a condominium development at the ski area there. I remember attending a seminar shortly after the law took effect where people were trying to get the word out about this new law and how significant it was. Back then, no one had any idea of its ramifications, or what we had to do. "Oh, it's just another law we had to follow."

**NELSON:** Do you think that if the Friends of Mammoth suit hadn't been successful, Inyo County would have proceeded with their suit?

**KUEBLER:** There wouldn't have had a basis for it. Their suit was based on CEQA, which resulted from the Mammoth lawsuit. But, obviously, the environmental movement was going to happen anyway, so somehow it would have happened.

**NELSON:** Well, if CEQA had been delayed a year or two, would that have made a better case for our not having to prepare an EIR?

**KUEBLER:** I don't know. If it would have been five years and we had gone ahead and pumped, and if a lot of the vegetation had died off as they alleged it would and the effects of the pumping could be seen, the project would have been completed and to do an EIR then would have made a mockery of the process, besides being blatantly outside the law. They wouldn't have ordered us to do it. The Court would have said it was too late. But, as long as there was some doubt as to the finality of the effect, I think they would have stopped us.

**NELSON:** Who were your principle helpers on the EIR?

**KUEBLER:** Initially, I worked a lot with Mel Blevins and his group, because they had all the groundwater information. We obtained some stream flow data from Louis Sanchez, and then worked with Northern District people, particularly Russ Ranson, because he was the ranchlands manager and a lot of the information had to come from land use patterns up there.

**NELSON:** Did the Department go outside on that first EIR?

**KUEBLER:** We hired the Earth Satellite Corporation, out of Berkeley. Charles Poulton was the guy in charge. They had a way to remotely sense the vegetation. They thought they could map and determine vegetation condition by taking aerial photographs of the valley floor from a fairly high altitude using satellite technologies. With ground photos, they could then map the vegetation that was present, grouping it in different categories to develop a sensitivity for each of the different plant communities to changes in groundwater moisture.

We had a question of identifying the valley basin itself and to what extent was the valley a confined aquifer, or to what extent was it open so we could find that if we pumped a certain amount in certain areas over long term, what the effect would be on overall water levels in the valley. So, we had to have the amounts and locations of pumping available and we had to figure out how the groundwater table itself would respond. Once you figured that out you had to figure out how the plants would respond, because of those changes in the water level elevations.

When the preliminary studies for the Second Aqueduct were made, it was estimated that the evapotranspiration from the ground surface and the vegetation itself would be decreased by a certain amount that would

result in a yield of, I forget the numbers now, but, say fifty thousand acre-feet per year, or something like that.

We were supposed to receive one third of the total increased flow for the Second Aqueduct from groundwater pumping. The total increased flow was estimated to be one hundred and fifty thousand acre-feet a year for the Second Aqueduct. Fifty thousand acre-feet was to come from groundwater pumping, which in effect, would have decreased evaporation from the soil surface and transpiration from the plants.

Over a large part of the valley floor the watertable was within six or eight feet of the ground surface. That's close enough that you can have evaporation directly from the ground surface.

Our biggest challenge was to identify the basin and get the vegetation patterns. We thought that with Earth Satellite we could get the mapping of the vegetation and somehow do some studies to predict how different species of saltbush, the native grasses, and things like that would respond.

We had Dr. John Mann, who had been working with Mel Blevins on the San Fernando case, help in terms of the groundwater basin characterization. We also had a number of well records which we used to identify the confined zones.

We asked Fish and Game to provide information on the fauna, particularly wildlife use patterns, in different areas so that if we found that a certain vegetation could or would be affected, we could determine what animals were dependent upon that food source. With that knowledge, we could perhaps make some adjustments to our program. Fish and Game did an inventory of the species and made estimates of the numbers for us.

We set up an Owens Valley Groundwater EIR Advisory Committee.

The committee was composed of local people who had different expertise who could help us obtain the information we needed. Mary DeDecker who was well known for her knowledge of the plant communities in the valley participated. Don Gray, a Union Carbide geologist, participated. In all, we had a variety of people, maybe eight to ten who worked with us on the EIR advisory committee.

Our intent was to brief them on the project, what we were doing, and run by some of the methods we were using and the results we were seeing and get their feedback and input. They helped us identify critical areas.

**NELSON:** How many times did you get together with the EIR Advisory Committee?

**KUEBLER:** I forget now, but think we met twice a month for a few months. We may have had eight to ten meetings in total.

It didn't work perfectly. Mary DeDecker had made comments on the inadequacy on the Draft EIR where she thought something was not properly portrayed and that I should have have redone the Draft before sending it out for comment. What I decided to do was to release it as a draft and receive comments, then make the necessary change when the final EIR was prepared. We were not saying, no, were not going to consider it. No, it's not correct. But, instead of wasting the time and delay, we wanted to go ahead with it and do the change in the Final. Mary thought that was terrible. But, generally I thought the process worked pretty well.

**NELSON:** Did you receive help from the other agencies in the valley?

**KUEBLER:** Yes, I think much of it was due to the groundwork laid by

Paul Lane and his work with the InterAgency Committee. That was a nice kind of vehicle to help coordinate some of the information collection.

**NELSON:** Have those agencies shifted one way or another in how they see their charge, as compared to the seventies?

**KUEBLER:** My more direct knowledge is with Fish and Game. It depends a whole lot on the personalities. Phil Pister was a remarkable individual. We have other remarkable individuals in other ways that are not as positive. It seems like the agencies were more coordinated in that period and goal-focused at lots of different levels. Now, it seems Fish and Game is run by individuals, and there is not so much overall supervision and direction.

A person believes a certain thing so he/she goes out and does their thing, and if it's against the broader agency mission, well, it's OK. Rather than working as a team, it's more individual. I think Fish and Game has become more radical in their approach and unreasonable in many ways.

**NELSON:** Let me back track a bit here, Bruce. I've heard that with the completion of the Second Aqueduct, fewer acres were going to be irrigated in the valley by the Department. Was that true?

**KUEBLER:** Yes, as far as it goes. Completion of the Second Aqueduct project would change the Department's land management practices in the Owens Valley. The annual amount of water made available for irrigation in the valley would top at about fifteen thousand acres of firm irrigation. Notice the word, firm. Because of the firm supply, the long-term productivity of those acres would be greater than the thirty thousand acres that we had previously irrigated on an intermitent basis.

Intermittent meant that in "wet" years there would be water for irrigation. In "dry" years there would not be water for irrigation.

**NELSON:** How long did it take you to prepare the Draft EIR?

**KUEBLER:** We started in mid-73, and produced the document about a year later.

**NELSON:** What direction were you given by the Department?

**KUEBLER:** We had an EIR to do on the project. The Court directed an EIR on the increased groundwater pumping that was supposed to be separate and divisible from the Second Aqueduct. Duane Georgeson was very involved in the EIR. Paul Lane was not so much involved, at least not with the details. On important issues Paul would involve himself, but mostly it was Duane and Byron Weinstein.

**NELSON:** Did you have to put on some public meetings to take local input?

**KUEBLER:** There were public meetings. I don't recall the dates offhand.

Before a final EIR is prepared, you must schedule public hearings to receive public comments from people and respond to those comments. Inyo County was obviously trying to kill the whole thing and delay it because they thought that once we got the EIR approved, we would go ahead and begin pumping.

**NELSON:** Inyo was pretty confident we would prevail?

**KUEBLER:** They were afraid we would. We distributed the Draft EIR showing that we were proceeding with the project. We found some adverse effects and identified them. Inyo found our conclusions unacceptable and

proceeded to challenge our EIR. So they hired their own consultants to come up with their own assessment of what effects the pumping might have so that we wouldn't be able to proceed.

When the draft came out they submitted their comments and challenged the project description. As a result of that they went to court, I haven't refreshed my memory on some of the details here, but it seemed that the Court told us to go back and change the project description. The project description was one of the biggest difficulties. This was not a project that was defined precisely so that we could clearly move forward. We had implemented parts of it over the years because part of it had to do with changing the land management practices, which had been done gradually in the years the Second Aqueduct was under construction.

In an EIR, you are supposed to discuss a no-project option. Well, what's a "present environmental setting," and how do you do one where the present environmental setting is constantly shifting? Where changes had been underway for some time. We weren't going to be flood-irrigating as much land anymore because we were going to take that surplus water and export it to Los Angeles. So there were changes that were taking place constantly.

The Court basically said our project description was not correct so we were to go back and do it again. We came up with a revised draft EIR. The first draft EIR was distributed in 1974. We did the revised draft, submitted it, received comments, and that went to a Final EIR which the Los Angeles Board of Water and Power Commissioners (Board) approved, I think, in July 1976.

Inyo County challenged the Final EIR and went to the Third District Court of Appeal, who told us that we had done the EIR on the wrong

project again.

Inyo County challenged two things in our EIR. The project description and the adequacy of the environmental assessments. The Court never really got to the environmental assessments because they sided with Inyo and said our project description was wrong.

As a result of that, we had to do another EIR. I can't remember now if it was submitted in 1978 or not, but Inyo County challenged it too.

**NELSON:** What was Inyo County's problem with the project description?

**KUEBLER:** That was one of the problems itself. Their position kept changing. Initially, it had to do with the groundwater pumping amount. We had said that because the increased groundwater pumping was part and parcel of the Second Aqueduct, the part that was part of the Second Aqueduct was outside the EIR. So the baseline for our groundwater pumping was anything above eighty-nine cubic/feet/second (cfs). That was another problem.

When the Second Aqueduct was conceived in the early 1960s, we thought that the long-term groundwater pumping, which at that time had only averaged about ten cfs, was going to have to be increased to about ninety cfs.

When the first EIR came out in 1974, the long-term groundwater pumping was then estimated at, say, one hundred and forty-nine cfs. So, it had increased above the eighty-nine cfs. So, the question was, "What's the baseline for the increased pumping, if the EIR is about increased pumping, above what is it?"

We said it was above the eighty-nine cfs, and Inyo County said it should be above ten cfs, which would have been the long-term average prior to the Second Aqueduct. The Court said it should be above ten

cfs.

We had to go back and do the EIR for all the increased groundwater pumping above ten, up to one-hundred fifty, cfs, instead of eighty-nine to one hundred fifty cfs.

Inyo County didn't like that either. They said the project should not just be increased groundwater pumping, but the increased export of water from the valley as part of the Second Aqueduct. The Court went along with that saying, in effect, "Well, the project now isn't increased groundwater pumping, it's the water for the Second Aqueduct," as if the Second Aqueduct had only been a project to bury pipe in the desert. You would build the pipeline, then go look for the water sometime later. One of the Justices of the Third District Court said, in effect, "Hey, wait, this is wrong, we're shifting too much. We've got to return to the original intent which was on groundwater pumping, not for all the water of the Second Aqueduct." He was, unfortunately, in the minority.

**NELSON:** During the preparation of the EIR were there prohibitions against our pumping of the groundwater?

**KUEBLER:** Yes. I forget now when that came about. Initially, there wasn't a limitation, but later, one was established, that had to do with not pumping above the eighty-nine cfs rate, which was sort of the pre-project pumping amount.

**NELSON:** During this time when the project was in jeopardy, did you get support from the Board or City Council?

**KUEBLER:** I don't think the Council was too much involved. It hadn't gotten to them yet. It was more of a Board issue and they were

generally supportive of what we were doing. They adopted a Final EIR in 1976, which Inyo County challenged. We did another one after that. Aside from what I said about the City Attorney's Office, and Jan Chatton-Brown, working, as I thought, at cross purposes to the interests of the City, I think there was general support among those who knew about the project.

Ken Downey, from the City Attorney's Office did yeoman service for us. We shared the frustrations of the Court's decisions. We couldn't believe that we would be doing this. That the law could be changed like that.

**NELSON:** How and when did it all end?

**KUEBLER:** We adopted the EIR in 1976. The Court said, in effect, "No! Wrong!" We did another EIR that came out in 1978. Inyo County didn't like that either. They challenged, as I mentioned above. But, at that point, I think Inyo County was beginning to fear that we might be getting close to satisfying the Court and getting our EIR right. I shouldn't say right, because I believe we had been doing it right all along. But we couldn't satisfy the Court because they kept shifting their criteria. I think Inyo County figured we were going to get out of this and be able to proceed.

In 1980 they decided to go ahead and do their own water management plan. Their plan was based on some recently enacted State Legislation that they supported. They prepared their plan and were going to adopt it when we challenged it as being inadequate.

So, they had to prepare an EIR too. I imagine this whole process had been very expensive for them. Now, they were facing another court battle. Finally, I think, the political people began looking for a

better way to accomplish all this. We finally got our City Council more interested, and the Inyo County Board of Supervisors more interested in trying to work something out jointly.

From all of that came the historic 1984, LA-Inyo Agreement, between the City and Inyo County, signaling that we would work together on joint studies towards the resolution of our differences. We called in the U.S. Geological Survey to help on this.

**NELSON:** Who was responsible for the LA-Inyo Agreement - getting the sides together?

**KUEBLER:** Duane Georgeson probably had the most to do with that. Duane with his interactions with our Board, City Council folks, and the Inyo County folks. He was the key guy on that. Commissioners Rick Caruso and Jack Leeney were key players from our Board.

**NELSON:** What were your impressions of them, Leeney, Caruso?

**Kuebler:** They were both strong. Rick had good questions and still does, and was right on target on stuff. At that time the Board was questioning a lot, and you never knew what information they would be wanting from you. So, we spent a lot of time doing prep work. But, they had very definite strong views and beliefs.

**NELSON:** Could the agreement have come together without those two Board members?

**KUEBLER:** Oh, I think so. The time was ripe. When you get two big governmental entities going at each other, it becomes obvious that both were wasting a lot of money and resources. I think the two would have come together even if Leeney and Caruso had not been there.

I was not that much involved in the political end of it in negotiations and interacting with the Board. That was something Duane liked to do. He was good at it and he dia a lot of it. Duane and Paul Lane. Of Course, Jim Wickser had his role up in the valley too. He was up there for about ten years. He had some obvious influence on the outcome too.

**NELSON:** In the mid- to late 1970s, the Mono Lake issue began to identify itself. What was the trigger?

**KUEBLER:** It seems to me that the report the Stanford students came up with, that David Gaines was involved with. I remember we had a Board luncheon in January 1979, where David Gaines was invited to make a presentation, or he had requested to make a presentation to our Board on Mono Lake and the resources there. He made the pitch that Mono Lake needed to be protected and preserved and the Department ought to be doing something to ensure that. I think his presentation was the start of the issue for most of us.

**NELSON:** Was the Board receptive, or were they merely paying lip service to him?

**KUEBLER:** I think Gutierrez, Stivelman, Maloney, Nagel, and Ward were on our board at that time. Gaines probably struck a sympathetic chord with some. Obviously, they had to take the issue seriously.

**NELSON:** Going back to the groundwater pumping EIR. Were you involved with the EIR all the way through?

**KUEBLER:** Most of it. There was a hiatus, where the Court had it for a long time. I was involved in working with USGS in doing the studies

jointly with Inyo County on vegetation monitoring. As I have said, we had an absence of information about what effect the change of soil moisture would have on plants. So we had to do a lot of research in the valley to determine that.

I left Aqueduct Division in August 1985, which was prior to the completion of those studies which ultimately led to preparation of the joint L.A.-Inyo County EIR.

**NELSON:** You were promoted a couple of times too, weren't you?

**KUEBLER:** I left the division as a Principal Water Works Engineer, and Assistant Division Head under Val Lund. I had made principal in 1983. Earlier, I had become the Senior Water Works Engineer in charge of the Hydrology Section, when Byron Weinstein moved on.

**NELSON:** Why didn't Mono County get involved in the Mono Lake issue?

**KUEBLER:** I don't think I have a precise answer to that. If you contrast them with the Inyo County Board of Supervisors, it's a totally different county if you look at the way it's spread out. The Inyo County supervisors are pretty much bunched on the Owens Valley floor, except for the southern end that extends into Death Valley National Park. The valley floor is like one big community. The groundwater issue seemed to unite them with a common issue.

But, Mono County is spread out. You have the Mammoth, Bridgport, Lee Vining, and the Long Valley area. It just didn't seem like there was the same commonality of interest. And you probably didn't have the same historical situation as was the case in Inyo County.

**NELSON:** What about the players on the Mono Lake side? What are your

impressions of say, David Gaines?

**KUEBLER:** He seemed very dedicated to the lake and sincerely interested in protecting the resource. He was sharp.

**NELSON:** Martha Davis?

**KUEBLER:** Totally different. She seemed to be more like a professional political organizer type as opposed to David, who was first and foremost a biologist, who was concerned about the lake. That all evolved into a political issue. The Mono Lake Committee approached it as such.

**NELSON:** Who represented them?

**KUEBLER:** Morrison and Forester, from the Bay area, was their counsel, doing largely, as I understood it, pro bono work for them. Except we ended up paying for them. The Mono Lake Committee was well represented.

We tended to approach the issue from the technical side. Of course, we didn't have our act together politically. At that point the political side of the City was much more attuned to the Mono Lake issues, and much less supportive of the technical part and the interests of the City. Overlooked was all the money it would cost us in replacement water and lost energy. That just didn't seem to be a priority.

**NELSON:** Mike Gage came to the Department from City Hall. What are your impressions of him?

**KUEBLER** Strong-willed and very energetic. He wanted to be in control and have his fingers in everything. He tried to support us.

**NELSON:** With his City Hall experience, was he able to muster interest for the Department?

**KUEBLER:** He thought he could settle it, but he apparently met his match when he ran up against Martha Davis. He tried to work out a compromise but she wasn't willing to compromise, she wanted to win.

**NELSON:** Did you say the City Council finally came around to our side?

**KUEBLER:** No, they wanted to protect Mono Lake. The Mayor's Office wanted to protect the lake too. I think some of them realized that to protect the lake to the extent the Mono Lake Committee wanted, would cost us more money, and we would have to do some things to increase water conservation.

Some said we ought to conserve so we wouldn't have to pump as much groundwater in the Owens Valley. Then the Mono Lake issue came up and they said we should conserve so we wouldn't use as much water from Mono Lake.

Then the State Water Project, delta, Peripheral Canal, controversy swelled up again with the thrust that Southern California ought to conserve so the water could be saved. So, all of this fell back on conservation. We did some belt-tightening that resulted in cutbacks in water use.

So, they were looking for a compromise that would protect the lake and still have a reasonably firm water supply. The added costs would be looked at as so many cents per customer per year, or not so much. There was general support in the City's Sacramento delegation for it being, environmentally, the right thing to do. It was felt to be good public policy to preserve these natural resources.

**NELSON:** Where did you move to from Aqueduct Division?

**KUEBLER:** I moved to Water Operating Division where I was assistant

division head for two years under Ron McCoy. In December 1987, I moved down to Water Quality to replace Raul Sosa as division head.

In January 1988, Ron McCoy and Larry McReynolds switched jobs. Ron moved to Water System Executive Office, and Larry, who had been in the executive office, moved to Water Operating Division.

**NELSON:** The Los Angeles Aqueduct Filtration Plant was operating at that time, wasn't it?

**KUEBLER:** Yes, it began operations in November 1986.

**NELSON:** You inherited a few water quality issues.

**KUEBLER:** The superfund cleanup work on the contaminated wells in the San Fernando Valley was handled by Water Engineering Design Division, working with Lockheed and other large manufacturers in the valley. We did the sampling and provided the laboratory. The big issue we became involved with was the improvements to our open reservoirs required by the surface water treatment rule. This requires covers, or tank replacement, or filter plants, for our open reservoirs.

**NELSON:** What are we opting for, tanks?

**KUEBLER:** For the big reservoirs, like Hollywood and Encino, we'll install large tanks and a small micro-filtration plant. At Stone Canyon, we'll install a filter plant, similar to the LAAFP, but about one-tenth the size. This should all be done by 2005.

The other major problems in Water Quality were with the open reservoirs and algae growth, while trying to maintain the esthetic quality as well as the bacteria quality and prevent algae "blooms."

**NELSON:** Do you expect to get "flack" from the public, as a result of replacing reservoirs with tanks?

**KUEBLER:** We set up an unique process with the community via the mediation process, which was Norm Nichols' idea.

In 1974, the State Health Department made a comprehensive evaluation of our water system and found that we were deficient in many areas. So deficient in fact that they didn't want to give us an update of our water supply permit. Our water supply permit is dated 1918 or 1919. It is the oldest non-updated water supply permit in California. They were not happy about that and told us that we needed to do a lot of things, one of which was to take care of our open reservoirs.

Open reservoirs are generally not good waterworks practice. Because once you treat the water you want to protect it from any potential contamination. We made improvement over the years, but not big improvements on the open reservoir issue.

In the late 1980s, Water Engineering Design Division, held a series of workshops to let the communities know we had plans to move ahead with an EIR for the improvement of those open reservoirs. Rather than serving to inform and receive input from the communities, it united them against us because they thought we were going to destroy the environment of their neighborhoods where they had an open reservoir, which was beautiful to look at, and which was a positive attribute to the neighborhood.

Norm Nichols thought there must be a better way to work with the communities and that we should maybe set up some sort of an advisory committee.

I was involved in identifying how we might approach this. I

thought about using Leroy Cramer, who had been used on the Mono Lake issue. Gramer was with a U.C.L.A. public policy group, He had facilitated discussions between us and the Mono Lake Committee to try to work out some sort of a compromise and we thought he might be a good one to do this. He declined because it was a little politically sensitive with U.C.L.A. and its relationship with the Bel Air community. Bel Air surrounds Stone Canyon Reservoir, which was one of the reservoirs we had to work on.

Gramer gave us some suggestions for other people and ultimately we selected Alana Knaster, who works with the Mediation Institute, headquartered in the state of Washington, and affiliated the University of Washington, Seattle. A fellow from the Bay Area, Jeff Ball, helped out initially.

This all led to some preliminary discussions. Alana identified interest in the community and checked with the City Council members to see who might want to be involved and what role they might want to play. She identified community groups that might want to participate with us.

I had a couple of informal meetings with a friend of mine, Jim Boner, who had gone to elementary school with me. Jim was an architect who worked in the Silver Lake area. He, Sharon Flanagan and I lunched one day just to "test" me out to see if I was sincere and this was a program that the Department was really behind. I told them I thought it was a good program so they decided to participate and that got going in 1991.

I've been involved since that time. The approach seems to be working well. Hollywood, for example, came up with a project that the community supports. So, in a long answer to your question, the

communities by and large do support what we are doing. They realized what we had to do. We didn't have a choice in the matter, something had to be done. The tanks were the best approach which the people liked. We are trying to preserve the land forms up in the canyon where the fill is going to go. We're going to preserve the reservoirs as open spaces. We won't be using them to the extent we do now, but there will always be water in them. This will retain property values and include a nice jogging trail around the reservoir.

We have a similar process going on with Encino Reservoir. It hasn't moved along as quickly as Stone Canyon, as it has been mired down with some of the Stone difficulties. At one point it looked like there might be a joint project that might solve both Stone and Encino, but that was not feasible from a political, and probably economical, standpoint. But, we're moving ahead and I believe we'll have a project there that the community will support.

Stone Canyon is the most difficult because of the personalities involved. We had a good group initially and things went on and we started making progress and got an EIR out. With the EIR some people there finally realized this was going to happen. They had ignored it because they didn't think it was a real threat. So when they found out this was really going to happen, they kicked out the reps and replaced them with people who didn't know the issue and didn't want to know it. They didn't want to compromise, so we had to start over with them.

That's delayed us substantially. This whole mediation process is probably as unique as setting up the Owens Valley Groundwater Pumping EIR Advisory Committee. It was very difficult initially. There were a lot of barriers and animosity and strong feelings between the groups and it took a long time to develop a good, trusting, working relationship.

**NELSON:** In the reorganization, you've taken on Water Operating in addition to Water Quality.

**KUEBLER:** In late 1995, after the Focused Separation program, Jim Wickser wanted to reduce overhead so he decided to merge the four water divisions, Aqueduct, Engineering, Water Quality and Operating into two, so I became the head of Water Quality and Distribution Division, which comprised Water Quality and Water Operating divisions. Bob Yoshimura headed the merged Engineering and Aqueduct divisions, which became Water Supply Division.

**NELSON:** During the first few years of your career, did you had a mentor, someone you looked up to?

**KUEBLER:** The top one would be Paul Lane who I admired for his personal skills and values and his strategic outlook. And Duane Georgeson for his energy and overall brilliance. He was very skillful in the way he used information and knowledge and kept up on things. Later, in working with Jim Wickser, I admired his commitment and constant focus on working on the people side. He worked hard with the quality teams that he developed in General Services Division.

**NELSON:** Who sticks out in your mind from the Board of Commissioners?

**KUEBLER:** That's hard to say. Currently, with Rick Caruso on again, he's really a stabilizing force, right on target and a sharp guy. I would put him up there very high on the one's I've seen in terms of his overall interest, knowledge and tact. I think all of our commissioners had been supportive. They're all different. How can you compare? Carol Wheeler, she did a good job. Walter Zelman did good things.

Mike Glazer, good job.

**NELSON:** What do you think of the current downsizing?

**KUEBLER:** Tragic. I think it is necessary because of the competition on the energy side. But the spillover effect on the water side is tragic. Under Jim's leadership, we've done a lot to cut back and become more efficient. Larry McReynolds did a super job in the Productivity Improvement Program that he instituted here.

I think Water System is pretty well positioned and aware of what's going on. It has the right kind of culture to succeed. To have us go through the same turmoil as the power side, when we have a different environment and are looked upon differently, I think is unfortunate.

**NELSON:** You have thirty-five years with the Department. How has it been?

**KUEBLER:** It's been a great career.

**NELSON:** Thanks for your time.