

WORKING UP THE RANKS AT DWP

GERALD L. NIEDERDEPPE

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

Gerald L. Niederdeppe

Born in Lincoln Nebraska, March 2, 1919.

Parents: Ezra August and Martha Marie (Gruenhorst) Niederdeppe.

Brothers/Sisters: One sister, Althea (Niederdeppe) Hummer.

Married: Dorothy (NMI) Kangas, December 4, 1940, in Los Angeles, California.

Children: Two daughters, Joan Marie and Carol Ann.

Grandchildren: Seven.

Great-Grandchildren: Eight.

Began DWP service on September 29, 1939 as a Clerk Typist, Purchasing Division.

Retired October 1, 1980 as a Commercial Executive, Commercial Division.

Affiliations:

Member, Executive Committee and past President, Greater Van Nuys Area Chamber of Commerce; Board of Directors, Vitalize Van Nuys, Inc.; Advisor to the President of the United Chambers of Commerce of the San Fernando Valley; Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Salem Lutheran Church, Glendale; Board of Directors Solhheim Lutheran Home, Eagle Rock; Board of Directors, Valley Area Red Cross; Valley College Community Relations Advisory Committee; Glendale Chamber of Commerce; Glendale YMCA; Rotary International; President, City of Glendale Parking Commission; Past Exalted Ruler, San Fernando Elks Lodge; Walter Mendenhall Man of the Year Award; and Chairman of Franchise Commission, City of Escondido.

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.

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TAPE NUMBER: 1, SIDE ONE

GERALD L. NIEDERDEPPE

GIVEN THURSDAY, JULY 30, 1991

AT

HIS HOME IN ESCONDIDO, CALIFORNIA

THE INTERVIEWER IS DICK NELSON

NELSON: Okay, Jerry why don't you tell us about your early life, where you were born, growing up and all those things associated with childhood.

NIEDERDEPPE: I was born March 2, 1919 in Lincoln Nebraska. My grandfather, there in Lincoln, Nebraska, was a Lutheran Minister and I recall he had two parishes there in the city at that time. One speaking English and the other German and he would travel back and forth between the two parishes.

I attended grammar school at the 25th Street Grammar School in Lincoln, Nebraska. I recently traveled back there and the school is still there, in tact, every brick in place. It was a marvelous school in many ways. I recall that I won or was awarded a penmanship award at that time and I am left-handed. And I understand back in those days that the school systems often tried to get students to move to the right hand if they happened to be inclined to be left-handed, but they didn't do that with me and so I am left-handed in most everything.

In my travel back there recently to the school, I found that it's still a progressive school and they had all kinds of special classes. Classes for the more talented or the more special students. They were totally integrated in all of the minorities—they were included in the classes and it just seemed as if they had all kinds of great programs going there even after these many, many years. It's still a very progressive board of education obviously there in Lincoln.

We moved to Phoenix, Arizona at my age of about seven, I think it was and mostly the reason for it as my parents told me later was because of my poor health in Lincoln, Nebraska. I was a very sickly boy. In fact, my grandfather once made the statement, I guess, that "this boy is not going to survive, he's sick

so much." In school half the time and things like that. So the doctors recommended move me west to get me into warmer climate. And so he transferred. Dad was a mail carrier and so he had put in for a transfer to Los Angeles or anywhere in Southern California and the closest he could get at that time was Phoenix, Arizona, so that's where we went. We were in Phoenix less than two years and then he got another transfer to Inglewood, California and then that place was in Los Angeles where we remained thereafter. But indeed the two years that we were in Phoenix, Arizona was a miracle for me and my health. Just completely turned around everything. I was great thereafter so indeed that was probably the reason.

So then I attended Washington High School. Well for a short period of time while in an Inglewood school, and interestingly enough, I remember Inglewood Grammar School. It was the only school that I attended, even into college, that played soccer. So I remember playing soccer in this school in Inglewood. Never saw it again in junior high, high school, or in any of the L.A. schools thereafter and I often wondered about that. But anyway, I then went on to Washington High and then to Metropolitan School of Business. I spent a couple of years there and then that was about the time that I was hired at Water and Power so college had to be gotten later at night. And I was in college for the next fifteen years trying to get my business degree. All of my schooling was centered around business administration.

Then when I was hired by the Department, I was hired as a clerk typist, as I recall and my first job was with the Purchasing

Division, and there I wrote out invoices on the teletype machine that was transmitted somewhere else, I don't know where, and I was there for only six months. That took us into 1940 and then I was transferred from that location to 1320 Wall Street District office and worked for the people there that were involved in the frequency change with Southern California Edison Company.

There I got to learn a few things about ice machines and the equipment that they had to change in order to accommodate the increase from 50 to 60 cycle, but that didn't last much more than 6-8 months as I recall and I got my first and only pink slip from the Department. Friday I was laid off, but then something else happened and I got a call that afternoon. They wanted me to report to West Los Angeles, Commercial Division office which was on the corner of Santa Monica Boulevard near Sepulveda. So I really didn't miss any time, although I had a pink slip, I was rehired the following Monday. And that started my career, then, with the Commercial Division. There I was clerking and I remember working with Paul Northinton at that time. He had been there longer so he sort of "taught me the ropes" and we were on the telephone desk, people would call in and want information about their account and this sort of thing, and our desk was a large desk and we sat facing each other in this operation where we were doing the same thing. So one had a view of the counter where the public came and paid their bills and did other business with the department and the other had his back to the counter, and the reason why I mentioned that is because back in those days the employees were often thrilled by some of the personalities coming

into the office to do business. We'd get a lot of UCLA students and that sort of thing, but also there were a lot of Hollywood people that would come in and do business and Paul and I had a little code going because sometimes these people that would come in would be especially attractive, beautiful women or they would be personalities that anyone would be of great interest to see and so when we were talking about women, we would say that 100 per cent is perfect. It was like the "10" today, I guess. And when one of us that had the view of the counter would say, "I think we have a 101 with us today," that would give us the opportunity then for some excuse to get up and take a look at the records so we could check this out. But that was kind of funny.

Back in those days it wasn't at all unusual for us to take our work home with us. If we didn't finish writing up the on and off orders and that sort of thing that came in during the day, we would take them home to complete them so they would be available for the servicemen the next morning. That sort of fell by the wayside, I think, after a few years and I'm not sure who started that.

NELSON: Let me go back and pick up some things here so we don't get too far removed from them. How did you move to Phoenix, Arizona? Do you recall?

NIEDERDEPPE: We drove. The family got in the car and we drove to Phoenix, Arizona. Now, I'm sure the furniture and everything was delivered later. I don't specifically recall the van backing up

and that sort of thing, but we lived in a small home, close to the main railway that went through Phoenix at that time. In fact, only about three or four blocks from the round house where they make repairs on the engines and cars and so forth. So this was a great attraction to me. I often spent hours over there watching them work on these big engines and rail cars and the turn tables where they would switch them around and that kind of thing. That was fascinating to me.

I recall also that we had a date tree in the back yard that bore fruit and that was kind of exciting to us because we were from Nebraska and had never seen anything like this. Palm trees, etc.

NELSON: Was Lincoln, Nebraska larger than Phoenix, Arizona at that time?

NIEDERDEPPE: Oh yes.

NELSON: This was a sleepy little town that you moved to in comparison?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, Phoenix at that time was smaller than Lincoln, Nebraska. Lincoln is the capital of Nebraska and, of course, you had the university there too, so it was large. Phoenix, interestingly enough, if you know anything about Phoenix today, there is the Hole in the Mountain. Now when I was there, the Hole in the Mountain was out in the desert. I mean way out in the

desert. There was nothing but horny toads and cacti and this kind of thing at Hole in the Mountain. There were a couple of times when we went on picnics out there, in fact, we even took a screen and a projector and we had our own little movie and that sort of thing and we just had this outing right out in the middle of the desert right below the Hole in the Mountain. That was the landmark at that time. Well now, the Hole in the Mountain is right in the middle of town. It's in a little park. That was kind of interesting.

NELSON: Did you learn German?

NIEDERDEPPE: Well that was probably one of the big mistakes of my life now. You know my folks spoke German and spoke it well and certainly before I started grammar school at the age of five, there was a lot of German spoken, but then when I started school, I think they, perhaps on purpose, got away from that. I think the people, my family and other members of the family that came over from Germany and were that close to the old country, made a special effort to learn English at the expense of maintaining German and so that certainly happened with me.

Although it was available to me, I really didn't keep it up at all and I thought I was going to be very, very smart when I was in high school and take German because I had to take a foreign language - this will be a snap. I want to tell you that I had trouble, nothing but trouble with that language. I didn't get anywhere from it at all.

NELSON: That sometimes happens. When you moved on to Los Angeles, where did you live more precisely?

NIEDERDEPPE: On Hobart Boulevard at 96th Street. That was our home and I remember when dad bought that small, stucco home, five-room home, that me and my sister were raised in for so many, many years. Gone through junior high and high schools. He paid \$3,000 for that home after it had been renovated and completely painted inside and out. And I also remember at that time when we were living there, the earthquake. That was the earthquake in 1933. I was home alone at that time and my folks were in downtown Los Angeles and they certainly had a lot to say about the swaying buildings and getting out of there. But I was home alone and across the street on Western Avenue, 96th and Western, was a large water tank that served the entire area I understand and I was told later that fortunately the tank was only half full. Because had it been full it probably would have moved a few houses around us off their foundations because it was quite a wall of water that came down from that tank, washing debris up on our lawn and this kind of thing.

NELSON: Your dad continued to be a mail carrier? Where did he work out of?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes he was. He worked out of Station H at that time. Station H was on Manchester near Vermont.

NELSON: He was a house to house?

NIEDERDEPPE: House to house carrier, yes. He was outside.

NELSON: Then you mentioned attending Washington High School. That's up there on Western and Imperial?

NIEDERDEPPE: 108th and Denker.

NELSON: And you graduated from Washington High? How did you get the job at water and power? How did you hear about it? How did you apply?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes. That came to my attention when I was at Metropolitan School of Business, downtown Los Angeles. There they had a lot of things posted on the bulletin boards all the time pertaining to jobs and I recall that there were county jobs and state jobs and city jobs and all that sort of thing. It just happened to be about the time that I was going to be leaving there and going on to junior college when I saw these examinations coming up, so I took one and I guess I passed it high enough to be called and that's how I got started.

NELSON: What kind of money were you making at that first job?

NIEDERDEPPE: \$70 a month as a clerk typist and I was in heaven!

NELSON: How did you get to and from work? Did you have a car?

NIEDERDEPPE: No. I took the street car.

NELSON: Where was the work location?

NIEDERDEPPE: I believe it was 1630 N. Main Street.

NELSON: That was the Purchasing Division?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes.

NELSON: And that's where you ran the teletype machine?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes.

NELSON: Did that require any special training, or was that more of a if you knew how to type, you pretty well could get by on the machine?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, pretty much so. It was just a typing job.

NELSON: Do you recall you boss or co-workers at that time?

NIEDERDEPPE: I sure don't. I remember that we played cards at noon and that was the only place where we played cards at any time during my entire career as I recall. But at noon time we'd all have our brown bags and we'd play Pinochle. It was fun. But I sure don't remember any of my colleagues or my boss, any names at that time.

NELSON: What were your hours and shift? Do you recall that?

NIEDERDEPPE: I think it was 8-5.

NELSON: And a five or six day?

NIEDERDEPPE: Five day.

NELSON: Then you went to the frequency change?

NIEDERDEPPE: Wall Street. That was on Wall Street. Let's see, the address on Wall Street was 1320.

NELSON: Was there just a number of people who were told next Monday you are assigned here or did you volunteer for it, or were you assigned?

NIEDERDEPPE: No, I don't recall anyone else involved although there could have been. I was just told to report to that location on that particular day and that was it. I guess it was more of a reassignment in my case.

NELSON: I guess that was better for you. It was slightly closer to where you lived.

NIEDERDEPPE: That's true.

NELSON: Do you remember your duties at that time?

NIEDERDEPPE: On the frequency change? That's a little bit foggy because I didn't do as much typing. In fact, I did very little typing and as I recall I was working for one fellow in a smaller office and I shuffled paper, followed up on some field orders that were completed and this kind of thing. It is really quite vague as to the specific duties.

NELSON: And when that assignment was over, you got your pink slip which was a termination slip, but at the same time then you received the call to go out to West Los Angeles.

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes.

NELSON: And you went there, what was your title? Were you still a clerk typist?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, clerk typist. No, I think then it was a clerk. Back in those days, as I recall, you could take a clerk typist and a clerk job at the same time and a good deal of the examination was the same. The only difference was the typing skill. That was a separate item, so I'm sure I was on two different lists actually. I was on a clerk list and a clerk typist list. So when I went to West L.A. no typing thereafter. I'm sure it was a clerk position then.

NELSON: You recall that you worked with Northington. Was he a co-worker or he was your supervisor?

NIEDERDEPPE: He was a co-worker. Don't ask me who the supervisor was.

NELSON: And you worked at this desk and apparently the senior man faced the counter?

NIEDERDEPPE: No, we switched around.

NELSON: This was a telephone desk at the time, in 1939 -1940. There probably weren't as many telephones in the city of Los Angeles were there?

NIEDERDEPPE: There were two on our desk, of course, for each of us and everybody at the counter had a phone and there were other phones scattered around the room.

NELSON: Did you have a lot of women employees at that time?

NIEDERDEPPE: Oh, yes. In fact they were in the majority in the office.

NELSON: So that was the first part of DWP that pretty much gave equal opportunities toward male/female employees I imagine. Probably had very few field females at that time.

NIEDERDEPPE: That's true. All the field personnel were men.

NELSON: You said there was a telephone desk. What were the types of calls and problems that you handled? Were they new services or connects or were they problems?

NIEDERDEPPE: It included ordering the services, first of all, off if they are moving away or on if they were moving in and we would advise them to come in and sign for the services. Back in those days everyone had to sign for the service. Moving from one address to another, asking questions regarding their bill and where they could pay their bill and how and this kind of thing. It was general telephone service at that time.

NELSON: Were you married by then?

NIEDERDEPPE: I was married in 1940 and I started the Department in September of 1939 and was married a year and a half later or a little less than that.

NELSON: So you were not married when you initially went to West L.A?

NIEDERDEPPE: No.

NELSON: You were still living at home?

NIEDERDEPPE: Still living at home.

NELSON: How did you meet your wife?

NIEDERDEPPE: Dorothy and I knew each other way back in junior high school. We lived in the same area and we knew each other for many, many years before we saw each other, so to speak. Also we were both very active in the church. We went to a Lutheran church on Manchester across the street from a Catholic church. I think the name of it was Messiah Lutheran Church and it's still there. So we were active in the youth groups, we also sang in the choir from time to time so we were well acquainted and we went to parties together and we were just friends for a long time prior to really getting serious.

NELSON: You got serious after you got a job?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, I guess maybe that helped or it helped in those days. I don't think the young people today worry too much about those things, that seemed to be important at the time. And then too, age had something to do with it too. There comes a time in your life, you know, when these things become important.

NELSON: How long did you work at the telephone desk?

NIEDERDEPPE: You know Richard, it's getting foggy now.

NELSON: What did you do from that point? What was your next assignment?

NIEDERDEPPE: From there I went to I believe that I was assigned to the Van Nuys office. It seems to me that it was not too long, a very close from out there that I got my senior clerk assignment. That took me to the San Fernando Valley in Van Nuys and there I was on the counter doing basically the same thing that I had done before only face to face with the customers at the counter, handling money and this kind of thing.

NELSON: Were you married at that time?

NIEDERDEPPE: Oh yes.

NELSON: Where were you living?

NIEDERDEPPE: We lived in the beginning, we lived at two locations. One was across the street from the Automobile Club's main office, Adams and Figureoa. We were there for a short period of time and then from there we moved to West Los Angeles just a few blocks down from where I worked at the West Los Angeles office.

That district office was located near the corner of Santa Monica Boulevard and Sepulveda Boulevard. This was in 1940. We took a unit in a triplex close to the office. After we had our first child, Carol, this unit became too small so we rented a two-bedroom in a court, on the line between Culver City and Palms. During this time we had our second child, Joan. Both children went to a Culver City school for a short period of time.

When I was transferred to West Los Angeles in 1940, I changed from a clerk-typist to a clerk. The salary was the same.

In 1946 I received a senior clerk appointment and was sent to Van Nuys. At Van Nuys, I worked at different locations over the 12 years that I was there. I was on the counter and served the public. Mostly, I was in water sales and acted in the position of assistant to my immediate boss, Mickey Gallagher. The district supervisor at that time was Mr. Windette. I also relieved one-man branch offices when the employee was on vacation or sick leave. These offices included Canoga Park, Reseda, North Hollywood, and San Fernando. In Van Nuys our Commercial Division operations were first located in the District 5 office building on the corner of Oxnard and Van Nuys Blvd. Then the new Commercial District office was completed at Haynes Street and Van Nuys Boulevard.

It was during this time at Van Nuys, that I went through the chairs at the San Fernando Elks Club and General Sales Employee San Farmer sponsored me into the Speakers Club of the Department.

It was about 1951 that we bought our first home. And that was terrific. That was a great experience. We didn't have enough money for the down payment, so I went to my grandmother and she loaned us \$600 for the down payment and we bought one of the first homes in the Kaiser development there adjacent to the General Motors plant, Van Nuys, Panorama City. It later became Panorama City.

NELSON: How big of a home was that and how much did it cost?

NIEDERDEPPE: It cost \$10,500 and it was five room, double garage and nice large, wide lot. Front yard, back yard. I think it was probably 1,300 - 1,400 sq. ft. It was the larger of the units they were building at that time. Three bedrooms, or two and however you wanted to arrange it.

NELSON: That would have been about 1941 or so?

NIEDERDEPPE: No, it was a little later, maybe 1942, 1943.

NELSON: The war had started?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, it was under way at that time.

NELSON: This is while you were commuting to the San Fernando Valley?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes.

NELSON: Let me go back and pick up one thing here, Jerry. December 7, 1941, where were you? Where did you hear about the war where the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

NIEDERDEPPE: I think that was Sunday. We were at Dorothy's parents for dinner.

NELSON: They still lived in the old neighborhood?

NIEDERDEPPE: No, her folks had moved from there and moved to San Marino. They had a beautiful new home that they built there and I spent a lot of weekends there with "Pop" building retaining walls and stuff like that, because they lived right off of a wash that went through. It was a beautiful area. That's where that happened and his son, Robert, went into the paratroopers. He was with the 101st Airborne and he was lost in the Battle of the Bulge, right after December of that year, I recall and I was called up too, of course. Probably one of the most disappointing times of my life, crushing - I went down to answer the call and went through the lines, you know, physical inspection and so forth, and I wanted to be in the Navy, that was my first choice, although it certainly wouldn't have made any difference to me one

way or the other. The doctor examining me said my feet were too flat so I had to be 4F. My wife tells me that it took me a while to get over that. I was really a crushed human being since I couldn't get into the service.

NELSON: Then you say that the work at the San Fernando Valley was counter work, a branch office relief and water sales?

NIEDERDEPPE: Counter work, yes.

NELSON: Doing the same type of work though.

NIEDERDEPPE: Doing a similar type of work. In this case, taking cash now, responsible for money and that type of transaction.

NELSON: Could only certain people take money?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, only those that were doing that kind of job.

NELSON: Was there any bonding or how did you keep track of money?

NIEDERDEPPE: Well we had to balance out every day and we had our own cash box. Subject to spot audit at any time and the fellows from auditing would show up from time to time and audit everyone. Then after you had balanced out and you were over or short or whatever, your reports would go in then and you'd turn them into

the cashier who had the safe and had custodial activities on all those little boxes that came in and went out every day.

NELSON: How many counter people were there?

NIEDERDEPPE: Well it grew from four to six or seven as I recall over the years there out at Van Nuys.

NELSON: Do you remember colleagues there or supervisors?

NIEDERDEPPE: Well there were several. Windette was the supervisor in charge of all the activities so I was working for him for a number of years.

NELSON: How long did you stay in that position? When you left the counter job, where did you go?

NIEDERDEPPE: Then I went out in the branches. They were sending me out in the branches and I worked all of the one-man branches during that time, Canoga Park, Reseda, and over at North Hollywood.

NELSON: What do you mean, and this is a stupid question, what do you mean one-man branches?

NIEDERDEPPE: That's exactly what they were. I was the only person in the office. I ran the office and there wasn't anyone

else. So I would open up in the morning, I would close at night, I would close the office for an hour for lunch, put a sign up and it was a one-man show. I was at Canoga Park a one-man office, Reseda a one-man office, San Fernando office was two or more most of the time and I spent time down there as was North Hollywood office. Two or more.

NELSON: You worked in all of these one-man offices at one time or another so you did not rotate around?

NIEDERDEPPE: Well, for example, the one that's usually there goes on vacation or something like that, so I'd be there for two to four weeks.

NELSON: So some of that was relief work or something like that?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, that too.

NELSON: And you were that major person who did that type of relief or were there others?

NIEDERDEPPE: I think that probably I did become sort of a regular relief person.

TAPE NUMBER: 1, SIDE TWO

GERALD L. NIEDERDEPPE

NELSON: Jerry tell me a little bit more about the one-man offices. What did you do at the end of the day? Did someone come around and collect cash from you or did you keep it in the office?

NIEDERDEPPE: We had armored car pick up so every day I had to balance out, usually I would be balanced out at the end of the day, put everything into the safe and then the next morning I would make out the deposit slip and the necessary documents for pick up and the armored pick up would come around at some hour during the day varying between the offices to pick up yesterday's receipts and that would then go into the armored car center and there it was recorded to the proper bank account and be available for the Department I'm sure probably that day or the following day.

NELSON: During this time you were still living in your Kaiser home in Panorama City and I guess that was fairly centrally located?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes it was indeed. I think Panorama City is, perhaps Van Nuys, Panorama City is perhaps as close to the geographical center of the San Fernando Valley is more like it.

NELSON: What about supervision and things in these one-man offices. Was this a telephone supervision where you'd see somebody occasionally?

NIEDERDEPPE: Occasionally somebody would come and visit me and we also had the auditor from time to time who would pop in and he would do his thing, but for the most part, if you knew your job, why you were pretty much left alone and had to deal with problems that came up whatever they might be as best you can. Mostly the branch offices dealt with people that were moving in, moving out, paying their bill, questions on the bill and this sort of thing.

NELSON: I imagine you had customers who used your office for payment regularly and you developed a rapport with them.

NIEDERDEPPE: That's true, yes. That certainly is true. I recall you'd see some customers regularly.

NELSON: The disadvantage of working in a one-man office, I guess, was that there wasn't anyone else around a lot of time. Was it a hardship or was the one-man office something that was preferred by many employees who worked these one-man offices?

NIEDERDEPPE: That might have been true under certain circumstances, depending on one's personality. I, myself, didn't find it necessarily an ideal job because you were very isolated and I didn't particularly like that. You don't know what's going on at the main office, you don't know what's going on in the Department, you don't hear anything hardly, so it is rather isolated kind of work, but I know that there were fellows that I relieved during those times where this was their career and this was their life and they loved it and they didn't want to have anything...they wanted to have little to do with everybody else as possible. So it turned out to be desirable from their viewpoint.

NELSON: But you were certainly out of the mainstream?

NIEDERDEPPE: Out of the mainstream.

NELSON: Would that affect promotions and things like that?

NIEDERDEPPE: I don't know that it would. It might. Again if I were on an interviewing board, for example looking back on the days when occasionally I was, I might want to know how long have you been in this kind of work. How long had you been in such an isolated area? Is there something that you like and this kind of thing. And so, depending on what job is coming up, it might have influence on how I would consider that party for another job.

NELSON: Handling it all yourself, you might think that only very qualified people were allowed to go out there, but basically you had no one to turn to and help solve a problem that came up. I guess you had the telephone.

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, I never thought of it that way. Perhaps someone might think that.

NELSON: What kind of money did you take in one of those one-man offices a day? Did that ever ring a bell to you?

NIEDERDEPPE: That's an interesting question. It varied. One would think that would stick in mind. An important part of the job was how many bucks were you taking in, but it doesn't seem to make that much difference to me.

NELSON: Was it fairly consistent? Your inflow, your daily schedule? Could you go to a certain branch office and think to yourself, "Ah, this is kind of going to be a breeze, but office B is a real wildcat?"

NIEDERDEPPE: It had its moments when you could really relax, but it also had its other times when it was very, very busy and you had people lined up. If you were the only one there. So you'd get the rumbles and the grumbles in the line and you had to deal with that too and move as quickly as possible. So you had to have the capability I suppose. If you wanted to do the job right, you

had to have capability of high gear and overdrive as well as just normal speed of work. You had to be able to move along or learn shortcuts.

I learned a lot of short cuts in taking an application, for example, involving signatures and information from the customer and stuff like that. Taking basic things and then filling them in later when I had the time to do it, that sort of thing. I'm sure most everybody did that, but it was necessary.

NELSON: Do you think in your own case that working on those one-man offices gave you a great deal more self confidence when you went on to other assignments that you could pretty much handle whatever was thrown at you?

NIEDERDEPPE: That could be true, sure. I don't think there's any doubt about it. If the company had enough confidence in you to ask you to go to and take over a one-man office in the first place, why that certainly was a good sign from the employees viewpoint and I would agree to that. Sure.

NELSON: So you were still a clerk at that time?

NIEDERDEPPE: A Senior Clerk.

NELSON: What happened then?

NIEDERDEPPE: I became a Principle Clerk in 1958.

NELSON: How did you become a Senior Clerk?

NIEDERDEPPE: Through examination, of course, all promotional exams. Seems like I was always taking promotion exams all my career and most people do if they are in that line of business.

NELSON: You became a Principle Clerk. What was your first assignment as a Principle Clerk?

NIEDERDEPPE: My first assignment was managing the Brooklyn Avenue Branch office with an employee or two.

NELSON: You became a manager of the branch office?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, and somewhere along the line I got assigned to the general office building and there I was involved with the Brooklyn Avenue office for a period of time. That was an interesting assignment too because most of the customers were Spanish who spoke Spanish.

NELSON: You had not done well in high school in German.

NIEDERDEPPE: That's right, but I remember this was around the end of the year when all of this happened during Christmas time and New Years and so I picked up a few phrases that I could bounce off

the customers when they came in, but that was about the extent of it.

NELSON: But previous to that, you had been in North Hollywood?

NIEDERDEPPE: At most of the branch offices in the San Fernando Valley, yes.

NELSON: What does a branch manager do?

NIEDERDEPPE: They checked the cash in at night, balancing everybody out, also work on the counter when needed. It was kind of a help out position. You assigned lunch hours and coffee breaks and this sort of thing.

NELSON: Handle all of the personnel matters.

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes.

NELSON: Was there a definite order among the branch offices, a new Principle Clerk took over North Hollywood then that person moved up? Was there more prestige in being a manager of Brooklyn Avenue, say versus North Hollywood? Were they all the same?

NIEDERDEPPE: I think that probably that was a factor, although maybe not department-wide. He was just a local like, for example, in the Van Nuys office, being the main office at that time, would

be more desirable, I think, working in the North Hollywood office than it would in the Canoga Park office because the Canoga Park office was a one-man office out in the boonies and perhaps number two San Fernando Office, that was a two or three man office.

NELSON: Were you able to bid on those offices when they came up, or were people just assigned to them?

NIEDERDEPPE: No, I think it was more of an assignment. Didn't have too much to say about it.

NELSON: So you worked out and around the Valley until about the time the general office building was occupied and that would have been 1965?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes in 1965, so it must have been about that time that I went to Brooklyn and became associated with Steve Frank who was executive and I became his assistant as a Commercial Manager.

NELSON: In the organization, those were the so-called metropolitan offices?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes.

NELSON: Steve Frank was the overall supervisor of those metropolitan offices which consisted of a number of branch offices?

NIEDERDEPPE: That's right and here again you had several branch offices there, Central Avenue, San Pedro, Brooklyn Avenue, Hollywood, West Los Angeles, Watts, Venice, Highland Park and Eagle Rock.

NELSON: So when you transferred from the Valley, you transferred in as the manager of the Brooklyn branch for a while.

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes.

NELSON: Where were you living at that time? Still in the Kaiser house?

NIEDERDEPPE: Still in the Valley. In 1953 we sold the Kaiser house and built in Van Nuys on Hartland Avenue. Hartland near Woodman. We needed a little more room because of the girls. They each had their bedroom and this kind of thing and we were in that home for seven, eight years and then we sold that and moved to Glendale, rented for a few years and then built our last home up on the hill in Glendale in 1969. We were in that home for 14 years until we moved down here.

NELSON: Were you in Glendale when you got the GOB assignment?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, it was about that time that we moved to Glendale.

NELSON: Your boss, when you came to GOB was Steve Frank?

NIEDERDEPPE: Steve Frank.

NELSON: How long did you have that assignment or where did you go next?

NIEDERDEPPE: In 1958 I was appointed a Principal Clerk and assigned. Less than a year at Brooklyn Avenue Branch. After my appointment to Principal Clerk, I moved around a lot for a while. After less than a year at the Brooklyn Avenue Branch office, I was assigned as supervisor of the Special Collections Group in the GOB. My boss was Bill Moje. This assignment involved collecting delinquent bills and keeping track of unpaid closing bills. I later was assigned to the mail room operations under Ben Aimar. In 1963 then Commercial Director, Blase Beltramo brought me into the Division offices placing me in charge of the Division's Budget and Statistical Unit.

It was in 1964 that I was reassigned to San Pedro as Dalrymple's assistant at the San Pedro District office. That was a long haul from Glendale. We are now living in Glendale and not in our home that we built, but renting in that area and I remember that going to work in the morning because I was on the freeways so early there wasn't a problem, but coming home at night, the traffic was horrendous. I would leave the Harbor Freeway at about Ninth or Tenth Street and take surface streets from there to Glendale Avenue. I'd take Glendale Avenue into Glendale itself.

Do you remember Manny Becker? God bless Manny Becker. He had a term for everything and I think he was the one that coined the phrase, "malfunction junction" for the freeways there where Harbor and Hollywood came together.

NELSON: Was your work down in San Pedro similar to what you had done in Metropolitan?

NIEDERDEPPE: That included field forces now also. It was sort of like our own little district office. Like the Van Nuys office only smaller, but it included all the field men as well, so I got involved in that and not only the up front office customer relations, customer service end of it, but also the field forces, the inspectors, the meter readers, investigators, and things like that and so it was sort of an all-inclusive, a good training ground to be exposed to.

NELSON: So this was pretty much your first experience with the field people?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, more directly.

NELSON: You were there for several months?

NIEDERDEPPE: About eight months, that's all and I was working with Dalrymple. In 1965 I was appointed a Chief Clerk. That's when I was assigned as Steve Frank's assistant and placed in

charge of the Metropolitan Branch offices. I supervised the operations for the then eleven branch offices including San Pedro and West Los Angeles.

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes. There were so many other things that were happening in my life at that time. The sixties and seventies were just absolutely phenomenal career days for me. I just enjoyed it so much. This was about the time that Jerry Pfefferman was getting me involved in the community and I joined the Chamber of Commerce, you remember those days, Richard and then following that I got into the Rotary Club and all kinds of things happening to me at that time and I was in the Speaker's Club, of course, also. Was President, I think, in 1972. That was a great year. Some of the memories of that time were just great.

NELSON: Sounds like you didn't have much spare time as you were doing your other duties and then this community involvement and you found it very satisfying?

NIEDERDEPPE: Not very much spare time. I did, I enjoyed it. I surely did and I guess I did all right. That was the important thing. In many respects becoming a spokesman for the Department now and I remember having some meetings with Councilman Bernardi at the Chamber of Commerce office. One gets involved and you are sort of on the edge of politics and all of that is not so great, it does happen and it's part of it.

NELSON: How did you get into the Speaker's Club? Who were your sponsors?

NIEDERDEPPE: Sam Farmer was my sponsor to the Speakers Club and that was back when I was Principle working at the counter and they took me in and I became a member and I remember too, and I've got the trophies to show for it, that the next years that I was a member of the Speaker's Club, Richard, I was called up seven times to make a speech. Of course they don't call on the President, so there is a year, year and a half there where I'm not even in the fishbowl to be drawn, but I took the Owl, best speech of the night on every one of those.

Incidentally, I served as editor of the Owl publication for three years, 1966, 1967, and 1968. I was Speaker's Club president in 1972.

NELSON: You had pretty heavy company - there's the Charlie Robinson, who used to do it pretty regularly, Jerry Jones, who used to do it pretty regularly. I know a lot of people, when they were up against those guys, preferred not to speak that night.

NIEDERDEPPE: I know and of course there may have been some luck involved there too, because I don't remember competing against Jerry Jones, but here again the panel, you don't have anything to say about the panel, but I worked hard at preparing every time, I really did. I'm sure more so than the average guy, but it paid off.

NELSON: Had you, through schooling or through Toastmasters, have you had speakers training?

NIEDERDEPPE: I didn't joined Toastmasters, although I had opportunities to do so, I'm a past Exalted Ruler of the Elks Club there in San Fernando so that was probably my first experience in speaking before groups of people and the activities involved there. I was a part of a championship ritualistic team there at San Fernando Elks and we went on to the State competition in San Francisco. I recall that and we lost by a few votes, took second place which would have moved us up to national level. We would have been state champion, but they also gave awards for the individual chairs and I was Lecturing Knight, the first of four chairs there in the lodge and I was awarded state champion of that position in that competition, so those were interesting times.

NELSON: So there was some little preparation over the years that helped you and honed your skills?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, that's right. Going back, now to probably the two years that I spent at Metropolitan School of Business was the beginning of my standing up and addressing a group of people. I remember we had an Aud. call and I was president of the student body. I don't know how I got that. I didn't know anybody. This was kind of a queer thing and I don't even remember the circumstances at all, so I had to open up the assembly and I was going to be really good about this, I was going to tell them a

little story first before I introduced the first teacher and that sort of thing, and I almost forgot the punch line. Oh gee, I was terrible, awkward.

NELSON: So what you learned from there is preparation.

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes. So then all of these things were happening. So many things were happening to me during those fifteen years or so from 1965 through 1980. Just a marvelous time. I loved every minute of it.

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GERALD L. NIEDERDEPPE

NIEDERDEPPE: Are you interested in any of the activities that I had? I'm going back to that now when I was with Steve Frank there in the general office building.

NELSON: Please.

NIEDERDEPPE: I had a most enjoyable time there aside from my duties on the job, but I remember somehow or other I got appointed to head a campaign for the Donor's Welfare Plan. So Bill Priester and I and another fellow, we were given the job of putting on this campaign and we came up with the little face with the mouth that was since used by a soap company, I think.

But anyway, we developed that little character and had a series of meetings there in my office next door to Steve Frank's office and I remember we laughed at some of the things we put together. It was just a riot and I guess it was a successful campaign, but we sure had a lot of fun doing that.

Then I served some time with the suggestion plan, too. That was very interesting because it brought us in touch with so many

other divisions and other activities of the Department that was not otherwise open to me in my work unfortunately. So that was interesting.

NELSON: How did the suggestion plan work or what was your duties in connection with it? You evaluated suggestions?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, we met regularly to review the suggestions and sometimes there was a challenge, why was it not followed up or why was it not accepted or maybe the recipient would come back with some additional information or have some reason to meet with the board about his suggestion and how it was or was not implemented.

NELSON: Was this primarily Commercial Division's suggestions or Department-wide?

NIEDERDEPPE: It was Department-wide.

NELSON: The suggestions are suggestions for job improvement or money savings or something and the employees then would receive a reward or some sort of a part of a savings that was accrued by implementing their suggestion.

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, that's correct. And this was also the time that I was in the Chamber and the Rotary Club. I was president of the Van Nuys Chamber of Commerce in 1977, 1978.

NELSON: What was your role there as far as the Department was concerned?

NIEDERDEPPE: I think the Department's interest was, first of all, to have a voice in the community and the logical place to have the voice would be at the Chamber of Commerce so they sponsored me then as a member of the Chamber because this was kind of a new program at that time. I believe that I was probably one of the first employees to be sponsored into a local Chamber of Commerce.

So I served on committees and on the board and this sort of thing and eventually I became then president and the president did a lot of ribbon-cutting in the community and, of course, almost always there were representative from the council and other people in the community.

When I was in the Rotary Club, we got involved in specific programs to enhance the community in several ways and I do recall at that time I was instrumental in developing, in our Van Nuys club, the Greater San Fernando Valley Athletic Program which was designed to take all of the high school athletes throughout the San Fernando Valley and bring them together in a contest involving running, jumping, pole vaulting, etc.

NELSON: Kind of an olympic games type of thing on a local level?

NIEDERDEPPE: Right, very similar to that. What was unusual about it was that we wanted to reach those young people in high schools that couldn't otherwise win. They were not necessarily winners,

because in each of the high schools you've got your stars, but there are a whole bunch of other youngsters out there that just can't quite make the winner's circle and they're sort of forgotten. So we wanted to open this up to all of the high schools, not just the high schools that competed together in their own little district and there were many districts in the San Fernando Valley, but to bring all of the schools together, athletic schools, private schools, public schools, all together in this kind of track meet that would involve the athletic director at each of the high schools could nominate their own candidates and we encouraged them to, not only send their good ones, but send the other kids too because we were going to give out a lot of awards.

We did hold it somewhat like the Olympics. We had the little three-tired platform and we gave them a gold, silver, bronze medals. So that was a great experience as well. Getting in touch with them, talking to all of the coaches at all these high schools and traveling there and so forth, was great. We usually held it at Birmingham High, more or less centrally located. Very successful.

NELSON: Do you feel that your presence in the Chamber was of a benefit to the Department?

NIEDERDEPPE: I think so. I would hope so.

NELSON: By making the contacts and knowing these people rather than just being a voice on the phone.

NIEDERDEPPE: Right. I remember at one of the Chamber board meetings, Bernardi was there and the day before, and it was in the press, he had criticized the Department because it was discovered that a meter reader had "curbed" the readings and the customer's bill wasn't right because he didn't read the meter. So they had this big article in the paper, big splash about that. So at the meeting I had to point out to him that the opinion that you cannot fire a City employee which was prevalent or is prevalent, you can't fire a City employee, that that's not true at all because curbing was a very, very serious matter and that we did indeed fire employees for that and they know that in the beginning when they take the job.

NELSON: You mentioned the secret word here. What is curbing?

NIEDERDEPPE: Curbing is a no, no! You have to remember the system at that time, the meter reader carried with him a sheet for a particular address and meter number etc. and it contained all of his readings that had been taken in the past. All those consumption readings are on the sheet.

NELSON: A history.

NIEDERDEPPE: A history is on the sheet and for the most part there would normally be somewhat of a pattern. Obviously people used about the same amount of electricity most of the time and same amount of water. So instead of reading the meter and putting the actual numbers down, he would skip that and put down what would be a sort of an eyeball average of what occurred before and put those numbers down as a reading. It may or may not be correct. The reader could save time this way.

NELSON: So the term is from the curb rather than going in and actually reading the meter.

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, while he is zipping by and not looking at it, yes. That was certainly a time when we had an opportunity to talk to an official of the City with others present, trying to straighten out an opinion that was not accurate.

NELSON: In a non-hostile....

NIEDERDEPPE: In a non-hostile kind of way for sure.

NELSON: As a member of the Speaker's Club, you represented the Department before many organizations?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes that's true. That was a great experience for me, too. I remember the year that I was president of the Speaker's Club. That was the year that we landed on the moon.

1972 I think. It must have been. Had to be or soon thereafter. I remember when I had the board meeting prior to the August Stone Canyon outing where we always got together every year in autumn under the trees, out in the open. Bar-b-que, things like that. So I told the board, I said, "Well now what I want the chairman of the paraphernalia to do is to forget the flag. Don't bring the flag with him to that meeting." Now this turned out to be like off the cuff, but it was very, very successful, but it was planned. I planned it that way.

So I fined him for not having the flag and then I told the guy, "Hey, you know, we don't have a flag here, we're really in trouble, but there it is, so let's all point south." I understand that it was in a syndicated column in a few newspapers. That was kind of interesting on behalf of the Speaker's Club.

Then I went, this was not unanimous on the board either that year for our Christmas party. Always had it close by within the city some place where you could dance and have a good dinner. That was about the time that the Queen Mary was anchored and it was just about ready to be opened up to the public so I said let's have a party on the Queen Mary. And we did and it was a huge success. A whole bunch of guys and their wives stayed over night as we did and it was just fantastic. I think we had every member of the commission at that party.

NELSON: Maybe for someone who is not familiar, what was and is the Speaker's Club?

NIEDERDEPPE: As I understand it, originally the Speaker's Club was developed to speak for or against important issues that involved the Department and the City, particularly where there was something on the ballot, for example, that might be beneficial for the City or the Department or otherwise and that we would now have a group of people that could go out to organizations and speak for or against the issue at hand. I think that was the initial purpose for the Club members and, in fact, it continued on, changed a lot, but basically was for the same purpose. All of the speakers were supposed to be available for assignments to go out and speak to other groups and most of them did.

There were some that were exempt by virtue of their jobs, for example. I remember Bill Plumley never took a speaking assignment and there may have been many others that were in higher positions.

NELSON: Bill was the division head?

NIEDERDEPPE: He was Commercial Division Head, right.

NELSON: These speakers were all, for the most part, middle management and up?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, I would say so.

NELSON: They generally donated their time as this was after hours?

NIEDERDEPPE: Oh yes.

NELSON: They would go out and speak, I guess you said earlier, they would speak on political matters or legislative matters that would affect the Department or the City and then later they represented the Department, would speak to groups about Department history, Department projects, things we were doing, explaining what we were doing, what we weren't doing and why and the whole business. You probably racked up maybe hundreds of assignments, I don't know.

NIEDERDEPPE: I haven't any idea how many, Richard. I never kept track of them, but there were a lot.

NELSON: You mentioned that there was a shifting of assignments and you went back out into the Valley. You were a Principle at that time or you were a Commercial Executive?

NIEDERDEPPE: Commercial Executive. I took somebody's place. Anyway, I went back to Van Nuys and that put me in charge then of all of the operations in Van Nuys including the branch offices and so forth. That was a big experience too. All of this, of course, was while I was involved in all of these others things as well.

NELSON: Were you pleased to go back to Van Nuys?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes. I thought that was really great. I considered that to be a most desirable place to be because I was most familiar with that area having lived there for so many, many years and being in other positions and so forth, so it was very comfortable for me to go there.

NELSON: You went back to a certain extent, in triumph. This is where you went back as a boss and you had worked your way up.

NIEDERDEPPE: Makes a difference too.

NELSON: How many people did you supervise, roughly? Are we talking in hundreds?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, we are. We're talking about several hundred. It would depend on the time of the year. Summertime we'd have a lot of relief people that would be in for a temporary period of time, but the permanent, ongoing personnel count seems to me I recall something on the order of 200-250 and it would increase from time to time, fluctuate.

NELSON: And here, like in San Pedro, you had the field people too. You had all of them.

NIEDERDEPPE: I had all of them. Just as existed in San Pedro, but on a very smaller scale, in San Fernando a larger scale.

NELSON: Do you remember what year it was that you went there?

NIEDERDEPPE: Let's see if it relates to any of these notes here. It must have been the early 1970's.

NELSON: How long did you stay there?

NIEDERDEPPE: I was there until I retired.

NELSON: You retired in 1980.

NIEDERDEPPE: I retired in 1980 so that was about ten years.

NELSON: So you commuted from Glendale?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, right.

NELSON: During your career you served under a number of division heads and a number of supervisors, are there any that particularly stand out in your mind? Was there a mentor type of person that you observed and felt that you kind of liked to take some of their attributes and apply them to yourself?

NIEDERDEPPE: I am certainly very grateful to Bill Plumley because he was director at the time that I was getting involved in community affairs and from the start, everyone understood that although one might be nominated to do that kind of thing, it still

was up to the division head to approve it and some division heads weren't too happy about releasing their employees for a luncheon or a speaking assignment or something like that, so it was a factor. But Bill Plumley was certainly behind me on all of that in every way so that was certainly good.

Then I worked for Blase Beltramo at other times earlier. He was one that I was with, worked under and Bill Jacobson.

NELSON: What about Department top management? Did you have much interaction with top management?

NIEDERDEPPE: I remember having a meeting or two with Paul Lane. He wasn't general manager at that time and Tamaki on one or two occasions. Let's see, who was before Tamaki.

NELSON: Before Tamaki was Bob Phillips.

NIEDERDEPPE: Phillips, yes. Then after Tamaki?

NELSON: Louis Winnard, then Jim Mulloy. You spent approximately forty years in the Department and most of that time was spent in one division. I guess there were a lot of changes between how Commercial division operated in 1939 as it operated in 1980. They still collect the money and do all those things, but there was quite a bit of automation. Did any of those automation techniques come to your memory?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes. At the time that the Department went to the computer, computerizing our customer records and collections and that sort of thing, a couple of us guys were selected out of the division to go to an IBM school which was located on Wilshire Boulevard and we did indeed. We spent a whole week there, full time and the purpose of that was to decide which of the two of us wanted to more or less be the leader for our division in moving into this new field technology.

After the week was up and we talked between ourselves, I decided that this was not for me. I could see this was a great opportunity. It would, in a sense, almost put a person at a division head level by virtue of what happened and it was true. After that we realized that's exactly what did happen, but I didn't find, in my own mind, that much satisfaction in this challenge. It certainly removed you from being in the public and being customer service oriented, as I am, and day to day contact and this kind of thing. I could see a great deal of confinement to a desk, eight hours a day, tough to find the work like that, so I bowed out and I'm glad that I did.

NELSON: Who was the other gentlemen?

NIEDERDEPPE: Bill Parsley.

NELSON: He basically set up and was responsible for transition of commercial to the computer automated age.

NIEDERDEPPE: That's right, exactly. And he and I were the two that went to this school for that specific reason and I told him at the time, "It's all yours, I don't want to have anything to do with it. Go for it." And he did, and, of course, he did a great job.

NELSON: Well that was near the end of your career too, this consideration - you saw that coming too, I guess?

NIEDERDEPPE: Well yes. Let's see, when was this? This was probably around the middle 1960's wouldn't you say, when the Department went into this computerization. In fact they had a false start. Do you remember they had a false start. The first contractor couldn't do the job, so they lost about a year or something like that and then finally they went to IBM.

NELSON: And I guess meter reading has been revolutionized, too, to a great extent?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, when we were in on all of that, there was a sort of an ongoing debate in our division about automating the meter readers in one form or another and there were umpteen different schemes and ideas and equipment to use and I can't tell you how many meetings we had where we examined this equipment with the hope that one day we'd find something. And I haven't any idea what they do now, but I know the people around here have a little box and they just do their punching on like a calculator machine

thing and that's great and that's the way it should be. We never got around to it in my career.

NELSON: In 1980 you retired.

NIEDERDEPPE: It must have happened shortly thereafter then.

NELSON: So tell us what you did, you retired in 1980 and what have you done since?

NIEDERDEPPE: In the beginning, I stayed in Rotary for a while. I like that kind of activity so I was commuting back and forth to the weekly Rotary meetings there in Van Nuys for a while and then I got tired of the traveling so I transferred my club membership to the Glendale club, so I was in the Glendale club for a while as well.

Also it was about that time that I decided to learn a skill. As I mentioned before, Dorothy and I have been in the musical end of church activities most of our lives and over the years, from time to time, I would see somebody sitting at a piano, tuning it and it was a great curiosity that I had. What does a piano tuner do? How do they do that? What are they listening for? And stuff like that. So I decided to find out so I went to school, went to college for a while and picked up some of the skills and attended a whole bunch of piano guild meetings and this sort of thing, sort of got into it and started tuning pianos and I built up a little business there in Glendale. I had a little thing going, by golly.

But then when we decided to move down here to Escondido, we hadn't been down here but a few days and I received a phone call of somebody that belonged to the country club over there that we didn't even know and they said, "I'd like you to come and tune my piano." I don't know how they got my name or knew about it at all and I suddenly came to a realization that this might be a good time to cut this off, because I could see nothing but a great deal of pressure ahead.

An interesting thing I learned in piano tuning, there aren't that many piano tuners around, so you build up sort of a little clientele and it has a tendency to grow naturally more from the word of mouth than any other way and I didn't want that much time taken away from other things so I dropped it when I got down here. I just cut it off. But that was an interesting experience. I found out what a piano tuner did.

NELSON: How long does it take to learn to be a piano tuner?

NIEDERDEPPE: Well I was in school for a couple of years. That is part-time and then you practiced a lot too. You did as much of that as you could, school pianos, things like that. A lot of help from the teacher and, of course, he had his eye on everybody too and you can tell those that are more interested in actually getting into it than others that were in the class that were just there for information purposes only, would never consider or apply it in any way, just for their own information.

So I had a lot of help from him and he helped me along. He directed me to a couple of large piano distributors. They have to have their pianos tuned all the time in their display areas and things like that. So I had a lot of help, but I could also see that it was getting too big for me for my liking and so I knocked it off when I got down here. That was an interest.

I served on Glendale Parking Commission. Became it's president. In fact, at my retirement, the city advisor to the Parking Commission was there and presented me with a parking meter. I have it on the desk around the corner there. So that was fun.

NELSON: And it was not red flag up, I hope.

NIEDERDEPPE: The flag is there, you got to put a coin in if you don't want to see the red flag. So let's see, what else. Another interesting experience I had while I was in Glendale, again associated with our church, I was asked to serve on the Board of Directors of the Solheim Lutheran Home in Eagle Rock. I served on that board for a number of years and, of course, resigned when we moved out here. I was president of the board for the prior three years or so before we moved down here. I guess I'd have to admit that I sort of stirred things up when I became chairman, because first of all you have to realize the background of a Lutheran home internal structure. The board of directors was almost always made up of the clergy with a few exceptions.

When I got on the board and I had any influence at all in discussing these matters, I convinced the board that this probably was not in the best interest of the home. What I wanted to do was to get the local community involved in the board. All we needed was one clergyman. We don't need nine or eight and there are all kinds of great people out there - a lot of talent and know-how that would much better serve on the board than having all clergyman as good as they all are. Many clergymen don't have all that much background in finances and the really important things. They're good people. People oriented, but there are other things that they lack in.

So anyway, I sold that to the board and since I left there now, the board is made up, except for one or two clergymen, they're made up of such people as the president of the local Chamber of Commerce, a couple of bank presidents in the area and stuff like that and it's really great. They had a building program that they completed not too many years ago now, just a few years ago where they floated a million dollar bond issue, especially designed for that purpose that we didn't otherwise know about, but it was brought about by the knowledge of some of the board members from the outside. It was a successful thing to do. It turned out to be very positive.

When we came down here, of course, we joined the country club across the street and at the present time, I'm president of the Franchise Commission here in Escondido. Now the Franchise Commission oversees the operations of taxi's, ambulances, trash pickup, Dimension Cable Television, so that's been really

interesting knowing about some of these operations that otherwise one doesn't get too close to.

NELSON: You've stayed very active then in people work haven't you?

NIEDERDEPPE: Yes, I'm President of the Men's Golf Association across the street this year. That's as bad as most anything I think. Trying to satisfy all these golfers. Also I'm serving on the Finance Committee of the Homeowners Association and I was it's first president in 1985 and 1986.

NELSON: You moved down here in what year?

NIEDERDEPPE: 1984. April, 1984.

NELSON: Well, how would you sum up your 41 years with the Department of Water and Power, Gerry?

NIEDERDEPPE: I surely would have to say it was a most interesting and satisfying career from the very beginning. I enjoyed every bit of the time I had with the Department. I thought it was great. I just was enthusiastic about everything I did most of the time. I had fun right up to the last inning. Well thank you very much.

NELSON: Well thank you very much.