

Rawlins: I guess the first thing was that we were about to talk about was sort of how you first heard about the Wagonwheel issue. Did you hear it from the newspaper, from somebody here locally?

Bousman: Well, we first heard about it, the cattlemen had a, their annual meeting down at Big Piney. And I got ahold of a draft Environmental Impact Statement. I forget who gave it to me, but it disturbed me an awful lot mainly because of our dam at Boulder Lake that we just finished building. And in their impact statement they put a value on that dam of \$150,000, and it cost in excess of a half a million dollars. Then we became aware of the Price-Anderson Act, which limits the liability for any atomic incident to \$5,000. Which is all you could be paid. So this bothered me a lot. That, plus the fact that they were going to, they wanted to flare the gas for a year. And it was going to drop out all the tritium, cesium 137, and so forth and so on, on the people that lived downwind. And this, this Wagonwheel well is only ten miles down the road here, you know, below Boulder. So hell, that bothered the hell out of me. And then I feel that it was probably Sally Mackey and Doris Burzlander that started the Wagonwheel Information Committee, and they asked me to attend. And that first meeting, I don't recall who was there, but I'm sure there's minutes of it. You could look that up. And we started holding regular meetings on this thing. And as I started to say before, the cattlemen had a meeting down at Big Piney. And there were in excess of 1,000 people that attended this, because they were going to discuss this Wagonwheel project. And they had called, called in, and I think Jim Noble was involved in this and maybe, I forget who was the president of the association, it may have been Phil Morency, but

they had some experts, radiation experts, and people on both sides that came out with the pros and cons on this thing. And it was being pushed by the boys at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory. It's where the idea came up. And then El Paso, you know, had all these leases here on the mesa, and their idea was they had to loosen and crack all that sandstone to get the gas into the well. And at that time, they had already had the first test down in New Mexico. And they had had another one at Rifle, Colorado. And the results of both

of those were inconclusive or a failure. And we got really stirred up about it because it was apparent it was going to do a lot of damage to Sublette County. And we were able, after we got knowledgeable about this and had looked into it, and we talked to lots of experts, knowledgeable people, that it was real bad for Sublette County. Well, it happened that the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission at that time was Schlesinger, and he was on a tour over in Idaho Falls to that Arco facility over there. And he was questioned about Wagonwheel, and he made the statement that if the people of Sublette County didn't want it they wouldn't have to have it. Well, that was some encouragement. So what we did in response to that was, there was an election coming up and we wanted to hold a poll, a straw vote of all the people in the county, how they felt about Wagonwheel. Well, Governor Stan Hathaway was for it. And so was Thyra Thompson, who was the secretary of state. So as a consequence of that and through one or two local people in Pinedale that were in favor of it, they required us to conduct our straw poll at least fifty feet away from the polling places. Well, what we did, we had all the ministers in Sublette County count the votes. And when, we got quite a little publicity out of it.

Rawlins: Who, who thought that up? Who thought of having the ministers count the votes?

Bousman: I can't tell you who thought it up. I believe it was either one of three people. I think either Mary Ann Steele or Doris Burzlander or Sally. They deserve a lot of credit. But at any rate, the vote turned out four to one opposed to Project Wagonwheel. So as a consequence of that, the feeling that we had support and had become a lot more knowledgeable about this thing, we had people

call us from Nevada, telling us about underground tests that had vented to the surface. That the government wouldn't admit. Do you follow me?

Rawlins: Oh, yeah.

Bousman: So it became apparent that you couldn't trust what they were telling you. You couldn't believe the bastards. So at any rate, we invited Cliff Hansen, who was our senator then, to meet with us.

Which he did. We had a big turnout and a meeting one night with the Wagonwheel committee. And when we got through talking to Cliff about this and made our case, he agreed that we were entitled to have a hearing back in Washington about this thing, with the El Paso Natural Gas Company, Atomic Energy Commission, and everybody that was involved. Well, even before the meeting took place it, kind of an odd thing in a way, we got the Conservation Districts in the state, starting in this county. And at their state convention in Cheyenne, we wanted them to pass a resolution in opposition to nuclear stimulation and specifically Project Wagonwheel. Well, they would have got that passed but the governor, Hathaway, jumped up in Cheyenne at this banquet meeting and opposed it. So rather than alienate him they never passed it. And this --

Rawlins: But they didn't vote in favor, either. They just didn't vote.

Housman: No. They just killed that thing. So this was a time, at a dance right after that, I, one of the SES guys or somebody, introduced me to Governor Hansen. And he proceeded to lecture me. He says, "We'll try to make you people as whole as possible." "But," he says, "if we don't go ahead with this, the Russians are going to get us." Now, what he meant by that, at that time El Paso was trying to make a deal with Russia to develop their gas fields in Siberia. And he thought that we would become so dependent on them for natural gas that they would dominate us. See, the official government position then was that there is no more natural gas to be found. In the world. And there was a movement about that time, El Paso Natural Gas borrowed several billion dollars from investment bankers in Chicago, I forget their name, and built some tankers to bring liquified

gas from Algeria to the east coast. They went ahead with that. But in the course of this meeting down at Cheyenne, I met a guy at the bar. Got to talking to him, and he was with Dames and Moore in San Francisco that did the seismic studies here in Sublette County. Well, the impact statement says they looked at every bridge, every tower, every dam within a 25-mile radius. But they never looked at Silver Lake. It wasn't mentioned. So at any rate, this guy and I lived

at the same hotel in Marrakesh, Morocco. And knew people that were common friends, and told me, he says, "Don't let them bullshit you." He says, "We looked at everything they told us to look at." You see. But they'd skipped the dam, and they didn't want to send anybody up there to look at it and take pictures of it, or admit that it even existed. And it's a dam that couldn't be replaced because it had been made into a wilderness area, and if it washes out they can't go in and rebuild it.

Rawlins: And it's an earth-filled dam too.

Bousman: It's an earth-filled dam. So when we got to —

Rawlins: Just [?]. What, now, when you said something about being in Marrakesh, was this when you were in the service?

Bousman: Yeah. Yeah. From World War II. We stayed in the same hotel.

Rawlins: Okay.

Bousman: So this guy gave me quite a lot of confidential information. And he worked for the company, at Dames and Moore Engineering out of San Francisco.

Rawlins: Sounds like you do some of your best undercover work in bars.

Bousman: (Laughs.) Well. At any rate, a day or two before our meeting back in New York, Schlesinger got appointed to the CIA, to head it. And they put, Nixon put Dixie Lee Ray in there as chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. Schlesinger had agreed to meet with us, with the whole, all of the Atomic Energy Commission they could get together. So Dixie Lee Ray wouldn't meet with us because she didn't know anything about it. She's a fish

biologist. So we think that we won all the debates. And Cliff, we'd asked Cliff Hansen to chair the meeting. And we started off by making El Paso Natural Gas Company real mad. The chairman, president, right on down, they had, the whole caboodle was there. Even their historian was there.

Rawlins: And this, now, this was in Washington, D.C.

Bousman: This was in Washington in a Senate hearing room. And Cliff Hansen, when we asked him to chair the meeting, we asked him if he would ask El Paso to dispense with a big, long lecture about an energy crisis. Because we were well aware that there was an energy crisis. So there was no argument or difference of opinion there, you see. And he did. And that, they had a big, long, they wanted to use up all the time that was allotted lecturing us about an energy crisis.

Rawlins: Sort of with their, their prepared presentation.

Bousman: Yeah. Yeah. That screwed them all up on that. So ~

Rawlins: Now, that was Cliff Hansen?

Bousman: Yeah.

Rawlins: Or that was McGee? Was Gale McGee at the meeting?

Bousman: Gale McGee, I don't remember if he was at the meeting. See, he was a Democrat. Cliff Hansen was a Republican, and he set up all these various meetings with DEQ and BLM. It happened that a guy that used to be the BLM manager here in Pinedale was the head of the BLM then. I knew him personally, had dealt with him. And he was sympathetic, real sympathetic. I'm trying to think of his name. They named this spring right, Willow Spring out here, after him on their maps.

Rawlins: Hmm. I'll have to, I could probably, it doesn't, the name Brubaker pops into my mind.

Bousman: No. He was a state director. I'm trying to think of this guy's name. I'll think of it. If I could dig out a map and look at it, that would remind me

of his name.

Rawlins: Uh-huh.

Bousman: But at any rate, we had kind of an opportunity. I wouldn't say how well I handled it. That's for others to decide. But we hadn't been going along very long till Cliff Hansen got notified he had to go vote in the Senate and he asked me to chair the meeting. And here's a big room of big-shot oil executives, and what the hell do I know about

chairing a meeting. Yeah. You know. But at any rate, we had our string of witnesses. Ken Perry made a real good presentation, and I think Doris and Sally and Mary Ann Steele. And we all had a part of it. John Perry Barlow went too. And finally we got to talking about this Price-Anderson act, and just a week before somebody had sent us a clipping out of a newspaper from down at Rifle, Colorado that, where some guy had a motel down there that was damaged by that experiment. Somewhere around six on the Richter scale. And they settled it out of court. Well, I was questioning the general counsel for the Atomic Energy Commission, and he made the statement that there had been no claims of any kind. And I whipped that copy of that out of my pocket and read it. And he stuttered and stammered about that for a long time. Well, then, I think really the thing that maybe convinced him, and I've never seen him since or corresponded with him, was that I'd made the statement that because I felt this way, it was only common sense, that nobody could tell me that you can shake a dam, an earth-filled dam, 6.8 on the Richter scale, ten times a year over a ten-year period, without shortening the useful life of the dam. And there was no way, under the law, that we could be paid for that. Because of this Price-Anderson Act. Here was his answer: he says, "You know, we never thought of that." If you can believe that. And this guy, you can look up his name, he went on to become Secretary of the Army. So that was a —

Rawlins: Huh. And, now that was the fellow, he was the general counsel for the AEC.

Bousman: General counsel for the AEC.

Rawlins; Okay.

Bousman: So I felt that there were several things happened that were a little nasty. For example, John Chrisman, old John, he's dead now, you know, that had the Chrisman ranch up there.

Rawlins: Mm-hmm. The oil, oil company and the ranch.

Bousman: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. And he had been the president of the Independent Oil Producers for the state of Texas. Pretty influential. And real

knowledgeable about hydraulic fracturing, you know, which was a little bit new then. And Texas A&M University had come out with a kind of a new method in their research, and he was explaining that. And the president of El Paso Natural Gas just jumped all over John. And I think they felt, because he was in the oil business, that he was a traitor or something. You know. Being opposed to them on this. And I've often wondered what happened to him in this regard, because I know that he had a bunch of gas wells down by Farmington, New Mexico. And was selling the gas to El Paso Natural Gas Company. Well, I'm sure they retaliated against him some way. I've got no way of knowing it, but I feel it in my gut that they did. Because they were bitter, bitter mad. Well, Senator McGee was real helpful, in a sense. He took us all to dinner in the Senate dining room and made a little speech to us. And he told his chief of staff in his office to give us anything we wanted. They would type letters, we had that whole office, you might say, at our disposal there for two or three days. Well, when we got all through and left there, and this left a bad taste in everybody's mouth, they sent word to us that they wanted to meet, to meet with us before we left town.

Rawlins: Mm-hmm. Who, now who sent word?

Bousman: Gale McGee's chief of staff. And he was from Cheyenne, a great, big, kind of a sandy-headed guy. And I can't even recall his name. Sally Mackey would know him. You could ask her. But what he told us was, you know, since we went back there, part of us in a private airplane and the Swifts went with us, they had the idea, McGee did, that everybody was a bunch of millionaires. He was going to get some big campaign contributions. Because what he said, he says, "You people have

got to understand that how much Senator McGee helps you depends on how much you're willing to help Senator McGee."

Rawlins: Oh. So the fact Chrisman and the Swifts and those people were back there, he figured he had some big

Bousman: Well, he thought there was, he thought there was some big bucks involved, he'd get some big

campaign contributions. Well, that even, that turned even the Democrats off. You see, Sally Mackey's a Democrat. So, but Teno really was the one that pushed hardest. After that. I think this meeting, and I don't know who did it, I'm trying to think of her name, there was a gal on that committee that had some connections.

Rawlins: On the Wagonwheel?

Rawlins: On the Wagonwheel committee.

Rawlins: Phyllis Burr, maybe?

Bousman: Phyllis Burr.

Rawlins: Uh-huh.

Bousman: Phyllis Burr made some telephone calls. And she set up this Today thing for me to debate it with Phil Randolph, who was going to be in charge of this Wagonwheel shot.

Rawlins: Now, was this a whole separate trip?

Bousman: No, same trip. Same trip. So one morning we went over and did that thing. But it was pretty short. But I think I come across more as telling the truth than Phil did. And I did. I quoted out of the god dang impact statement a lot, you know. And the thing, another thing that made me mad about it, and I thought was dishonest, you'll notice if you'll compare the two impact statements, the draft statement tells about all this tritium and whatnot that will fall out on us. We won't be able to drink the milk from our own milk cows. We won't be able to eat her meat, how it goes through the food chain and all this stuff. And there's no answer or explanation in the final impact statement. They just completely ignore

that section.

Rawlins: So they just took it out.

Bousman: Just take it out. Took it out.

Rawlins: At that timeline, most of the people around here probably were slaughtering a lot of their beef, and using the milk from their own cows.

Bousman: Oh, they were. Everybody. Everybody. Sure. A lot of people had milk cows. And, you know, ate their own beef and this sort of thing. So I thought that was dishonest on their part. And when they called them, when I called those guys in El Paso about, you know, they'd missed this Silver Lake dam. "Oh, big surprise." What bullshit. You know, it was all on the map. They didn't want to pay the cost of, of sending a crew up there. So they did. Finally after that, Joe Thomas got a pack trip out of the deal. Len, I was up on the mountain in the summer, the next summer with Susie on a pack trip. And I bumped into them, they was taking old Phil Randolph, their nuclear physicist, up to look at Silver Lake. (Laughs.) I don't know if they had anybody from Dames and Moore there or not, you know, to study the seismic problems that might happen with them. But they were not very honest about the whole thing. But Teno Roncalio got into it to the extent that he hired a nuclear physicist to work for him on this thing. And became real knowledgeable. And I might relate a little thing that happened to show you how, indicate how thorough he was. The year following our meeting, I think this was probably '74, they had a, what they called a Tri-state Fossil Fuel Energy Conference in Denver at the Brown Palace Hotel. Nelson Rockefeller was the keynote speaker. And one of these companies, I forget which one, had a big oil shale proposition. Used up part of the time. They maintained that this oil shale right down here in Colorado by the Wyoming line? That they could produce oil from that shale for seven dollars a barrel. With a process they were going to use. The heads of all the major oil companies were there. This friends of ours, or friend, who was a biochemist at the University of Colorado, Peter Metzger, who's written two or three books about the Atomic Energy Commission, a real expert, he was one of the

panelists on that thing. And it was to honor this Dr. Edward Teller, you know, the father of the H-bomb. All the guys from Los Alamos Laboratories were there. And there was some time devoted to Wagonwheel. Well, Teno was on the program. And they gave him, I think, five minutes. And he made the point, I was the only one there from the Wagonwheel committee that went down to that, except Phelps Swift. And he was there, he went on it.

Rawlins: And this was after, how long was this after your Washington trip?

Bousman: This was, well, I can't tell you the dates on it.

Rawlins: But the same year.

Bousman: Or the following summer, or spring and summer. Seems like it was in the summer. But at any rate, Teno got up and said if they took all the energy that they were going to use in this one Wagonwheel shot, and ran it through an atomic power plant, it would produce electricity for the state of Wyoming for a full year. Well, immediately Edward Teller, he used to be the head of Los Alamos Laboratories, they called him the father of the H-bomb, but he's given to wild statements about what's possible and what isn't possible. He jumped up and cut Teno off right at the pockets. Said, "That's not true. You're crazy. You're way out of line." He no sooner finished than the head of Los Alamos Laboratories in New Mexico got up and told Dr. Teller, "The way he worded it, Teno Roncalio is right." Well, that was kind of a, created a little bit of excitement on the thing. Just kind of an interesting —

Rawlins: Yeah, having a congressman arguing with the, with Teller.

Bousman: But Teno had done his homework on that thing. And also back there, Kathy Karpan helped us quite a little. She was working for Teno then, on his staff. So after that, here's an, I'll relate another little deceptive way they operated. They were going to have the Rio Blanco shot. A test. Down in Colorado, western Colorado, towards Meeker. So they invited people from Pinedale to go, the ones that were in favor of it. And there were, and general public I guess, but nobody on

the Wagonwheel committee were allowed. They didn't want us. But the, we had become real well acquainted with the boys at Los Alamos, or at Lawrence Laboratories in California, Lawrence Livermore. And they invited us. So there were a group of us went down. I took a car down and Ken Perry flew down to Craig with several people. And we had my car to run around in. So we, everybody was at the observation point, as close as they would let you get to the shot. And right after

the shot, soon as it went off, why there was a waiting period while they cleared the road. They had to run motor graders over those roads to blade the rocks off. You know, this sort of thing. Well, as soon as they were cleared, why we took off. So we're among the first, you know, to get down there, the public. Well, about a mile away from the shot there was an old historic rock schoolhouse. And they had put new mortar in it before this thing took place, in the outside. And it was kind of a national historic site. Well, when we got there, here's a engineering company from Grand Junction that's bringing out, out of the building, all the bracing. Planks, timbers. They had that thing braced on the inside like you wouldn't believe. We watched them take it out and put it on their truck and drove off. Okay. About thirty minutes later here comes the El Paso bus with some Pinedale people on it. Including Jim Noble and some other people, I don't remember who they were. They said, "See? It didn't hurt the schoolhouse at all."

Rawlins: Uh-huh.

Bousman: Do you see what I mean?

Rawlins: Yes.

Bousman: Well, I think that's deceptive. But it sets —

Rawlins: Well, do you know, it makes me curious. Do you think that possibly, you know, having, I guess this was, you know, long enough after World War II and the Korean War that you wouldn't think these guys would still be operating in a wartime fashion. But that almost sounds like the kind of thing that you do to deceive the enemy.

Bousman: Well, it does.

Rawlins: You know, you use camouflage, you —

Bousman: Oh, it does. It does sound that way. And we were lectured. They invited us down into the Atomic Energy meeting room underneath the Capitol. And Nixon's energy experts briefed us. He says, "There is no more natural gas to be found." Well, that goes against common sense. Because, and I think this is one of the things that convinced

Cliff Hansen too that it was maybe all bullshit they were putting out, was the fact that the state geologist puts out an annual mineral yearbook. And in that, up until 1973, there had only been three percent of the state of Wyoming had been explored for oil and gas. Well, who can say there is no more when there's been that limited amount of exploration? And now look, we've got it running out our ears, can't sell it, so much of it. And we had a meeting, I had a nice meeting with Nixon's energy advisor, who was Earl Butz, his secretary of agriculture who was also supposedly an expert on energy. And he gave us, well, really, a meeting with him lasted about 45 minutes. I really enjoyed visiting with him except for the interruptions of one of Nixon's aides, some young punk in his twenties that thought he knew everything. So we had some real good meetings back there. And I have felt good about it, really, ever since. I mean, the way everybody conducted theirselves and the things we had to say we could back up. And the following summer I met Cliff again at rodeo in Pinedale, and was visiting with him, and he told me that this Wagonwheel committee had been the most effective group he'd seen from the state of Wyoming since he'd been in the Senate. And he was in there, I think, for eighteen years. So that, I felt real good about that. But I think the people that really held that committee together and worked at it day and night that deserved probably most of the credit would be, I would name three. I'd say Mary Ann Steele, Doris Burzlander, and Sally Mackey. Those three. We got Sally's husband, John, he incorporated our little group so we'd be a nonprofit corporation. And we still are. We still have a little money that they felt like we should save for if anything more ever came up where there was a need for an organization of that type, why we'd have a start. So after that things

just kind of, I forget, they just finally gave up
on the damned thing.

Rawlins: Mm-hmm. Now, did, before you —

Bousman: Oh, we did have, we did have one more meeting [?].

Rawlins: Mm-hmm. Did you have a victory celebration or
anything like that?

Bousman: No. No, we didn't do that. By this time, the university had gotten interested in it and they wanted this hour-long television program down in Cheyenne. And I think I mentioned it to you the other night. And we did, I wouldn't say it was a dirty trick, but we were really laying for the guy. That wasn't, the only one that was truly, that I know of, that was truly in favor of it was Vern Delgado. And, you see, at Republican county meeting the fall before, he'd made the statement that if El Paso Natural Gas company spent ten million dollars down there he was going to get four of it. So we tipped our lawyer off to that. And this was all, it's had all been taped. I've got a tape of part of it if I can find it. They had expert witnesses on each side. And when our lawyer, and he's practicing law in Rock Springs now, he's married to John Arambel's sister, can't think of his name. But at the time he was a senior law student.

Not Jim Magagna.

No. No. Ah, what the hell is it? John Crow knows him, I know him. But at any rate, we tipped him off to this. So when he got Vernon on there, he asked him if he stood to make any financial gain from this project. "Oh, no. No. No." And you won't believe what he said. So then he come out and read off, "At the Republican county convention, didn't you make the statement if El Paso spent ten million dollars you would make four of it?" And he turned kind of white and he said, "No. It was one million." I've got that on tape. I've never tried to embarrass him about the damned thing.

He was probably embarrassed enough for it to last a little while. I mean, he —

Well, he was. 'Cause we had some sharp ones. We had two real sharp guys. It's Pete Metzger and David Evans, the guy that proved the Army caused that earthquake down in Denver. He's a friend of John Chrisman. They went to geology school together.

Who else, just, just, just to, besides Vernon Delgado, who else around here was pretty strongly in favor?

Bousman: I don't know, Sulenta was kind of on the fence. John Sulenta. Oh, at Big Piney there were a lot of them. Oh, hell, Danny Budd was for it. The, now what's his name, the mayor in Marbleton. Oh, he's —

Rawlins: ?

Bousman: No. Ah. Two brothers, one of them worked for the school. He has a bar, and he had a drugstore and had the Marbleton Inn [?]. Was county commissioner with [?] all over. Ah. Tanner. Tanner. Tanner boys. They were all for it. They thought they were going to make a pile of money out of that thing. There were several in Big Piney that were for it. But they always supported whatever the oil patch wanted to do down there, you know. They had that mentality.

Rawlins: Mm-hmm. So there was a, there was a fairly distinct sort of a, oh, divide between the general opinion in Pinedale and maybe the general opinion in there. When you had the straw poll, were people over there polled too or was it all the county election places?

Bousman: Well, there were some opposed. One guy, he works up the Green River now and I think worked for the Forest Service, got fired from El Paso for speaking out of, in opposition to it. I'm trying to think of his name. He worked up, he worked for Kearney quite a while up the Green River. He still lives up there, up in that [?] country, works. They can tell you, Sally can tell you. My memory ain't worth a damn. I didn't know the guy personally. I've met him since. But there was an element in Big Piney that was in favor of it. But they weren't knowledgeable about it. Jim Greenwood was in favor of it. I think they probably since, you know, changed their mind

after, you know, it got further along. And we had some more help. What's this old lady's name, and I know her, she's up in her nineties now, owns that land. Orchid. Mrs. Orchid. What's her first name. Has that Orchid subdivision up above the cemetery, on that hill? She had been a librarian, at, in New Mexico at Los Alamos Laboratories. And she explained to us exactly what would happen, you know, when the shot went off. And that there was going to be three 100-

kiloton bombs. And they said they had a sequential firing system. But they really didn't. Because the guy that invented the goddamned thing sent word to us that it wasn't reliable, wasn't finished. It was a theory from somebody at Jackson, and a lot of this was kind of secret and you couldn't find out much more about it. But people kept getting, we even had a letter from the prime minister of New Zealand. I've got a little news account from a guy from Alaska that come down here that ran for president that year, that was trying to help us. He wrote a little news, I've got it in there in my room, a little news article. We thought he was kind of a nut. He was a veteran of World War I who lived in Alaska. We heard from all kinds of people about this damned thing.

Rawlins: You know, when you, when you got involved in all this, had you ever had much experience before that at public speaking or politics or anything sort of like that?

Bousman: No. No. The only, the only thing I had, I spent a year and a half in Africa as a briefing officer. And I had to get up every morning and brief fifty or sixty guys, pilots and navigators, on navigation to wherever they were going. I'd have to make them out a thirty-minute speech and answer all their questions. So I'm not a public speaker, make no, you know, pretense about it. I, hell, I only had one semester of college.

Rawlins: Where, where did you go?

Bousman: I went to Springfield, Missouri. It's Southwest Missouri State now. But I took, the smartest thing I ever did in my life. I'd been out of high school four years, see, I graduated when I was sixteen. And my mother wanted to build a new

house and wanted me to come back there and help her. So I did one summer and I'd got involved with this packing in these prospectors up here to these, to this molybdenum mine up here by Tipple Peak. And I got it in my head I'd like to be a mining engineer. So I applied for admission to Rolla School of Mines, which is a real good school at Rolla, Missouri. And I couldn't get in, so I knew I had to have some more mathematics. So I got the idea, well, hell, I'll go to school and take all the math courses I could. Which I did.

I took just straight mathematics for one semester. And if I hadn't have had that, I never would have got in that aviation cadet program. Because if you didn't, if you never had two years of college, you had to take a written exam. So I had to take the written exam when I applied for it. But all of this was kind of fresh, see?

Rawlins: Mm-hmm. You tore up the mathematics [?]

Bousman: It, it was loaded with math. So I got by. And if I hadn't have gotten a commission and got to be a navigator, I never would have saved enough money to get started in the god danged dude outfit up there at Boulder Lake. See, I saved, I saved fifteen thousand bucks the last year I was in the service. That's what I gave for that Boulder Lake ranch.

Rawlins: Right. That's pretty good.

Bousman: That's why I say that —

Rawlins: We're about run out here, this thing over. Let me, let me flip this thing over.

Bousman: So I'd say that's about the smartest thing I ever did in my life.

Rawlins: Well, I wish I knew what the smartest thing I ever did in my life was! [Side Two.] Okay, it looks like we're going here. And that is, we were talking about the fact that you weren't really a public speaker and other than being a briefer, briefing instructor for the Air Corps, you hadn't really done much. And after this, and then to be in Washington on a television show and speaking in a Congressional hearing room and things like that, did you sort of feel like you discovered some abilities in yourself that you hadn't known about

before? To talk to people and influence them and make a difference?

Bousman: Well, I don't know. I feel like that if I know what I'm talking about, if I know the subject matter, that I can put up a pretty good argument. In fact, I forget the year but it was the Republican state convention in Cheyenne and I was a delegate. And I introduced a resolution in opposition to Wagonwheel and got it passed.

Before it passed, Cliff Hansen was in attendance. And I could see several of them questioning him about it, and when it came to a vote it did pass. Ask Bob Lelonde maybe about that. I attended 1980 Republican convention in Detroit, that nominated Reagan. And Bob Lelonde was also a delegate from Jackson. I got pretty well acquainted with him then. And I had to make a speech to some club in Rock Springs a time or two, just a talk about Wagonwheel and answer everybody's questions. But I felt like we'd studied that thing so much and had had so much advice from experts that I did know something about it.

Rawlins: Mm-hmm. Well, now, I get a feeling from talking to, oh, for instance Sally, Sally Mackey. She does her homework wonderfully well, and she, you know, she works really hard and she clips things and files them and does all this behind the scenes stuff. But I get the impression she's not very comfortable speaking out, and it seemed as if, in some way or other you sort of end up being marked out as a, as a natural leader in this thing.

Bousman: That may, you'd have to ask other people about that. I, I just don't know. But I had good support.

Rawlins: Well, when did you run for county commissioner?

Bousman: Well, I ran once the following year. I think '76. '76 or '77, I got beat the first time. There was a lot of bitterness from, because of Wagonwheel. Especially with people down at Big Piney. Because we had some pretty rough arguments with those people. Paul Schurbel included by the way, and he's later, I'm sure, has changed his mind and became a friend. I've debated this thing with him. But then I was elected in 1980, and I was re-elected in 1984. So I felt like they, after I

had been there one term, why, they could judge what I, knew what I was going to do, how I felt about things. And evidently some people thought I did all right.

Rawlins: Now when, now when you for instance later went on during the negotiations over the Sheep Creek gas plant and then the Riley Ridge field, weren't you one of the commissioners that negotiated some of the agreements?

Bousman: Well, yeah, I was. I was on the commission and I was the chairman of the commission when we wrote the bonds for Exxon. Forty million dollars worth of bonds from Sublette County. And Exxon promise you the moon, you know. They had us believing that they'd be paying so much taxes in Sublette County, we could pave all the roads in the county. And there'd be lots of money. And oh, they were, what a good neighbor they were going to be. They bought a cop car for the city, they paid for one employee in the courthouse, and they did this and that for Marbleton and Big Piney. But, and this, they don't like to talk about this, the towns can't write these municipal bonds, or pollution control bonds. It had to be the county. The same way in Lincoln County. Well, they wanted us to write forty millions worth of bonds and they were going to pay us. If we would do that, they'd pay us a couple of hundred thousand dollars. And there's no liability for the county. They're all guaranteed.

Rawlins: They pay this directly to the county.

Bousman: What?

Rawlins: They'd pay that directly to the county.

Bousman: No, they'd pay off the bonds. The whole company was behind it. So Lincoln County wrote a hundred million dollars. So I did have to go back to New York and sign the bonds at Salomon Brothers. 'Course they wined us and dined us because they made a pile of, they got three quarters of one percent just for writing, for handling those things. We no sooner, Gordon Johnson went with me too, he was County [?] then. But I had to sign.

Rawlins: He was [?] veteran?

Bousman: Yeah. And he was another one of the commissioners, just newly elected. But at any rate, we'd no sooner signed the god danged bonds and probably an hour later, and Salomon Brothers, they had a bunch of their vice presidents, they'd wined us and dined us, taking us around touring their facility there. It was pretty damned big, one of the biggest. And we went by a guy's desk and he mentioned he just sold the Sublette County bond for 6.8 percent interest, I think it was, to

ell South bought them. Okay. Pollution control equipment, see, is not taxable in the state of Wyoming. So they didn't need this money for a couple of more years. So they immediately, we didn't find this out till about a month later, another head financial lawyer came through Pinedale, stopped in to visit with us, says, "What have you, what are you making on our Sublette County's forty million bucks? I'll bet you're getting fifteen percent interest on it." "No. We're only getting thirteen and a half." See, they were able, and this is legal, to put that money out on interest real quick. Interest rates were high then, you know, up to eighteen, twenty percent. They were getting over thirteen percent, at any rate they were netting over five percent interest on forty million dollars. For two years. Well, the point is, this more than paid for all their mitigation things that they had done for this school district and the county and, you know, and the towns. For the whole damned project. And think of what they did with Lincoln County. They got a hundred million bucks out of Lincoln County on those bonds. And immediately got it loaned out at a big rate of interest. So their mitigation didn't cost them anything. Well, what was, made me mad after, and I think probably that Exxon didn't know in the beginning, but you know Wyoming gas is taxed at the wellhead. That has always been the law. And we don't know what kind of a break these bastards down there on that Board of Equalization had been giving, it was all verbal, had been giving to those two little sour gas plants down by Evanston. Does Chevron have one, and who has the other one? There's two of them down there, see. They're small ones. I forget.

Rawlins: Umm. Yeah. There's Taylor Creek and I'm not sure which ones they are.

Bousman: Well, there's two. Small ones.

Rawlins: Chevron's got one and maybe Amoco might have another one.

Bousman: Amoco's got one of them. But at any rate, soon as they started production they refused, they paid their taxes under protest. And the money had to be put in escrow, couldn't be spent. See, they'd told these school districts, oh, all the money

they would have. You know, tax money? And they said, "Our tax bill should be zilch. Zero. Because the gas at the wellhead is worthless," was their position, see. Well, that made us madder than hell. As commisssioners after all this, all the things they'd told us. Well, now they move all those people out and send in a new bunch of people, you know, to deal with the counties here. So we go down to the legislature and, and, and we get them, make our little spiel, and get a little sympathy. And we got them to pass a law that would require Exxon to pay taxes on that. Well, they immediately sued. They sued the state and Sublette County, and specifically the Sublette County Commissioners.

Rawlins: Huh. I remember that. That was [?]

Bousman: Because, they said, we lobbied the legislature and caused them to pass a law that was unconstitutional. Because it only singled them out. Those legislators didn't want to jump on those little operations down there, you know. They were real sympathetic to the oil companies then. They had a lot of support. But we'd made a pretty good spiel down there, Louie Thomasi and I both, before committees and down at the legislature. Well, Sullivan settled that after about a year and a half, out of court. And they agreed to pay, I think it was ten million for the first year and a half of operation. But in all this dinking around, we find out that there was no written rules, no auditing, not a goddamned thing on those people. It was all word of honor. They figured their own taxes, what they wanted to pay. Paid it to the state, no questions asked. If you can believe that. And they're the crookedest bunch of bastards in the whole wide world. This is absolutely true. Well, since then, you see, the state hired some auditors on their own. The

governor, Herschler, to begin with. And, God, they just picked up money here and money there that these companies had owed and had not paid. And there were no written rules spelled out on the damned thing by the Board of Equalization. See, they collect from all the oil companies and industrial stuff, not the local counties. But our local county, the only thing that fell on us was that dehy site.

Rawlins: Dehydration plant. Mm-hmm.

Bousman: That cost them two hundred and twenty-five million dollars, so they claim. Well, it, there, it wasn't two years in operation till they applied for a twenty-five cent economic obsolescence to reduce their taxes on it. A standard tax rate, according to the cost, the value of the building to last fifty years, you know. You would think, you after, if you got a house you got depreciated out a year at a time, a fraction. Well, they wanted twenty-five percent off, and I'll be goddamned if old Hazel Warner didn't approve it. And we weren't aware of it until it was too damned late. And also approved by the Board of Equalization. Well, then they come back two years later and wanted another twenty-five percent off. Well, we sent John Crow down to, we turned it down. So when the county turns it down, it goes before the state Board of Equalization. And we sent John Crow down there to fight it. And he won. And they didn't get it that time, but the only reason they didn't is they refused to release any figures, financial figures. You know, how can you say you build a facility, the gas is there, the equipment's there to last fifty years and then in two years you want to depreciate it all that, want to reduce the taxes down to nothing on it.

So do you feel like you maybe learned a lesson through the Wagonwheel and then through this later stuff, that, that, you know, people in rural areas in the West, when the government and these big companies come sort of with their hats in their hands, to approach them with quite a bit of skepticism and do your homework?

I would, I would say so. I mean, really beware. I'll tell you a funny thing that happened back in Washington too. Old Bob Dole was there too.

'Course he was running for president then, 1973.
I'll bet I watched that guy shake a thousand
hands, going around shaking hands with everybody.
But some of these big oil guys in favor of
Wagonwheel, gas people, I really don't know who
they were, kind of got us cornered in one of the
hallways. And this guy was telling me, he says,
"You people can make a lot of money." He says,
"We'll buy your ranches. We'll buy you out.
We'll give you a lot of money for your ranch."

And Sally Mackey, or Sally Swift was standing there. And she looked at this guy, got right in his face, and she says, "You can't afford me." (Laughs.) He was a great big guy. He didn't know what the hell to say. She really put him down. But we stayed at a real prestigious place. I can't remember the guy's name, but he had a summer home up here above Pinedale. And he is a member of the Army-Navy Club in Washington. Retired military of some kind. And he let us go back there as his guests. We all stayed at the Army-Navy Club, a real —

Rawlins: This was, this was when the committee went back to Washington.

Bousman: Yeah. Yeah. So did Sally and Phelps Swift. Sally Swift's sister is married to a general who is a member, see. So they went at their own expense, Swifts did, on their own. But they wanted to sit in on all, all the meetings and listen to all this. Which they did. I thought maybe Sally and Doris, especially, and maybe even Mary Ann was going to get us in a little trouble there. Because they were making some noises. They had a rule there that women had to use the back elevator. You can imagine how that went over with them. They couldn't ride the regular elevator with the men. That thing was just loaded with all these old retired admirals and generals that lived there, you know, all the time. All the waiters were Jamaicans, blacker than a goddamned ace of spades, they had them all fancy formal tux and, you know, all that stuff. [End.]