

Regional Oral History Office  
The Bancroft Library

University of California  
Berkeley, California

Richard A. Wilson

RANCHER, CONSERVATIONIST, DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY:

TOWARD A WORKING LANDSCAPE FOR CALIFORNIA  
FROM ROUND VALLEY TO THE REDWOOD FORESTS

Interviews conducted by  
Ann Lage  
2001-2009

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Richard and Susan Wilson, 1980s

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[End of Interview]

## Interview History—Richard A. Wilson

The oral history with Richard A. Wilson was suggested to the Regional Oral History Office in 1994, when Wilson was director of the California State Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The original subject was to be Wilson's role in the defeat of the Dos Rios dam on the Eel River in Mendocino County, a pivotal battle which brought an end to the big-dam era of the California Water Plan. In ensuing discussions, the scope of the oral history was broadened to include Wilson's many significant contributions to the conservation of California's natural resources and environment.

Interview sessions were postponed until Wilson had left his position in Sacramento. The first several interviews took place in August-September 2001 at the remote family retreat Wilson's father built in the 1920s at Henthorne Lake near the headwaters of the Middle Fork Eel River in southeastern Trinity County, California. Our audio taped interviews over three days at the Henthorne retreat explored Wilson's family and education and his timber and ranching experiences in Round Valley and the surrounding area. We discussed the extended story of his work in defeating the Dos Rios dam, which would have flooded Round Valley and the town of Covelo, and his subsequent efforts to build a sustainable community in Covelo, battle timber barons, and foster a working landscape in the area. These discussions complement Ted Simon's 1994 book, *The River Stops Here*,<sup>1</sup> which focuses on Wilson's role in the Dos Rios battle.

In April of 2002, we met once again for three days of interviewing, this time at Richard Wilson's ranch house at Buck Mountain, some fifteen miles out of Covelo. Turning to Wilson's participation in California government, we discussed his membership on the first Coastal Zone Conservation Commission, the California State Board of Forestry, and the Mendocino County Forest Advisory Committee, as well as his presidency of the Planning and Conservation League. He discusses in detail his experiences as director of the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection in the Pete Wilson gubernatorial administration, 1991 to 1999. He came to the department with the mission of promoting the idea of sustainable forestry. Thwarted by myriad political pressures, he nevertheless was able to incorporate a sustained yield plan into the department's regulatory process. He also focused on reorganizing and improving the fire fighting and prevention programs.

During Wilson's tenure as director, Charles Hurwitz and his Maxxam Corporation were rapidly liquidating the ancient redwoods and other timberlands of the historic Pacific Lumber Company, acquired in a hostile takeover. Wilson's department was responsible for developing the sustained yield plan that became part of the Headwaters agreement—a joint federal-state negotiated settlement with Hurwitz that preserved, at great cost, a small area of old-growth redwoods and enshrined a sustained yield plan on the remaining 97 percent of its forest lands. Always uncomfortable with the Headwaters deal, several years after leaving his post Wilson found substantiation for his suspicion of fraud in the company's data submitted for the sustained yield

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<sup>1</sup> Simon, Ted, *The River Stops Here: Saving Round Valley, a Pivotal Chapter in California's Water Wars* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994)

plan and filed a whistle-blower lawsuit. The recording of this story, to be the final chapter in our oral history, had to be postponed for several years while the lawsuit proceeded.

In February of 2004, while Wilson was visiting the Bay Area, we video-recorded a one-hour interview, intended to be an overview of some of the important themes of the oral history. Then, in May 2009, Wilson came again to the Bancroft Library, and video-recorded the full account of his part in and understanding of the Headwaters deal, the lead-up to his lawsuit, and the course and aftermath of the suit. The final topics return to the central themes of Richard Wilson's life and work: the importance of supporting the working landscapes of California and the nation, and the sustainable forest as a metaphor for a sustainable society.

During this decade-long process, Richard Wilson reviewed the transcripts of his oral history, making minimal corrections and adding several substantive remarks, noted in brackets. The full-text transcripts and video clips from this oral history and others in the Regional Oral History Office's extensive collection of interviews can be found online at <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/collections/subjectarea/index.html>. Particularly pertinent to complement the subjects of the Wilson transcript are oral histories with Norman B. Livermore, Lewis H. Butler, and William Gianelli on the Dos Rios campaign; Henry Vaux, Phillip Berry, and David Pesonen on the Board of Forestry and the Department of Forestry; and many others in the Natural Resources, Land Use, and the Environment collection area. Audio and video files of the interviews are available for listening and viewing in the Bancroft Library.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954. ROHO conducts, teaches, analyzes, and archives oral and video history documents in a broad variety of subject areas critical to the history of California and the United States.

Ann Lage  
Interviewer

Berkeley, California  
February, 2012

**Interview #1: August 31, 2001**

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

- Wilson: This is Richard Wilson with Ann Lage from The Bancroft Oral History Library in Berkeley. We are right now at Henthorne Lake, which is on our ranch in Mendocino and Trinity County, Buck Mountain Ranch. We are at Henthorne Lake, in southeast Trinity County, and it's August 31st, Friday, the year 2001. We are commencing a series of interviews and, I guess, monologues for an oral history. Are we ready?
- Lage: We're ready to go. We're starting from the beginning, I hope.
- Wilson: I think what we're going to do is to try to follow an outline that has been broken into about six different categories. The first category, or Roman numeral one, would be on personal background. To start on the background, my origin in the state of California started in Los Angeles, September the 13th, 1933. My mother was Anna Grant, and my father was John Cree Wilson, Anna Grant Wilson being his wife. We, in those days, lived and had a house on Virgil, which was just off Wilshire Boulevard, over not too far from the Silver Lake area.
- My father grew up on a dairy in Orange County. He had one sister, Nellie Vance Wilson. After he got a little older, he aspired to go to medical school. He worked on the Owens Valley Reservoir as a teamster. One of his jobs was to collect all the guys out of the houses of ill-repute and deliver them for work on Monday morning.
- Lage: Was this as a teenager?
- Wilson: Yes. That was kind of his job, whether they were drunk or otherwise, among other things. He worked up there to make some money, and—
- Lage: And this was Owens Valley?
- Wilson: Yes. He eventually went to USC.
- Lage: Can I just ask, was this something that his family was accustomed to? Had any of them gone to college?
- Wilson: No. I don't know that, but I don't think so. I don't have any real—it's very vague. He didn't really talk about this, other than when they lived in Orange County on a dairy he used to hunt ducks on Balboa Island. If you could ever think of Balboa Island today as being nothing but a marsh with ducks—today it's just house to house, cheek to jowl, without a break.
- Lage: Did he talk about working on the dairy farm?

Wilson: No, not really. He obviously liked it because it's something that he—he always loved to have the out-of-doors as part of his life, even when he became a doctor. He went to the University of Southern California and was accepted into the medical school. The medical school went bankrupt, so that class was taken by the University of California, so he graduated from the University of California.

Lage: In San Francisco?

Wilson: In Berkeley.

Lage: Was the medical school in Berkeley then?

Wilson: Well, I don't know that. I can't answer that. Well, in fact, it probably was in San Francisco. He graduated and went back and took his internship and training in Boston. Then he returned to California and had a small apartment that he took on Sunset Boulevard and found out the difficulties of entering a community, whether it's today or anytime; there's always the old-guard doctors and the new Turk on the street, trying to get into a hospital, trying to practice in a hospital. But he began to improve on his practice, and he developed really the first treatment for the club foot. In other words, he was treating these kids and was very successful at that, and eventually—.

Lage: A surgical intervention?

Wilson: Well, yes, and also corrective. He was a person that had tremendous faith in the human capacity to heal. I remember him saying so many times that you never operate; that's the last resort. You always try therapy, or using corrective splints, or something, to try to get things straight, so far as bones, but you don't go to surgery, because when you cut it's never the same after you're through. It's just not as strong. It's just not as good. And that was his way of looking at everything in his practice. He really became one of the top, maybe the top, one of the top orthopedics, certainly, in the United States.

He was a member eventually of the Board of Trustees at the University of Southern California, but he also was on the board of examiners for the younger orthopedic surgeons who were going to take their boards. I remember one [surgeon] telling me one time that he had my father as the person to interview him, and my father put up a bunch of slides on a screen, like an X-ray. He said, "Tell me what this is." And the poor guy said, "I didn't know. I sat there for half-an-hour, just sweating bullets." He finally said, "Dr. Wilson," he said, "I don't know what it is." And my father said, "Neither do I." [laughter] Point made. He didn't try to fool him. Actually, I think it was an X-ray of something off one of the horses he had been working on up here on the ranch. He would occasionally try to fix one of these animals with some surgery. I don't know what it was, but anyway, that was one of those tales that—

Lage: Did he have a good sense of humor?

Wilson: Oh, very good, very dry. Yes, very good sense of humor. He got along extremely well with everybody, whether it was running a hospital, or [being a] surgeon. He was a remarkable man to do what he did, and he was held in really high esteem by those people in that community—the Los Angeles community—because he actually worked at the Good Samaritan Hospital and the Children's—he was the first resident at the Children's Hospital, I believe, in Los Angeles when he came out.

Now my father only had one sister, Nellie Vance. She remained a single spinster all her life, and she was a school teacher in the Los Angeles school system. My mother was a Grant.

Lage: And you wouldn't have known your grandparents.

Wilson: I knew just the grandmother, and that was just—she was gone. It was pretty much over when I was aware of her. My mother, Anna Grant, had a sister—Gertrude and Anna were sisters. Anna died when I was three, so it was after a relatively short period that my father married Marjorie Connell. She was a niece of Michael J. Connell, who basically was really one of the prominent men of Los Angeles in that day. He came from Montana as a lumberman. He had been in the lumber business, and he came to Los Angeles, and he got into the downtown real [estate] while it was the—I don't know what you would call it—the garment district. He had buildings and they had the garment district.

Lage: More as a realtor, or as a—?

Wilson: He actually built the buildings, and his tenants were people in the garment business. Then he also was involved with the Crocker Bank and a number of the old names around it were early Los Angeles. I think he was also a member of the Fish and Game Commission at one point, and it was he and his wife that ultimately set up the Connell Foundation which today I still serve as a vice president on. They basically committed their efforts from the foundation into the cultural—mainly Mrs. Connell was the founder of the symphony, of the Los Angeles symphony. They were committed to the arts, to medicine, to health care in those days, and mainly those were the interests. I think to this day Michael, who is a relative of the originator, Michael J. Connell, continues to—well, for instance, I think he's chairman of KCET, which is [Community Television of Los Angeles]—he's a lawyer, Michael is, and has more or less retired. He's a Harvard graduate, and a lawyer, and has been the managing partner for what used to be the Hastings firm, and then he moved on to—it's a big firm. I'll think of it [Morrison and Foerster]. Anyway, he's more or less retired and he works on the foundation and continues the interest in education, and things like Old Town Pasadena. His wife is interested in art, and she's an

artist, and so we continue to work with—certainly KCET gets a lot of support from the foundation.

My father married, and there were three boys. There was John C., Jr., who was thirteen years older than I am. Then there was Lewis Grant, who was eleven years older. John, Jr., went to Stanford and Harvard Medical School, and Lewis went to Harvard and Harvard Medical School.

Lage: Both of them following in your father's footsteps.

Wilson: John certainly was. He was one of these young men, or boys, that said, "I want to be a doctor," and that's all he ever wanted to be, and it's just the way it was. Lewis is one of those people, I must say, that I—I was awfully young, but I look back on it and I suffer Lewis a bit because I don't think Lewis wanted to be a doctor. I think Lewis wanted to be something else. He had a great mind. I think he might have wanted to be a priest, or even maybe a teacher, and had a very difficult time, I think, trying to make his way with medicine, just because of his personality. He was not really of that type.

Both of my brothers were in World War II. John was in the army, and Lewis also was in World War II overseas. Lewis was a bachelor. John married. Lewis was very attached to Gertrude, who was his mother's sister, and also Nellie; they were very close, extremely close. John married Anne O'Melveny, who was a daughter of Stuart O'Melveny—Stuart's brother was Jack O'Melveny of the law firm O'Melveny and Meyers, and Stuart was a title man. Anne was their only daughter. John married Anne, and they have four children. Lewis remained single, all his whole life. Both the aunts, Gertrude and Nellie, remained single until they died. So right now I'm the only male Wilson left in the line.

Lage: I don't know if you mentioned that John had died.

Wilson: He died. He died just about the same time my boy died, my oldest boy died. In any event, after my father married Marjorie we lived in those days on Figueroa Street, which was near the Doheny area down in Los Angeles, which was one of those old, very established neighborhoods where Mr. Connell's house was. It was kind of an old red brownstone, something you wouldn't expect to see.

Lage: I don't think of brownstones in Los Angeles.

Wilson: It was really something. Then we moved to Pasadena. It was right in 1940, '41, because I remember just so vividly in the new house at 655 Hillside Terrace the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. I just remember that particular time. The house was on the arroyo; there was not much over there. I remember my mother, my stepmother, they had this lot, and she said, "John, you can't build a house on that." He says, "Listen, Marjorie," he said, "I'll get

you the lot, you build the house [laughing].” It was one of those jobs where you had to make a landing, so to speak, to get at the house.

Lage: Over the Arroyo Seco.

Wilson: Yes, it was over the arroyo, but they had to really do some landscaping to get the pad to build a house. In any event, they did, indeed, build the house.

Lage: Did this give it kind of a feeling of open space?

Wilson: Oh yes, you looked out over Pasadena and way up to Mount Wilson, and it was a beautiful site. There were still some people above us, but they even hadn’t built up there yet. It was interesting that the Valentines moved in above us. I married one of the girls, Susan. Her sister, Sally, was in my class at Polytechnic School. In any event, they owned property up above us after they moved from a place in Pasadena, I think it was San Rafael, and they came back and moved on that property above our property at 655 Hillside Terrace.

Lage: Was the move out of LA to kind of get away from—?

Wilson: I think it was that old house. I mean it was one of those things you just didn’t really want to run anymore. It was kind of big, and dark, and heavy. I think that, yes, to get out of LA, and then we were right down pretty close to USC, and while that part of the town has not held up too well, I think just everything—it was just more desirable. Going to Pasadena in that period was like getting out of the city and finding some space. Of course, it was also not very long before the first—the first freeway that was built was the Pasadena freeway. My father always used that because he was an early riser, and for operating, and wanting to get in [to the hospital].

Lage: He might have followed the freeway out there.

Wilson: We moved before the Pasadena freeway was built. It’s something about that, even though you were living a little bit further from your hospital, you could get around because you didn’t have the traffic, and you had the freeways, and the freeways just made it much easier to get in and get home. You didn’t have these long waits like today where it’s so crowded—the congestion. That wasn’t so.

Lage: Were you close to your stepmother?

Wilson: Yes.

Lage: Was she like a mother to you?

Wilson: She was wonderful. She was rather a frail lady. I think, like all of these marriages, I think there was some friction there, you know, between the older

boys and she, but she was very good to them. I think she was very good to me, because—there were the older boys and my dad who was—I mean I saw the most of him when we were up here [at the ranch] because he was a doctor; he was working a lot, late. My mother was very helpful to me if I was doing something in school, or needed help, she was really good about working with me on that, and I—when I went to Pasadena I went to Polytechnic which was then, I mean it’s a fabulous school and always was a good school.

Lage: What kind of a school is it?

Wilson: Grammar school. I went to public school early, just the beginning in LA, but when we moved to Pasadena we went to—Polytechnic was a private school. I was there, and my brother Lewis had gone to Thacher in the Ojai Valley, and then he went on to Harvard. My father was a good friend of Anson Thacher, who was the son of Sherman Day [Thacher], who was the founder. I was an okay student; I got through, but my heart wasn’t always in it, and my father felt I should go to Thacher, then a boys’ school, and be more serious about my studies. I think his thinking was, “This boy needs to go somewhere where he’s got to apply his academics more than sports, and all this stuff, because I loved sports. I loved sports.

Lage: What sports?

Wilson: Everything. It didn’t matter whether it was football, track, tennis, basketball. Any kind of sport, that was for me. I always remember my introduction to the Thacher School, when my father put me in the car and we went up to Ojai. In those days you interviewed—the headmaster was Anson Thacher.

Lage: Who was a friend of your father’s.

Wilson: Oh yes. I’m sitting here, and Anson Thacher’s here, and my father’s sitting here, and you can imagine how you feel. My father said, “Well, this is a good boy, but he kind of specializes in sports.” And Anson sat there and nodded and he says, “Well,” spoke very slow. He says, “Well, we have ways of controlling those kinds of things.” [laughter] I thought, Oh God, what’s going to happen to me?

Lage: Was your father a man that you didn’t argue with on things like that?

Wilson: No, I didn’t argue with him. We did what—

Lage: What did he say?

Wilson: He said, “Yeah.”

Lage: It was a boarding school.

Wilson: It was a boys' boarding school, and there were—at those times there were not a hundred boys. I think there were ninety, in four classes. That was a terrific period for me because I—there weren't quite as many as there are now from the different parts of the country; most of them from California. My roommate, Brooks Crawford, is a doctor in ophthalmology. I still see him. In fact, we just had our fiftieth reunion of the class. I was struck by the quality of the teachers and how well they worked with us. In those days, going to Thacher, it was a small school, and we all had horses.

Lage: You had your own horse?

Wilson: Oh yes, everybody had to have their own horse. That was mandatory.

Lage: Had you ridden before?

Wilson: Well, I brought a mare from the ranch named Flinchy. I'm going to try to pick up the ranch side of this now. I came here [to the ranch], the first trip here with my family was in 1947. In those days, oftentimes we would either take the Lark up to San Francisco and have somebody meet us with a car and then drive from the station up here. In those days, the road from Longvale, where you come in on 101, [to Covelo] was all dirt, and it was only one lane. It was dirty and dusty, and it was hot.

Lage: And windy.

Wilson: And I got car sick all the time. It was the most miserable—then we had to get out. Before we got our house built at Buck Mountain, which was about 1941, we stayed with the McDuffies.

Lage: We're getting mixed up. You said you came here in '47.

Wilson: I came in '47, but my family, when they came before they built the house at Buck Mountain, they stayed with the McDuffies in Hull's Valley, and Bill McDuffie was an oil man who, among other things, had taken the old—he worked for the Shell Oil Company, and then he took then the old Richfield Oil Company—before it was Atlantic Richfield, it was the Richfield Oil Company—over in receivership and ran it for a number of years.

Lage: What was he doing up here?

Wilson: He had the Bar Z Ranch, which is next to where we are. It was a large ranch, and he was a good friend of my father's, and Mary, his wife, was very artistic. She had a beautiful garden and a beautiful house. They had a big enough house that they could put us up. When I say "us," they put my family up, but when I came up, I still stayed at their house before we moved up into our house. They had a couple named Gene and Violet, and it was just a really nice place, and it was, in those days, a long way away from anything too. It's a

ranch that was probably around 20,000 acres, largely timber, not so much grazing. The manager was Clarence O'Ferrall, and there's O'Ferralls all over the place in Covelo. So anyway, that was a long association with my parents and the McDuffies. Then the McDuffies had a son, Bud McDuffie, who was up on that ranch during World War II. I think he kind of stayed there and kept his head down instead of getting into the war. He married a gal and then eventually divorced. Bud is alive today and in Santa Barbara.

Then, when we moved up to Buck Mountain a little later—I'm jumping ahead. I'm trying to get back to coming up here the first time.

Lage: Up to Henthorne.

Wilson: To come up to Henthorne what we did was we had to get into a spot on Buck Mountain that was kind of an open piece of ground with water and a corral. It was called Beefhead. Beefhead is where we had our packs, and our mules, and our horses, and all of our supplies. We could get into that area with a truck, and in fact my brother, having come out of the service, was able to get one of the first four-wheel-drive weapons carriers. I've still got it down at the ranch. It was four-wheel-drive, so we could use that. We got down to Beefhead, and that's where we loaded everything up, and then it was about, by horse, seventeen miles, about a seventeen-mile trek into here.

This building started in 1929, well, the cook house, and this effort here. My father—this gets a little confusing with these dates because we're talking about different time frames of who came when. My father had a friend named Keller, and I don't know his first name, but when you go out of Covelo over to the valley there's something called Keller Lake. Keller just liked this country, and he came up and they walked around. In those days there were forties, and you could trade the Forest Service. There was nobody here; it was just open. He had some property and got my father interested in it, so my father had some forties and—

Lage: What are forties?

Wilson: Forty-acre parcels that they bought or traded, stuck out in the middle of nowhere where you had government land, and somebody had a forty and they didn't want it anymore, so somebody bought that and traded this to the—whatever.

Lage: I see, so it was kind of in the midst of the government land.

Wilson: Yes, it was. As was this.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

Wilson: Eventually my father was able to find this property, so I still have the deed with FDR, who signed it over to him. This was 1929, or very close to it. After he had found the place, there were two Swiss-Germans—there was Rudy, the dad, and Otto Kaser, his son, and they lived in Covelo. They were of the old school. They knew everything about axes, saws, poles, building things. They came out here and built the cook house, the old—where we will be down there—in 1929 as the first building. They came out and literally swamped this place out and started with just their hand tools. That’s the way they did their work.

Then, over the course of several years—and it’s rather remarkable to see how this was all done because it’s about thirty-seven miles to Covelo if you have to come over Castle Peak and down to Asa Bean Flat and then to Henthorne Lake—which is the way they came—on a horse and mule. They packed in machinery down here that made up a Pelton wheel, which was the source of power, with a three-inch pipe, three feet long. They built a power line out of the lake, down the mountain, through the Pelton wheel. Then they ran the power up here to where this old barn is down here, and they had a band saw, and a plane, and they built a sawmill out of a Wisconsin engine, which was gas, that ran a circular saw on a belt, and they made a sled out of Timken roller bearings, three-quarter inch pipe, fence posts, and they had it on a sled so that the mules—they would go out and they would cut a tree and they would haul it in, and they would run at the boards—this was all DC-direct current in those days, running the plane and the saw mill. Everything you see here was made that way, except some things like flooring they packed in. This stuff all came in over thirty-seven miles.

Lage: This is what’s so amazing. What about this? [pointing to the fireplace] Who made this?

Wilson: [Hans Zwilig?] was a—well, that’s what he was.

Lage: A stonemason.

Wilson: Yes. He scrambled around and found all this rock, hauled it up here, and built that fireplace. That’s to give you some idea. To this day, there it is.

Lage: Who told you these stories? Your dad?

Wilson: Well, Otto Kaser. I have a tape on Otto. I filmed it. Rudy and Otto were pretty much here to World War II, when Otto went to war. My dad used to complain about Otto because, he says, “Otto’s a little bit lazy. Otto just lies around in bed, and Rudy’s up doing all the work,” and all this kind of stuff. But whatever, they both got a hell of a lot done, when you think about how you had no roads, no nothing. Then, beyond that, they had a garden.

There's another character in this mix. There's the Kasers, Otto and Rudy, and then there's Tony Bernath. Tony Bernath was a single Lithuanian that could barely live with himself, so he did well out here alone.

Lage: A difficult man?

Wilson: [sighs] To put it mildly. But he did know how to build fence, split posts, split shakes for roofs; anything with trees and woods he could do it. Terrible temper. Often walked to town, or wherever he needed to go. Usually what happened was Tony would stay here for an extended period and get paid, and go in and get totally drunk and get into fights, or whatever, and then he would come out, and then he was okay for another three months. When the Brown brothers were still here he worked with them too.

Lage: And the Brown brothers were ranchers.

Wilson: They were our neighbors. They owned adjoining ranches, which I own now today. Tony helped them with whatever needed to be done.

You had Tony, and you had the Kaser boys and the Longs. There were a number of people that over the years—Stanford Long, and Loren Long, and I think one of the Schultzes did some packing.

Lage: These sound like men you all got to know.

Wilson: Yes, I did. I did get to know them. As I look back at it, they were highly accomplished people in their own way, because most of them had learned everything. The most fundamental basic stuff they built themselves, were good with their hands. When I came up, and I'm not sure whether it was the first trip up here, but it was pretty close. We often had mules too. We rode horses and mules. I had a red mule called Birdie. My mother's, stepmother's, was Downsy. Just down here a little ways there's a rock. She was very short, so she needed to get on a rock, or something, to get her foot in the stirrup and get up. I don't remember exactly what we were going to do, but she got on the rock and the mule named Downsey moved, and down she went and broke her leg. So my father gets her up here. He goes up and he gets the stove pipe out of the attic. He had some plaster of Paris. He sets the leg, builds a riding cast, and out she rides, seventeen miles.

Lage: She had the right husband.

Wilson: She had the right one for that [laughs]. It worked. It was the darndest thing.

Lage: You described her as frail.

Wilson: She was.

Lage: How did she like this outdoors life?

Wilson: She toughed it out. She was a great person.

Lage: Did she seem to enjoy it?

Wilson: In her own way she did. I'm sure she didn't want to spend too much of her life at it, but she did things, she did. She just did really well. She got home and recovered from that incident. That was pretty tough. You've broken a leg, and you're going up and down these hills.

Then, anyway, after I had come up, and then in the summertime my father had made sure that I was sent up here to work with some of the men we had working on the ranch.

Lage: You used to come up on your own?

Wilson: I was here. I worked in the hay and I worked different building fences. I did whatever they wanted me to do. That's the way it worked. We had various people. We had Buster and Helen Ogle, were one of the pair we had here, and Hattie and Jack, her husband. We had some really strange people, but that was what you get in this kind of business; you never know. We had one guy named Jack Christopher, Hattie's husband, and he was—oh Lord, I can't—I think he got drunk and drove the weapons carrier to Paso Robles, or some horrible place, and my father had to go get him out of jail, whatever it was. But there was some very good men too; we had Bud Niesen, a fella from the valley. His family's still there; two grandsons, Fred and Walter, still ranch in and around Round Valley. He was a good hand.

Then we had Dave—Bill Axton and Dave Wilburn were Indians, and they were half brothers. Dave was impossible and his problem was booze. He was a constant boarder at the jail. Reno Bartholome was the sheriff in those days, and Reno had him down in the can more than he wanted him. We had a standing agreement that whenever I and/or my father, if we wanted to get some help, to always call in to see if he had Dave in the jug to come down and get him, and get him the hell out of the county, you know. As far as riding horses, working cattle, and all that, he was great, just so he was sober. We did that many times. I remember he thought this was very funny—Dave said to me about my father, he said he would always say to Dave, “Well, considering everything, how are you Dave?” [laughter] It was always, “Considering everything, how are you?”

He worked here a lot. His brother, Bill, was a very much more talented, finished kind of guy. He spoke very well. They packed hunters, and they made a little money that way and worked around. Dave never cured—I mean he was always on the ragged edge. I remember one time he was packing hunters in from over Sacramento side. He would pack them in and meet them up there,

because they had some road, and then they would get them, and they would take them out hunting. The sucker would go out, and he would bury the beer in all these springs.

Lage: He knew where it was.

Wilson: He would hide it. Then I would bring him out here to help me gather cattle before I got on to it. Before I figured out what was going on, he would go over and find some of that beer, drink that beer, and go to sleep under a tree. [laughter] He knew where it was. It was from the year before. He buried the beer but never forgot the site.

Lage: Like a squirrel.

Wilson: Yes, he had this stuff stashed around.

Lage: I don't want to interrupt your thought, but the kind of contrast between your father as this prominent orthopedic surgeon in Pasadena and a ranch this far away. Did he ever talk to you about what brought him up this way?

Wilson: He just loved this wild outdoor kind of thing. I think it's just because of his early days, maybe, and he had his friends, the Twisselmans, Carl and Dorothy—this was a patient actually, an old family in southern California. There's lots of them down around Taft, and McKittrick, and Shandon, and Atascadero. They were big farm/ranch people down there, and they would come up and hunt with him in the fall. They would help him buy some cattle, and my dad took care of all of them, their broken limbs, and this, that, and the other thing. He had a lot of—he had some professional people that came up, but they would come up and hunt. They liked to come up and hunt and fish.

Lage: So he would bring his friends?

Wilson: He would bring his friends. That's why he built this place. He brought them up and they had a good time. You can't envision this, but this whole area was a compound that was fenced with split-rails, and there were no bear, and we had a garden in it. One of the couples—don't ask me where he found them—it was a couple from Wyoming, Joe and Margaret Pallouse [sp?] was their name. Joe was French and Margaret was—Margaret had high blood pressure, that's all I can remember. She was a piece of work. Joe wore bib overalls, and he had Prince Albert pipe tobacco and a pipe, and he had a little French hat. Every morning—because the real garden was down below us, a bit of a way, and he had a mule and a sled—every morning Margaret would get his breakfast and then he and the mule would be out there at the cook house. He would load his tools up; he would get his pipe; he would load his pipe; he would get his pipe in his mouth; and he would take the reins and he would whack Sarah the mule, and the mule wouldn't go. He would say, "Who's the boss?! You the boss. Me the boss," bang! And he would hit the mule and then

the mule would go. It was a three-step thing. They went through this every morning. They went down to the garden and he took care of—and it was all fenced down there, so the deer and bear couldn't get in.

Among other things, there was a number of trees; there was apples, pears, peaches, plums, and cherries. Those trees came in, I don't know whether it was '30 or '31, but Otto and Rudy, they pushed them over on a wheelbarrow over the top of the mountain from Covelo.

- Lage: Incredible!
- Wilson: Those trees are still down there. The bear are just massacring them because they can get in there.
- Lage: You don't have the fence anymore.
- Wilson: The fence is gone. The point is the trees—they pushed those trees over in a wheelbarrow.
- Lage: Having made this trip in today—
- Wilson: And this is nothing.
- Lage: I have a sense of how far it is.
- Wilson: This is thirty-seven miles. I can tell you, it's twenty miles over to the Buck—but we didn't do—Buck Mountain was five, so we did about seventeen using a vehicle, and that's a road. So anyway, they did that. They had the garden down there, Joe and Margaret, and they would come out in the spring, and stay the summer, and then go back to Cheyenne. Of course she would cook, and they had a milk cow. This place had actually a garden. They had a milk cow. They had a power plant. I mean it's unbelievable.
- Lage: It really is unbelievable.
- Wilson: It all worked. [laughs]
- Lage: And they had—your dad really had an active cattle ranch.
- Wilson: Yes, the cattle were up here, and then they went down below in the winter, yes. They had somebody to help move them. It was a one man—usually one man and his wife that had to help do that.
- Lage: Who watched them during the winter?

- Wilson: They were down around the Buck Mountain on the lower end. That was more of a winter range. There was a high summer range and a lower elevation winter range, and one man took care of the livestock and ranch.
- Lage: So he had a staff.
- Wilson: Not a staff, but a cowboy. This was summer range on the government land, where you would have a permit, which we don't have anymore. We would turn them out here, and then about, oh October, when it got colder, the cattle would go back down on the winter range, which was down in Mendocino County where we were earlier, down through that country. That's kind of the way it worked.
- Lage: How many head of cattle?
- Wilson: He didn't have too many. He had about a hundred cows, or a little over, at that time. It was small. Some person took care of it, that was—and then when Joe and Margaret came they just came for the summer and then went back to Cheyenne. [I remember Margaret had high blood pressure and was always yelling at Joe. Joe took his counsel by hooking up the mule and spending the day down at the garden smoking his pipe with Prince Albert tobacco.—added during narrator review]
- Lage: How do you think it affected you, growing up, to have this place?
- Wilson: I think it probably really is what got me so interested in resources, and the out-of-doors, and the versatility, the variety of it, because I used to love to hunt. I don't really hunt anymore, but I did; I used to like to hunt. Of course, the horses, I liked—it didn't matter whether it was running a Caterpillar tractor, or riding a horse, or training dogs, or building; there was nothing I didn't like. I just liked it, that's all.
- Lage: Yes, you looked forward to coming up in the summer.
- Wilson: Oh yes. And I usually brought a friend with me and we built fence. We had a good time. We hauled hay and did stuff. I don't know, it's just I look at it and I see these young people, what they've missed. They don't want to do it. They don't want any part of it, "That's work." We used to think it was fun. Today you don't even think it's fun, "That's too much like work." I don't totally understand that, but it's, of course, how you perceive things and everything.
- Lage: Did your dad do some of this?
- Wilson: Oh yes, he loved to. I remember Bruce Coddling; he succeeded the McDuffies and he was kind of a crook. He was always pulling shenanigans. He's one of these guys that never worked; he was always pulling deals. My father knew him pretty well, and one day he was out—I think he was trying to put a

culvert in. He was having a hell of a time down there on the road and working hard, and Bruce said, “Doctor,” he says, “why the hell do you work like that?” And my dad says, “Because I like to.” [laughter] That was it, he did.

I’ll tell you another good story about—we had a fella named Frank James who looked just like Harry Truman. He ate Beechnut chewing tobacco and he threw those damn Beechnut wrappers everywhere he was. As he got older it was pretty apparent that he wasn’t working as hard as he used to because the Beechnut chewing tobacco wrappers weren’t around the ranch like they used to be. Anyway, he’s always bossing my father, “Do this! Do that!” In those days, we had a little tractor, a Caterpillar tractor, and an Adams leaning wheel grader, which is a big, heavy piece of equipment that you have to—it’s none of this hydraulic stuff; these wheels, you got to turn them, and set the blade in the wheels, and you’re grading; and I mean this is for these dirt roads. Frank was running the tractor, and my father was running the grader. Frank was turning around and saying, “Raise the blade! Do this! Do that!” My father got so pissed at him that he just raised it up and they never graded anything for three miles. [laughing] They got all the way down there [laughing]; they just drove for three miles and never put the blade down. He was so mad at him. It was just bizarre. He quit yelling. He didn’t yell at him quite so much after all that.

He was one of them, he and Hattie his wife. She was a nice enough lady. One of the things I noticed about these women, the life that they led, the ones that were married to these people—they kind of, it’s a little hard to explain what it was, but it seemed to me the isolation and the lack of communicating with other women tended to kind of make them a little more difficult to be around. I don’t know. I noticed it in two or three of the couples, Helen and Emmet Jacobsen, Ray and Vivian Rash. It isn’t that they didn’t like it, it’s just that—I don’t know. I just get the feeling—

Lage: You mean they were kind of crabby?

Wilson: Yes, yes, they were kind of crabby, and bossy, and a little bit that way. It just seemed to me that they didn’t have other women to associate with. They got after their husbands to do “honey-dews” as the husbands saddled the horse, got the dogs, and rode off for the day.

Lage: Not much community.

Wilson: No, no. They were pretty much just living this kind of a life, which maybe is what you would expect given the isolation and the long way away.

Lage: Would they go into town in the winter?

Wilson: There would be nobody here in the winter. This [the compound at Henthorne] closed down in November and then they would be back at Buck Mountain.

We didn't go there because they would take you back through, but it's the low end and it's the winter range. It's the main—the ranch is probably—it runs through here seventeen, eighteen, twenty miles. Some of it is federal land, some of it is BLM [Bureau of Land Management], and it's deeded land too. There were no roads until, well, really the seventies, when they began to get some roads in because of the logging. A lot of this was on horseback. I mean, if you came out here you were out here for a week or something, and when you came out you brought a pack with you.

I remember one time, probably this was about 1960, that I was trying to get out here and we had a mule named Maggie. She was white with gray, a pretty mule. A friend of my dad's named Bowman, a friend of Carl Twisselman from the Carrizo Plains in Kern County, had given her to him from Mexico. She had come up here. One of the reasons I always liked to have the mules is because if you were packing anything like eggs or anything a mule doesn't run into trees and bang things. They get through the brush and things a lot better than a horse. I had my horse named Joker, that came from the Witter Ranch, and I had Maggie, the mule. It was early, and we had had quite a lot of snow. When we came over the top, and we got into the snow drift, all of a sudden Maggie was going [makes horse noises indicating anxiousness], and she reared back, and her ears were up, and I thought, "What the hell is wrong with you, Maggie?" Well, she had never seen snow. [Imitating Maggie] I mean, you put your foot down, and you go down like that, you know. She was not too happy with this, so we spent most of the night out there working our way through that situation. After a while we got it worked out, but I had to tie the horse up, and then I had to lead her.

Lage: You realized what it was.

Wilson: She figured it out. Well, yes, she was okay after she got accustomed, but she had never seen snow before.

Lage: Trying to walk in it.

Wilson: Walk in it, and having—yes, that was long night. Like I say, you can get use to that.

Lage: So that was your summer life.

Wilson: That was my summer, yes, and of course I was in school. I went to Poly and I went to Thacher.

Lage: I just want to get a little bit more about what you were like down in the city. You liked sports. Did you read? Did you go to movies? Did you play marbles?

Wilson: In the city, sports. I loved sports. I loved tennis. It didn't matter. Like I say, wherever there's organized athletics, and I was good enough at it that I could do it, around the school, or if there was a place I could play.

My brothers were older; they were gone, and I didn't have much companionship as a young boy and a teenager. In other words, I wasn't in a situation where I was around a lot of big families, a lot of kids. I had to sort of do stuff myself, whether it was sports or up here. As far as social life, we had those sort of dances too around Pasadena and some stuff.

Lage: Did that interest you?

Wilson: Yeah, well, it was okay, but somehow it just wasn't a very big part of my life. Younger days when my dad—he had built a house at the beach, and one of the first houses on the peninsula.

Lage: What beach?

Wilson: Balboa beach, which is the peninsula going out—well, you know probably where that is. The ocean is on one side, and then the bay, and then the island is over here. 1322 East Central was that address. That was one of the real first houses that was built. There was nobody on the ocean. Before I came up here I would go down there. I had some friends that lived down on the beach, and we used to do quite a bit of sailing. I crewed. I didn't have a sailboat, but I crewed.

Also, I used to swim in the bay. Literally, you wouldn't consider that today, to swim from the peninsula to the island, get a hamburger, and swim back. You wouldn't do that. And I used to do that quite a lot, just do it. Today, with all the boats and the traffic, you couldn't do it, you just couldn't do it, with the traffic.

They had a fun zone down there, and that was kind of neat because that was a place where there were kids, and a Ferris wheel, and there was a lot of kind of—that was social. That was kind of fun to go down there. There was girls and things going on, a lot of things. That was kind of fun down there.

Lage: Was your family religious?

Wilson: My mother and her sister, Anna and Gertrude were very, very religious Catholics. My father was so-so—I mean he was, but it wasn't—

Lage: He was raised Catholic?

Wilson: Well, I'm not sure, I think so. You know, I don't know for a fact, or whether when he married my mother. I think that my aunt Gertrude was a little bit put out that I wasn't—in other words, I was sent to take catechism, and I was

raised a Catholic, and we went to church, and we didn't have—I still go to church and practice the faith.

Lage: Was your stepmother Catholic?

Wilson: Yes. I think my Aunt Gertrude was a little put out that—she thought my religious training wasn't what it should be. I don't know. I just never—

Lage: Were you very close to her?

Wilson: No, no. She and Nellie, I never really knew them. The other boys were much closer to those two than me. The religious aspect of it was kind of that extra thing you do because you do it. It wasn't something that was—

Lage: Required?

Wilson: Well, I think there was—yes, that's fair enough, maybe. It was just you just sort of did it. I didn't go to a Catholic school. When I went to Thacher we went to church. A lot of times we just rode our horses to church because in those days we did ride the horses. They really don't anymore, of course. Nobody goes to church, I don't think, any more.

Lage: Did everybody go to their own church at Thacher, or did the school go—?

Wilson: They went to their own church. They had their own service, and they had a Catholic service, and people went to where they were supposed to more or less go. They used to see that you did that. They don't do that anymore.

Lage: Tell me more about Thacher School, if we've covered the other things. That's where we got into talking about the ranch, from Thacher School.

Wilson: Right. When I went up there it was demanding. It was a lot of work. By the same token, I didn't mind that either. I had to work hard in Latin and things like that. They had great sports, and in those days, as opposed to what it is today, it's a co-ed. It looks more like a country club. In those days it kind of looked like this place: it had horses, and barns, and older buildings. The boys, we maintained the trails. We used to have work days, and we used to clean the campus. What today is hired out we used to do as students, along with the studies and the teams.

The other thing was, because there were so few of us, to have a team you had to play everything; you had basketball, track, baseball—I mean as much as possible.

Lage: And with everyone.

Wilson: With everybody, yes. You just do it. I was very good at track. I had the record for forty years on the high hurdles before this young black man came in. He was really good. He took it all apart. The only thing I said is that the hurdles were lower than when I did them. [laughs] That was just a copout because he was really good, legitimately good. We had a good soccer team, and one year were undefeated. We did a lot of things: we had day trips; we went places. I think I had some just outstanding teachers.

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

Wilson: We had, well, David Lavender, and there were Anson Thacher. Charley Beck was a math teacher, Jack Huyler, any number of people. These were more than teachers; these were almost lifelong friends that you got to know and kept up your acquaintances with them. Fabulous people.

Lage: And they all lived right there.

Wilson: They lived on the school. They lived in the upper Ojai.

Lage: With their families?

Wilson: Yes. They had both single and married situations where they could live. Some single ones lived in the dorms, and married ones had a house attached to a dorm, or whatever. They had a communal dining hall and that kind of thing.

The friendships and the people that I see today are—most of the people are related to the Thacher School, which I actually served as a trustee for seventeen years later on, and I've done others things with the Thacher School. But more than going to college or anything in Pasadena—I've sort of lost, not all, but lost contact with that—but the Thacher School is really where my contacts, and the people I know, and try to keep up with, are—friends.

Lage: You really developed a lifelong—

Wilson: Lifelong and they're mostly either down south or in the Bay Area—a lot in the Bay Area.

Lage: Did most of the students come from families with a fair amount of wealth?

Wilson: Mixed. The school always had a scholarship program. Of course the relativity of wealth is interesting because in those days it was a lot of money, like 3,000 or 4,000 dollars or something, and today it's 33,000.

Lage: Thirty-three thousand dollars a year! That includes room and board?

- Wilson: Well, yes, it's your board and all—but I'm just saying it's like going to Princeton or—it's terrible. It's just unbelievable. But proportionate, if you put it back into the perspective of that time, it was expensive. Even when I sent my kids through it was expensive, but nothing like—Sarah's was pretty high—but nothing like it is today. It just seems—I don't know how long you can keep doing it except they get people from the Orient and they keep pounding the—they do pretty well with the scholarships, so they manage. But it's a different—from my view it's a different school just because of times, and girls, and the things you have to go through to be competitive.
- Lage: Do you think having the girls there changed it?
- Wilson: Oh, absolutely. The girls at that age tend to mature faster, and it seems to me they take more control. I think the boys are running behind a little bit now.
- Lage: Socially?
- Wilson: Yes. The thing that was so good about it for boys is you could be a cut-up, and there were older boys, and there were ways—they kind of dealt with each other a little bit like, I don't know, the Marine Corps. Anyway, they threw you in the water troughs, and stuff went on. It was a boy's deal, and when you're at that age I think boys need to be boys, and with the girls there there's this feeling of, "Well, you know, the good-looking chick. I'm going to play up to that one." I think it's a different—. I think it's a good place for boys to get in trouble, and just kind of be boys. Now it's a little more—there's a word I'm searching for, but it's a— it's a more measured—it's almost as though people are playing their part more calculated, if you will, than just kind of doing what you're doing.
- Lage: Do they still have the horses?
- Wilson: Oh yes. They don't have to have them for four years, but they do have their horse; the first year's mandatory and then you go on. The other thing is, I don't know how they do as much as they do, because of course it's bigger, having boys and girls. It's gone from something less than, probably, when I was there 90, to maybe 200 at the most—they have some day students. Now on top of all the sports they've got lacrosse, and the academics are just really tough, I mean I—you work hard there.
- Lage: So it's preparing kids for the Ivy League?
- Wilson: I guess so, but it isn't as easy even to get into those schools from a place like Thacher anymore. You still don't necessarily have a lock on an Ivy League school, not anymore.
- Lage: Nobody does anymore.

Wilson: Nobody does. But I do think the education is good, and if you have to shoot—let's face it, if you're going to spend 100,000 dollars I think I would rather make the effort on a young person there than waiting for college, because college, that's a timing thing. Sometimes people that go to high school aren't ready to go to college. They've got to go out and do some stuff, grow up, or do some things before they're really ready to kind of find their way. When I went to school you just went to college. In fact, most people went to Yale. I don't know, it just was Thacher to Yale.

Lage: Was that kind of a common—?

Wilson: Common path, and now a lot of it is Stanford, and of course there's other schools too that get a lot of the students. Yale was very big, and largely because of the founder and the history of the school. Today the students go everywhere, East and West.

Lage: Now you didn't go to Yale.

Wilson: No, I went to Dartmouth.

Lage: How did that—?

Wilson: Again, it's another one of those crazy things that—I can't remember whether I got accepted at Princeton and rejected at Yale, but I didn't get into everything. I got into Cal, but Dartmouth was a—it's a way-back-in-the-boondocks kind of a school. It was a small school, and it was a boy's school, and it just had some—there were some people I knew there. Again, I just sort of, I thought, "Well, why not? I think that's maybe not such a bad idea." One of my cousins worked there, that was related to one of the Connells, I think it was in the admissions office. My brothers went east, and I'm not convinced that you have to go east to get an education. I personally got an education. I liked Dartmouth a lot, but it's only by sheer luck. It was not through anything I knew ahead of time. I got there and I had fabulous teachers that just blew me out. I did play soccer and track. I think we were the only—

Lage: You didn't get sports out of your blood.

Wilson: No. We were the only undefeated team they've ever had in soccer in 1954. We were undefeated. I got my knee injured and that was the end of it for me. I lost cartilage and so I can no longer play.

I was president of the Sigma Chi house, and I was in the Sphinx Honor Society, and I had some other things. I made a lot of good friends, but the problem is that it's an eastern school, and all the alumni stuff is eastern, and like everything else it's just too far away.

Lage: Was it a hard transition to go to the East? You seemed so rooted in California.

- Wilson: I thought it would be, but after I got there I found it not too hard. I liked to go down to the girls' schools at Smith and Vassar. We had a good time. We had a good time, yeah.
- Lage: I was wondering if we could just get the dates on record here.
- Wilson: Fifty-five, fifty-one I went. I graduated—'47 I went Thacher, '51 I went to Dartmouth, '55 I graduated.
- Lage: That was the Korean War years.
- Wilson: Then I went to Cornell post-grad, and I—I think my father was quite mindful of Korea. He wasn't too keen about—I had been in the Air ROTC. In the Air ROTC program they had a rule on your eyes that if you were qualified to fly, okay. If you didn't have good eyesight then you either had to go to the back seat—you know, the guy behind the pilot, the bombardier, navigation—or drop out. Well, they offered me that second choice, and I said, "No, you know, if I'm not going to fly the damn thing I don't want to be in the back seat." That was it. I was out of the ROTC.
- Then the draft was on. I went over to Cornell to do some agricultural work. I knew that I was going to get drafted, but I didn't know when. I went there a year, and it just didn't happen. But then I came back and went to Cal for some summer school. I got drafted in '57.
- Lage: Drafted in '57?
- Wilson: [counts] Yes, I think that's right. Then I was inducted in the army at Fort Ord, up at Monterey. I think I got the mumps or the measles and I lost my cycle, and so I had to hang around there. Then they sent me to Fort Lewis, and when I got to Fort Lewis they give you a bunch of tests for officer candidate school or the Counter Intelligence Corps, CIC. I took the tests and I passed them, but I chose—I went and I got accepted in the Counter Intelligence Corps, which is Fort Holabird, Maryland; that's their school. After my basic training I went into the Counter Intelligence Corps. You're an agent, in other words. Sometimes you live off the base. You have an apartment. You have sort of a plainclothes—not all the time—but kind of a plainclothes job. You do a lot of security checks, backgrounding on people, and all that.
- Lage: But all domestically, in the US?
- Wilson: Yes, I did not get—well, it's interesting; it was all domestic until Eisenhower. The unit I was attached to at Fort Lewis was the eighth, ninth, infantry. That was my base unit, even though I worked outside. And the base. I worked the base too. Lebanon blew up, and they called us in and said, "You guys are going to Lebanon." Then it all blew over, the whole thing. In other words, it

was go, no go. They pulled us back and then that was it; we didn't go. I stayed in the Northwest and cycled out. My father died in 1957.

Lage: While you were in the army.

Wilson: Yes, it was. I hadn't even gone to Fort Holabird.

Lage: Was that untimely, unexpected?

Wilson: He had been sick. I think he had heart disease, arteriosclerosis, hardening of the arteries. He had a lot of trouble. I remember one year my mother put him on an all-rice diet. This was before we knew a lot about these things. He was eating this all-rice diet and it wasn't going too easy. He never got the kinds of exercise he needed. I think he went to the California Club and got somebody to kind of work on him a little bit. I don't think he heavily did a lot of walking, or, you know, something that—he wasn't a golfer, though he did play golf. He just didn't get exercise, and I think anybody prone to those kinds of problems needs to continually exercise.

Lage: I don't think they knew that then.

Wilson: No, they didn't. Well, it was all—this rice thing was a cutting-edge, kind of a—he was an Indian, Indian fella and I think he was on the right track.

Lage: Too late maybe.

Wilson: Too late, yes. And my mother—we had some people cooking sometimes that put out some pretty French-type meals with butter and, you know, things. It wasn't the best. It was too much. He was sixty-nine when he died. So then I came out of the service.

Lage: Let me just ask you, you said you had gone and studied agriculture in Cornell. What did you have in mind there?

Wilson: I had thought maybe I would go to work for somebody elsewhere. I had interviewed for a job in Florida with a fellow that had a large place. My thought was that I wanted to stay in some kind of agricultural work. I had a pretty good handle on the basics of just working around here, but this was more nutrition, and feeding, and the things you would do if you were doing something commercial—feed lots or something.

Lage: Did this grow out of your experience here on the ranch, that you wanted to continue with that?

Wilson: I wanted to continue. I wanted to do something. My dad, he was alive, and this was here. It wasn't really a job. I interviewed with General Motors when I graduated from Dartmouth, but I wasn't really—I really wasn't sure what in

the hell I was going to do, but I knew these were things that I really liked, and I wasn't sure how do you get into it exactly. You go work for somebody, so I did some interviews.

This whole draft thing was kind of an unsettling thing because my father, you know, he didn't want me to go to war. He was afraid I was going to join something, the Marines or something, and I said, "Well, that didn't happen." I made him madder than hell because my roommate at Dartmouth—his name was Richard Leroy Wilson, and he had managed to join the Maritime Union in New York. He used to go out and work these cruise ships and make a lot of money on these damn things, so I joined the Maritime Union. I told my dad, I said, "I think I'm just going to take off for a while." He says, "Where are you going?" I say, [laughing] "To join the Maritime Union." I had the card, not anymore. "You what! There's nothing but a bunch of faggots and queers on those boats!" God, he was mad at me. That didn't happen.

Lage: You didn't do that.

Wilson: No, that didn't materialize. It came pretty close, actually.

Lage: He wanted you to be a doctor.

Wilson: Well, yes. The book covers that disaster. That was an unmitigated disaster, but maybe the best way to—that was my junior year at Dartmouth, and it was Christmas vacation. My brother and my father were still pushing this doctor stuff. They were going to—they had a woman they were going to take a, I think it was a calcium deposit off her shoulder. It was not a big operation, but it was something. So they said, "Come on down and look at it." I told my mother, and my mother heard this wrangling around going on about, "Well, you know, why do you keep hammering away on him on this stuff?" "Well, you know, come on down. It can't hurt to look."

I went down there, and the operating room was a theater, and you have a little raised dais back here where you sit down, and the students come in, and you watch. They gave me a gown and one of these masks, and I just sit down. I said, "Now just remember, I have an aversion to ether. It makes me sick, and dizzy, and I don't know, just doesn't seem to sit very well with me." They said, "Now just sit down, and if you feel bad walk out." I sat down and I was just sitting there and I began to feel really—my head was going around. I got up and walked out. I just went flat on my face, broke my jaw in three places. They hauled me out on a gurney, threw me in the next room, called the oral surgeon in, wired my jaw shut, then left me a hole to suck a milkshake when I went back to school. My mother was so mad at those guys [laughing].

Lage: And it was the ether that did it.

Wilson: Yes, yes, the ether.

Lage: You must have been supersensitive.

Wilson: I am supersensitive.

Lage: Was that the end of the doctor—?

Wilson: That was the end of the doctor deal. [laughter]

Lage: So your dad didn't know that you ended up making the life up here. I wonder what he would have thought of that.

Wilson: He would have thought it was fine. He hoped I would do something. As it happened, I mean the ranch wasn't big enough, but as things worked out when I got out of the army, the country was just starting to open up and the price of timber was coming up a little bit; it wasn't two dollars a thousand but it was ten or fifteen. While this timber here on this property was still a long ways out, the crop and lumber company that was in here—and they were a friend of mine, Billy.

We'll have to cross back here, I got married. Billy Crawford had married a friend of Susan's that went to Stanford. There was an opportunity that they might want to buy—they did want to buy this timber, and I wanted to buy the Brown Ranch—that's these lands in between. We were trying to work that all out, and all and all we did work it all out. What I did is that the price of timber came up enough so that I could buy some land. We used to, on those hills—you haven't see Buck Mountain so you—

Lage: No.

Wilson: It's open hillside. It's not flat. We used to raise hay on that, loose hay. What you would do is you would have a mule and a muller, the mulling machine, you just walk along; it's got a wheel and it mows. Then you have a rake. You go along and you rake it up and make a hump of it, like a windrow of hay. Rake up some more and make another. Then, what I would do is I would shock that hay, and a shock is a pile of—you know the pictures, the shocks? I would shock that hay and that's the way we dried it loose—dried it in the shock. Then we would take it and put it on a truck, or a wagon, take it down to the barn. What you did in the barn is you had what we called a Jackson fork. There was an open end and a pulley, and this fork had tines in the fork. You would put it into the loose hay and we would take the four-wheel-drive army truck and drive it out, and it would pull it in, and you would jerk the rope, and it would drop the hay. That's the way we hayed.

Eventually, I had to get to the valley and figure out a way to get some valley land so I could raise hay and bale. That's when we began to really get equipment.

Lage: Equipment and have more cattle?

Wilson: More cattle, but then equipment. Everything was coming up, both in scale and size, and so I was able, with the Crawford effort to put this thing together on a larger scale and to develop some land and pump some wells, good wells, and raise some—when we get into that, that’s a whole ‘nother period. This timber really got me going.

My mother, she died in 1960. I told her that I just thought I was going to stay up here. We got married—Susan Valentine and I got married while she was alive. The cardinal married us, Cardinal McIntyre. It was one of those things where my stepmother was at odds with my brother so they didn’t get invited. It was terrible, the fights. It was pointless. Nevertheless, we got married, and Susan and I came up here. Of course, Susan said, “Gees, you know, a house is one thing, but we need some electricity.” I said, “Well, I’ll get you electricity. I’ll get that for you.” [laughs].

Lage: Let’s back up about meeting Susan and—

Wilson: Susan, well, that goes back to Poly because her—

Lage: Her family went there?

Wilson: Yes, because Sally—Mary and Bill Valentine had two sets of children because there were two marriages; Bill had Susan and Peter from Mary, and then there was Val and Sally from a first wife. Sally and I were both in the same class all through Polytechnic. We used to go out. We were pretty good buddies. We really were. Sally, she eventually married Dick Lyon, divorced, went on and remarried.

Lage: Was she your girlfriend, or just—

Wilson: Yes, part girlfriend and just long—we were just both. Susan was always around too.

Lage: Younger.

Wilson: Yes, she was a little younger. I had known Susan, and Sally had been married, and I had known Susan, and we lived sort of next door to each other, and were seeing each other. She was at Stanford. I was coming out of the army and coming up here, and we were going out, and over a period of time there we just really felt like we wanted to be together and make a go of this thing, and so that’s what we did.

Lage: Was the ranch always part of the vision?

Wilson: Oh yes, she was for that.

Lage: Had she been up here?

Wilson: Yeah, she had been up; not a lot, but she had been there.

Lage: It was such a change for her.

Wilson: It was indeed. I think it was hard on her in the sense that she probably didn't realize—like I say about the women thing. I think she wasn't one that had a lot of friends like a lot of women. What she was was an incredible mother for little kids, totally loved the babies and gave them lots of love. When they got older and started kicking back [laughing] then she sort of didn't know what to do with them. When they began to get to an age, you know what I mean. She was sure good with the babies though. She loved little babies and kids. The ranch was a great spot for her in that kind of an environment because it was good, quiet, controlled.

So many things happened, 1960, and '61, '62, and then '63. Sixty-four I was just trying to move into the valley. We got some property down there, and then we had the flood. And the 1964 flood, I've got to tell you, it was the flood of the—it wasn't a 100 year flood; it was probably 1000 year flood. It just tore the place to pieces. The valley was flooded, in Covelo. All my bridges going to Buck Mountain were out. We were stuck. I had the three of them: Marjo was a baby, and then we had Alex and Chris. They were all sick. I had run out of propane. I couldn't get out because the water was so high, there were no bridges.

I used to go down to the river because there was a logger down there named Norm Wright. Norm had a little pulling operation, and I knew eventually if he could get out of the valley up there, he would come out there. I had a Caterpillar tractor on my side, but I didn't have any way to string any logs or anything to make a bridge. The river was just wild. I used to go down in the morning and I would kind of wait around. Well, I don't remember just exactly whether it was two or three days, but he did come out. We were able to get my Cat and his—he had a cable and an old jin pole. It's like a big A frame with two poles and a pulley so that he could pull his poles up on his truck and haul them back to—Baxter Pole and Piling was the name of the company he worked for. So he rigged it up so he could pull up some of those poles and kind of swing them over on my side enough so they would hit the ground. So I take the Cat to him. We were able to make a bridge, literally, across the creek. We got the bridge built in about, I don't know, a couple days. I got Susan and those kids out of there, and then it snowed about three feet then next day. I mean, it just snowed; it just poured it off. But I got them out. Anyway, they went down and stayed with some friends at Covelo. Then we kind of picked up all the pieces after that because it—

Lage: It really damaged things.

Wilson: Fences, and roads, and culverts.

Lage: What about equipment?

Wilson: The equipment, no. I didn't have any equipment that was damaged by the water. It wasn't anywhere where I was in trouble there. I'll tell you, you look at this today, if I took you to the river, it hasn't recovered, and that's thirty-seven years ago.

Lage: Wow!

Wilson: I know. It's just that bad. In fact, when we go out I will show you, give you some idea of what that flood did. We had one in 1955, and in 1955 it was big enough to wash this lake out, cut out on me. We fixed it with a mule and a hand-made Fresno scraper. It was a hokey deal.

Lage: Washed out the whole reservoir?

Wilson: Right at the end. Then '64 came and we had a—the stories keep coming back. In '55 there was a pretty large gap cut into the spillway.

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

Wilson: In 1955 when the lake washed out, my father and me—and then at that time we had a trail here—there's a pasture down here by the garden called the Johnson Field. That's named after the sheepmen that used to come in here and they owned a hardware store in Willits. It was a holding pasture and he had a fence crew, and the fence crew was one of those great fence crews; it was made up of Dave Wilburn; it was made up of Lillian and Jim Shields, that was it. And Squirrel Hole; his name was Clifford Bush.

Lage: Squirrel Hole?

Wilson: Squirrel Hole is his name. Now Squirrel Hole got his name because the previous owner to the ranch we have over here at Buck Mountain had some things in their house, and Clifford Bush had come out, and he had stolen what he could. He got drunk, and they caught him, but they couldn't find any of the loot. When they got him on the trial down there, and Tom Cleland was the district attorney, tried to prosecute him, all he could get out of him was, "Well, what happened to the loot?" He says, "It fell down the squirrel hole." So that was his name from that time.

Lage: And they never found it?

Wilson: Nope, they never found it. Furthermore, he had some other problems such as he was a pyromaniac. He sets some fires and he put a little time in San Quentin too. So he was—

Lage: Was this the type you wanted on—?

Wilson: Well, these were kind of the characters that were floating around. So we had Squirrel Hole, Jim Shields, Lillian, and Dave Wilburn. Well, they needed supplies and Dave was kind of packing the supplies. They were all staying down in the garden. Of course, there was quite a little drinking and all that stuff down there. We got in one evening, and it was getting kind of dark, and so Dave said to my father that he wanted to go to the garden. My father said, “If you go to the garden, you make damn sure you’re back here in the morning.” I had told my dad I had walked down there and this thing was washed, and it was, you know, it was pretty steep. It was dark. It was just darker than the pitches of hell. Dave Wilburn takes off. We went to bed down in the little cabin right there across from the cook house. I don’t know, it was about two o’clock in the morning, I hear this [snoring sound], all this snoring and everything. I look out, and all I can see is this pile on the porch with saddle blankets over it. Apparently, what happened is he had tried to get down there, fell into this washout, stayed there until he got cold, and crawled out, and went to sleep back on the porch because he could never get to the garden.

Next day my dad said—he sent Dave Wilburn down to see Shields. I was sitting there on the porch. Here comes Squirrel Hole. He’s hobbling along, and I said, “Well, what happened?” He said, “I broke my ankle.” They didn’t have any vehicles; you had to ride a horse. He was a crazy looking guy too, you know. So, I said, “Do you want me to see my dad about getting you out of here?” “No,” he said, “I’m leaving.” I said, “Where are you going?” He said, “I’m going to Covelo.” I said, “Going to Covelo on a broken ankle?” He said, “Yeah,” and out he went and walked to Covelo.

Lage: Walked?

Wilson: Walked. He was gone. He walked. He walked to Covelo. So then Dave brings [Jim] Shields up; he brings him up. Shields wanted to see my dad. He said, “I’ve got to get some supplies.” They started talking about money, and time, and work. My father didn’t want to give Shields anymore money than he needed because he knew if he did he would go down and he would get drunk. Well the first thing Shields wanted to do was borrow the weapons carrier at Beefhead. My father said, “No, you’re not going to get anything. You take your horse down there, and get your supplies with your mule, and then come back.” They wrangled that thing out and they finally agreed on that.

Then it came down to figure out how much Shields was owed for time spent. He was a rough looking guy. God, he had his hair in his eyes because he was drinking all the time. He was a good guy in a lot of ways too, but he was

awful rough looking. My father said to him, "Let's see now, you worked this and you worked this. That must be about 200 dollars." Shields says, "Oh hell, doc, I can figure better than that." [laughter] Anyway, they wrangled it out. They got the money and so Shields was—Lillian was in the garden, Dave was up here.

Lage: This was '55.

Wilson: Well, it's about '56, because the flood was '55, so it would have been '56 or '57. It turns out they got into a big drunk down there, and Lillian shot Shields.

Lage: Oh!

Wilson: Don't be alarmed at this at all.

Lage: This is not something unusual?

Wilson: This is not. She shot him three times, on three different occasions, never killed him, and they stayed married together [bursting out in laughter], and I thought that's got to be some kind of a record.

Lage: I'll say!

Wilson: No, that's the community, it's quite a community. The best story about Shields is they lived right down in the valley across from Ted O'Ferrall, who owned another little ranch that I bought that's part of this ranch. He worked for me for many years, and he had a little field about thirty or forty acres by his house. Shields had his trailer right off to the side with a fence between Ted and the trailer. So Ted was out running this tractor around his field. I don't know whether he was cutting hay or disking, but he was working the field. All of a sudden, he heard this "whing! whing!" and he couldn't figure out what the hell was that. He looks over, here's Shields with a 22, leaning on the fence, shooting at him. He went over there—he used to call him Jimmy—he went over there and he said, "Jimmy! What the hell do you think you're doing?! Give me that rifle." He took the rifle and I think he just damn near broke it right over the fence post. He said, "What's the matter?" He said, "My TV—your tractor's coming around and is wrecking my picture." [laughter] Now, the only reason I say that is nobody got hurt, Ted took his gun away from him, and there were never any lawyers or anything; it was all settled right there at the fence. Period. End of story.

Lage: Did Susan fit into this milieu well?

Wilson: She did pretty well. The first time she met Shields, Shields had been drunk all night up on a stream. What the Indians do is they build these dams on these streams, and then they catch the salmon as they're coming up. They can do it because they're Indians. He always was good with me. He was a good guy in

a lot of ways, except for all these habits. So he got this salmon, and he comes up—I was not home—he came up to the front door. Susan opens the door. Here's Shields [laughing] looking like the wrath of God: eyes bloodshot, hair in his face, with the salmon. "Is Dick here?" And she said, "No, he isn't." He looked at her and he said, "Well, I brought you salmon." She said, "Well thank you." He put it there and he says, "Where did Dick get you?" [laughter] That was their introduction. After a while she figured it out and got along with him okay, but I thought that was kind of a classic meeting.

- Lage: He was bringing her salmon.
- Wilson: He was bringing a little present, yes. "Where did Dick get you?"
- Lage: That's great.
- Wilson: I don't know.
- Lage: It sounds like you came here in '60, right after you got married?
- Wilson: That's correct.
- Lage: And you were doing some lumbering?
- Wilson: Well, we were working on that sale, and we were trying to build—not as much the lumber as I was trying to build the ranch up by trying to buy these different parcels and getting the valley organized. I knew we would have to move to the valley pretty soon because eventually schools, and a lot of the work down there, so that that was in the works.
- Lage: Was there a home in the valley that you had?
- Wilson: On this ranch I was trying to buy there was, and then we fixed it up so it was a little better.
- Lage: You had the Buck—
- Wilson: I had the Buck Mountain house, then when we moved to the valley we were down there pretty much because of just the kids. It's just real—I mean I, trying to commute with seventeen miles back and forth and it was just, you know, pretty hard to do.
- Lage: But you bought up different parcels.
- Wilson: I bought up what was known as the Old Perata Ranch. It was more of a place to raise corn. We got into some farming, and there were some other parcels that made up the ranch, and so—

Lage: What kind of farming?

Wilson: Well, hay mostly, but we eventually started raising corn silage, and we built a little feed lot over the hill. I raised about 4,000 tons of corn silage in Covelo, which I don't think people believed could be done, but we sure did it.

Lage: Pardon my ignorance, but what is corn silage?

Wilson: Corn silage is when you grow a corn plant and not for corn grain, but when corn dents—it's when the kernel just gets a little dent in it—then you chop it through a chopper and you dump it in a pit and you pack it—dairies do this all the time—and that's your feed in the winter time. It ferments. We grew good silage.

Lage: For your own use?

Wilson: Yes, it was all for my own. In those days I worked with a man named Grover Turnbow. We used to be—he was the head of the executive committee at the Bank of America. Grover had a feed lot in Chowchilla. Actually, Grover and I got acquainted through a man named Jack Himmelwright, who helped me buy one of the valley ranches. It was a bankruptcy sale down in Monterey. Jack had been a long-time friend of Potter and then Witter. I think Jack may have sold—or his dad—but Jack sold the Potter ranch to Witter way back in the forties. He introduced me to Grover. Grover was a fantastic character. I actually started my cattle and sent them down to his feed lot to be finished because I didn't have the grain here. Then we sold them. I used to buy cattle for him when I went to the sales in Red Bluff for quite a while. Lewis Hurt, a neighbor, helped me buy Turnbow's cattle. Lewis was a true expert at buying cattle in the sales ring. We really operated a pretty big operation in the sense of the feed we produced, the hay we produced. I leased some ranches. I had some other—

[looks at the outline] Well, we're up to '64. We're up to the flood.

**Interview #2: September 1, 2001 {morning}**

[Begin Tape 3, Side A]

Wilson: This would be Saturday morning, about 9:30, or 9:35, also at Henthorne Lake, on the first of September?

Lage: And we're continuing from yesterday. We wanted to—

Wilson: We want to review a little bit about kind of what the ranch was when I had left the service, what I came to. When my father died, he left the ranch basically to me, because I was the only one of the boys that was interested in it. My brother John was a doc—both of them were off then. Frankly, their memories of this place, I think, were not the happiest, simply because my father—and that's when my mother, Anna, would come up here, and he would bring the boys. For instance, they had to build fences. In those days, it was split posts, and they had to dig them by hand. I remember one tale about my mother telling my father, "John, we've got to get these boys back to school," and my father saying, "Don't worry, Anna, they're learning more up here than they'll ever learn in school. Back to the fence." [laughter] They got their real bellyful of western ranch life early, and I think that was it. That took care of them. [laughter]

Lage: Did your father know by the time he died that this is what you wanted to do?

Wilson: No.

Lage: Maybe you didn't know by then.

Wilson: When he died, I was still in the army.

Lage: You had studied agriculture at Cornell.

Wilson: No. Well, that's correct. I had gone there. Yes, that's correct. Of course, when he died I was in the army, and when I came back out of the army I came up here and this was the beginning; this was 1960, but this was the beginning. There are certain kind of key thresholds, and I think this was when the Crawfords had moved a mill. In other words, they had a mill at Longvale, over there at [highway] 101, and they had moved into Covelo, and they were building another mill in Covelo, and there were several littler mills around in those days. It was the beginning of the opening of this country, because there really were no roads, other than the county road, and a few roads back into the country where you came. For the most part, it was all wild virgin country, that's it.

When Frank, and Vivian, and Bill was his brother, moved him up to Covelo and started that construction of the mill, they were obviously very much interested in timber. Again, I saw kind of the future was that they were going

to open this country, and there was going to be more activity, and my interest was the ranch. The question was, well, what could I do to improve the ranch? The size of the ranch wasn't big enough. It was small, a little less than even 100 cows. My dad had a man work for him at that time. I sort of felt, well, with the possibility of the Browns selling their ranches—. Well, I got married and Susan and I moved up here. And the possibility of buying the Brown ranches, and then there was the O'Ferralls, another family that potentially could be bought. It was sort of filling the holes and the in-holdings in, so it was contiguous with the permits we had up here on the Forest Service land, that we could do something. Then, as I mentioned earlier, there was that potential too of maybe going to the valley to raise some hay and some things we needed to make this a balanced ranch. My thought was not so much timber as that when I dealt with the Crawfords I said, "You do the timber, I'll do the ranch side, the range," and we kind of left it at that.

We wrote a contract that was important in 1960 because, to my knowledge, it was the only time there was ever a conservation clause in a contract. It stated that there would be conservation practices engaged—used when they were doing the logging. One of the specific terms of that contract was that there would be a 100-foot screen around the lake where they couldn't cut the timber, right here. [points] If you look at that when you walk it, you'll see what I—probably should have been 300 feet, but in those days 100 feet was like going to the moon in the eyes of the lumber people. In any event, that screen was set up as a buffer, which years later the whole lake and stream protection zone all came around the screen. I mean, that's what the fight is today, the set-asides on rivers and water courses. That kind of thought was not of interest to, obviously, lumber people. The reason that I—I had seen them operate. What they did is they cut everything right down to the bank, and then they used it—

Lage: Clear cut?

Wilson: Well, as much as you could clear cut with the regulations, which was pretty close to a clear cut, and also they had put their water trucks in there to get water, and then go water the roads. It was a very, kind of a messy—it was a mess. That's why you needed—I had seen that, and this is why I put that in the clause to protect the lake.

Lage: It was an unusual clause.

Wilson: It was very unusual. Yes, it was. In any event, with the country opening up, and the opportunity, eventually, as I said, I did make a sale to the Crawfords. In those days it was a king's ransom because timber was twenty dollars a thousand, as opposed to now when it's four or five hundred, or going up as high as probably close to a thousand dollars, just to show you how times have changed. Nevertheless, it was the money that gave me the opportunity to really get out and try to expand the ranch and work with Crawford on this

exchange land. In the exchange land, for instance the Brown ranch, I kept the range and the hard woods I retained, and he bought the timber lands that were the best yielding, and then all the timber. That contract ran until 1995. That was thirty-five years, from '60—and this is the significant date we will visit many times—but it ran from 1960 until 1995.

Lage: The contract you had with Crawford.

Wilson: With Crawford.

Lage: Did the price—?

Wilson: No. The price didn't change. It was a contract in terms of getting—you see, the contract implied that they had to build a road. You see, there was no road here, so they had to get to here with a road from somewhere, and they get the timber out, and then they retain certain rights over that period. Then they're through. Then it all reverted back to my own property.

I told my mother, I said, "I think really what I want to do is to go there and try to make my life up there, because that's kind of what I want to do." She understood that too. So that's when I started out, and then as time went along we bought these properties and the valley ranches—there were some other properties there—and began to really build something that was a sizeable herd, both in terms of the farming side and the cattle numbers, in terms of the cow herd, and the little feed lot area we had.

Lage: How many?

Wilson: We went probably—at one time we probably had about—on leased ground and our own ground—around 800 cows. We probably had, in the course of a year, the lighter cattle that we fed through the Turnbow feed lot, maybe, oh, up to 1000 to 1500 over the course of a year. Then we had our, of course, we produced a lot of hay; and we produced silage; we drove the wells to get the irrigation. Again, this is all taking place in the sixties because this is a very significant period too because that—I had some really good fellas helping me, Hanneson and Riddle were consultants, Hanneson, and Riddle in Davis, to really look at how we set up the farming and the kind of fertilization we required.

Lage: Were they Davis professors?

Wilson: They were consultants. I think they may have gone to Davis, but they were not the university extension; they were private. The feasibility was all right, and everything was in place, but the point I want to make is—we're all mindful of it now—that it was totally energy consumptive in that your PG&E rates were set on the more you pump, the less the cost; the more fertilizer used it was practically given to you, because nitrogen was obviously an extraction and it

came from oil, a petroleum bi-product . All of your freight rates, being again Covelo's freight rates, but it was very cheap to get in and out of Covelo with cattle trucks. We had a carrier right here in Covelo. Insurance wasn't really a big factor in those days; we did not have unemployment insurance on agricultural help. We didn't have all of the kinds of things that you have to give to people today in terms of the benefits which, I know when I finally got pretty much out of that segment, I think we were up to fifty cents on the dollar in terms of benefits, which for agriculture was pretty steep because if you paid a dollar, fifty percent, half of it, whatever it was, was going to go into benefit packages. My thought was to build that and to try to really build a balanced ranch with the capability of producing most of its own feed.

The other thing at that particular time is there were a lot of older fellows here. Everet Dunlap was one, an old family name here. Everet's sister, Vera, was married to my very good friend, Lewis Hurt. Frank Weimouth [spells]. Gene Rehner [spells]. These were men that had lived all their lives in Covelo and farmed and worked the land, so they knew how to farm. They were good. If they went out and did it, they did it and they did it right. That was important to them. Whatever it was, whether it was fixing a fence, or anything. Or cultivating, or watering, or anything. Or if something wasn't right they would always ask me, or we would have an opportunity to talk about it.

Lage: You must have learned from them too.

Wilson: Absolutely, absolutely, because they used to raise corn in the valley without irrigation because the moisture was good enough there that they cultivated up the moisture. By that I mean, if you keep the ground loose, and you keep using these mules [as a cultivator?], but they would raise a corn crop that way, just cultivating, without any irrigation. You keep working it up, and the moisture keeps coming. The ground tends to seal, and if you just keep the cultivation going you'll find that it will keep coming up—not all of it, but some of the ground down there that's very rich. They understood all of these things; and they understood livestock; and they understood kind of sickness, and if cattle were not right—they didn't look right, anyway. You could get help, and it was willing help, and it was good help. That's kind of the way we got underway.

Lage: How were the market forces at that time?

Wilson: The market forces in cattle have always been erratic and very unstable. We would have some just good years and bad years. We had several breaks in it, and the worse came along a little later in the drought years, and when we really got—it was problems, but we're not there yet. We'll get to that. Basically, cattle today aren't a heck of a lot different than they were then in terms of the price of them at the ranch. There was still more competition because there were more people buying for feed lots, there were more auction yards, and you had a chance to look for a market where there was a

differential that you could get a better price at one place than another if you were in a certain situation with a certain weight class of cattle.

There also, in those days, was a response to the weather. In other words, if you got a good fall or a good spring and the grasses came, the markets responded to those kinds of conditions, and there was a bounce in the price. Today it doesn't matter whether you're in a drought, because you've got Argentina and Mexico, and the price is the price and it's in control of five big packers anyway, so that's all disappeared. In those days the weather made a difference, and the competition, and the ability to have access to a—whether it was in Ukiah or whether it was in the valley, or whether it was in Humboldt, there were a lot of auction yards just like there were a lot of mills.

Lage: Did you do your own sales?

Wilson: Only to the extent that they went to somebody that sold them. Usually a buyer came to your ranch and bought your cattle, and you got different ones to come. They came, I mean there were order buyers all over the place. Sometimes you went to an auction.

Lage: Did you negotiate with them?

Wilson: Oh yes, absolutely, absolutely. That's what I mean, you could negotiate and you had an opportunity to talk about the conditions of sale and the price. It wasn't a lot, but it was something. That's no longer true, you see. Now you just take whatever they'll give you and that's about it. There aren't very many options even left, really one in this whole part of California. Anyway, that's kind of the tone of the ranch and what we were doing, and how we developed it. Of course, we moved to the valley and really right after the '64 flood we came down and were living here. I'm going to shut off for a minute. [tape stopped]

The other thing about this is it took a lot of money to do this. We had to borrow money too, to do it. We had the leverage, but land—like these range lands, I never, I don't think, paid more than twenty dollars an acre for the range. In those days, with the number of acres—thirty or more acres a cow—you could afford it because it made some sense to have that price. Like I say, there was kind of some equilibrium between the price of land, the price of your commodities, and the price of a pickup. All of these things were more at a level for agricultural prices to contend with. That was a very, very, very different time than what we have today, as we're moving ahead and forward. So we've got a base on that.

Lage: And you want to talk about the road—

Wilson: I wanted to talk, as I say, the country was opening up. The Forest Service was trying to build the road up the river. If you were to come here, as a guest or

somebody, I would route you up and park at Hoxie Crossing, which is about a mile underneath us here.

Lage: Where would that road start?

Wilson: From Covelo you would come ten miles out to the ranger station, right on the hill, and drive right up. It's thirty-two miles up the river. They were building that road in those days. It wasn't complete, but that was—and one of the things that they had on their maps was a bridge across here, and again this road was going to go back—

Lage: [pointing] here?

Wilson: Yup, up to the Mad River, because it isn't very far in distance from here to shoot a line through a gap and up a little further, and you would drop right into the Mad River, and that takes you out of the Mendocino National Forest into the Shasta Trinity. Grew lots of timber in this country, and so—

Lage: And that was the goal.

Wilson: The goal was the timber and the access to the timber. Forest Service was primarily in the business of trees and building roads. There was a man that worked for the Forest Service by the name of Eugene. I knew him, and he and I, at one time, we were out here, and he was kind of doing some survey work, and looking around down there at Hoxie and, "You know," he said, "Richard," he said, "I hope you don't let them come through here." He said, "This is the most unstable, poorest place to build a bridge or anything. It's a landslide. It's going to—it just so happens that this part of the river in the summer, 85 percent of the summer habitat for steelhead is right here, right in this river. Summer run." He said, "If they get in here, they're going to have dirt, and sediment, and slides, and it's just going to be a mess." I looked at it, and it was unstable; it was a terrifically fractured, broken, and the site was terrible too. And then, not only that, they came right through the cook house with the road and then headed out north.

So the district ranger, I think it was Dave Jones in those days, had come to me and said they wanted to do some survey. I said, "Well," I said, "Survey for what?" "Well," he said, "We just want to look at coming down to the crossing and everything. We're not surveying a road through you." And I said, "Well, no surveying, no grade stakes, but go ahead. I mean, you can come down here and look at this if you want to. That's all right." I left it at that and I came out here and low and behold, everything was surveyed and there were grade stakes right through the cook house, and right out through there! I was furious, and I picked up every lousy stake and burned it. Oh, I just blew up. I just thought, "This is it! This is really what it's all about!"

Lage: And this was something they could do? This is private land.

- Wilson: Yes. They just went ahead and did it. This was federal government. So I had some friends in the Brobeck Phleger & Harrison [law] office in San Francisco. I had—well this is—we're beginning to get into another little area, but nevertheless, one of their—this is when Nixon was coming in, and there was a man named John Larson, I think, that was an attorney that had gone back to the Department of the Interior from the Brobeck law office.
- Lage: Now, we have to think about the time. You said it was '60.
- Wilson: I know. It's '60, you see, but—
- Lage: And '60 was Kennedy.
- Wilson: Well, it's just, yes. It's right in that—Larson. Let's think about—let's see, Kennedy came in—
- Lage: In '60, and Nixon came in in '68.
- Wilson: Yes. I'm trying to think about how—that contact—yes, I think that was the next road up, the BLM road that I'm getting this mixed up with, because that was the Nixon administration. No, it wasn't the Larson thing at all. This was, they wanted to have a road from Covelo to the northern Mendocino Forest and into the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. To get there, they had to cross my ranch either at Hoxie Crossing or over the Big Butte over the BLM lands.
- Lage: Should we back up? Did you go to Brobeck on that first road?
- Wilson: Not for this. Scratch that out. We'll be coming to it. Anyway, I challenged—I had a forester working for me named Bob McDougal, in Ukiah, that had helped cruise my timber and different things, and wrote some letters, and challenged the Forest Service road on the basis of the benefit-cost ratio. The benefit-cost ration was just that they could sell enough timber to justify building the road and building the bridge to get across here to do what they wanted to do. As I say, in those days timber at the top was twenty or less, and they couldn't even begin to get the money together to justify the cost of this kind of construction. The long and the short of it is they threw in the towel and they gave it up. That idea died.
- Lage: And you did it strictly on cost—?
- Wilson: It was a benefit-cost. It wasn't environmental. It was pure money. It was nothing else.
- Lage: I guess there weren't many rules or legislation in place then, at the time.
- Wilson: No. Not yet. It was coming, with the National Environmental Protection Act, and all these other things that were shortly coming. When that took place, the

desire for a road had not changed other than it went inland where we came in from Covelo, and that was the Bureau of Land Management.

Also, at that point, you see the Crawfords—I don't remember exactly the date that they went down with their plane in Canada on a fishing trip, but they did, and were lost, and of course what that meant was that their lumber company went up for sale and was purchased by Georgia-Pacific. George Schmidbauer was their son-in-law. George today lives up in Arcata, Eureka, has a mill there and a mill in Weaverville. He and Peggy—he married Peggy Crawford. His wife was Frank's daughter. They sold the mill, they sold the company to Georgia-Pacific, and that would have been about—God, you know, it's just without going to calendars and everything—I think it was after '64, I think shortly right after '64. In any event, Georgia-Pacific took it over, and Georgia-Pacific was the biggest lumber company around in those days. They were the biggest in this country because they had bought the Union Lumber Company over on the coast, which was an old company of redwood land, just like Pacific Lumber. It was 200,000 acres, so they bought that, and then they were buying these inland properties along with it. The BLM—and it was the same crowd—the timber people, and the off-road vehicle, and all this kind of stuff. It was after '64. I think that's right. I'm getting it together a little bit.

The flood of '64, as I say, was so big, and it was so—they talk about the 100-year floods, but this thing, you would have to say, maybe was a 1000-year from the kinds of material. Right here under us, for instance, the year after the flood, Lewis Butler, who helped me with Dos Rios—I don't know how much you want to go into that because it's written in a book<sup>2</sup>, but we can talk a little bit about it. He and I walked that river, and the river is very rough, and it has boulders and everything. After that flood, you could have taken an ATV, one of those four-wheelers, down that river, there was so much sediment. It's hard to believe this, but if you look up on the bank and see where the water was and the sediment, and the point—there's a very important point here because the fishery problems of the Eel River are really not logging and roads. The '64 flood is what really washed out and destroyed the fishery because all the pools were filled in. There was not one sprig of vegetation down there in that canyon left. It had been scoured absolutely clean.

Lage: And this was the area where your forester friend said was the—

Wilson: Bridge.

Lage: Not just the bridge, but the spawning place for all the fish.

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2. Simon, Ted. *The River Stops Here: Saving Round Valley, a Pivotal Chapter in California's Water Wars* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).

Wilson: Yes, and the pools were gone. When you go down there today, what you're going to see is a recovery of a river thirty-seven years, whatever, after that flood, and perhaps eight years after the flood the eddying of the old steelhead pools came back, and eventually in time the steelhead even came back. It's amazing how they knew after this—because they didn't have any place to come. There were no pools. There was nothing. It was absolutely nothing. It had completely decimated as a river. And the cover—there was no vegetation. There was nothing for the micro-nutrients—the smaller insect life. Shade, for instance—even after it started rebuilding its pools the summer just was hot; there was no shade, and fish can't hatch. They've got to have water; they've got to have shade; the temperature of the water's important; the vegetation to support the kind food they need. All of those things, they were just gone. The river, to this day, is rebuilding itself. In another, I don't know, fifty years, or whatever, it's going to be—probably will come back if it doesn't have another one of these massive floods, but that's going to take a lot of time.

Lage: Was the flood—did cutting, lumbering up the stream affect it?

Wilson: There was never any lumbering here because there were no roads. This was totally a natural event. Now downstream, yes, there was some logging, and the roads, and that's always been a big—you go down to the Pacific Lumber Company and there's been problems, no question of it, about how they've managed some of their roads. All I'm saying is that all this material down here that was put down by that flood had to be taken out. It's been carried out year after year. Some of it's eventually moving to the ocean. That's what the river's doing. All of that had to be done, and it's done each year. If you saw it before, and see it today, you can just see, slowly and surely, the whole system is slowly rebuilding itself and eventually I think it will come back, and eventually support a fishery again. There are some fish, and the steelhead numbers are way down, for this reason and others too, probably because of what goes on down where they go into the ocean, and there's some problems there.

You can't believe water like that until you see it. I know at Hull's Creek, when I was stuck there with Susan and the kids, and I would walk down to a couple of places where there was a bridge, and a [site?] or two, under the house—I never had seen so much water—there was so much water in the canyon, it almost looked like a movie slow motion, where the water was cascading, but it's just rolling. It was just like slow motion, and just a roar, just a roar. It's just hard to comprehend stuff like that.

Lage: What did it do to the valley?

Wilson: Well, Covelo was under water, and there were fences, and you know. The water was fairly slow down there—while it was up in the town, and everything, it basically wasn't fast cutting, it was just up and flat, so it was—

Lage: Had that happened before?

Wilson: We've had floods. We've had some—

[End Tape 3, Side A]

[Begin Tape 3, Side B]

Wilson: The road to Covelo, the bridge, was out—the main bridge coming across the Middle Fork Eel River at Dos Rios, and then the road, just before you get to the bridge at Dos Rios, actually was under water. That's how much water was in that channel: it took the road out. So we were cut off. We had planes coming in, to bring us some supplies there at the airport, in the town. And then, of course, we had the snow right after it. It certainly was an event that—I don't think people appreciate the size, and the significance, and the force of nature when it comes at you this way. It's like a volcano, or something. It's just overwhelming, and it tends to sort of change things, set things in motion in the future that maybe you didn't always anticipate at that time. Rebuilding, of course, and all that took place. It was costly, but, uh.

The '55 flood, while I wasn't here for that, was a significant flood; but it didn't have anywhere near the capacity, velocity, or just magnitude of the 1964 flood. I mean it's where you've seen this cutting down here underneath us here, where the fence was, that's mostly '64, where the channel was like this, and then the flood came and opened it up, and just took out so much of this sediment, and then the mountain above just sort of filled in behind it. That's what's happened. It's a Franciscan formation here: it's unstable fractured. Anything that shakes it loose tends to make it want to move. It's that kind of blue clay, unstable ground.

Lage: So that's sort of the background to the Dos Rios dam idea.

Wilson: That's the background to Dos Rios. Simply one of the things it did is it was a great motivation for the dam builders, and everybody that's part of that constituency. We had the flood, and the California Water Plan, which we voted on in 1960, was Oroville [Dam] and the San Luis reservoir. But the second stage was to come here to this part, to the north coast rivers, and the question always was, well, where do you start? Obviously, the powers that be—Bill Gianelli was involved as the director of Water Resources in the Reagan years. Of course this is—we got dates right here—

Lage: Sixty-seven.

Wilson: Yes, sixty-eight, well yes, but before. I'm trying to think. I think it was William Warne. I think so. But in any event, they all were looking at this area, and—

- Lage: And were you aware of that?
- Wilson: Well, I was aware of it for—where I began to get into this is through the Thacher School, and I was, I think, on the board, but in any event, Ike [Norman B. Livermore, Jr.] and I worked on the Wilderness Camp for Thacher over in the Sierra. Ike at that time worked for the Pacific Lumber Company as its treasurer, I think. He was active during Don Clausen's years as the congressman. Ike was the treasurer. He was enlisting me to support Clausen as the Republican, you know, and I was interested. It was passive more than active. In any event, I began to get the feeling from the Humboldt people that were Clausen's representatives and local staff people, you know, that this whole Eel River thing was beginning to shape up. You could begin to see the part that—you know, the Metropolitan Water District was mixed up in this. They had an association in Santa Rosa, the Eel River Association. All the background stuff was beginning to move around.
- Lage: Did Clausen's staff alert you to this?
- Wilson: No, they were talking about dams, and because of the damage to the Pacific Lumber Company we have to do something to protect that from happening again.
- Lage: Down by the coast.
- Wilson: Yes. And there were also bulletins from the Department of Water Resources, and all these things were beginning to show up. You know how if you're around the talk and the stuff that goes on—you begin to think, "Yeah, there's something kind of coming along here." And of course it was this whole idea, this concept that the engineer has is this is all waste water and therefore we should dam this water and move it back to the Central Valley agriculture and to Southern California. The whole place was filled up with these people: Marin County Water District was in on it; Eel River Association was in on it, and that was the Metropolitan Water District.
- Lage: The Metropolitan Water District was in on it?
- Wilson: In LA. You bet, they were right up to their ears. Bill Fairbanks was their lobbyist in Sacramento, and he's quite a guy. They had big-time plans over here, because they had not only this, but they had all of them: the Klamath, the Eel, the Trinity, the Smith. What wasn't dammed they were going to move on and have a project of dams, and lifts, and tunnels, and just—I have a map, sometime I might show you, that would just—you wouldn't believe it.
- Lage: These are the—
- Wilson: They're all the proposals. I mean I just can't believe it.

- Lage: It's sort of a counterpart of the plan to turn the San Francisco Bay basically into a creek, running out to the ocean.
- Wilson: Well, that's true. There's some of that.
- Lage: An engineer's dream.
- Wilson: Engineer's dream. There was nothing they couldn't do. That was their world, and it was their job to tame nature and to make it work. Whatever the cost, the end justifies the mean. In other words, you just do it and if you run into some problems, well, you just go back to Congress and solve that too. There was the money—that's the whole thing—that was the right thing to do. This was progress, and the people that were vested in it, like the Army Corps of Engineers, and DWR [Department of Water Resources], and all these people, they saw the world in that vein, and that's all.
- Lage: Were you thinking that at the time, or is this in retrospect? Did you see this in those years?
- Wilson: Well, yes. I mean, I could see it. As I say, I voted against the state water plan bonds in 1960 because I think—you see, the thing that's changed the world for us up here was one man, one vote in '64. The thing that changed the world for us was that the one man, one vote gave the rural areas [less representation]—in other words, you had the state senate representing you [rural areas], and then you had the assembly representing the city, so therefore there was always negotiation because there was enough power—you had George Miller, and Hugh Burns, and Randy Collier, and these old names from Siskiyou, from Contra Costa, or from Fresno, Zenovich, from Fresno—there was a whole bunch of them, and they had a lot of power, and they could represent their area, and see that the rural areas, and the agriculture, and the people up here didn't get completely short-shrift or wiped out from this urbanization, and the numbers that were—well, when one man, one vote came, that was it.
- Lage: You see the difference.
- Wilson: Well, yeah. I mean there's no—you have two state senators for the whole northern part of the state and then everybody else. It just doesn't work. I think that where you really feel it is in the field of resources, because they're what people want. They're the things that—it doesn't matter whether it's real estate, or water, or roads, or whatever it is. That was another big issue that showed its face to people. Again, once you have a change like that it takes a while for it all to seep in; but it certainly has, and I think it certainly has taken its toll.

I think that from that point, my sense was that there was some room to negotiate prior to 1964 in a political sense. After that, it was up or down, black

or white, yes or no; there was no middle ground. As I have said to people many times, my nature was to see if there was maybe a smaller dam than Dos Rios, or a smaller My Ranch or something. That wasn't the way it came down. It's all or nothing, and when you get into all or nothing you're just, in my lights, in a fight. It's you or them; you're in or you're out; and you might as well draw your line in the sand and say, "Whoever's left here wins, and the rest go home." That's all.

Lage: So it affected the way you went about tackling these issues?

Wilson: Absolutely, absolutely, it did. I was not a great advocate of wilderness. I have, to this day, had a strong feeling that we ought to have a working landscape, but a working landscape implies negotiation, discipline, and the ways of moderation. The country has lost that. It's globalization; it's big capital; it's Wall-Street money setting high expectations that resources cannot beat on a sustainable basis. If you add that all up—[tape stops because of wind]

Lage: We're going to launch into the Dos Rios controversy.

Wilson: All right, well, I think the best part of the beginning of Dos Rios is that the Department of Water Resources had put out a bulletin that this was the best prospect for water. George Baumli [spells] was the engineer over in Red Bluff. He basically—they send people out to the communities to sort of explain what's going to happen. There was a meeting in Covelo, behind the library, or maybe kind of what is the library now, which was the Masonic Hall. Baumli came over and was giving everybody the explanation of why the Dos Rios dam was needed, and everything, and kind of how it worked, and the Corps of Engineers was the partner, where the Corps basically was going to do the land work in the exchange, and all that, and the DWR was the engineers to get the water out and get it either through the Grindstone Tunnel or lift it up into Lake County and flush out Clear Lake, which was like a toilet; it needed water because of the sewage water quality before they dumped it into Cache Creek to go into the Sacramento River delta area.

It's just funny; it's one of the quirky little things that hits you. Somehow, we have some of the biggest oak trees in California in the valley, and that Quercus valley oak series, and I think I may have asked something about, "Well, what do you do about all of the trees and everything here in the valley floor?" And they said, "Well, we just bring the bulldozers in and we can just pull them down, and pile them, and burn them." You know, it struck me that that kind of a statement, that there's no interest about what's here, or what it is in a natural way. It's just this is a mechanical engineering: you do an arithmetic and an algorithm, or something, and show that this is the way you do it; then you bring in all of the heavy equipment and the things you do, and you just do it. That's sort of the end of it, and then the Corps [Army Corps of Engineers], their whole perspective was, "Well, we move the town and get it up on the hill, and set the Indians up with a bunch of basket-weaving kind of

concessions.” The whole thing, it was just this thing that you do, every time you build one of these things.

Lage: How did the audience react?

Wilson: The audience was a bit stunned, and also I think overwhelmed by the—if it wasn’t said, it was unsaid, that, “Look, this is California. This is something we need. We understand your problems, but don’t—we’re going to buy you out. We’re going to make it right. But this is going to happen. Just take it.”

Lage: Who all was there? Was a big group?

Wilson: Oh yes, it was the local people, and they were all—everybody was pretty darn interested, obviously. Right there I thought, “You know, there’s some things here that just don’t add up. We ought to just look into this thing a little bit and see if, you know, what is the Dos Rios project?”

The Corps does a report about this thick; it looks like the Internal Revenue Code, or the holy Bible, or something, it’s got so much—but in it, there were a lot of curious things. The one that intrigued me, one, was the flood control benefit for Round Valley, because it claimed a flood control benefit for Round Valley, and I could not, for the life of me, figure out how that worked until I asked one of the Corps people. I said, “How did you calculate this, because I’m under 300 feet of water?” The answer was, “Well, if you’re under 300 feet of water there’s no longer anymore floods.” “Oh, good,” I thought, “That’s wonderful logic.”

Lage: They said this with all seriousness?

Wilson: Yes. That was a benefit, a claimed benefit.

Lage: That would make an activist—

Wilson: Not to mention the fact of the geology. Not to mention the fact of the lack of water because most of the water came from down below the dam.

Lage: Most of the—? Now say that again.

Wilson: The water that was produced in flooding in the Eel came from the south fork down by Branscomb below the dam. It was not up here in this watershed. So to get 700,000 acre feet out of this, you had to get it all out of here, and as you can see like years like these, there’s not enough to keep the bottom of the dam irrigated, much less store that kind of water.

Lage: So you realized that?

- Wilson: Well, I mean it's just these were things that I seriously questioned, and that's when I rounded up Lew Butler, who was a lawyer, had been in the Peace Corps, and was Pete McCloskey's partner.
- Lage: Did you know Lew Butler?
- Wilson: I actually got ahold of Lew through California Tomorrow, and Alf Heller, and his old pal over there who did water—what was his name? [Sam Woods] God, it's terrible, you forget some of these people who were—anyway, that Alf Heller and I'll think of him, he said, "Well, why don't go and see Lew Butler?"
- Lage: And did you know Alf Heller?
- Wilson: I was engaged with California Tomorrow. I was in that. I was a great supporter of that.
- Lage: Okay, so you had been a supporter of that?
- Wilson: Yes. And so I saw Lew, and we visited on it, and he was interested in this. He was a fellow that's kind of a—they've got property up on Fall River, and there's a whole bunch of these: Dave Lennihan was a fisherman and a Brobeck lawyer, and Lew had been a member of Brobeck [law firm]. They all liked fishing on the Fall River. [Pete] McCloskey was in the group. These were kind of—they were a little younger group of the Dean Witter class, you know what I mean.
- Lage: Tell me—I may know what you mean, but people who read this oral history—
- Wilson: They had an interest in California. They had an interest in the out-of-doors. They had an interest in the fisheries. They had an interest in the policy, the government, what we were doing with these resources, all of that kind of thing. A lot of it was through fishing and fisheries, and wildlife, and out-of-doors, and just things like that. But it went beyond their interest in being a lawyer, and practicing law, and all of that sort of thing. Dave Lennihan was a great advocate of the fisheries, and fishing, and they all liked duck hunting; and they all liked just being out in that part of California that they thought was really important, and probably why they liked the state so much.
- Lage: So they were outdoorsmen.
- Wilson: Outdoorsmen, yes.
- Lage: With civic, civic consciousness—
- Wilson: Both, yes. McCloskey too. They had a group at Fall River. They were all—they bought partnerships, and they had a place up there.

Lage: Where is Fall River?

Wilson: It's up by Burney. You go from Redding and out east. Fall River's one of the finest fishing pieces of river in this world, in the state of California.

Lage: And Dean Witter was another one, you said.

Wilson: Well, yes. I mean he was also an advocate of resources and protection, I think too. Conservation, I would rather say, because I think it implies more wide use than just stopping things. He was a good supporter, and Grover Turnbow, and Jack Hume, and it was the Reagan cabinet type people; there were several of them in there. But I mean Alf Heller, he was great on this stuff, and Woods, Sam Woods, was the fellow. Sam Woods. They wrote about this stuff, and in California Tomorrow we worked on these things in those magazines about planning and thinking about maybe what needed to be done, and tried to get it into the legislature, and all this kind of thing. When you come in with a scheme like Dos Rios it just—it's like the '64 flood; it just blows it all out of the water, the whole thing.

Anyway, Lew, and then I came upon a fellow by the name of Curtis Roberts, who was a public relations man that worked the San Francisco turf and was a fly fisherman. Curtis Roberts was a brilliant person. I never met anybody quite like him. He worked for [Joe] Alioto; he worked for [Jack] Shelley; he worked for this, that, and the other, and bond elections, and was wired into the whole press corps and everything.

Lage: Was he a friend of Lew Butler's?

Wilson: No. I got Curt—and, you know, this is deep in my memory and so I'm doing the best I can. I think John Connell, my cousin in Los Angeles, was a friend of Ted Braun—Braun and Company was a public relations firm, statewide, that did a lot of political work, you know, that kind of thing. I think it was Ted Braun told John Connell that Richard ought to get a hold of Curtis Roberts because these big companies have stringer-type people and Curt was one of their people that they used on campaigns and that kind of thing. So I introduced myself through Braun to Curt and we met a little apartment over there in San Francisco. He was single, and he chain-smoked cigarettes, and was kind of a—he was a character.

Lage: Was he an old-time pol?

Wilson: He was a pol, but he was a shrewd, very shrewd, cagey guy. I explained this to him, and I think he, he looked at me, and he looked at me, and he said, "Is Richard Wilson real, or what am I—am I having a nightmare? What is this thing [laughing] in my living room?" So I had him—

Lage: Because of your passion?

- Wilson: I don't know what it was. Anyway, I asked him to come up to the ranch, and he came up and spent time with us, and we looked at this whole thing. Oh boy, he really, you know, he got a hold of this thing fast.
- Lage: So he got a hold of it philosophically. This was the job for him.
- Wilson: You bet, you bet. He began to lay out to me how politics really works in the media, in the sense that he said, "Look," he said—there was a hearing in Willits with the Corps of Engineers. It was a real dog-and-pony show. He gave us the whole bit about how this was going to happen. I gave a paper at that called, "Look Before you Leap," it was kind of a "think this thing through everybody before you jump into this." Curt, he went there, and he helped me with that, kind of making that presentation. Then he said, "This is one of those deals where this is the greatest kept secret in the state, or in the country, because everybody up here knows it because they're affected, but it's a total blackout in the Sacramento, Los Angeles, San Francisco media; it's just not known. This is the Corps of Engineers, the Department of the Water Resources, the bureaucrats, and all the water boys." And he said, "This has to change. This has to become—" and this is his transparency thing that I really began to understand, how when you really put this out in the middle and people see it over, and over, and over, and it's true that if you say something over, and over, and over some of it seeps in, somehow, but it takes a lot of time.
- Lage: But you didn't have a lot of time.
- Wilson: No, and he did something that was a brilliant stroke. He labeled it, "The Controversial Dos Rios Project," and that one word started the—he would write press releases about this stuff, you know, and he—every time, it was always "the controversial." Well, as time went, pretty soon the powers that be—because now we're in the Reagan-Livermore period, you know, we're in the Reagan administration. Every time somebody would pipe up saying, "No, it's not controversial," and start justifying it—every time they started justifying it, they would put their foot in their mouth. It was just like bouncing off the wall and getting a new political gaffe to work off. They just—they didn't get it, what was going on. They were—"this isn't controversial; this is the way you do things. This is America. This is—" all this stuff, you know, and they just couldn't get it, and he was just hammering them [on] the inconsistencies, and it was just all kinds of flaws in their report. Pretty soon what happens is the papers begin to start talking about it in the editorials, and Lew Butler said, "You know, we got to get over to the legislature and educate these legislators." So he got together what we called, "The famous red binders." Everybody got a red binder on Dos Rios with all of these facts that we were putting out.
- Lage: With photographs?

- Wilson: Everything, but mostly facts. It was called—I started then—we formed the Round Valley Conservation League, really started here in Covelo, and then the Round Valley Conservation League became Save the Eel River Association [SERA] for a broader audience; that was the letterhead that had Dean Witter and all these people on it.
- Lage: So you brought in people from outside—?
- Wilson: Oh yes, because that was one of the strategies is to get people from outside to be a party to this, not just a local—this isn't just some of these local hick farmer things that everybody—
- Then the other thing that really helped was that the economics—this thing was just crazy. I mean, they were charging three and four percent interest when the rate of interest was like ten, nine—eight or nine percent, the benefit-cost thing. It was just all haywire. So, I thought, “Well, how do you—? Who is there around that knows how to deal with this from a resource economist?” Through the various avenues I came up with Gardner Brown, who was at the University of Washington. Gardner was a young man who was on the staff up there, that I think had worked for Resources for the Future at some point, but he had worked on Corps projects in different places, and was totally familiar with the how they did their business. Gardner, I got him, and got a report to him. He did a fast study and said, “Well, it's what it is. It's just a lot of paper, false assumptions, and bad economics. It does what they want to do, and that's to build the largest dam in the western United States by far.”
- Lage: Is that what it was?
- Wilson: It was the size of Oroville and Shasta combined. That's how big this project was too.
- Lage: Was I right in remembering that it would create the largest lake in California?
- Wilson: That's what it is, yes. Oroville and Shasta combined. But, of course, that all was on the premise that they had the water to fill the lake, and if they didn't, they had a lot of scarred hills with no water in them, that it was kind of a—because that's what they do in Trinity, is they keep Whiskeytown [reservoir] up, which comes out of Trinity, and they keep that up because the public drives by, that when you go up to Trinity in a year like this that you go up there, that's where the boat landing is and the water's down here, and it's all rock and bare soils in between.
- Lage: How many feet are we pointing to here [between the boat landing and the lakeshore]?
- Wilson: It could be hundreds of feet.

Lage: That many?

Wilson: And of course that, among other things—Curt and I went up, because Curt Roberts used to go up to Coffee Creek to fish and he knew that area. And Al Wilkins, who was also up there, and is a long-time friend, worked with me on this, with Hazel Wilburn. Hazel Wilburn, who grew up on the Kelly Orchard, right there on the ranch, part Indian, was a supervisor in Trinity County, and she was the first one out telling the Metropolitan Water District to go to hell, that they weren't taking our water. She was on the board of supervisors. When I went up with Curt we went out to Trinity Lake and it was—well, it was dry, and there they were, just boat ramps up there, and you had to try to get across this thing. I took pictures of all of that, and I was invited to go to talk to the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce—which was a real kangaroo-court set-up deal—where it was me, and the Corps, and all these people.

Lage: You're in the wolves den.

Wilson: Nobody more prominent than Joseph Jensen, the godfather of water and the MWD [Metropolitan Water District], sitting right underneath me at the podium. I had these pictures, and I put them up and gave it to them. I said, "Here's what this is to us. You get the water; this is what you're giving us in these so-called recreation benefits."

[End Tape 3, Side B]

[Begin Tape 4, Side A]

Lage: What about Joe's reaction?

Wilson: Joe Jensen, being the godfather of water, and the MWD, and all of that, was so irritated with me that he displayed his displeasure by going to sleep under the podium and snoring in the midst of my presentation. But it was fun because Jerry Barnum, a lawyer from [Cosgrove, Cramer,] Rindge and Barnum—that's an old—they were lawyers down there and friends of our family—and Jerry had had to deal with the Met and worked for a lot of small water companies, and he couldn't stand them. So he was on the Water [and Power] Committee [of the Chamber of Commerce] and was somewhat instrumental in helping me get down there and do this little thing. So he was there, and it was a pretty quiet crowd. I've got to tell you. They didn't like hearing this stuff, so I pretty much gave them the long and the short of how I saw Dos Rios: the fallacies in the economics; how there were no recreational benefits; that it was a raid on our water, and our fisheries, and everything; and for Los Angeles, and the delta, and some of the farmers, because the farmers wanted it too—I mean this was agriculture.

I had everybody [against us], I mean all the money was against stopping this project because of the history of this state and water where we always have

these deficits, and the thought was that Dos Rios was the backup bathtub; you could plug in if you were short 700,000 acre feet, if you could ever get it stored. Not to mention, how do you get it out of Covelo? Because that Grindstone Tunnel is an absolute nightmare in terms of tunneling and going to the Sacramento Valley, and if they had to lift it into Lake County, the energy costs—I mean, you could just imagine what that would have been then, much less what it would have been now, if you were, like the Tehachapis, going out over those mountains. It's the biggest—

Lage: Did you find that people listened? Were they skeptical about the Corps?

Wilson: They were mad. They were mad that it was being challenged.

Lage: They didn't listen to—?

Wilson: This bunch I was dealing with now, it was a time when, I think, at the public level I think there was a consciousness out there of people that were kind of disorganized in anything, but I think there was definitely a receptivity once they began to—again, it's this transparency thing that once you get the facts out and they begin to understand what really it is you're trying to do, and this—I've always used money, and benefit-cost, and what it means to the taxpayer—that angle. Not conservation, saving birds, saving Indians, because that doesn't work. You've got to go to their wallet and make them understand that dollar stuff. This thing had so many holes in it from an economic [standpoint] that it was not too hard to begin to build that case.

Again, what the press doesn't do, and should do today, is they don't ask the question about, "Well, is this true? Is this assumption false? And if so, how do you arrive at this flood control benefit for Round Valley?" That kind of thing. They don't ask these questions. They just write stuff, even though it might be against the project, it somehow doesn't get that. So you've got to keep getting this stuff out in writing, in articles. We were beginning to get some pretty darn good coverage, and it was beginning to get out. The red binder was in the legislature, and they were trying to have water hearings.

One of the fascinating tales is the first Ellsberg papers took place in Dos Rios, because when I was president of the PCL (Planning and Conservation League), and had moved them over to Sacramento, we had a very large conference down in Santa Barbara, and at that conference a young man came to me named Amos Roos, and Amos worked for DWR in Los Angeles. He came to me and quietly says that, "We don't need that water." And I said, "Really?" And he said, "Yes, the DWR has a report that says that." And I said, "Where is it?" And he said, "It's buried, sealed, and it's for eyes only, and nobody gets it." So I said, "Well, I've got to tell you, Amos, that's pretty devastating. If that were to become public, that would blow the hole right through this thing." He said, "I can't, you know. I don't know. I can't get it." I

said, "Have you seen it?" He said, "Yes, I've seen it." So it took a while for him to kind of get himself together.

Lage: To come around?

Wilson: Come around to this, but finally he said, "I think I can get pieces of this thing out." I said, "Well, Jerry Barnum's down here, and he could sure be a recipient of the information and everything." This was where we were having some telephone calls at night and all this kind of stuff.

Lage: Tell me more about that.

Wilson: Well, he couldn't talk from the office and was really uptight about trying to, you know. This was kind of—

Lage: Oh, this was Amos Roos.

Wilson: This was Amos Roos, yes.

Lage: He was worried about—

Wilson: Well, yes. He was a whistle blower and he didn't want to get hung out to dry, and I said, "I'm going to protect you. I'm not going to use your name." So we were trying to figure this thing out as to how to get this out. How do you do it and do it in pieces? Anyway, it was a long kind of dribble process where he did get most of that information out.

Lage: And then you publicized it?

Wilson: Well, then there was a big hearing in Sacramento about Dos Rios that had Carly Porter, chairman of the Water Committee in the state assembly, and in those days the consultant to the Water Committee was Ron Robie, a great guy. He's a judge now, a fine judge, who was a straight guy. Anyway, they were having a hearing, and there was [William] Gianelli, [John] Teerink was his deputy. The whole place was filled up. We were on the agenda about last, for good reason. Jerry Barnum, or Lew Butler—I think it was Lew—anyway, we dropped the Doody—it was known as the [James] Doody report, who was the engineer from the DWR. We dropped the Doddy report on the committee about five o'clock in the afternoon. Gianelli had gone back to his office. Teerink had been covering this thing. When that thing hit, you never saw that room clear out. There were guys going for doors. The whole place just went—

Lage: What about Teerink?

Wilson: Teerink went to get Gianelli back. Gianelli came back red in the face and he said, "I'm not a liar! I'm not this!" And he just went crazy up there. We just sat back and watched the whole scene.

- Lage: That must have been fun. Do you think Gianelli knew about this report?
- Wilson: Sure he knew. Of course he knew about it.
- Lage: This wasn't just a low-level—?
- Wilson: No, no, no, no, he knew about it.
- Lage: So he was repressing this.
- Wilson: Of course he was, as all bureaucrats do if they have—I mean that's just done. That's what Americans don't realize about their government. There is an agenda, and if it's in the eyes of the beholders of the—whatever the majority will of the sort of elite decision makers says we need to have whatever it is, then we tailor everything to do it, that's all. It's in the public interest.
- Lage: What was the change? Were they changing population projections, or what—?
- Wilson: No, it was done on the basis that basically the water was not needed, on the basis of available capacity and storage at this time. The other options, whether it be desalinization, water storage—you pump your excess into ground water—pricing, I mean, there were a host of reasons that they hadn't needed to jump into this thing as the only alternative. They said, "This is the only way we can do it."
- Lage: You folks kind of played up the desalinization, it seemed to me.
- Wilson: We did.
- Lage: You never hear about it now.
- Wilson: Well, you know, I just saw in the papers; it's now back.
- Lage: It's back on the agenda again?
- Wilson: The one in Santa Barbara that had been tabled now as a question of money and everything, but again—see, the thing is that while it's very expensive, the urban users—there are so many of them, that once you spread it out over that base it's not—it's expensive, but if you look—we'll eventually get to this issue with the forest—if you look at that comparison in terms of the damage, the environmental costs, and all of the things that would accrue to coming up to these north-coast rivers, if you were to do that accurately, desalinization doesn't look that expensive. But if you don't take those costs—and that's one of the problems—if you don't take those costs in then when you just crunch the numbers, the way traditionally we do, then, of course, you make the case that, Oh my god, you can't do it, and it's just too expensive.

You take the energy cost. The biggest power user is pushing this water over the Tehachapis. All of the side canals and distribution systems, and everything, that's all something. You've got to not only build, but maintain. It isn't just the building of the project, it's the ongoing capacity of that project to service all of these interests and everything.

Lage: And eventually the dams silt up.

Wilson: Eventually the dams—as Matilija dam has in Ojai—is totally full, and you have to take them out. That's another big problem. Dos Rios would have been the worst because it has the highest siltation of any river in the United States. Because of the load, the stuff that's coming down, you would be just capturing silt. Instead of going into the ocean it would all come in against the dam, and it would fill in very fast in the sense of the life of the dam.

What Dos Rios did is that they had to reach pretty far into this area at a high cost to get this water. The cost of trying to capture it, and get it out of here, and the way we kept our books in Washington, and the politics, I think were slowly coming to an end in the sense of reality. In other words, it just—you can fool people part of the time, you can't fool them all the time, right?

Lage: Especially when you have your good arguments.

Wilson: If there's basic data there to show that this thing just doesn't fly, and the legislators see that—the legislators, once they can't hide, and are accountable, then they begin to get much more realistic and pliable in terms of arguments. Then there was as Senate Committee hearing which was a riot because they were voting on Dos Rios. It was a time when [Mervyn] Dymally was on the committee and [Jess] Unruh was the speaker, and I went down to Unruh's office to see what he needed to deal with Dymally, and Unruh told me, he said, "Well, you can't buy him, but you can rent him." [laughter] Oh well.

Then we had James Q. Wedworth on the committee, and Wedworth was one of those votes—with Curt, we'd worked those committee guys hard—Wedworth was one of these old-time senators. It was a real old-boys club. He had a horse farm over there on Auburn and, I don't know, had a hard time getting to the meeting. He got to the committee late, and they were having the vote, and they all raised their hands [laughing] and he put up both hands, and the secretary asked him, "Senator Wedworth, I don't understand what you're voting!" [laughter].

Lage: Did he understand?

Wilson: I don't know. It went down.

Lage: Did they have a deciding power?

- Wilson: Oh yes, this thing had to pass the legislature.
- Lage: I thought that the actual decision was made by the governor.
- Wilson: It was. The governor ultimately had to make the decision, but on its way you go through all of this stuff.
- Lage: So what was the end result in the legislature?
- Wilson: Ultimately, the legislature—they had sort of neutralized their position to the extent that yes, it was needed, but it wasn't the best kind of—you know how they do their business. By the time it got to the governor it had been beat up pretty badly, and of course good old Ike [Livermore]—I've got to go back with you to the camp we had for the Thatcher School.
- Lage: We'll get to the whole relationship with Ike.
- Wilson: Susan and I with the kids, we went up to Golden Trout Camp out of Lone Pine, and this was when Ike was coming in as Secretary of Resources. I had a map of Dos Rios, and what it was, all with me up there. I was in this tent cabin with him, and we had a Coleman lantern. I was trying to explain to him—he didn't know anything about it, see. He didn't have a clue.
- Lage: He wasn't into water.
- Wilson: No, and he didn't know anything, and Gianelli wasn't going to tell him anything. I said, "Ike," I said, "Listen to me. Listen to me. This is the biggest water project conceived. It's got all kinds of problems." And Ike looks at it, and he says, "That's amazing." [laughter] His great response, "That's amazing." That's where I introduced him to Dos Rios, and then it was a long period of getting him—because every time I would come up with something and he would get staffed out, and he would get overwhelmed by all this other stuff from everybody, to back it off and make a—but nevertheless, he hung in there in a way that nobody else would have, and the great thing about the Reagan cabinet—and Cap (Caspar) Weinberger was good too, because Lew Butler and I went to see him. Cap Weinberger understood the money, and he also is a very savvy guy. He was another one of these guys that understood the statewide issues.
- Lage: Livermore was kind of a lone voice on that cabinet.
- Wilson: He was, yes, because it was hard to—but he did an awful lot on the Minaret Summit Road and Dos Rios. You know, Wild Rivers was put in later; we'll come to that. I think truly Reagan was a man that had a real feeling for the land. He had his ranch, and I think he truly himself had a certain empathy and sense of the land that we haven't seen since with a governor. And he had enough cabinet people around him which were probably better as a governor

than maybe as a president. Even Earl Coke, over in finance in Bank of America, was a hard-boiled old guy, but when he began to see the numbers and how this thing—even he kind of wasn't about to jettison it, but I think was sort of not an advocate. Do you know what I mean? He just didn't skip all—

Lage: William Penn Mott certainly didn't like it.

Wilson: Bill Mott didn't like it, and [Ed] Meese even wasn't too bad, and Bill Clark was over there. These guys, they collectively were of a different cut of people representing the state of California as the governor's cabinet, governor's support system. Gordon Luce. They just were different than what you get today, which is the feeling of just paid staff consultants that are there to get what they need out of it, and protect their base, and their candidate, and the [Gary] Condit sort of thing you see going on. To me, it's a whole different world, and a whole different bunch of personalities.

Lage: Did you lobby any of these other men, or did you focus on Livermore?

Wilson: Oh no, we talked to Cap Weinberger, I dealt with him, and Ed Meese. Over at PCL I had Bill Hauck. He was [Bob] Moretti's head of office of research. Jed Clark was on the—I had—these guys were all Coros [Coro Foundation graduates]

Lage: Coro Foundation?

Wilson: Yes, they were all Coros, and I had enlisted them to help with this, and they were all involved to some degree later with Wild Rivers. It's just it's black or white, the kinds of people—the people that were trained, the kinds of legislation, the nature of the legislature before the one man, one vote. All of that, as compared to today, doesn't surprise me to see where we are in today's situation about how we conduct business.

Lage: Let me just challenge you. Something comes to mind—

Wilson: Go ahead.

Lage: It was those days and those kinds of people that created these projects—those kinds of “we-can-do-it” people who created projects that today they wouldn't even try to put forth.

Wilson: I'm not sure I'm answering your question, but I'll try. They would not think about it because the awareness of the general public at large, and the understanding of the environmental issues, that if you go to the extreme what we hear is the wacko enviros that are just against everything, including human beings. Barring that, if you move the general public towards the center on issues like that, there is more awareness about the total picture and these

issues that we're talking about than perhaps—I mean we were in the process of—this thing was shifting.

Lage: In the sixties it was shifting.

Wilson: It was. We had Dave Pesonen, and we had—but we also had back-to-the-landers, and we had everybody wanting to go to the land, like Alan Chadwick later on. All of this was going on in the universities, and like all cycles, they go in and they go out, and they tend to flame out. But there was a dialogue, there was a lot of things in the press.

Lage: More of the sense that citizens could challenge.

Wilson: Well, the whole, the thing is—there it is, you gave me the thing I was missing, that most of the work—for instance, the coastal initiative was a volunteer effort—Proposition 20. That was volunteers.

Lage: And Diablo Canyon.

Wilson: Yes, that was volunteer. These issues that I'm talking about were mostly coming out of volunteer-citizens action. It was all of that that began to change things. Then I think when we institutionalized that activity with the Coastal Commission, with the Water Quality Control Board, with the—well, the Board of Forestry's been there a long time—but when we institutionalized these kinds of issues into government, we began to lose that cutting edge that produced a Prop 20, or some of these other conservation measures—you know what I mean?

Lage: Yes.

Wilson: I think that happens, because once you staff it, and once you get these people all full time—it comes out in the timber thing all the time, is that while they have a prescription from the legislature to practice sustainable forestry, every morning it's the foresters from the industry and the regulators at the coffee table. It is not me and a bunch of individual citizens they see. They know they're only going to see me probably once, so you get through that and get on with your business. But they're socially together. They meet together in their associations. It's human nature that if you're dealing with people all the time you tend to want to be part of that constituency regardless.

Lage: The institutionalization that occurred because of the success of the movement led to its downfall.

Wilson: It did indeed. Absolutely. It's the energy. We had Janet Adams and different people in the coastal effort—she was a terrific organizer and the key to Prop 20.

- Lage: We should hold off on that because I want to—
- Wilson: Well we'll get there, but I mean it's true of all of—and some of the issues lend themselves better than others on this discussion we're having. On some you get the public, and on some they yawn and say, "I'm tired. I'm going to watch 'Three's Company,'" or something.
- Lage: Let's talk about the public here a little bit more, in Round Valley. Tell me how you saw—
- Wilson: The public here, well it was real difficult here because they would split. As all these issues it really—my group of Elmer Bauer and Jim McCombs—these were old-time fellows, and they understood it, and they were part of the Round Valley Conservation League.
- Lage: Which you got going.
- Wilson: Yes. Then there was Cliff Foster, plumber. Cliff was marvelous. If I had a picture, you'd just be fascinated. Dirty bib overalls, ran around, fixed people's things night or day. Cliff was the best of the world, and he was so mad at me about this that he said, "The Corps of Engineers is doing the work of the people, and you have no right to stand in their way!" He was furious.
- Lage: Did he see this as a moral crusade or did he want to be bought out?
- Wilson: No, it was moral. He thought I was selfish and not—the Corps were people that basically had integrity. It was the FDR kind of view of the world: this is government and it's good government. Cliff's grandfather knew Abraham Lincoln; he came from way back when. Cliff was a Mormon, I think, at least his family were.
- Lage: He saw these water projects as—
- Wilson: He thought they were good because the economy was going to get better. The ultimate was that life was going to get better because of them, for the people, not for the—
- Lage: Like the WPA.
- Wilson: Yes, that kind of thing. I think he felt that, and he thought I was in the middle of trying to stop that and deny people getting a better life.
- Lage: Okay, well there's one perspective. Were there other—?
- Wilson: Well, and then there were others that said they were going to get able to sell their land and get out of here. Of course, that was exactly opposite of what was going to happen, because in the Corps of Engineers the way it works—

and some people in different parts of the United States have fallen victim to this—is the process is a budget process that has to go through budget each year. They’ve got something they call Rivers and Harbors, and it gets in there and then it goes in. Well, if they get a project approved, the minute it’s approved all of your land is frozen as an owner; you’re never going to be able to sell it because it’s potentially going to be condemned and paid for. But they may not get the money for ten or twenty years, or never. And all of that time that you’re caught in that trap, you’ve got property you can’t do anything with; it’s frozen. That was a huge danger that I wanted to make abundantly clear to people, that don’t buy this, “Oh, we’re going to get you fair market value, and we’re going to do this and that,” because the Colonel [Frank] Boerger, the guy with the eagles on his shoulder that came into town was always out—

- Lage: From the Corps of Engineers.
- Wilson: The Corps of Engineers, he was the guy that was giving them out all this, but the people that come in behind are all the bureaucrats that run the San Francisco office—Charlie Elmore, and I don’t know who else came from the corps civilian bureaucracy. They’re the guys that do the dirty work, and the condemnation, and all of this. Eventually, we force that out of them about history and: “Yes, are you going to get the money?” “Well, yeah.” “Uh huh, when?” “Well. . . I don’t know.” And that kind of stuff.
- Lage: Did you force it out of them at public hearings?
- Wilson: Yes.
- Lage: So that people could—
- Wilson: Yes.
- Lage: Did people’s minds change in the balloting?
- Wilson: It was split. We had a majority, but there were those that were just totally committed to the Corps of Engineers.
- Lage: Are there other arguments? You’ve mentioned two now: wanting to be bought out and feeling that progress was—
- Wilson: Well, that it was an issue that the state needed the water, and that therefore it’s—one, you can’t stop them. That’s another one. “Look, you’re just spinning your wheels on this stuff. This is crazy. All you’re doing is just delaying it and making it worse,” which is the reverse of what the Corps—“Let us in and we’ll take care of you,” and that argument.

But I think the main argument was that—look, there were people like Jan Stewart that owned the old hardware store that’s now the restaurant down there. Boy, it was their headquarters. He wanted to sell out, and he saw this as a way to get the hell out of Dodge, or Covelo, and he was adamant about it.

Lage: So his was kind of a personal interest.

Wilson: There were those that had a personal interest, and that the economy in Covelo never changes, it’s never great; I mean it’s up or down. With the mill and everything, it was better because we had employment. It just hasn’t changed a lot, and people—as television has come in have seen a better life outside, at least they’ve thought that. So this was a way to get out, and they made it very appealing, the way they sold their package to people. And then they played on me and others and said, “Look, these guys are just looking out for their own interests. They don’t care about you.” This was basic politics. This is the way it works.

Lage: Did you try to counter with a positive vision as well as the argument that they wouldn’t get their money?

Wilson: Yes. I mean, my argument, to the Indians particularly, “You’ve been moved so many times, and now you’re hitting at some kind of a dry hillside, making baskets. You’re taking it really on the chin.” They really understood it and they became active advocates against this thing and were very forceful in testimony. I think on Livermore and the governor, I think they had a telling impact. They did understand it.

Lage: Tell me more about the Indians.

Wilson: The Indians are a conglomeration of tribes in Covelo that were moved from the valley by the army, and driven in here. It’s a multi-tribal thing. Of course, there’s probably—I don’t know if there’s a real Indian left. They’re now pretty well diluted.

Lage: With white blood?

Wilson: Oh sure, and marriages, and things that have gone on over the decades. Nevertheless, they’ve been moved. We had Ida Soares, who was a lady of great integrity, and boy, she just—

Lage: Is she still alive?

Wilson: She’s dead. She told them, right there in the press—big, heavy Indian woman—she said, “They marched us in here with tanks and now they want to flood us out.” She gave it to them right full—

Lage: She told them.

Wilson: She gave it to them right there. They didn't have anything to say, either. That was a real compelling argument that slowed them down. That was a time when Indians were sensitive. We had [Ted] Kennedy, and Tunney, and different people on Indians' rights. There was a lot of activity going on. It was a big issue, and they were strong. They were pretty good. Again, the whites, they were divided, as I say, between those that wanted to give up, and get out, and not stall it and make it worse; those who saw that this was a way for them to get better money for their land; this was something that was needed for the betterment of the state, and all of these sort of societal values.

[End Tape 4, Side A]

[Begin Tape 4, Side B]

Wilson: Ukiah and the people on the periphery, the real estate boys and all of that, the developers, they were gung-ho because they saw real estate values on the lakeshore development. John Mayfield was one; he was a great booster of all of this. He was a supervisor. Al Belotti was our assemblyman, and they were in cahoots and misrepresenting testimony, and we called them on it in the assembly area. They blew up and God, Belotti had a fit and Mayfield stormed out the door.

Lage: Was this over the issue of what the water line would be?

Wilson: Well, what the project was and what these benefits were. He had represented it to the board one way and then we caught him in a flat-out lie. [laughing] Of course, then they had stormed out.

Lage: This was the Mendocino County Board—

Wilson: Board of Supervisors, yes.

Lage: Were they kind of a booster mentality?

Wilson: They were split. We had some people on it that, you know, again, they were beginning to listen a little bit to these other sides of this stuff. Of course, at the beginning it looked like it was just a done deal, and all they needed to do with Mayfield leading the charge is get in line and let's get this thing done.

Lage: And they thought it would mean money for the county.

Wilson: Yes, it was a benefit. Tourism, and trade, and all this good stuff. That's all. If you look around, you'll see at Trinity it hasn't happened. It's a little bit, but it's marginal. Very seasonal, very marginal.

The thing that was a telling argument is that this is a water supply project that when there're shortages this water's going south. It's not going to be up here

to keep this nice pristine-looking real estate for you and your potential buyers for real estate. It's not going to be very pretty. There's nothing worse than a lake with a scarred drawdown to the water. That's not real pretty.

- Lage: That's what Mott understood. He didn't want to administer it.
- Wilson: That's right. That's the whole point. That's the stuff nobody ever said anything about, but once this kind of began to sink in, and then their water was gone too. In other words, the fisheries weren't big, but they were there. They realized that, "Well, hell, when you turn the water off here, that's the end of the fisheries. Gone."
- Lage: Speaking of fisheries, Trout Unlimited.
- Wilson: Dick May.
- Lage: Did you get him involved?
- Wilson: Oh yeah, Dick was a great supporter.
- Lage: Had you known him before?
- Wilson: Yes, well, through, largely, California Tomorrow. Yes, I had. Dick was a great supporter.
- Lage: Without giving up the Dos Rios story, at some point I want to come back to your California Tomorrow connection and the Planning and Conservation League.
- Wilson: That comes with the Nixon administration, and when Butler went back with Nixon to be undersecretary of health [education, and welfare HEW]. As far as Dos Rios, it was the economics; it was the costs; it was the fact that, as in the LA Times, there was an editorial that said, "Dos Rios: A herd of white elephants." That was their lead.
- Lage: In the LA Times?
- Wilson: Yes. The legislature, I think, was getting the picture pretty fast that this thing was not—and Reagan—I mean it was headed south. So I think it was the economics, but I also think it was so many other issues than the public, and the Sierra Club, and others that hadn't paid attention for too long were beginning to focus on this. I think it generated an overview of public water policy, and that there are options, and there's other ways to manage this water. It isn't just this mindless building of dams, and building infrastructure, and an enormous amount of money and indebtedness. This was probably 400 million that was closer in real terms to those days a billion, and they hadn't even got the money. It was a time that seemed appropriate that it came to an end, and it

was a massive effort by really a large number of key people, whether it's Lew Butler, Curt Roberts, um, I don't know, Dick May, Joe Paul, Committee of Two Million.

Lage: Joe Paul?

Wilson: Joe Paul. Joe Paul was a rabid fisherman that was in the public relations business. He started the Committee of Two Million. He put out this paper, and it just ravaged the water guys. I remember there was a hearing on the Senate floor, and Randy Collier was running around with this piece of paper that Joe Paul put out about the Committee of Two Million. He looks around and he says, "What is this Committee of Two Million?" Joe Paul says, "It's 5000 people." And Randy Collier says, "I'll take that." [laughter]

Lage: Tell me more about Joe Paul.

Wilson: Joe Paul worked in the public relations. He was a friend.

Lage: Did he create this committee?

Wilson: Yes, the Committee of Two Million.

Lage: —for the purpose of Dos Rios?

Wilson: Yes. What did he call it? Gianelli's minestrone bathtub, or something.

Lage: Did you bring him in, or did he—

Wilson: Oh yeah, well, he with Dick May. The reason it was effective is that the objective was clear of what we all wanted to do. It wasn't as though we had this massive steering committee or anybody. Everybody did their thing. Sometimes nobody knew what the hell anyone was doing, but they were all on the same course, and that was rolling along. It kind of made fun out of it.

Lage: It built up steam?

Wilson: It built up steam on its own. It had enough going for it that it could do that. Joe died a few years later. Joe was a great fellow, and a great proponent in fighting this thing. It was a mix of people. As I say, we had Jerry Barnum in Southern California. We had Amos Roos crawling around at night with a flashlight in the bowels of the DWR. You had Dan Frost up here in Redding; he was a lawyer that was very much in favor of stopping it. Al Wilkins in Weaverville was a great friend and helped us. There were those folks up in Eureka even, John Stokes, a lawyer, that were opposed to this—just because the flood was bad, and all that, but they didn't see the benefit of putting a dam in just because the log deck of the Pacific Lumber Company got washed out once.

Lage: Did this make trouble for Ike, having been an officer of Pacific Lumber?

Wilson: Oh sure, they were all—I mean Ike was getting it from all sides. I think you said it, Ike has got this sort of calmness. I think it comes from being a—you know, Ike had been a packer for years. He had a saw mill in Cloverdale. He had rattled around in the woods, and to this day my feeling is that people—if you come out here and live in this stuff, and have to work with it, and do it for real, you have a much better appreciation for what it is and how it works. When you get this frenetic kind of emotional outburst in the city from people, “Oh, this is terrible! What are you doing to us? Why are you destroying our future?” and all that, you have a way of just sort of sitting down and listening and, “Well, fine,” and then we’ll get on with the next one. It doesn’t get you all upset. It just doesn’t do it. Whereas some of the people are so engaged and they’re so involved that they’re having just a traumatic experience just at the thought of either for or against, or it’s just got them so tangled up. Some of the Sierra Clubbers, I think, have that trouble; it gets them so wild that they have a hard time settling down.

I think that time is here, and the question is, Are we going to be able to use these resources wisely and spread it out so that the future is a future, or are we going to short-circuit a lot of this stuff and cut off? I think with water, we’re just on the threshold of seeing that our policies have not been too smart in distributing water and that we’re not going to build anymore dams; we’re going to have to manage what we’ve got. If you read some of these books that go back hundreds and even a thousand years that have done geologic studies to show droughts in California lasting fifty or a hundred years—well if it happened before it can happen again, and if anything like that ever takes a hold—because the ‘76, ‘77, ‘78 drought that I was in was bad enough. I could see then what this is all about. That’s it.

Lage: So what’s your answer to that?

Wilson: The answer would politically be is they’ll give the water to the cities and the farmers will be out of business, that’s all. We have enough water. Eighty-five percent goes to agriculture, so if you get rid of agriculture you can supply people with water in the cities with the system we have.

Lage: But that isn’t an answer that you would—

Wilson: My question is, can we live without agriculture? Is agriculture, for a lot of reasons, important to the state? There’s a professor at Davis named Knopf, or Knapp, or Damp, I don’t know, that wrote some paper saying we don’t need agriculture anymore. There was an article in *The Economist* recently about England that said agriculture is only 1.5 percent of our gross national products, so therefore we don’t need it anymore; we can rely on obviously offshore and bringing in. I find this to be a very dangerous thing to assume that because of globalization that everything can come from Chile, or

Argentina, or offshore, because: a) we have the resources, the rich soils, the climate, and everything, and to walk away from it and just grow houses—which is what we're doing—is a very narrow, short-sighted view. But, to turn that around, the state has to be asked the question, in a political sense, Are we going to keep agriculture, and if so how are we going to keep it? And there's going to have to be some big- time changes to get across that bridge—Clinton's bridge to tomorrow or bridge to the future.

Lage: Bridge to the twenty-first century.

Wilson: Twenty-first century. Well, we're kind of standing there, looking across the creek, wondering if the bridge is going up and how we're going to manage this. I don't know whether—I mean, somebody that's a governor has to stand up and launch this kind of a thing and have a dialogue, and it will be a beaut, but without it I'm afraid we'll just keep drifting. And we're just drifting along, getting into more problems than we are solving anything.

Lage: And Dos Rios didn't really—the controversy didn't give an answer to that question.

Wilson: Dos Rios stopped a mentality and forced them rethinking about, they had to live with their existing water supply, because they only have so much in Shasta, and Oroville, and these places in groundwater, so they had to rethink their premise rather than just building more dams. But it didn't answer the bigger question of, How are we going to live with what we've got? That reaches into the whole context of sustainability and what does it mean. Again, these are things that are used freely and everybody is for it and everything, but when you get down to actually practicing it, it's very different.

Lage: More difficult.

Wilson: Dos Rios, again, we've talked about some of the characters like Cliff Foster. There was another one, again his name—he was a funny little man that worked for the Soil Conservation. He was just a mousy little man and he was all against Dos Rios and he was so afraid of getting involved in this thing. My wife told me that one evening when she was asleep, outside her window there was this little, "Susan, this is—" I can't think of his name. He was giving her some hot scoop on this thing through the window, outside. [laughing]

Lage: About what?

Wilson: Oh something about the—yes, something he knew, he knew. It was just hilarious because he was just a funny little creature and this was—

Lage: So he was engaged?

Wilson: He was engaged. [laughing]

- Lage: How did Susan feel about all this? Did she get involved?
- Wilson: Well, she didn't. She was very much against this stuff too. But her focus was the kids, and that's kind of her life, and the way she saw things. No, she was against it. Just the whole thing was more than she wanted to deal with.
- Lage: She didn't take a public role?
- Wilson: No, no, not really. She went to a few town meetings, but she didn't ever go out. She stayed pretty much home; that was the way she was. She was a private person who put her energy into her family and garden.
- Lage: How old were the kids at this time?
- Wilson: Alex was born in '60, Chris was '62, and Marjo was '64. That was it.
- Lage: And Sarah came along later.
- Wilson: Yes, Sarah came along in '78.
- Lage: So she was taking care of three little kids.
- Wilson: Three little kids.
- Lage: You can't do to much more.
- Wilson: We'd been at Buck Mountain, we'd moved. She was a born mother for little kids. When they got older she just didn't know what to do with them. [laughs] That was her—she was a great mother.
- Lage: Did she mind your taking the time and going all over the state?
- Wilson: Well, I think she was very good about it. It's something I had to do, and I think she—because she was engaged so much at home with little kids in those years. I think she felt okay about it because she was busy doing things that she liked. She had a garden; she liked to garden. She was a good gardener. Her grandmother was a good gardener; she kind of came by that naturally. Her parents were killed in an airplane too. They had a ranch up north at Red Bluff. They crashed en route in their Aero Commander plane to their ranch in Siskiyou County.
- Lage: And she was an orphan from an early age?
- Wilson: No, no, no. That was after we were married. That was again about the time the Crawfords went down, so it was probably '67, or something in there, when that went down. We had that to contend with along with—we were losing family pretty fast. I mean, my mother, father, stepmother, and her parents.

- Lage: I don't know what made me think she was an orphan.
- Wilson: No.
- Lage: Lost one parent?
- Wilson: No. They were divorced. But she had that event. That event was a tough one.
- Lage: That was about the time of the dam issue.
- Wilson: It was, yes, and then of course we had the church there; we had a little chapel up there. It was a mission chapel serviced out of Willits.
- Lage: Up—
- Wilson: Up in Covelo. It was good because we had some people that pastored it. They were nice people and it was a nice thing to have.
- Lage: Ted Simon makes remarks about kind of a bitterness in the social context of Round Valley, and a lot of schisms.
- Wilson: It is bitter. It's terrible. If you read *Genocide and Vendetta*, you would see it. I could give it to you; it's a book that's out of print now that was written by a man here that co-authored it.<sup>3</sup> The history of the Indian is very bad. It was brutal, bloody.
- Lage: And disease.
- Wilson: I think there's probably—that's a good—yes. I think they killed them and they just—it was bloody. The root of the way the white man took the land, that's true, and left the Indian in a very fragile and incapacitated—whatever was left over. The reservation system—I guess you'd have to say if you take the case of the Black, who was, I don't know, from 1665 put on slave ships and brought over here from Africa, and dumped onto the New World turf, as it were, they didn't have anything. They didn't have any land. They just were here and they were slaves. The Indian was here and had a lot of land, and it was taken from them, but there was some land, at least, that they retained.
- It seems to me that as we live there's an enormous feeling in people that have something like land. There's something belonging if you have some land, that you at least can kind of turn to. I think that's a very important point, even though the land maybe wasn't the best and there was some problems, the

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<sup>3</sup>Lynwood Carranco and Estle Beard, *Genocide and Vendetta: the Round Valley Wars of Northern California* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1981).

whole way it was administered, the Indian at least kept some land, albeit, the reservation system is not very good. The poor Black, I mean that—it was like being just dumped in the sense of a slave capacity, and then having to work through that all the way up, but never really having property to kind of call your own, you know. In Africa they've got land; it's a Black continent, but here—so the Indian problem, and the way—I mean it's been violent.

In many ways, the Riding Club in Covelo is probably like Selma, Alabama, or one of those southern towns where there were no Indians invited and it was only the whites. The Indian was regarded as being a worker and somebody that could work as a—you know, as a—I don't call it slavery because the Indians actually have some land, and some they own and some they don't on the reservation, in very much a kind of second-class-citizen role.

Annabelle, who's an Indian that helped start the clinic—I talked to her once about it, and I said, “You know, Annabelle, it's just your people, they don't—they're not a part of our culture of the work ethic, and the hard work, and all that. There's certain things that are just very different.” She said, “Well, you've got to understand that—” This is about hiring people and they don't show up, and they get drunk, and all this kind of stuff. She said, “We work about six months out of the year, good, well, and then six months we go home and sit around, and talk, and do what we do.” She said, “That's just the way we are.” And having handled a lot of them, it almost got to the point where it's better in the fall to fire them, and let them go, and in the spring they're raring to go, and they go back to work. And that's it.

Lage: There's a rhythm to their—

Wilson: There's a way they live and the way the thing functions, and it just doesn't change.

Lage: I don't know if you want to talk about this, but Ike told me about a young Indian man that you had sort of—

Wilson: Yes, there were two boys, they were Alex's friends. When I finally gave up on Covelo schools, I had to send them to Thacher.

Lage: Your sons?

Wilson: Yes, and Marjo. They all went to Thacher.

Lage: Did they all go to grammar school here?

Wilson: Yes, well almost. Sarah went for a short time. Part of the time, but yes, they started here and then moved out and got toward the high school side of it. My point is that I got scholarships for the two Indian boys to go to Thacher so that one was in Alex's class and one was in Chris's class. The older boy graduated

and went to Harvard, took English, and the younger went to Cal Poly and I'm not sure whether he finished or not, but he's pretty good. Then their sister, on her own, went to Dartmouth free because she's an Indian, and Dartmouth College is an Indian chartered school.

Lage: Through high school here?

Wilson: Through Covelo High School to Dartmouth and graduated. Now they all—there's a real feeling in the Indian community that you've got to come back to the community; you don't go out. And the idea that if you go out and leave us you've sold out, or you've betrayed us. The older folks, particularly the father-types' side would say, "You better come and help me live." It's kind of the idea that "help us make our living, and you're here to help."

Well, the older boy came back here. Now that he's got a teaching credential, he's teaching, he's a good, able kid. The other boy has done well, but they're all back in the Indian community trying to make the Indian community better. The sister moved out, I think, and lives in Willits or Ukiah. They did not break, and couldn't break, if they had wanted to—I mean there's this parental pressure to stay loyal to the community, to the family.

Lage: So he's teaching here in a local school?

Wilson: I think he's teaching here, and his brother is here too, in a—I don't know, teaching, but in one of these programs for development. It's one of those training programs, not an academic high school, that kind of a class.

Lage: Do you think it would have been better if they had gone out and started anew somewhere?

Wilson: The question is could he have got a law degree and maybe been a lawyer and come back in that capacity and done something in addition to having a—I mean, could he have been maybe a lawyer in Ukiah and wanted to participate in the Indian thing, could he have done more that way than to come back and come through this very hard period of transition? Eventually I think it's worked out, but could he have done better that way? I don't know. I can't say. Or if the younger boy went out and worked in the mills and learned some skills, but came back—but they come back, and I often wonder what they see as how—what do you do where you're on limited resources? You build houses, and then people come and live in the house almost rent free, or whatever it is, so they can have a house with no work. They kind of just exist, and they talk, and they—I don't know.

Lage: It doesn't fit your value system?

Wilson: It isn't the way I live, but that doesn't mean anything. It's just how they are being supported by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Bureau of Indian Affairs

is the largest budget in the Department of Interior. That's where the money is. And that's the reservation system, where we are now paying back to support the reservation, and the homes, and keeping them together to—to do what, I don't know? I don't know what it all adds up to. I don't understand it.

Lage: There are no real answers, that's true.

Wilson: Well, there may be. There may be something that collectively they—I don't think—I mean if they feel like they're victims and they've been done wrong, and that is taught continually so they're always angry, I don't think that's a solution because eventually you've got to come to terms with these issues and call good, "good," and whatever.

The interesting thing is when the Chadwick project came in—I'll come back to it—I thought we would see some Indians interested in that, and there was not a one, not a one. So this sort of ethic about being the land, and all the things that you hear, in practice I have not seen. They love to hunt, and they love to work on fires, and burning, and there's a side to them that does that. And there are a few of the others ones that have shown some interest in doing some things along those lines, but I don't know.

I guess you're right; in my lights, the way I look at the values is, Where's the progress, or where are they headed? I look at some of the houses that have got all these broken-down cars in the yard, and the houses that were built new in total disrepair, unpainted, windows broken and everything, and I just say, "What does this mean?"

Lage: In the non-Indian community, are there similar kinds of problems?

Wilson: Well, no, I mean the families, the old families are almost gone. The Longs, the Hurts, the Rohrboughs, the founder families, the people that were fundamentally the beginning of Covelo, the old timers, they've sold their land, and the kids have gone on. They're just kind of, they're just blending into the new people coming in. We are seeing new people coming in, and now there are some major people that have capital like the Dachs lady [Laurie Dachs] who's Steve Bechtels' sister. And we've got the Fetzers that are a fairly prominent name in wine in the south end of the valley. A few others that are coming in because what's happened is that the land has now gone beyond agriculture; it's either a specialty like grapes, maybe, but more than that it's people who are looking for space and privacy as one—

Lage: Seeking an escape from the city.

Wilson: I think you'd have to say that. There's an old friend of mine that's a judge that retired, Jim Luther in Ukiah, said something one time when he was helping with this stuff, Dos Rios—I don't remember what it was in—he referred to

Covelo as “splendid solitude.” I thought, well, that’s maybe a pretty good name.

Lage: Maybe that’s part of what got you up here too.

Wilson: Well, I do.

Lage: Except you are really working.

Wilson: I do, but it certainly is. I really respect it and feel very strongly about what these kinds of open areas have without congestion. Even when you go to the Sierras in times you see so many people; you feel a little bit—like the old Fish and Game trips we used to go on when I was in the department there. We had a trip every year, and the new rules of the Forest Service have instituted where you can only have, I think, ten or twelve people in a camp, and then you’re supposed to be separated by, I don’t know, a hundred yards or something, and then you have to set up another camp or something. If somebody who’s not in your group comes in and wants to get in next to you, they can do it, but they can’t be part of your camp. It’s just bizarre. You can’t have your horses near the lake. They’ve got so many rules and regulations that it’s just kind of, you know, that’s the kind of thing that—I guess as we get more and more people demanding uses, there’s no end to that, but I’ve got to tell you if you’re used to the freedom and the open areas here, then you’re harassed by that. These old packers like Bob Tanner and Herb London that are Ike’s friends over on the east side, they just go nuts over there with these regulations, and they can’t do this and do that. I don’t know if we continue to put more people on the landscape—

[End Tape 4, Side B]

**Interview #3: September 1, 2001 (afternoon)**

[Begin Tape 5, Side A]

- Wilson: It's now about 1:45 PM. We were talking about Dos Rios and the people involved, and the local people. We discussed Elmer Bauer. Elmer, from an old-time family in the valley. There are a lot of Bauers and his relatives. His son was a forester for Louisiana-Pacific. His daughter, June, was married to Jerry Drewry. He was a rancher; he's deceased now. She runs a little store in downtown Covelo. They were all totally opposed to this dam. One of the things that troubled them is they wanted to take the cemetery and move everything up to the hill and upset that whole—they have their own local cemetery and they didn't like that.
- Lage: It wasn't only the Indian cemetery [that was to be moved]?
- Wilson: No, no. It was the white settlers, the people that lived here. Jim McCombs, again he was an old family. His old ranch, I ultimately had bought it and it became the Chadwick site for the garden shortly later. There was the people like the Hurts, Lois and Rolly. Different degrees, but Lois was very much against the dam.
- I think that the older families that had land, that had a stake in the valley, they tended to be against this project. The people that weren't so landed, maybe, and were just working and saw a way of maybe selling something and getting out, were more better disposed towards the Corps of Engineers and listening—
- Lage: But they didn't have much to sell if they didn't have any land.
- Wilson: They didn't have much, but they thought—the illusion was that they were going to get something more than they would get if they sold something in the real-estate market, or some kind of—I don't know, not even damages, but it just sort of seemed that way.
- We had Frenchie Adamson running around and he was the king sewer rat; he ran the sewer and he was always in the town in the sewer, and sort of using the sewer in the middle of town as his platform to espouse whatever he thought about the world, which was plenty.
- We had the merchants. The merchants, they kind of thought, "Well, maybe this isn't so bad a deal." They were looking at the dollar to try to figure out what was best for them.
- Lage: Was there ill-feeling between these different groups?
- Wilson: Oh yeah, it was hard. In a small town, when you get into this kind of a dispute—Marge Vann, the Vanns used to own the Shell station that is now the

Island Press, one of their offices. Those folks, they were a little ambivalent. She was a little more disposed towards this than Grover, her husband, who was a rancher and he wasn't. So, there were clearly divisions and it was clearly some hard—I mean Cliff Foster, I told you about, he was just really upset about fighting the Corps of Engineers because they had done the Midwest and built all the dams. He had come from that part of the world, and had felt that that was something that people were benefiting from: their presence, and their dams, and their recreation, and all this sort of thing that they do.

The thing about Dos Rios was it was really a project that was out of step with the times because I think we were moving on to other ways of looking at water, and everything, and it was the last lurch, if you were. The establishment that builds—I mean this is the thing you get into, is that when you get into these things, the so-called establishment that's built—this is all the Caterpillar dealers and the truck dealers, and the off-road vehicle people, and the water engineers, and the consultants, and Kaiser Engineers that were hired to do some of the engineering to figure out how to get this water out, the DWR bureaucracy; it goes on and on. It's like a bureaucratic train of all these people getting on board and they're going choo-choo-choo-choo to Dos Rios. And that's all they saw, and that's all they knew, and the politics, and that's it. And, of course, derailing it is the problem—is slow it down first and then derail it, was the ultimate work that Reagan finally blew the whistle on and said that it was not something that we needed and it was time to look elsewhere. Reagan didn't quite finish it forever; ten years, I think he said, and there was that door left open.

Lage: How did you understand his decision, his reasons? It was a little bit unclear, even.

Wilson: I think he did waffle a bit, but my understanding was that he stopped the project, probably—see, if there had been any room for them to come back in a year or two, they would have come right back. That's the way they do things: if they get derailed they come right back and do it. That's why that ten-year period was very important. But I recognized clearly it wasn't finished, and that's what brought me to Wild Rivers, simply because—and it's this black-and-white problem that I raised with you earlier, is that you have to shut the door; there's no negotiations; there's no kind of working things out. It's all or nothing. That's hard to accept, but these people are tenacious and they keep going, and they don't want to give up, and they will continually come back as long as they see there's an opportunity. They've built everything around this.

When the decision came down, I told the PCL—and we had Bill Press over there at the time—I'd hired him to work for us—and Peter Behr was from Marin County. I said, "We've got to go back and try to nail this thing and put it into a wild-river system that's going to give us some protection; because that decision, while it's a great decision and everything, it is not final." So we

did, and it took us a couple of years running at the legislature to get that decision. I first had to be sure that we had the Mendocino Board of Supervisors on board. It was difficult, but they came along after seeing the Dos Rios fight, which threatened their own water, the Eel River.

Lage: Did you introduce the idea to Peter Behr?

Wilson: Oh yes, through the PCL I was running at that time. I had help from Jud Clark and Bill Hauck, among others.

Lage: Was he receptive?

Wilson: Oh sure, he was very receptive. Randy Collier, who was the other one who I'd worked with on Dos Rios, was not. He was the prototype of a lobbyist looking out for oil interests, was his standard; I mean that's what he represented, was oil. It was right there that then Nixon went to Washington, and Lew Butler was president of the PCL. I had joined PCL, and then Lew left [to join the Nixon administration] and wanted me to take it on, which I did as a kind of—

Lage: Do you remember the year?

Wilson: Well, it was the year Nixon came in, in '67, '68?

Lage: Sixty-eight, he was elected, but probably started in sixty-nine.

Wilson: So Lew Butler left San Francisco and went with Bob Finch, who asked him to serve as his undersecretary at Health, Education, and Welfare in '68. He asked me to take over the PCL, which I did, and I moved them to Sacramento; they had always been in San Francisco. John Zierold was their lobbyist and Maureen Farnum was their secretary, and it was pretty loose and kind of a volunteer outfit. There were a lot of problems with their accounting, and money, and things, and so we kind of took a hold of that and got them set up in Sacramento, and a little more business involved to run the organization. That's where it's been and has been ever since.

I did help set up the Planning and Conservation Foundation because they needed to have some kind of vehicle that could received 501-C3, the tax exempt moneys, because they were a political organization, so we did do that.

Lage: As an ancillary to the league?

Wilson: Yes. So with the Dos Rios program and project behind us, and with this sort of moratorium for eight, ten years, the effort then was to begin to argue the case of the Wild Rivers, and Joe Paul really swung into gear on that one with his Committee of Two Million. We had a little organization called something like Saving our Wild Rivers. I created something, so we had a newsletter and we're generating help. I failed to mention the Brodys again to you, but the

Brodys were extraordinary people because Virginia and Marvin—Virginia's father was a superintendent way-back-when in the Covelo school district.

Lage: So she was from here.

Wilson: She was, but she went south and married Marvin, and Marvin was an executive of the United Auto Workers. She's a labor lady, and he was a labor man. When it came time to fight the Corps, and later on this My Ranch thing, they did a lot of work. They really helped with some paperwork and Virginia helped organize, get ahold of people. She's a great organizer. She still lives in Ukiah and is a great friend of Jim McCombs too. She was terrific, and Marvin was terrific.

Lage: They brought the UAW in?

Wilson: Well, more so as we go a little bit further up into some other things. But yes, they did, as trying to explain to them that this thing wasn't what it—these jobs and all this stuff they were promoting was a lot of ballyhoo, and it wasn't so. There were just not—all those jobs that they tried to make out of it, or what they were trying to make people believe that this kind of project brought in—

Lage: It still seems like kind of an unlikely issue for the UAW.

Wilson: It was, except for Marvin and Virginia. He, when we got around to Wild Rivers and kind of that set-aside idea—that's a non-union issue too, in a way that, "Why would you want to do this?" But some of the leadership—they had a very progressive young man running. I don't remember his name. They saw these resources just enough to realize that this was a place for people like them to go, to get away from the cities and to have. If you just keep chopping them up that you lose some of that too.

Lage: Some of them were probably fishermen.

Wilson: Exactly. Fishermen, and they want to camp, they want to do things, and if you just keep gobbling this stuff it's kind of taken away from them; they've lost that opportunity. So we did. We had Jud Clark and Bill Hauck over there in Moretti's office, and others, and worked on this bill. We had trouble because again it was the same old problem of the same constituents that wanted Dos Rios were crazy that these rivers might go offline. At the same time, there was the level of awareness, I think, coming on with people that, "You know, maybe we ought to just cool it a little bit; slow down, and just stop this incessant wanting to convert everything to some kind of material use out of the resource than letting some kind of a natural resource exist."

In the legislature, my biggest problem here in Mendocino County was holding our board so they did not go against it; because throughout all of these kinds of efforts, what people who don't live in California don't fully understand is

that everything starts at local government, whether you like it or not. If local government is for or against something, it's very hard for the higher echelons to turn them around and go against them. In other words, assembly people, state senators, congress people, don't usually overrule a board of supervisors; if the board says they're blessing it then you're in trouble. That's why it was very important to try to get the board, which we had fortunately some people like Joe Scaramella, Ernie Banker, Augie Avila, and unfortunately Al Barbero, and I don't remember the other, but there were enough of those fellows around to, if not being totally for Wild Rivers, were against Dos Rios, and could see the wisdom of maybe going ahead with this kind of a program for wild rivers and putting this stuff off.

- Lage: How did you happen to hook up with Peter Behr, or choose him to carry it? He was a freshman—
- Wilson: Yeah, but he was from Marin County and a conservationist, and he had Bill Press—Bill Press worked for him, and he worked for me; I brought him over afterward to work for PCL. We had Bill, and it fit him really well; it was his kind of an issue. He loved it because he was kind of a—what did Vice President Agnew come up with, “efete something snob” or whatever that thing that he came up with.
- Lage: Elite or efete?
- Wilson: Elite, efete, whatever it was. Peter was a little that way.
- Lage: Did you get along with Peter?
- Wilson: Oh sure, I knew Peter well, and sure. He was a good fella; I liked him. He was a little aristocratic for that bunch over there, but, you know, he got quite a bit done.
- Lage: Then you got introduced to Randy Collier by Ellen Winslow.
- Wilson: I know. Then Randy, well, we got him in the bill, it's just he was going a different way. But Randy and I got along famously on the Dos Rios. He didn't want it either, and honestly he was just—Ellen Winslow was his aide. She was the gatekeeper. Honestly, that man—I remember they would all go to Posies to drink and to have lunch. I remember one instance where all the lobbyists, and there was a big bill on transportation, and it had something to do with highways, or something, and they all were waiting for Randy to rule. They all went to lunch, so Randy and Ellen finished lunch, and Randy went around and said, “Take your time boys, just take your time. We're going back to the committee room.” They went over there, called it into session, ruled it out, and it was all over when they all came back. That's the way he ran it, see. So he had a lot of power and he was willing to exercise it his way.

When we got him kind of on this Dos Rios thing he was wonderful. He and I got along extremely well, and we had a good time. He had a guy—he didn't have any staff really, he had some poor guy in the back room with a blue suit that had so much dandruff that it looked like it snowed on his shoulders—running around full of all kinds of papers. But Randy did his thing, and Ellen Winslow, she kept the gate there.

Lage: Did she make access for you to pass?

Wilson: Oh yes, she was just perfect. She said, "I'm glad you're not running against Randy."

Lage: Speaking of running against Randy, people, I hear, were interested in having you maybe run for office.

Wilson: Oh yes, I got a lot of that. I got a lot of that and a lot of big money came in.

Lage: From whom did you get it?

Wilson: It came from Southern California, and frankly it was the same people that were funding Randy.

Lage: Oil people?

Wilson: Sure. They knew that he was getting older, and being a northerner like myself, it was a safe district because I could take care of the business up here and cover them with their needs. You see, that's the way it works: you get somebody up here that—those issues don't bother this constituency—so you've got a safe district, you can get seniority, and they'll give you all the money you want to run. So you don't have to do too much about campaign finance.

Lage: When you say he represented the oil business, he was a great highway builder.

Wilson: Highways. Everything to do with an automobile and a car, petroleum, gas, oil lobby, everything. That's what he did.

Lage: Was this baldly put to you like that?

Wilson: Yes, I think they wrote a letter, and talked about it, and everything. I said—well, I just really appreciated their interest and everything, but I preferred not to be totally beholden to a constituency that would be funding me, that gave me just not a lot of latitude; because politics, being what it is, and for all this talk about this bologna about campaign contributions not mattering, that's what it's all about. It is all about campaign contributions and that if people are going to give you 100,000 or 1,000,000 dollars they expect something. That's just the way it works, and you're silly if you think not.

- Lage: Apparently Curt Roberts also wanted to groom you for office.
- Wilson: Oh no, he wanted me to run for governor. He wanted me to do all kinds of things. I had a lot of things here at home to deal with. It would have been easy to—politics is something—
- Lage: Were you tempted?
- Wilson: If I was tempted, I was also turned away by the Republican Party, which at that time that was getting very conservative and very difficult to deal with. On environmental issues, the two of us wouldn't have gotten on at all. I have a strong feeling about the environment as almost a Republican issue in almost like a Teddy Roosevelt sense of how it works, but the Republican Party wasn't there. Because of the party system—whether it's a Democrat or a Republican—they have their caucuses, and all their people, and while I always thought myself more as a conservationist, in the eyes of the Republicans I would be a wacko enviro, or something, and we'd be battling it out in that kind of an arena. Even if I'd raised the money I would have had to fight with them. It just frankly tempted—sure, I guess temptation is part of human nature and you get tempted, but boy, there's never been a time when I—other than running for school board, that I really said, "I'm going to run and do it"—that I really wanted to enter that arena.
- I really felt that you could almost do more outside because you were free to move. Outside I had a good working relationship with both sides; we could get along, Democrat, Republican. I could get access to people. It was something that I didn't have to fight my way through. The minute you become a political entity, well then it's the party line, and—you know what it is. It begins either you're loyal or you're not loyal, and you start all that. Actually, I saw Peter Behr, who was always an outcast and considered like Milton Marks, who eventually changed parties, but they were always considered whacked-out Republicans that didn't fit anything and were always being criticized. I rather think that in that kind of a business that you've got to have a lot of desire to be a politician. If you enter that then, you know, you work at it all the time, and you have to go to all the functions, and you have to go to all the parades, and you have to do all of these things.
- Lage: And be in Sacramento all the time.
- Wilson: And be in Sacramento. I like this style of life. I'm willing to do some of it, but I don't want a full diet of it. I think that's about where I came out on that whole thing.
- Lage: Did we talk enough about the Reagan decision and all that?

- Wilson: I think so. I think we've got it. The one thing about Reagan that always disturbed me a little bit is Reagan had a wonderful conservation record in California and nobody made anything of it.
- Lage: I've heard it acknowledged a lot, even by Democrats.
- Wilson: I haven't. Well, maybe now more than later. Lou Cannon, incidentally, who was Reagan's biographer, and Bob Simmons, who was KCBS in the Sacramento office, were both key players helping me all the way. Lou was with the San Jose Mercury News, and Bob was with CBS, and they did a lot of stuff. Bob had a pen-name and wrote some articles for Human Events which was a right-wing paper. They were terrific. Even Lou, to this day, I see him frequently. He's been up here. He writes still. He's not with the Washington Post. He lives south of Summerland, south of Santa Barbara. He's a real loyalist to Reagan, and I think probably the best biographer Reagan has. Those two fellows were instrumental in getting the word out on Dos Rios.
- Lage: Did you kind of court them, and bring them up here, or did they—?
- Wilson: They got interested in what I was doing. We became sort of friends in Sacramento, and then I got them to come up and visit, and we did, yes.
- Lage: Those site visits mean a lot.
- Wilson: You know, you go to court or something, and you get up as a witness, and you go along, and somebody comes along to cross-examine and they say, "Did you see it? Were you there?" And if you say you weren't there or something then it's all of a sudden, "Oh, he says you've never seen it. You testified to this, but you've never been—" that's a killer, that's a killer. You've got to see it, feel it, touch it, all that kind of stuff.
- Lage: I think we've gotten a good picture here of the Dos Rios project and the Wild and Scenic Rivers legislation. So let's look into the—
- Wilson: I might add that Al Wilkins played a big role in Wild and Scenic.
- Lage: You didn't really say who he was.
- Wilson: He was an attorney. He was in a big law firm in San Diego, and he and his wife decided that they had had enough of all that and they just moved to Weaverville. Al's just a single practitioner; occasionally he has associates, but he's practiced law since '64. He was a big help on Wild Rivers, and these water issues, and Dos Rios, just from that part of the country. He's been an old friend of mine now. He has two girls; some of them worked down here for a while in the garden project. I don't know, I always see him. They didn't burn down; they got through the fire, fortunately—this last fire they had up there that was so bad. He's always been a kind of voice.

That Trinity Board of Supervisors, as small as it is, has been very important with the decisions they've made on things like roads, and wild rivers, and things. They know what a dam does to a river. The Trinity is a second-class river now because it just doesn't have enough water to really clean and sluice that water out in high water, in the winter, and then support the kind of fish runs that they used to. It used to be, before Trinity, or Lake Engle, or whatever you want to call it, that used to be one of the finest fishing streams in the country. After the dam, that was the end of it. There is talk even of taking that out some day.

Sarah was up there with some friends this year on a little vacation early in the summer, and they had already started the drawdown so that you were getting those scarred slopes that I showed to the Water Committee there in LA. That's what you get. When there's a shortage of water it goes to the farmers, the demand; it doesn't stay in the county for their recreational needs, which means that then the revenues are not going to be very good. That's what they always sell you, "Oh, well, the recreation." Who has first call? Money. Who has the money? The farmers. Or the MWD, but that even has changed from when we were in it, because now environmental folks, and the habitat, and fisheries have got a call on it.

Really, today, the call is a struggle between MMI, the metropolitan-municipal-industrial water supply, the people that are interested in the fisheries and the habitat, and the farmers. That's where it's all at. They all have blocks, and they're all fighting, and I would say the farmers are losing as this thing goes on because of power. They all want more facilities, they want more water in the Central Valley. People don't care where they get it. As long as they get it, they don't care about more dams if more dams would bring it to them. I encouraged Ray to get a book by Victor Hanson called *Fields without Dreams: [Defending the Agrarian Idea (New York: Free Press, 1996)]*. It's a very good read about the valley and what's going on down there.

Lage: In the Central Valley?

Wilson: You bet. Selma is where Victor—he teaches at Fresno State, Greek. That's a good read.

Lage: I'll try to look at that.

Wilson: You do. It's a real statement. He writes for *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New Yorker* and he's got several books out on Greece. He's just a very good—.

Lage: This is talking about the Central Valley?

Wilson: The Central Valley.

Lage: Does he make any comparisons?

Wilson: Well, his mother was a judge, and knew all about Dos Rios, and was very interested with what was going on up here. But there's comparisons to what happened to the Central Valley. When we get to timber we'll get into it. It's all the same; it just depends on where you are.

Lage: Okay, let's move to post-Dos Rios in Round Valley.

Wilson: Dos Rios was, needless to say, one of those human events that you think, sigh of relief. We were mixed up with school things. I ran for the board. Glenn Barris and I both ran, and we were determined to try to get that school accredited and get rid of Hays and Mays. Hays and Mays were a couple of smart aleck superintendent principals that came in, and they saw the money that they could really wheel-and-deal and be very loose with public funds. They were. We got in there and cleaned them out. Again, it was a nasty fight, because becoming credentialed means that you've had to have some training and certification to teach. A lot of people didn't like that because it was their job base.

Lage: So they had a lot of teachers that had no state credential?

Wilson: Right.

Lage: Because they wanted to hire local people?

Wilson: Right. Because it was a job. We solicited a superintendent by the name of Paul Williamson who had gone to Stanford and Duke, and his wife was Virginia. It was our thought that we just had to have a better—we had to have somebody that did understand education. People that were not just Indians, a lot of kids were struggling. We were talking about ungraded primaries, and different ways to try to give the school some tools to upgrade its curriculum, but at the same time be mindful of those people that were struggling so that they could get the help. There were a lot of programs, there were a lot of things alive. Williamson understood this; he was not—he was a little bit of an intellectual for Covelo, and that didn't work in his favor.

Lage: Where was he from?

Wilson: He came from Stanford, and then he went to Duke, and then came from—I forget where—I think she was from Hayward so he came from a district, but it was unusual for us to get somebody where they both had skills. She was a music teacher, but she also was a good administrator.

[End Tape 5, Side A]

[Begin Tape 5, Side B]

Wilson: We were having difficulty with budgets, as everyone does, but the reason the budget process was such a wrangle, and I guess to this day is, is that often times the budget for the public school is out of sync with getting the budget into the county office in the budget year because the legislature's in session, and until the legislature passes a budget there is no real budget. So you really have two things going on: you have the real world, and wherever the legislature comes out so you know where the money is.

We worked on that to get that budget balanced and then to set up a set of books. We actually had our own book system that she set up, so we always knew where we were. Whenever Sacramento and the county people got their money we plugged that in so we could always report what was going on to meet their needs, but we always internally knew whether we were running out of money, which is not often, but we could find ourselves often in that situation.

Lage: How big is the district?

Wilson: Well, 400, probably, students K through 12. We have a high school and an elementary school. You have a superintendent and a principal. I think it was probably largely maybe 60/40 and now it's probably 60 Indian, 40 white. It has probably changed. Williamson, he wasn't a great politician. I think he was pretty good at running the school, and teachers, and all of that. That was 1970, and then in '71 in comes Jeff Dennis and the gold Cadillac and the helicopter.

Lage: Is this related to the schools?

Wilson: It's going to be. This is My Ranch. Here comes this guy.

Lage: Let me just say, when did you run for the school board?

Wilson: It would have been '68 or '69. Anyway, I was there—it's a four-year term—so '68 say to '72, or—that's about right.

Lage: So in the midst of this comes Jeff Dennis—

Wilson: Here comes Jeff Dennis. Jeff Dennis was an ex-marine and he had gone to work for Boise Cascade and developed this whole second-home-land-speculators-sales thing that damn near broke that corporation. They got way out into this thing and they had to retreat. He had put them into that business and then left with some money. There was a non-competition clause for a few years, and then he surfaced again in the Central Valley. He had Jackie Gleason and a bunch of guys, and they were going around buying up these farms in places, and cutting them up, and sticking a sign or two up, and selling then, some on time shares, and some whatever, but it was pure rural

speculative real estate. A lot of sales, a lot of suede-shoe high-pressure stuff, and no follow up. Nobody really was getting much except Jeff. Because of this time share, this was his deal, he had a bunch of people in the airport down in Concord and it was like having a bank, a wall with about twenty people, and all they did is sell these time shares. A time share meaning you—he had something called Our Ranch, and this creation was called My Ranch.

The way these deals were constructed is that you can buy a share in this thing, and then that gives you the right to take your trailer wherever, and you can pull in, have a hook up, and a tie up, and there's a rec center, and there's usually horses or something. Then you can go up to another one and use the same thing so that you've got some alternatives in places to go.

Lage: But mainly a trailer operation? Not a building or a home?

Wilson: No, it's mostly a kind of a place you visit, and you can have a site there, and you move in. They also have some sites there you can use, you rent, but the idea is that it's kind of an in-place recreational facility that you can buy—a share in one is a share in all. You pay a fee and you can use it and go wherever. Then you can only stay in one so long before you have to move to another, and all this kind of stuff. They sell a lot. A lot of them are turned back. It's kind of a money machine because you're just constantly processing these fees.

Lage: And high-pressure sales.

Wilson: Very high. So when he comes in, the first thing you get is the full blast of the promotion. Well, he had not arrived very long before he wanted to see me. He'd seen Dos Rios, and seen all that, and he thought there's a nice place to set up shop. We met down on the ranch, and he explained to me that this was going to be a 8,500 half-acre lot time-share subdivision for 30,000 people, with the rec center, and the sort of new-town complex with a firehouse and all the stuff that goes with this. It was going to be 65 million dollars, and da da da da, and went on and on.

I said, "Well, Jeff, the long and the short of it's this: I don't object to your wanting to develop The Old Hop and Barley Ranch," which is what it was called, which is 30,000 acres, actually. He was just doing the flats and around. He wanted to build 90 miles of road into the hills and around, and all over. "It seems to me that that concept isn't—but you just are going to create havoc around here because where you want to put all these half-acre subdivisions are under water a good part of the winter and sometimes—so you're going to have a septic problem. You're going to have a sewer out there. The technology isn't set up in such a ways to deal with—" "Oh, we've got this engineer." This is what you were saying: you can always buy your way around a problem. He had already gotten that all put together.

Lage: So he knew about the water situation?

Wilson: Sure. Well he had a pretty good idea. So he sort of said, “Well,” he said, “Look,” he said, “It’s my property and I have a right to do whatever I want with it.”

Lage: He’d already bought the land?

Wilson: Well, if he hadn’t bought it he optioned it, but yes, he was it. So I said, “Okay.” I said, “I guess we’ve just agreed to disagree. You go your way and I’ll go mine, and we’ll see where we all land on this one.” That’s kind of the way we left it.

Well, he launched My Ranch full-steam ahead. He had Barney Rowland on the planning commission that lived at Dos Rios. Barney was a kind of a hound-dog politician. Boy, he saw Jeff, and saw—he had a dump truck and some equipment. He saw that road contract and the money. He just—it all came down from heaven. Here it was. So obviously they had to put the plan on the table and go to the planning commission. At that time it was the My Ranch, and again it was this terrible division.

Lage: In the community?

Wilson: This one again was the Dos Rios thing, only I think there were harder feelings about is this good or isn’t it good? We were just doing a polling, and we were at 50 percent against it.

Lage: You polled the community in a scientific—?

Wilson: No, well we kind of had a pretty good idea that it was split, right down—hard pro-Jeff Dennis and anti-Jeff Dennis. Again, it was this transparency thing; the more that came out about this thing, the more people began to ask question and say, “Does this work? And what’s the history about this?” So they started out with the planning commission, and the planning commission at that time was pretty—it was chaired by Taylor York; Barney was right there as vice chairman. There was a fellow named Malcolm King on it, and I don’t know that Charlie Barra was on it at that time, but Malcolm was a farmer down in Ukiah. These people were sensible people and they started these hearings. Of course, when we’d be beginning to get some publicity on it, the local press was picking up on it, and they had to move the meeting to the Veterans Hall because of the—.

I’ve got to stop and just remind you of something about Dos Rios. They had a meeting in Dos Rios on the same kind of issue, and Bill Gianelli, from the Department of Water Resources, was sitting under this huge map of the project, and Lew Butler was testifying, and all of a sudden the map fell off the wall on Gianelli’s head. [laughter] I want to leave that with you just because it

was apocalyptic. Going back to the hearings. And this was a lot of hippies and long hairs.

Lage: Was it held here in Covelo?

Wilson: In Ukiah.

Lage: Oh, in Ukiah. So you had to get people—?

Wilson: Well, see, the planning commission—everything's in Ukiah. It's like France: if you want anything you go to Ukiah/Paris.

It was a big day. Just prior—I think it was a Tuesday. I had been kind of polling around to see where the planning commission stood. It looked to me that we might just have the votes to kill this thing in the planning commission. I decided that on Sunday I would drive over to Laytonville to see Barney [Rowland], because Barney lived over there, and he and I, we knew each other well enough, and I was just going to ask him about, kind of, “What do you think's going on, Barney?” So I drove over to Barney's house and his wife was there, and she said, “Barney's not here, he's in Willits. But he'll be back pretty soon because he's supposed to go for a helicopter ride.” I said, “Ooooooh, that's interesting.” She said, “You know what he drives.” He had a blue and white Camaro. I said, “I do.” At that time the 101 Café was on Highway 101. So I said, “I'll just go down, and I'll stop there, and maybe catch him on the road on his way back.”

So I left and I went back to the 101 Café. It probably was about 11:30 in the morning. There wasn't anybody in there but the cook and the waitress. I went in and I sat down, and I don't know, ordered a hamburger and a something. I was just sitting there, and all of a sudden I heard this, “Chchchchch.” What the heck? It's a helicopter. It landed right behind the 101 Café. In walks Jeff Dennis and the pilot. So I'm sitting in a booth; he's sitting there looking at me. He walks over and he says, “What are you doing here?” “Oh,” I said, “Jeff, I have a ranch over here and I just stopped by to have a hamburger and thought I'd stop on the way home.” I said, “What are you doing here?” And he said, “Oh, we just stopped. We thought we'd get a hamburger.” [laughter] In the helicopter. So Jeff Dennis, the pilot, and me in the booth together having a hamburger, and low and behold, guess who drives up in his blue and white Camaro but Commissioner Rowland. He walked in the door and he just stopped, frozen. He looked at that, and he went over and he sat in an empty booth all by himself.

Lage: As if he weren't expecting to see anyone.

Wilson: Right. Then after a while I said, “I'll see you guys. Have a nice day,” so they could all get in their helicopter and go for their ride. It was totally bizarre. It was just so funny.

Tuesday comes around, and everybody's down there. Barney, he's all dressed up in his cowboy boots and his red shirt, standing at the door being his jovial self. I came by and I said, "Barney, how's this thing look?" He said, "Richard, it's in the bag." I said, "You sure?" "You bet. This is a done deal." "Okay."

They started all the testimony and boy it just—one person after the other was going after the project and raising hell, and fire, and water, and roads, and everything. Jeff and—Irving Lubey was his attorney—and Jeff was getting a little bit sweaty and Barney was getting nervous that the agenda was bogged down; the thing wasn't moving. So it went on into the afternoon. Barney was sitting in a chair next to Taylor York, the chairman, and he kind of leaned forward and then he put his hands behind him, and then leaned back in the chair, and I thought, "Holy smokes, he's going over backwards!" And he went just about over and then he just, boom, came down like this on the table.

He said, "Mr. Chairman, I've got to say something." And Taylor York said, "Commissioner Rowland, please say whatever you want to say." So Barney said, "You know, Jeff Dennis is a war hero, and he's a self-made man, and he's coming to Mendocino County to improve our economy. It's going to improve our lives. It's going to help us all at the local level. Everything there is that we need he's bringing in here: jobs, and he's bringing in more people to use resources." This thing went on. And he said, "Furthermore, Mr. Chairman, you've got to understand, this is the American way because you've got to create a problem before you solve it!" And everybody went, "Yay, Barney! Way to go!" [laughter]

Lage: That's a great story.

Wilson: Isn't that priceless? That just set everybody at a—and the planning commission turned them down. [laughs] Poor Barney was just—so, then it was under the appeal to the board. Then I knew the board, that Al Barbero who was—he was terrible. He was just one of these awful people.

Lage: When you say awful, what do you mean?

Wilson: Oh lying, and just do anything. He was totally for the project and you just expect anything from him and all the builders. I knew this one was going to be tough at the board level.

I was walking down to lunch some time on the street there and a couple of guys I knew—one was a banker and somebody else—were walking, talking to each other, and I just heard them say, they said, "They ought to let us vote on this thing and we'll tell them what to do." They both just said this, and occurred to me, I said, "You know, I wonder if we legitimately can take this to a vote, a county-wide vote?" Covelo kind of sits up in the corner that nobody cares or knows where it is, but it's gotten a lot of publicity; it's something that people do know a lot about now.

The fair was coming up. Virginia Brody was active, and Marvin. I enlisted the help of Leo Cook who was an old name, a single practitioner attorney and a very good one. I made him the chairman of No on My Ranch. Leo had never been in anything like this before either, but he was game enough to try it. Then Marvin enlisted Rosella Smith from the UAW that came up and ran the office on My Ranch. She was a pro. I mean, they knew how to do all this stuff.

Lage: So they were gathering signatures.

Wilson: They were gathering signatures, and recruiting people, and all this kind of stuff. Then Dennis had Our Ranch, Yes on Our Ranch, and they both had booths at the fair. Things went on. Well, the board of supervisors did vote and they reversed the planning commission and approved the project. Then I had talked to Jim Luther, who had been an attorney and later became a judge, and I asked him, I said, "Can we vote on this thing?" He researched around; he said, "Yes, you can get the signatures, put it up, you can vote on it." So we did. We made a petition. We put it on the ballot.

The campaign raged on through the summer, the fair having just finished. People were going back to school. Walter Heil, I'd come to know through Curt Roberts. I don't know whether Curt had passed on or not, but anyway, Walter was around and had helped me do some things, and was kind of a savvy guy on political stuff. I said, "Walter," I said, "If I pay you, would you go down into the valley where Jeff Dennis had practiced his development and do some pictures for me, and get a little history of this?" So Walter took off. We were going to put out a publication that was Taxpayers for Sound Government. It obviously was the No on My Ranch. It was a paper, like a regular newspaper, and it was printed to go to every voter in the county about just a few days before the election. So Walter went down and it was devastating the stuff he took. I mean vacant lots, and broken down barns, and just—

Lage: He hadn't come through.

Wilson: Oh, nothing. One other thing that occurred a little bit before, which was a memorable event, was that there was a supervisor in Madera County by the name of Jack Schmidt, and he hated Jeff Dennis because he had been down there promoting all this hype and causing nothing but trouble. I had called Jack Schmidt and I asked him if he would be willing to come to Covelo and give everybody at a town meeting, an open meeting, the inside scoop of what the Jeff Dennis project had brought to Madera County. He said, "I'd love it."

I arranged to have this meeting in the Indian Hall, down on the reservation. It was open to the public, and the town all turned out. I introduced Jack Schmidt, and who he was, and there was me on the table and Jack Schmidt. There was a kid named Billy Boggs. Billy Boggs was another one of Barney's coterie that

drove wells or something, and he was very much for this Jeff Dennis project. Billy Boggs says, “Well what about Jeff Dennis? What does he get to say?” And I said, “Well, I don’t know. Where’s Jeff Dennis?” He says, “He’s right here.” I thought, “This is going to be interesting.” So I said, “Well Jeff,” I said, “I guess if you want to come up you can get over here on the other side and sit down.” Well Jeff Dennis and Jack Schmidt had been trying to get at each other for years, only there had been a supervisorial table, and there had to be some protocol. Not this night.

Lage: No protocol.

Wilson: No protocol.

Lage: Were you the mediator?

Wilson: I was the mediator. It was a show.

Lage: What was—?

Wilson: Schmidt starts up and says, “You know, I’ve watched you operate, Dennis, all these years with your blue-suede shoes, just sucker-moneying everybody, and leaving nothing but trash, and broken up land, and bills, and causing havoc at the local government,” and he went through this whole thing. Dennis got up and he said, “Well Jack, you’ve got to be the poorest, sorriest farmer I ever saw. You’ve got the lousiest looking—” [bursts into laughter]

And the crowd was just—God, they were just having the best time. Now mind you, this was to supposedly explain what the Jeff Dennis—forget it. One side was cheering and the other one was cheering. Old John Rohrbough, who was one of the cofounders of the valley’s dad, I mean the White Ranch, John was one of these characters. I asked him about the meeting. He said, “Oh my God, that was more damn fun than we’ve had here in a long time.” [laughter] I thought, “Well, so much for that meeting.” Anyway, we had the meeting.

Lage: Did you get your points across?

Wilson: I don’t know. Anyway, this thing went on for two or three hours. I was just trying to keep one in his seat while the other one was launching, and then the other one in his seat while they were about trying to eat each other alive.

Walter Heil got the pictures. We did the publication; we went to press; we did the mailing. The vote came in, and every single precinct in Mendocino unanimously turned that project down, except one on the Gualala coastline, right up against Sea Ranch. That one passed by a few votes, and that’s the only support he got.

Lage: What about right here in Covelo?

- Wilson: They beat it.
- Lage: They beat it. So you weren't outnumbered here.
- Wilson: Well, not outnumbered; we won the—
- Lage: You won the referendum.
- Wilson: But that told me that, again, the transparency where everybody had time to really go home, and they were sitting around the kitchen table, and, "Do you know why Richard Wilson or Jeff Dennis, or" whatever it was. Or the ranch, or the—whatever it was, there was plenty of time for everybody to really push it around and chew on it, so when it came time to act again there's a pretty good example of how people can vote.
- Lage: What was your main concern about this?
- Wilson: It was a terrible—to try to break that thing all up into 8,500 half-acre lots, to build 90 miles of road into the hill coming into Covelo, and then have that stuff sort of sitting there as most of these are unsold and all torn up—
- Lage: Were the lots up in these hills?
- Wilson: No, they were on the flats.
- Lage: What were all the roads doing up in the hills?
- Wilson: They were going to be to come in, and visit around, and tour, and mess around with what you do. But they were primarily all on the bottom. It was like a little cookie cutter with measles. And it was a water problem; there was a real water problem. There were real serious problems with this thing that had been hokeyed up, problems covered by engineer consultants hired to come in and do what they do.
- Lage: Did this leave animosity in the valley?
- Wilson: [Sighs] It was terrible.
- Lage: Was it strongly turned down in the valley?
- Wilson: It was fairly strong, but it left a lot of people mad. You bet.
- Lage: And did they identify you as the bad guy?
- Wilson: Oh sure, they got back at me at the next school board election.
- Lage: Oh, that's how it ties into the school board.

- Wilson: You bet. They ran John Bircher against me. Paul Williamson—I was not going to run because I had just had it, enough. He said, “If you don’t run, I’m out of here.” I said, “Paul, I have to tell you, I’m not going to campaign for this thing. We did Dos Rios; I had a year off. We got this thing, it’s over. I just—one more of these damn things, I’m just not feeling like I want to do it.” He pleaded and I said, “Go ahead and put my name on the ballot, but to be very frank with you, I don’t think I’m going to win.” I didn’t win. I think I lost by four votes. The campaign was over that ranch, and land use, property rights.
- Lage: In the school board campaign?
- Wilson: Right.
- Lage: Property rights?
- Wilson: You bet. And this guy, Bruce Heady, was a nut.
- Lage: The John Bircher—?
- Wilson: Oh yes, he was a—. He had a hardware store and used everything, so there we were.
- Lage: What kind of a school board member was he?
- Wilson: Terrible. The school just—they fired Williamson and the thing just went right back down, and we just went through one after the other, and it just—I don’t know, it’s just the way it is. But I did learn at the school that in a public school, that school is going to mirror where that community thinks of itself as the school should be. If you look at the mirror and see the school about where they see it you’re okay; if you go too far up they’re going to pull it down, and if you’re not down there they’ll pull it up. But if you push it too hard to be something it isn’t or maybe should be, they won’t put up with it. Williamson, I think, was trying to get programs and trying to get things going that they just, “No, this isn’t for us.”
- Lage: They didn’t fit into the community.
- Wilson: No.
- Lage: Now you sent your kids to this school.
- Wilson: Yes, until I moved them to ninth grade, and then we moved on to Thacher and got out. The high school is worse than the elementary.
- Lage: How did they do in the elementary school?

Wilson: They obviously did fine, because they got through it, but they were certainly not prepared for Thatcher. They had to work awful hard down there. It was not much of a school. Some good teachers too, but I don't know, it just—it's tough, I'll tell you what, it's really tough to say what the answers to these problems [are]. I'm not sure the Indians wouldn't be better in their own schools somehow, or part of it, or something, because they have things that they want to do that don't square up with what a curriculum in a public school's supposed to be.

Susan and I started a little Christian school for a while, which was an alternative, which ultimately led to the charter school, and I think it is a lot better. We had money. It wasn't as though we didn't have money. It's just so personal. It's just so darn personal about who's got what job, and bus driving, and friends that want jobs. It's a tax basis. You're unincorporated. The county is your revenue base, so the only revenue base in the valley was the school, other than the Forest Service and the CDF.

Lage: The school is a major employer.

Wilson: Major employer.

Lage: So that becomes pretty important.

Wilson: It does indeed.

Lage: Patronage.

Wilson: Patronage. And they want to play that game.

Lage: Maybe it's hard not to.

Wilson: Well, it's survival. I mean it's little money, and little money goes a long way. There are benefits too; you get benefits. They get a lot of benefits, with the health and all the things. More so today than ever. They've had a hell of a time. They recalled recently—they had another recall, and oh, I don't know, it just—

Lage: Not a happy situation.

Wilson: No. You'd think in a town you could do it, but it's just not in the cards with the way the culture and the people, and—I don't know, there's idle time. It seems like when you had ranches kids went home, they worked. They helped in the hay; they did chores; they did a lot of things. Today, when they're not in school they're on the street getting in trouble with drugs. Lots of drugs.

Lage: A lot of drugs around.

- Wilson: A lot of drugs. A lot come off of the Indian reservation because there's no way to stop it; it's kind of a free port in the sense of law enforcement.
- Lage: Law enforcement doesn't pertain over here?
- Wilson: No, not much. So you've got a lot of that, a lot of marijuana growing. Then you've got a lot of methamphetamine labs type things, I mean the bad stuff. I don't know, it's—
- Lage: Is that on the Indian reservation?
- Wilson: It's everywhere.
- Lage: You can't escape.
- Wilson: You can't escape.

[End Tape 5, Side B]

[Begin Tape 6, Side A]

- Wilson: It seems to me that your best bet for ever doing anything [about education] is to get the classes down to maybe fifteen students, and then have the best teachers that can really deal with them on a personal basis. Because when you get twenty or more kids in a classroom, I don't care who you are, you're directing traffic. Getting it down means money, and it means attracting the best teachers, both of which would be very hard in Covelo to do. Even in a place like down south, where I have a good friend that's an excellent teacher in Santa Paula, she said that even though they passed a bond, they got enough money to buy an administration center and a parking lot, but they could not get enough money raised for classrooms. So they're in trailers. They're bringing trailers in.
- Unless you have a classroom well equipped, and a teacher with say around fifteen kids to really get in and work, I don't think you have much of a chance for all the money we're spending. You say, "Well, what can you do?" Well, obviously you can do a lot of things about education, but that means you're going to have to have more space, and more smaller classes, and more teachers. We don't have the money for the space or the teachers.
- Lage: Not encouraging.
- Wilson: That's why we have charter schools, and private schools, and other things. So that's kind of where we are.
- Lage: Depressing. Should we go into the land-use-planning aspect, or do you want to take a break at this point?

Wilson: Whatever you want to do. It's now about 3:00. Do you want a break time, and then we can go on?

Lage: [tape interruption] We talked about My Ranch.

Wilson: My Ranch. My Ranch had left a lot of division and a lot of hard feelings in the community. People thought that Dennis's project was just what we needed, and it was going to bring prosperity, and jobs, and all the usual things that go with this kind of proposal. Anyway, it was over, and the public had voted. There were some concurrent things going on. [pause] I don't know how we're going to handle this road issue, and the idea of moving inland, and trying to get an access road through my property, and all of that, because there's some overlap here.

Lage: Is it overlap in time or content?

Wilson: In time.

Lage: Why don't we hold that for now.

Wilson: I think maybe I ought to just point out here that after My Ranch, it was at that point that through California Tomorrow, and some things that I had seen, that I got to know the Chadwick Project at Santa Cruz. That was really interesting; I was really interested in that effort. And I was on a plane going somewhere, probably from San Francisco to Los Angeles, or something, with Huey Johnson.

Lage: Were you there on a mission with Huey?

Wilson: No, I was going for business, something else, Connell Foundation work or something. I had mentioned Alan, because he knew Alan Chadwick. He said, "Well, Alan is in bad shape." He said he just more or less hardened the professional staff, the professors at the university, against him because of his teaching. The guy, the [Kenneth] Thimann who was their Nobel man [a botanist], was furious with Alan talking about plants and no pesticides, and solutions. Thimann's wife was in Alan's garden and that had caused a big uproar in his family.

The thing with Alan is Alan had been sponsored by Page Smith and Paul Lee. Page Smith was a very good historian, was the provost or vice chancellor under [founding chancellor Dean] McHenry at UC [Santa Cruz] when they started. Paul Lee was also a character by way of the East, Harvard I think. But they both had been to Dartmouth. They both had known [Oegain] Rosenstock-Huessey at Dartmouth, who was a philosophy professor who I also knew vaguely, not well, but was more or less the father of the idea of the Peace Corps. Page and Paul were very much enamored of those kinds of programs.

- Lage: And did you know Page and Paul?
- Wilson: Oh yes. Well, I got to know them quite well. Anyway, with Alan down there and sort of being evicted from the university—public relations had reached a point where I think they no longer could have him on the campus doing this garden with the students and keeping peace with the professorial corps, and the things would go on.
- Lage: How had you heard of Alan Chadwick?
- Wilson: Through the California Tomorrow. They had done a number of articles on the garden. There had been quite a bit of writing, and Page and Paul were people I had run across and talked about the program. I don't know, it was just one of those things at that time, if you were interested in something like biodynamics that he taught, and the things that went with it, it was something that you just kind of read about and kept track of. So Huey had told me, he said, "Well, Alan's in trouble. He's living in an apartment. He's all discouraged. He's going to go to New Zealand, or he doesn't know what to do." I asked him, I said, "What does he need, Huey?" He said, "Well, he needs land. He needs a piece of land to set up his program." I said, "Well, Round Valley has got some land. I don't know whether it works, but maybe we ought to just get ahold of him, or you get him and I'll arrange to meet him and take him up there." So Huey did call, and I did reach Alan, and Alan had said yes, he would like to come. He was living with a bedroll and a very minimum amount of personal gear. I took him up and he came to Round Valley. I thought I'd delivered him to the Vale of Kashmir. He just sort of, there he was. He'd found heaven.
- Lage: He was happy.
- Wilson: Oh, he was just ecstatic before we hardly even got to the valley floor. I had a piece of land right next to town and the opportunity to rent a house nearby. There was no garden there; it was just plain. It had a well.
- Lage: Was the land in use for anything?
- Wilson: No, it was just pasture. There we were. So Alan immediately set up shop and started building a garden, and sending out the call for his students who would follow him; many did. We had the problems of finding some places for them to live. They even rented the old hotel, which was a riot to see that, next to the bar.
- Lage: The hotel on the main street there?
- Wilson: Next to the bar. So the first site was right there, right in town.
- Lage: Did you have to fund all of this?

Wilson: I got some grants from some foundations to help. I helped as I could. In other words, I helped with some stuff they needed for getting their ground organized. Fundamentally, I was able to raise some of this money elsewhere and to get them going. Alan dug in, and there he was, right visible—

Lage: Tell me more about him.

Wilson: Alan was a raging prophet out of the Old Testament; just one of these genius types that was just a totally impossible human being to live with: outrageous, spoiled, dogmatic, but totally creative. Alan had been in England. Alan had kind of become part of the Rudolf Steiner School in England before World War II.

Lage: What is that?

Wilson: [Baron Justus von] Leibig was, I guess, the father of commercial fertilizer. He'd discovered how you can make it out of nitrogen. Coal, I guess he started with, and through an extraction process. Then there was this school that Alan and—these were sort of the purists. This was the von Moltkes—Helmuth, the son, and Freya, the mother, and [Rudolf] Steiner. They were more of the Waldorf School type thinking. But they had [Louis] Lorette, who was French and did a certain kind of pruning with trees that created a vase for trees, making it sort of pyramid so the sun came in. It was a whole group of these people who supported biodynamics.

When the war came, Alan went back to England and was in the Navy for a period. Freya von Moltke, her husband was part of that Hitler-bomb plot, and was executed for that by the Gestapo. She had fled Germany and gotten to Africa, South Africa, with her two boys. She had put out the call for Alan to come to South Africa and restore the Admiralty Gardens that were in disrepair, because this was kind of what he knew how to do: British-ornamental-horticultural-artistic kind of a layout. He knew how to do these things. He was an actor. He taught theater to these students, how to breathe, and how to speak. All of this is on tapes I have, relating to the classes and lectures.

Lage: In schools here?

Wilson: He had known the actors, [George Bernard] Shaw, and others. He had acted in Europe. He knew all of the fables, Aesop's kind of fables. He did lectures in fables, used references. I have some of those tapes that just blow your mind out of those lectures.

He had gone to Africa. Freya, in the meantime, had moved on and moved to Hanover, New Hampshire, where Rosenstock-Huessey was getting older. She had known him in Europe, and had come over to care for him. They all knew each other: Page and Paul Lee, Freya van Moltke, Rosenstock-Huessey. When

Page and Paul went to Santa Cruz, Alan was in Africa, and Freya was out in Hanover. After they started this new college, Page Smith thought, “Well, it would be wonderful to have a garden as part of the curriculum.” So he put out the call through Freya to Alan to bring him over. He brought Alan over, and was eventually the sponsor for the Garden Project, which is there today if you go to Santa Cruz.

Of course, then he went to work. As I say, it was famously successful and caused nothing but utter chaos and turmoil on the campus with the traditionalists and the people that practiced agriculture in the way that we’ve all been taught, and then Alan down there. Through that, and through Huey, I wound up with Alan in Covelo and his whole entourage.

Lage: And he brought a lot of his—?

Wilson: Oh yeah, they all came. And of course, this was future shock for Covelo, because this was red-neck-logger-type-cowboy country. Yet, I thought, my own self thought, things were so nasty after My Ranch that people were just not talking. This was just a miserable—

Lage: It must have divided families and everything.

Wilson: Divided families and made them mad, just everybody. I thought, you know, what would be a better antidote, or something, than Alan Chadwick and a bunch of kids gardening? I thought, it’s just going to unsettle them so that maybe it will get their mind off of all this stuff and go somewhere else for a while instead of this negative—if you don’t live in it, you don’t realize how bad it gets. It’s just ugly and it’s just awful.

Well, the kids, they came in, and this had to be a Renaissance period for Covelo, because there was—well, these were all the hippies, and these were all the druggies, and what the hell has Richard Wilson brought to us? It got so bad. I had taken over—

Lage: That doesn’t sound like a Renaissance period, what you just described.  
[laughing]

Wilson: Well, just give me a little bit here. I had bought the old hardware store that the Corps had used for their headquarters from Jan Stewart after his bankruptcy, and we made it into the Round Valley Inn, which is a restaurant. I had some of these hippies in there doing the work. That got the town pretty upset. My wife helped a lot with that, and actually there were Indians engaged in this, and that—

Lage: Rebuilding it?

Wilson: Well, more in the running, and actually the help of it. The rebuilding was done by some people that were certainly hippies in the camp and the creek, and oh God. And then it was so bad that the old-timers walked this side of the street and the hippies over here. It was just that bad; couldn't stand each other.

Lage: What did the hippies look like?

Wilson: Long-haired and disheveled, and just like their clothes, and their kids were all running around sort of ragged, just like they did. They were just hippies.

Lage: This didn't upset you.

Wilson: No, I mean they got the work done. We got through it all, and the place looked quite nice. We were able to get it staffed up and running. Then Alan was over there on the garden and had these kids all downtown in the hotel and scattered around town. They rode bikes. They worked from sunup to sundown. Of course the thing that had the town all in a tizzy was that the bar is right next door, and the loggers came in to have their beer, and these kids are all out there in the middle of the sun, working like hell. It was this thing about, "What do we got? Nothing but hippies working for a mad Englishman."

The problem was that they worked harder than the loggers, and this really made them mad, because hippies were supposed to smoke pot and lay around, and they worked. Not only did they work, but they were creating a rather gorgeous kind of a landscape with all the flowers and plants, and they were producing food. It was getting into town a little bit; people were buying some of it.

Lage: Did they have a stand?

Wilson: They had a little stand for a while. It's just that the whole presence of work, and the result that that work brought out, because Alan said, "You can't own five acres until you learn how to run one acre." His whole thesis is companion planting, and certain plants are compatible with other plants, and some plants tend to cover certain kinds of pests and protect them against others. He taught all this stuff in his lectures, and he rented a hall and they all did their mime, deportment, and speech and breathing. Fred Marshall and Raymond Chavez were two of the principle leaders of it. They were wonderful people. Fred right now is down in Annadel, which is down on Hearst. It's a camp that is run for kids. They're great.

It was a real change of attitude; you don't cut all the trees, and you don't let the cows run through everything. It was intensive horticulture, creating a lot of productivity using natural systems, companion-planting, mulches, working fertilizers, beds. And he had girls out there, and those girls worked like hell. Adrian, and the different ones; and they worked right along with everyone

else. So it was just something so different, and it attracted people that came in to look, and they were interested.

Lage: People from out of the area?

Wilson: Well, Ruth Wells, from the East, was a very wealthy woman that Lew Butler had known, and she took to this as a sponsor. She put quite a bit of money into it.

Ruth Wells. I think that they were Bausch Lomb, or something, in Massachusetts. I think Lew Butler has worked with them for a long time. Ruth was a great lady, and she really helped sponsor Alan. They have a village in Massachusetts, Old Sturbridge Village—It's kind of how the early days were, you know.

Lage: Like a living history—?

Wilson: Yes, like Williamsburg. She wanted for their annual meeting to have Alan come back and give a talk to the gathering. I said to Ruth, I said, "I don't know when we can get him to travel. I mean this guy is just really hard to move, or do anything but just—"Well," she said, "Try." So Fred, Raymond, and I, we talked about getting Alan on a plane and going back to Sturbridge to do this presentation.

Well, we got Alan back there, and the evening of this presentation was in one of these old churches in New England where the hall is big, and wooden, and creaky, and they have an upstairs situation where people sit and come in, and every time you move your foot, you squack. With Alan Chadwick, you're never quite sure what his mood is, or how he's going to feel, or how his sort of theatrical presence is going to be. He obviously was prepared to give this lecture.

Everybody assembled and Alan, of course, was being difficult and late, but he was there. So everybody had assembled. I was just holding my breath because I didn't know what was going to happen. Alan gets up in the pulpit, if you will, to deliver this thing. Somebody upstairs gets up or down and starts squeaking that wood. He left.

Lage: Just walked out?

Wilson: Walked out. I looked at Ruth, I said, "Ruth," I said, "Wait." We wait. [laughs], wait, pray.

Lage: The audience is quiet?

Wilson: Everybody is sort of stunned. He came back. It was all right for him. He came back and he delivered this thing. It was all very eloquent, and everything was fine, and that was the end of that.

The equivalent to this story is when Ruth had come out to visit Covelo and to visit Alan at the garden. I, again, had forewarned Ruth; I said, "Now look, when you get to the garden just come with me and we'll look around." Alan knew Ruth. He knew that she was a prime sponsor. He was in the garden. So Ruth and I walked in, and Alan Chadwick just ignored us completely. Everybody was busy and we just walked around for fifteen to twenty minutes, and everything was just going along, and all of a sudden Alan appears and says, "Oh Ruth! So good to see you." [laughs] He goes through this whole thing. This was what you're dealing with: his entry, on his terms, and he presented himself the way he wanted to do it. Other than that, just wait and make the best of it.

Lage: You must have figured him out quickly, or else you must have had some run-ins with him.

Wilson: Yes, that was my role, was to try to keep some sanity in the thing, and sort of keep the thing going as much as I could. And he'd come down to my house, and sometimes he would correspond; he'd have these beautiful handwritten letters that he would put under my door, like that.

Lage: About?

Wilson: About somebody in the project wasn't doing something, or they were having problems. At this time, Lew Butler had decided that one of the great things to do was apprenticing, and he thought about having some young men that were out of college coming and apprenticing around these kinds of things, after Dos Rios. He had been doing some similar things in California Tomorrow. What happened was my apprentice was Steve Bundy. Steve was McGeorge Bundy's son. Steve came for two years and lived with me and was prominent in the garden. He's a professor at Boalt Hall now. He was very active with all the people in the project and was a great help. He was around a little of the My Ranch stuff, I don't remember exactly, but the project, and the watershed things. He had a friend named Andy Taylor also that was involved a little bit, that helped.

Lage: So he was your apprentice?

Wilson: He came and worked for me to learn just about these things we're talking about. He came from Harvard. He was going to go to law school, but he just thought it was necessary to learn something about the West.

Lage: Sounds like a wonderful program.

- Wilson: Oh, he was great. He was a huge help to me.
- Lage: Did he have creative ideas?
- Wilson: Steve's smart, smart as a whip, and rolled with the punches, and sort of—he's just a fine—he and Marianne, and they have two kids, are just two of the best people you'd ever hope to meet. They live in Berkeley, not probably far from where you are. You'd ever meet him you'd love him.
- He was in the middle of it. We had Steven Decater and Gloria were in the project. Steven was one of the first people Alan had in his project. He worked at the garden for years and now has a piece of land that I had had that we arranged to get over to them and now they have the Covelo farm. What is it called? The Live Power Farm.
- Lage: Does that mean no mechanized power?
- Wilson: Well, they've got labor. It is a Chadwick-Steiner-type of program with a lot of kids. They bring people in and train them to be biodynamic-type of gardeners. They use horses and they use manpower—people, women.
- Lage: Windmills?
- Wilson: They don't use mechanized—no, not really. They do most of this—
- Lage: People power.
- Wilson: People power, yes.
- Lage: So he's still at it?
- Wilson: So Steve is here, and Steve speaks to the continuity of that idea, which is brought up quite a number of places in different forms, but behind Alan, and what he really set out to establish as a way of living on the land, growing, and nutrition, and a lot of things. It was very spiritual, and aesthetic, and he knew a lot about his business too, but presented in a way that a university could just drive him crazy; they couldn't stand this.
- Lage: It seems like a whole lifestyle and a personal style.
- Wilson: It is. It was a personal style and the kids of the sixties loved it. They really were people that looked for a change, and were willing to take his abuse. He was terrible to women. He just was a son-of-a-bitch.
- Lage: You mean the way he spoke to them?

- Wilson: He was just kind of mean to them. I don't know, it's just his personality was quixotic, and he was rude. He didn't use bad language, or anything. His demeanor could be so negative if he wanted to be. He could press you down if you did something wrong: "Why did you do that?! Why haven't you done what I told you to do?!" And that kind of stuff.
- Lage: How did he deal with the locals?
- Wilson: He was too much for the locals. They couldn't take him on, and they didn't know what to make of him, and he was never going to be bothered by them.
- Lage: Did he treat them respectfully?
- Wilson: He treated them all right, but he ignored them.
- Lage: Did he try to bring any in as—?
- Wilson: I think I mentioned this to you, I tried to get some Indians interested. Nothing doing. No way.
- Lage: That would have been quite a cultural mix.
- Wilson: Well, at least I thought just the idea of growing, and land, and—some of the older women would come through and he'd let them pick flowers, and they liked to do that. They were interested, but they wanted to keep a little bit of distance between themselves. People watched that garden as if they just knew it was a pot-smoking—and they didn't. They didn't smoke pot. They really behaved themselves very well.
- Lage: They didn't grow pot there.
- Wilson: No, they did not grow pot there. But it was hippies, and to the red necks that's just all there is; it's just hippies. But they were pretty well disciplined and hard-working hippies.
- Later, the opportunity came to buy the McCombs ranch, which was a little better site. We were able to buy that—which is Jim McCombs' dad—and move Alan up there where they had a house and a barn. It was a little more of a set-up and some room for the people. He, again, developed another sort of magical place with the garden. He had a little house separate from the big house. The big house offered a place for them to eat and something to live in. There was a little cabin on the other side that he could live in. He liked to live alone. I don't know, healthwise, he—

[End Tape 6, Side A]

[Begin Tape 6, Side B]

- Wilson: I think Alan was here about five years. He was impatient, restless, always wanted something better. He was always being—people were coming, wanting him to go to Napa, and do this, and do that, and build a garden in Sonoma, and he had a certain following from Santa Cruz. Paul and Page would come up and visit with him, because they had loved him dearly. He sometimes would curse and act terrible, but they knew that. So they came up and kept their contact with him. He's just restless and always looking for something else. Nothing was ever quite right. The students—we always seemed to keep a corps of students. We had, I think, up to fifteen at sometimes.
- Lage: Did they leave—?
- Wilson: Some left, and others came in, and yes, they did, but they always seemed to be available. They wanted to come into the garden. There's people out there that have done a lot of what Alan's taught them, and they do it in their own lives; they've got gardens, and they've done things in Santa Cruz. John Jeavons in Willits has written books on this stuff, and Steve and Gloria [Decater]. They're around. I was kind of running out of gas, just the time it took.
- Lage: The time it took the troubleshoot?
- Wilson: Yes, to try to keep them all going.
- Lage: Did you have an official position?
- Wilson: Well, I started something called the Institute for Man and Nature with Al Wilkins. Al was the lawyer and kept the papers straight for that. That was the vehicle we raised money for the Garden, the Institute for Man and Nature.
- Lage: You were raising the money, so you had some responsibility.
- Wilson: Some responsibility, and I had Steve Bundy to help. I had to deal with a lot because he'd [Chadwick] always wind up on my doorstep when things weren't right or something was wrong. He eventually just—this whole thing about leaving—he eventually went to Sonoma County for a while. Then they kind of floundered around down there; nothing really gelled. He had some women that were trying to get him underway with Napa, or something. Yes, I think it was Napa, Sonoma, it was close in there somewhere.
- Then he went back to Virginia to this nuthouse. There was some God mystic or something that just was bad news and had gotten a hold of him in Virginia in that kind of pretty country. It didn't sound good to me, but nevertheless there he'd gone. Steve and Gloria had gotten hold of this other place and were on their way [with Live Power Farm]. The thing was kind of unwinding and

unwound, I guess you'd have to say. I'd heard some not-good things about what was going on back there. I had to go to Washington on some business, and so I went back and I got a car, and I went down to Virginia to where he was. This was one of those old, I don't know, these very wealthy eastern horse establishments that had gone through a lot of transition and not in great repair, and in one day was quite—it was probably one of the big families, the Vanderbilts or somebody. But it had lost its luster. This guy, this guru, had got a hold of it and his group was falling apart.

I tried to find Alan, and nobody was around. I finally got a hold of somebody and I said, "Is Alan Chadwick here?" And he said, "Yeah, over there." So I went over to this building, and I found him. He was in terrible—I surmised he was dying. I just felt that.

Lage: What kind of symptoms?

Wilson: Just nutritionally, and I think probably cancer. It's hard to say what all the things were wrong. He was glad to see me, and he was very low. He had been at the Zen farm in Marin County [Green Gulch] for a period, Baker and that. They were always loyal to him. So there were a couple of his old friends that I knew. I, after seeing this, I said, "Look, we've got to get him back to the Zen farm for whatever comes of it, because he's just not going to make it there, and maybe not make it much longer anywhere."

We did manage that. We got him back there, and they got him comfortably into one of their little places. Eventually he died there, and his ashes were put there. The ending went down much better than it could of in just a lonely room. He had all his friends around him, and it was a nice way to wind it up. But it was a trip.

Lage: I'll say. This is quite an episode in your life.

Wilson: Oy yoy yoy yoy. Everybody associated—

Lage: You haven't told me everything, because I can tell from your expressions. You didn't begin to tell all the anecdotes.

Wilson: It just goes on and on. I don't know, it just is one of those things, that the man was an inspiration. He was like having a millstone around your neck. He was something that was pretty good, and I think brought a lot of energy to the—he just electrified. He just really put electricity into the air, and energy into young people. With the back-to-the-land thing kind of waning down too, he had a message. I think probably for Santa Cruz, and for Covelo, and for other places, these things pass, and they go by, but they always—if they're any good, they usually leave something behind. Steve and Gloria are there on their farm as—

- Lage: What about the other—aren't there two other organic farms?
- Wilson: There are. Tom Palley was working there, and he knew Alan, and worked with Alan. The other one I don't know so much for sure. They're all rooted in that whole system.
- Lage: There are probably a lot of other organic farms that he inspired.
- Wilson: Well, I think there are a lot of people in Santa Cruz and other places that have certainly built off Alan's personality, and his teaching, and the whole approach to nature and plants. It was like being in theater in some ways.
- Lage: Did it change some of your thinking about—and Susan's?
- Wilson: She loved the garden; she had a hard time with him as a person. He was just—I think her father wasn't the easiest man to live with, and I think Alan brought back memories of Bill. [laughs] I think there was a lot of that.
- Lage: So she didn't—?
- Wilson: She didn't participate. She did follow the work, and some of the people in it she really liked, the kids. But Alan was, no, he was too much.
- Lage: Did he change any of your thinking about the land, or the value of the live-power, biointensive method?
- Wilson: Yes, I think he really raised my—I was conscious of a lot of things happening, what came on with Carter. We'll get into all that. I think he raised this ability to make everything change by using so much energy and mechanization. You see, the thing is, if you go back into the Greek period, or something, that in some way or another every civilization and culture has managed to have some kind of a—I hate to use it—but slave labor to make things happen. The Industrial Revolution basically—well, however we approach slavery, or whatever it is. This gets back to the issue of the Civil War and lifestyle. Those people needed slaves to maintain it. Without slavery, they could not maintain their lifestyle of the South. Industrialization came in, which was the tractor and all of the commercializations, and all of the things were high-energy outputs that fundamentally meant that you can't get labor—when I say slavery, cheap labor. As I told you before, my guys were older, and they were terrific. But when I lost them, there were no replacements. The replacements had to be either a lot of mechanization and machinery—we did that for a while, but I'll bring that to closure with the Carter years, and I'll show you why when we get there. What Alan really was teaching is what—he used to talk about E-day and natural systems.

I had a young Frenchman I'd brought over and helped him get his papers, with the name Jean Francois. Watching Jean and Alan was a scream, because Jean

had been trained partially by the Franciscans. He'd had some upbringing by this order, and then he'd come over to learn the language and eventually went to Davis and got a master's. I taught him a lot about farming, and he was here with Alan. He knew some of this from France; he'd seen some of this. Between him and Bundy, those two guys, [laughs] that was a real pair, kind of interfacing with Alan, because they're both very smart, and they both could take it for what it was. Jean was a very good fellow, and a wonderful—he works in—in fact Oakland. He lives in Oakland right now.

Lage: What did he go into?

Wilson: He works for Clorox down there, one of the companies. His mother and father were doctors in France. They got out of that. They bought this place here, and Natalie, the sister, actually she took a degree, and her husband, and they taught. I think they're now—they may have gone back to France. They were teaching in Washington maybe for a while, DC, I'm not sure, but they went through an academic background.

Lage: How did Jean Francois end up with you?

Wilson: I had some people that were working with me on some project, who had a friend of the family, who had Jean, this boy. They wanted to send him to America to learn English, and he was willing to work. So one thing led to the other, and I said, "Well, yeah, if he'll help me, I'll help him get his English." He came over and sort of like Bundy became an apprentice.

Lage: Did he help you with physical labor?

Wilson: Labor, oh yeah, farming. He did a lot of farming. I taught him to drive tractors and to do everything, cows. He's a French cowboy; he's kind of a wiry guy, had his hat, and all this stuff.

Lage: You were willing to try a lot of different things. That's a real quality.

Wilson: I'll try anything, give it a try.

Lage: Very open. Do you think that's—

Wilson: I think we've probably—there might be some more, but we probably exhausted this one for about—

Lage: Okay, well, it's an interesting story. And you brought in the Round Valley Inn.

Wilson: It's still there today. I lease it out. I still own it. I don't run it, but I lease it out to a couple.

Lage: Is it a going thing?

Wilson: Oh yes. Well, it doesn't make a lot of money. They pay me the rent so I pay the taxes with a little bit of loose change, because obviously there's not that much business, and there's two other places. It was 1971 when we came in, or '72, when we started it, so what is this? It's thirty-eight, thirty-nine years? Does that seem possible? No. [counts] Almost thirty years.

Lage: How about the old flour mill?

Wilson: I had bought that, and I tried to do some things with it, but there were just so many things that I couldn't cope with in terms of health code, and I was just scared to death. First of all, I bought it for not very much money from the Rohrboughs, because they wanted to get rid of it. It had all the old machinery and the redwood. I got it listed in the National Historic Trust, I did that, and I kept it, but I didn't have the money or the—really it was something you had to take on. This was a real project. I had a guy come in and wanted to lease it, and he was going to do big things. I'd sold part of the old ranch, when I'd left, to him, and he didn't deliver. Finally we had to get him out. Then I put it back for sale, and I sold it to this guy that makes silkscreens in Oakland. It's just turned—you saw it, didn't you?

Lage: I did.

Wilson: He's restoring it.

Lage: It looked beautiful.

Wilson: You know, there are a couple of guys that are—they're both gay. The nicest people you'd ever meet. In the community they get along just famously. They have the Blackberry Festival. I started that. They do it; they sponsor it. They meticulously are replacing that thing. I've got to tell you, I couldn't be happier to see what they've done.

Lage: What do they use it for?

Wilson: Well they live it in it, and I'm not sure what the ultimate—they're going to do. I can't answer that. They certainly have done a great job, and he's a very nice person. He's got a friend, and he does this artistic—I think it's silkscreens or something—that sells all over the country. But being that gay side, I wondered when they first came, "As a town, what are we going to get into here?"

Lage: What would the town think?

Wilson: Think about that, but they just—no sweat. I think probably after Alan Chadwick I think these are all conditioning things. The town, maybe, is not so uptight about these things anymore; they've been through it.

- Lage: It makes it a very different place than what it would have been.
- Wilson: Well, I hope so. I don't know. It's still not an easy place, but it's got the Yolla Bolly Press; it's got Island Press; it's got those guys in the mill.
- Lage: The farms.
- Wilson: Well, yeah. Collectively, there's all of that there, that maybe all someday it's going to mean more than it does individually.
- Lage: The one thing we didn't address, and maybe this will come when we start up again, was there a decline in the traditional ranching and lumber around this time?
- Wilson: Oh yeah. That gets us into the art project, the watershed. Then we get back to GP, and the road going through, and all of that. Then we'll go back and we'll get there.
- Lage: The Carter years.
- Wilson: The Carter years. But we need to get through the road, and the GP, and the art project—the Applied World Technology, and that watershed, and where it was going at that time.

[End Tape 6, Side B]

**Interview #4: September 2, 2001**  
**[Begin Tape 7, Side A]**

Wilson: This is September the 2nd, Sunday, at Henthorne Lake, the year of our Lord, 2001, continuing on our discussion of the Covelo Garden Project and Ronald Reagan's visit.

I believe in August of 1974, Reagan was coming to the end of his term, and wanted to do a north-state kind of a fly-through to visit various places that had been of interest to him. Livermore, obviously, was key in this, in setting it all up. He came for the day. It was really a day. He came and we had lunch at my house.

Lage: In the valley?

Wilson: Yes. Then we went over to the garden, and we toured the garden, and he visited with the students and with Chadwick. Then he went to the Round Valley Inn. The big living area, the big room there, was named the Reagan Room because of the visit. He visited with all the people, and they'd all get up to shake his hand and have their picture taken. It was really kind of a fun day for a little town like Covelo to have a sitting governor come in, and be there, and talk. Reagan's a very congenial type of fellow and can mix with anybody. It struck me that both of them were actors—Reagan and Chadwick—and were both putting on an act. Steve Bundy at that time was with me, and Steve Bundy said, "Gee, it's a little bit terrifying that these are the people that are leading us in the world." [laughter]

Lage: He was referring to the whole entourage?

Wilson: Well, the Reagan—yes.

Lage: How did he relate to the students?

Wilson: Fine. Well, it was very interesting. It's a good question because what he said was, he said, "These students are out here"—he noticed them working and how hard they worked—and he said, "The students that I had to interface with at Berkeley were not doing this. They were a very different type of creature." He sort of said, "This is so nice to see young people doing this kind of work and not protesting and raising Cain on the campus." He made that comment about the visit and the students at the garden. Ellen Sugawara was one of the gals. Ellen now lives in Hawaii with Jack. They're on an island off Molokai, I think. Ellen—a small Oriental girl—she did some of the talking. She was very good. She was very precise, and very articulate, and had a shovel and was pounding some soil. It was really a—gosh, it was kind of fun to see it all.

Lage: Did Chadwick behave himself?

Wilson: Chadwick was on his very best behavior and dressed up in his—I don't know whether he had long pants or short pants that day. He had blue short pants he used to wear all the time. I think he did. When you go through Buck Mountain we've got that picture and I'll show it to you, the two of them.

That kind of brought us to the close of that period. Of course Reagan was going out and Jerry Brown was coming in. The project went on a bit longer, but Alan, of course, left, and some of the kids stayed around, but it kind of—like all things, there was not one person in the project that was old enough or mature enough to be a leader. In other words, they couldn't do it once Alan left. There were some other people involved that were on the verge. Raymond Chavez went—I think he went to the East Coast. I'm not sure where Raymond went. I think he even went to Harvard—I'm not sure—and studied some landscape work at Harvard. Fred is down in Willits.

Lage: Fred who?

Wilson: Fred Marshall, he's here. He's up at Annadel, at the ranch there. Fred's been around. Fred is old enough today to probably run something if he was given that kind of an assignment. There's not this charisma, and the behavior [of Chadwick]—It's like George Bernard Shaw, or somebody like that. Totally, every movement was theatrical, and the voice, and the temperament, and the mood swinging, and all of that stuff.

Lage: It sounds so out-of-place in a ranching community.

Wilson: It was kind of a renaissance to the extent that everybody was first a bit puzzled, overwhelmed, shocked; but as they got used to it, it was kind of a fun curiosity. It brought a lot of people to Covelo to see the garden. There were a lot of people who came to visit the garden, and to walk through, and to see some of the students. Alan sometimes was good and sometimes not, but I think that—I noticed that when they had all gone I heard things around town, "Gee, when we had the garden here—" It was this kind of stuff. So it did have—but again, it seems like it's always this way; when something like that is there, it doesn't get the support you'd like, but then after a while it wears off on people, and then they think, "You know, that really was kind of interesting."

Lage: They get nostalgic for it.

Wilson: Yeah, it brought a lot of vitality. It wasn't just the ranching-lumber mentality, which is fundamentally all we had. The ranches were all going fairly well, but beginning to suffer from a lot of things that were starting to happen.

Lage: So in this era, the early seventies, the ranching was still economically viable?

Wilson: Yes, it was, but it was getting—as soon as we get into that period with the drought—‘76, ‘77, and ‘78, and when we get into the Carter time and everything, and the things that happened, that was the beginning of the real end of ranching, which we’ll go into at some length.

The project was more or less winding down. We were getting into this business of the general plan. There was a period where the counties had to upgrade their general plans, and every community was told to do something about its plan. We set up a committee, and we had meetings, but it only did the valley floor. For that reason, I really felt that that’s not the answer—that’s a short-sighted answer, simply because we should do the watershed. The watershed was that natural boundary where all the roads, drainage, and everything came toward the valley.

That, of course, included a lot of the timber—Forest Service and private timber—and, of course, in 1972 Georgia-Pacific [GP] had to go through [a divestment]. The antitrust division said, “If you don’t get rid of all of those holdings outside of the Union Lumber lands, which were 200,000 acres over on the coast, we’re going to break you up.” So they had to divest everything they had over in Covelo, and all the land they’d bought.

Lage: When did they start buying all this land?

Wilson: When Crawfords went down in the plane, GP inherited the Crawford Lumber Company, and the Crawford Lumber Company owned a lot of this land—the Bar Z Ranch next to me and so forth, Tyson Ranch, and others—a lot. They owned a lot of this land, including my timber. So when GP took all of that over, and then the short period of time when they had this antitrust [action], Louisiana-Pacific was formed, and they created Louisiana-Pacific. Louisiana-Pacific took over these lands.

Lage: Was it sort of a breakup of Georgia-Pacific?

Wilson: Yes, it was. They said they couldn’t have Union over there and all this; it was a monopoly.

Lage: So Georgia-Pacific divested?

Wilson: Divested of their lands other than the Union Lumber in Mendocino County. They had, at one time, Louisiana-Pacific had over 300,000 acres. Anyway, that’s when Louisiana-Pacific was started, and they had Harry Merlo as an employee, a vice president of GP, and they more or less turned him loose and gave him the Louisiana-Pacific Company. That was the beginning—

Lage: He was your nemesis.

Wilson: He was big-time trouble.

Lage: Where did he come from?

Wilson: Harry came from over in Paradise, on the Sacramento side. His brother's an ambulance-chasing attorney over there. Harry grew up and went to Cal, I think. He went to work for the Rounds Lumber Company in Cloverdale that had some small but significant holdings, which he was instrumental in bringing into the Georgia-Pacific fold. So he became then a Georgia-Pacific officer, became a vice president, and was running the Georgia-Pacific operations in Eureka before they broke the company up. As soon as we moved away from the Crawford family mentality—first with Georgia-Pacific—Georgia-Pacific immediately went back to this road business, coming through up on top now. This thing had been stopped down [earlier] on the Forest Service at Hoxie Crossing, but they still wanted a road, so that's the road up on top from Covelo that we came in partially—not all the way, but part of the way into here [Henthorne]. They were right in bed with the BLM—Melvin Clausen, the manager in Ukiah.

Lage: Is he related to Don Clausen?

Wilson: No, no relationship, but it was part of the whole same bunch. They basically—the BLM, had sent somebody named Beauregard something into see me and said, "We want an access. We'll condemn the land, and we'll give you 3,000 dollars for it." That was through some of that country that we came in for this trip.

Lage: Is it this land as well, at Henthorne?

Wilson: Well, this is where they wanted to get to, but it was up there on the top with the road, and this spurred down, but it was that road up on top. They were trying to get that road through, push it on through, because they wanted a timber-hauling road out of Trinity County. They wanted the federal timber in north Mendocino County and then into the Shasta-Trinity Forest.

First of all, Trinity County and Hazel, way back in '60 when Al was there, had passed a resolution, and the board of supervisors in Trinity County had said they had never wanted a through road from southern Trinity into Mendocino County for the very reasons that they didn't want to have to do all the law enforcement, and all the cost, and have Mendocino County taking the timber and hauling it all to their mills down here in Covelo, or even maybe in Lake County. That resolution stood through this whole twenty years, or close to it. They tried to break it time and again with different supervisors and political shenanigans, but that resolution was never defeated in Trinity County. That was really very important, because as I say local government—when local government takes a position it's increasingly harder to overrule, no matter how high up you go.

They came in and wanted to condemn it, and it's that point where I had this connection with Brobeck, Phleger and Harrison. John Larson [a Brobeck attorney]—when Nixon ran again in '72, it's around then, '71, '72, when LP was formed—that's when GP started this procedure, and they wanted to condemn this right-of-way. That's when Larson was part of the Interior Department; he had gone back to work as an undersecretary. That's when I had told the BLM that they had to do an environmental impact statement or report.

Lage: Now, NEPA [National Environmental Protection Act] had passed in 1969.

Wilson: It had passed. We're starting to get in just the beginning stages because when I told Clausen that, he said, "We don't have to do one." Through Larson—

Lage: Larson was the attorney for Brobeck?

Wilson: Who went back as an undersecretary. They sent the word through the department that, "Sorry, you do have to do one."

Lage: They were still working out what the implications of NEPA were.

Wilson: Absolutely, absolutely. They didn't know anything about it. It was totally foreign; they didn't want to do it, and they wished it would go away. That's the sum of the whole thing.

Lage: I don't think anyone knew what it was going to be.

Wilson: They didn't know how to even—they didn't know anything. I told my wife, Susan, at that time, I said, "Well, now the Crawfords are gone and we're mixed up with these big corporations. Life's going to change around here, big time, because things are going to be different." Believe me, they got to be different very fast. In the corporate mentality, might is right and you don't ask; you don't do anything; you just go and pull all the stops out. We ought to stop just one minute here. [Pause in recording]

We're talking about the road, and they had made this effort to condemn the right-of-way, which I had resisted. They were told that they had to do an environmental-impact report. They commenced to do that, and it took them three years.

Lage: Was this the BLM?

Wilson: Bureau of Land Management in—you see, this was the Department of Agriculture on the Forest Service. Now we were in the Department of the Interior with the BLM. It took them three years to get this thing done, and they floundered around, but there were whole things about this transparency issue that they had to hold hearings, and show maps, and all of this kind of

thing. At the same time, the county had said, “Get your general plan together and do something about getting this whole thing—make some sense out of land use in the valley.” It was a very difficult kind of thing to do because people didn’t like to be told that there was going to be zoning constraints. George Hammond was a fellow that lived in Covelo that ran that committee and did a good job, I think, working through it, and became a member of the planning commission in Mendocino County.

Lage: Was this a statewide effort?

Wilson: This is statewide but every county had to do it. This was one of those periods when the state said, “You get your general plans in order.” Right there—I had talked to George. I said, “George, it seems to me that we ought to be looking at this watershed, because while the valley’s important, the life of this whole area is tied to the Forest Service sales of timber. You’ve got Georgia-Pacific and then Louisiana-Pacific coming in. Their method of operations is very different from these smaller mills that have been here. Road building and all of these things are going to have a long-term impact on what goes on around here—having all gone through Dos Rios and all that kind of thing with the government, if you will, as a warm-up period.”

Well, we never did get the county. Nobody wanted to take on that. This particular watershed is about 700,000 acres. That’s the size. I thought, “Well, the Planning and Conservation Foundation might be a candidate through California Tomorrow,” actually—I think we routed it through California Tomorrow at that time. There was a man named Ray Peart, and Ray was a swell guy. He was a supervisor up in Humboldt County for several years. He had been on the Water Quality Control Board—we’ll run into that again when we get into some of this logging. I enlisted Ray. I think he was maybe just coming out of his term as supervisor, and I don’t think he was working. I asked him if we got the money to run this watershed, because he was pretty good on this subject, to run this proposal. We got Tito Patri to work as a consultant to finally to find what it was, and a team of consultants, and we got some grant seed money to start. We were trying to get a full grant from the National Science Foundation, which had a new segment that they were going to put some money into these kinds of things.

Lage: Into land planning?

Wilson: Yes. It was real, real different for them. It was a new segment, as we will learn not too far from now, and they had set up a regional office in San Mateo. This project was a dollar an acre for three years. It was 700,000 dollars to work out this watershed. [It was] called an Applied Rural Technology Project.

Lage: Who came up with that name?

Wilson: I don’t remember exactly. Ray, or however we did it.

Lage: Applied Rural Technology.

Wilson: It was called the ART Project, that's all.

Lage: I don't want to interrupt the flow here, but was this idea of the watershed as a planning unit in currency then?

Wilson: No.

Lage: Tell me more about how your thinking developed.

Wilson: Well, my thinking developed—I did a bunch of series for the local paper, which was a watershed proposal. It was a long series that was printed, just like we're having this kind of a discussion. I think it was done in two or three parts. It was really about this thing with My Ranch, and then we'd gone through Dos Rios, and that it was pretty evident that unless we had some better way of making decisions on our resources at large, meaning everything, whether it was our ag lands, our timber volume, how much was hauled out, roads location—everything that the valley and its surrounding area was hooked into, how that was all opened up, and developed, and everything—all that was going to have a long-term impact on whether we were going to be around long term, short term, or whatever.

I just felt—I had read quite a bit about this thing over time, and watershed, and it just seemed to me we should be thinking in terms of watersheds instead of this single-minded kind of taking the valley floor, and trying to get down to these smaller units. Because if the public could understand the whole picture—and I considered the watershed the whole picture—and if they could see what GP and LP were doing, and also what the Forest Service was doing. Because the Forest Service was building roads and basically setting the map as to are the roads going to the valley so they can come from the valley over to Covelo and haul logs to the valley? Are they doing that? Are they protecting the watershed for the mill in this watershed, all these kinds of things?

My thinking was that if you can make them come up and state their five-year plans, or give some indication of where they're going with their planning, then you can react to that. In order to do that, we were able to get this very keen assemblyman, a lot of people in Sacramento on board—the Office of Planning and Research, whatever. But we never got GP or LP; they wouldn't buy in. We did get the BLM, and Penny was the director. Penny was pretty good. Russ Penny was his name.

Lage: He bought into this idea that—?

Wilson: He bought into it, he did. And Clausen hated it because he was the local director. He had to do it because Penny told him to. Actually, the Washington

people, they all—through Penny, we were going along enough so that Ray Peart could proceed and progress to trying to get a grant through the National Science Foundation.

To make a long story short, the National Science Foundation apparently had gotten crosswise to the oversight committee with [California Senator John] Tunney—well, Tunney was on it among others in the Senate. They hadn't asked him about opening an office in San Mateo, and they got mad and they closed the office. We had just submitted the proposal, and the local regional office had approved it and were sending it back to Washington DC for the final review. When they shut the office down, they gave it to an atomic scientist in Washington who didn't have a clue, and they just killed it. They just killed it. That was the end of that project, right there.

Lage: The end of the project? You didn't get other funding?

Wilson: No, that was it. We had the money to do it and then try to get the National Science Foundation to approve it, but after that collapsed we didn't have anymore money, and it wasn't something everybody was thinking about those days. The corporate guys hated it; they didn't want any part of it. And frankly the government didn't want any part of it either; they were just being made to do it. The Forest Service guy was okay, but they weren't enthusiastic.

Lage: What about the state though? This was the Jerry Brown years.

Wilson: Well, it was, and that's why the ART Project [went forth], and they got the support from the state. Jerry Brown and the feds didn't do this kind of interface very well either. The other thing with the Jerry Brown people was that while they were good and while they were—oh yeah, Jerry Yudelson [spells] I think is the guy that was running that over there at OPR. He was pretty damn good too.

Lage: Office of Planning and Research?

Wilson: I think it was, yes. But conceptually it was too early, and people were still busy logging, and there was more money to be made falling trees, and building roads, and all of that kind of stuff. It's a transparency thing when you begin to open up this thing and ask LP or GP, "What are your intentions? Are you going to raise the cut at the mill from 20 to 40 million board feet per year; are you going to increase the capacity of the mill to cut all that lumber? Forest Service, are you going to open more roads here and to the valley so more people can bid and take a lot of this timber elsewhere?" It did happen. They went to the valley, and they went to LP mills in Chico; they went to Eureka.

Lage: When you say "the valley," what valley?

Wilson: Sacramento. They were hauling over—

- Lage: They haul the logs out.
- Wilson: Yes, out of our watershed.
- Lage: The mill work and the profit go elsewhere.
- Wilson: Absolutely, and it went out of our watershed. So that was another way of liquidating this watershed on an accelerated basis, because you were feeding mills in the Sacramento Valley; you were hauling to the port up there to ship to Japan. It was a lot of export. Harwood [lumber mill] was over here hauling them to Laytonville, and then we had a mill in Covelo.
- Lage: So your vision was that the lumber from this watershed should be logged to support the watershed area?
- Wilson: It should be to support—because the Forest Service, part of their charter for managing the forest is sustainable communities. For sustainable communities that have a mill, their policy should be trying to protect that and enable the local mill to get the sales. They were doing absolutely the opposite; they were encouraging these roads. Because often times road building was more profitable than cutting trees and the contracts, and so they made more money in that. Jack Campbell, the logger—
- Lage: The Forest Service themselves made lots of money?
- Wilson: No, the loggers, through the company though. But Campbell made more money building roads than he did logging, really, because of the way the road programs were run. They had something called purchase-roads credit in the Forest Service where if the sale did not happen—if the timber was here and the furthest the road had been built was over here, they would sell this timber even though there was no road. Then the cost of getting the road from here to there got so high, legitimately or otherwise—known as a purchase-road credit—that they spent all the money on the road, and they sold the timber as a negative sale. The public didn't get anything out of that, and it all went through the road-building contracts.
- Lage: The end result was cutting the timber and having a road there.
- Wilson: Having a road there, and no money for the public. But it all went through the corporate side, and that's known as the purchase-road credit. They finally got onto it a few years ago, but I just hollered about that for years, "This is the biggest rip-off!" But they all knew it, I mean the corporate guys—they all loved it.
- Lage: Why did the Forest Service buy into that?

Wilson: Because they were part of that scheme. They saw that having the surveyors—well, I'll tell you, for me, when we had the restaurant, having those guys in there and buying meals and surveying and all that, it was good money. We saw that, and when it dried up that disappeared. But it was a terrible policy.

Lage: A blip of economic activity.

Wilson: It is a blip of economic activity, but it just did not—. That's one reason why things went to pieces pretty fast, and it's because the federal government and the corporate guys, they were all in it together, and that's where they wanted to go. I mean, they didn't want to own up to any of this as being the way it was being directed, but that clearly was what they were doing.

So when the BLM had to start doing this analysis, they had to then open up the hearings to the public, and they had to show maps, and they had to show BLM lands, and where they were going. At that point the public—meaning Willits and a lot of people—they said, “Gee, we didn't know we had all that land out there.” They said, “My goodness, isn't that—,” and they all began to get interested in it. Then, when they started seeing this sort of road thing, we—and I was trying last night to remember the first wilderness bill with [Senator Alan] Cranston and [Senator S. I.] Hayakawa. I don't know whether that's—

Lage: The first wilderness bill for this area?

Wilson: Yes, it was. It was more than here, but it was Hayakawa and Cranston.

Lage: That dates it in part.

Wilson: It was right, '74, '7—right somewhere in there, because [George] Murphy was the U. S. Senator and then Hayakawa succeeded him, I believe. [S. I. Hayakawa was elected to the US Senate in 1976.] Anyway, that was the first bill. Clausen went out and Bosco eventually came in as the congressman. The first bill didn't go anywhere politically. Cranston was pushing it. So there was this wilderness. There was a lot of pressure from the timber guys to get this damn road in and get it all done.

Lage: Before the wilderness act.

Wilson: Well, because there was another bill that came to life under [Senator Pete] Wilson, which Reagan signed in 1984, which was the same bill that came back again. Initially the BLM—so what happened was they had to come up and make all of these hearings, and go around. There was far more organization of people that were beginning to shove, saying, “We're not so sure that we want that road out there.” Well, I was in a bind on this one because I had a contract, and I could not stop them from building a road in here to get this timber, because I had a contract.

Lage: You had that old contract that you made in 1960, that lasted to '95, did you say?

Wilson: Well, that's how long it was written to last, but here we were—.

[End Tape 7, Side A]

[Begin Tape 7, Side B]

Wilson: If I got involved then it was interpreted that I was trying to stop them from getting the timber. They could say, "You're trying to breach this contract." So what I found myself in, what I had to do, was to try to make sure environmental issues—there were many that were involved in this, particularly coming into this basin—because they tried very hard to tag me with this. I didn't get into that side of it in terms of this public-access issue and everything, because that was being fought out between the public groups—the different groups that had formed to try to stop them. There were lawsuits and all kinds of things going on. As soon as they started coming down into this basin I could then look at what they were doing. If it was something I felt was not in compliance with regulations, I could do something about that. The first time—again retracking one bit down the Hoxie Crossing, in 1975, probably, or when they wanted to cross Hoxie down here at a low-water crossing—that was the first time the Fish and Game ever invoked a 1430, meaning you can't cross a river or a stream. In other words, they have a regulation that stops—

Lage: Stops the bridge building?

Wilson: Crossing. There was no bridge. You can't put a low-water crossing and you can't put a culvert in. You can't cross; that's all. They wanted to cross, and they really put in all the screws on to do that. Jack Frasier was the Fish and Game regional director, and he invoked that statute, and that just blew them out of the water. That was the first time that that had ever been exercised.

Lage: It was there but hadn't been exercised.

Wilson: Yeah.

Lage: Did you have something to do with his invoking that?

Wilson: I knew Jack, and I—well, yes to the extent that he knew, and I knew, and others knew that that was the worse place to be trying to cross. First of all, it was a steelhead run. Secondly the ground was unstable. Again, all of the environmental considerations were against a crossing there, unless you build a bridge. If you build a bridge, you'd probably build it and have a landslide right in the middle of the river, so it just didn't stand the test of time. So they

didn't make it. That's where they got jammed. I'm just saying, that was the end of that, and we're back up on top.

Now, when you come in, up in this country, when you start getting down into this basin—they had logged over there on that side. I had some timber and pulled out, I think, in '76. It was all on the other side of the river. Then they came around, and of course they were making this big thing about all the money they were losing here on the property taxes, because they had to pay the property taxes on this timber, and if they couldn't get in here to get this timber they were going to close the mill. This thing was so blown out of proportion, to try to pin me to this whole problem, when in fact it was costing them 3000 dollars a year.

Lage: That was the problem?

Wilson: That was what it cost them, and you would have thought it was just the Fort Knox. That's the way they were playing the game: "Oh my god! If we don't get it our earnings are going to go down." They had a couple of characters, Pete Bernard and Bill Smith. They were foresters for LP, and they were making all kinds of noise in Ukiah and around, and railing against me for trying to stop them from getting their timber.

Lage: You had said that you couldn't take a very active role.

Wilson: I could not. But it wasn't stopping them from saying I was behind it, sort of managing this great thing out there that was giving them all this trouble.

Lage: So they kind of focused on you as an individual.

Wilson: I was the archdruid, or whatever you want to call it, or the Evil Empire, or something, that was causing them to—because Bill Smith and I never got along anyway.

Lage: Bill Smith was—?

Wilson: He was a resource manager for LP. He'd been with Baxter Pole and Piling, and he was just kind of a nitwit. When they got the authority of being corporate, and all that, it gave him power, and then he began to—and Pete Bernard, and these guys were all—their charge was, "Look, get that damn road through." That's what they were told to do. That was it. You see, we were coming right up on the drought—'76, '77; it broke in '78. Jack Campbell was the logger, and he was as bad as [Harry] Merlo. He was a mad man, just crazy about making money, and making a mess, and bulldozers. Oh god, he was the Darth Vader of that period. He just was crazy.

Lage: These were not sensitive people.

- Wilson: No, these people just—they were mad. They were mad. Harry, who now was president of LP, was wanting—you see, they were in cahoots with the BLM. They were trying to say that they were trying to get the timber. This was it; they've got to get this timber here. But they were building the road to public [access] specifications as they built it. It was built to that. It was not a minimum—see, I had said all along, “You have no problem. You can get your access by building a minimum-standard road and closing it down when you're going through.”
- Lage: Sort of a temporary logging road.
- Wilson: That's correct.
- Lage: But they were building it as a—
- Wilson: Public access with the grade, with the sizing, with the culverts. Everything was made for public, and the BLM was part of that whole deal.
- Lage: When you say public access, what was the end—
- Wilson: A road to the Mad River.
- Lage: But for logging, not for—?
- Wilson: It would have been public. The way they do it is, initially it's logging, because they put big trucks and overloads, and close the road to the public, but finally once the condemnation happens and it's open, it becomes just another open road, and everybody can run up and down. So everything from southern Trinity into Mendocino and back and forth, it all opens up—public lands, private lands, everything.
- Lage: What was the objection to that, to opening it all up?
- Wilson: Well, it's a question, Are you going to throw everybody in a proposed wilderness-area expansion? This was still considered as part of the expansion of the existing Yolla Bolly Wilderness. It hadn't taken place yet, but it was in the first bill. That road happened to be right on the line whether it was in or out. Was it in or out? And this will be a real tale when we get to that decision.
- Lage: Okay, we're building up to the wilderness battle. That's what I wanted to get clear.
- Wilson: Well, we're getting there, but it was all couched up in getting this timber out, and there were 3000-dollars-a-year taxes, and we can't run this. Oh, it's just all kinds of this stuff going on.

They got slowed down by the BLM, and they had to get their—I mean they would be working on holidays, or Campbell would be out here working on the road, building the road, knowing that there was nobody in the A.G. 's [attorney general's] office, if they got sued, to serve them. So they'd work on the weekends, or they'd work on holidays. That was going on all the time. All that kind of stuff was going on trying to get this road through here. They were very much slowed down, but on the same token they were pushing, and pushing, and pushing. As they came through, the Bar Z was being logged, which they owned from Crawford, and then they came on to me, and, of course, they had the Brown Ranch timber that Crawford had, so they had that to log. Then, of course, they wanted to get into that old growth that we stopped—all that would have been part of the deal as they came through—and on clear into the Mad River and Shasta-Trinity.

Lage: And that would have probably made the wilderness—

Wilson: There would be no wilderness.

Lage: There would not be a wilderness.

Wilson: No, there wouldn't be. There was no wilderness. It would have been just cut-over land that the government has, and some of it's not very good, the way they did it. It was really a major issue. Again, frankly, I felt personally, from my own point of view, I was much better with wilderness and having that to use in the future for the property I owned than having a public road with all the realtors, and all the hunters, and everybody else running up and down that road, even though it would have been private coming down in this basin, the Henthorne basin. It's still you trying to hold them out and all that kind of stuff. It just didn't work. The point was, they were hells-bent to get here, and eventually they did get here. In the process, with all of the environmental review, you began to get Water Quality getting more and more into this than the CDF. The CDF was really pretty impotent. They were pretty much in the pocket of Louisiana-Pacific on all issues.

Lage: The California Department of Forestry?

Wilson: Right.

Lage: And who was in charge of this?

Wilson: They had a guy named Hammond that was the inspector. They had another one—I can't think of his name right now, but I will. They were all pals with the LP foresters. And Richard Wilson, you know, trouble.

Lage: Was this before you went on the Board of Forestry?

Wilson: Oh yeah.

- Lage: This is the backdrop for that story.
- Wilson: Well that, yes.
- Lage: And who was head of the department at that time?
- Wilson: [David] Pesonen and Claire Dedrick.
- Lage: Claire was—
- Wilson: Resources secretary. They both had real opportunity here to step into this thing and make some waves, so to speak, but they never wanted to really, I think, mix it up on some of these issues; they were just too hot.
- Lage: They seem terribly complicated when you've got the feds, and the state, and the private—
- Wilson: They are terribly complicated. They are really complicated.
- Lage: And you've got more than just—I mean you have the [departments of] Interior and Agriculture.
- Wilson: Yup, you've got these jurisdictions. It's a nightmare, whether you're outside or inside, trying to weave through it. In any event, as I say, the ART Project went—we just ran into a wall on that one so we couldn't proceed, and there was not much more to do but just let it drop.
- Lage: So that didn't really come to fruition.
- Wilson: No, it was an idea that got formulated, that had a budget, that was circulated, that had support in a lot of circles, and a lot of opposition in others; but because the money wasn't there that was it, we couldn't go. That's all there was to it.
- Lage: That's too bad. That sounds like such an interesting project.
- Wilson: Well it was. It was really. It really set the tone for a lot of this stuff. Had we been successful maybe we would have tempered some of this overcutting and some of these things that ultimately took place because the Forest Service, more or less, just kind of let everybody go wild, and these district rangers and people were just—I mean LP, they all played, "If you don't give us the timber we're going to shut the mill down. If you don't do this, we're going to—." I always said, "At the rate you're going, you're going to shut it down anyway at the rate you're going." Frank Crawford told me, he said, "We can cut 20 or 25 million [board feet] forever out there, but beyond that they're going to run us out of trees." It was kind of like the same thing going on over at Headwaters. The Murphys—the way they ran it—they were cutting big trees, but they were

bringing them out in a gradual basis and growing more. So they were really growing more timber than they were cutting, even at the second growth, although it was—I mean there was a balance there. [In the Headwaters] Hurwitz at Palco, all he did is go into heavy debt and accelerate the cut to pay off the debt, to get it out faster. Well, this is the same thing. It's the same thing; we just had the Forest Service and the Department of Interior. We just had a whole bunch of different players mixed up instead of one ownership. That's why I thought the watershed concept was so important, because it got ahold of the whole thing and then you began to at least give it some visibility and transparency so people could see where the thing was going, and maybe get the feds and everybody to put the breaks on a little bit, or try to protect some of this timber, or protect the mill and the jobs here.

Lage: How did the community feel about this?

Wilson: They never—I have several friends that are fallers, and Jack Brown—

Lage: What are fallers?

Wilson: They're loggers. Jack's an old friend. It was just this simple: it was more money running a chain [saw], see, than working around a ranch or anything, and the money talks. That's all there is to it. He knew the practices were bad. He didn't like it. Bob Pope, several of these guys, they all knew it, but the money—

Lage: They wanted the work at that time.

Wilson: Yes. And if they didn't do it somebody else would.

Lage: Was this something that made you unpopular in the area because they saw it as a—?

Wilson: Well, they weren't because they knew me, and they knew what my thoughts were, and that it was wrong. They knew it was wrong too, the way the LP was going, but as they say, "Money talks," and that's the way they felt about it. There were others that were giving me a hard time, sure. I'll tell you, these are nasty times. It's a small town and people's jobs, and they're being used as pawns in this fight over these land-use policies. I'm the devil and they're the angels: "We're providing the jobs. Richard Wilson's a rancher and he has four or five guys, and look at us, with a mill, and we have these jobs." Well, it's true. [They thought I was the Howard Hughes of Covelo.—added during narrator's review.]

Lage: Except that they were taking them to mills out of the area.

Wilson: That didn't matter for a while. Remember, they went through here from 1972, they were out of here in about 1988.

Lage: The mill was shut down.

Wilson: Oh yeah, they hauled it to Mexico. They hauled all the mill, and left it as an environmental—all the toxics were left. They just left it all, walked away. They didn't even clean it up.

Lage: Wow. That's quite a story.

Wilson: That shows you the responsibility. What do they do? Nothing.

Lage: And then how did the community react?

Wilson: I don't know. I can't answer that because any thinking person would see what the outcome of this was, but day to day the money came in. Then when the money didn't come in, a lot of these fallers moved to the Sierras, or they moved somewhere else where there were still trees to cut, and they just adjusted by moving. They moved out, and the ones here either retired or did something, but the jobs were gone; the truck driving was gone; the logging was gone. And it's over. The whole thing just—but while it was going—and they'd complain. They'd complain themselves about—but there still was the check.

The point is that that's why I say we're going to get into this big time at a later time over this working landscape and sustainability, because it's one thing to talk about it; it's another thing to make it work. The economic system is wired in such a manner that you're not encouraging this; you're discouraging it. You can still make money, and you can still work, and you can still grow trees—all of these things can take place. You even can run cattle and do things if you get a discipline in it so it doesn't—

The cattle thing is an example. On the ranch, when I had LP, they had a tenant named Zola Bauer. He was a native, and he was Elmer Bauer's brother. Zola just ran cattle anywhere, everywhere—he had too many cattle. It was like the black plague. I didn't have fences, and there were often times when he trespassed on me from LP lands that he leased. They had more cattle on me than I had on him, and we, for years, had to fight those cattle back. The cost was just unbearable to keep his damn cattle off the ranch, but we could never get—until there was a lawsuit—I mean it took a lawsuit with Matthews. We finally got a fence built, but it was way late in the game, over this issue.

Lage: To get a—?

Wilson: To get a fence between us to keep Bauer's cattle off us. And they knew it; they were, "Let him go."

Lage: So this again was a—?

- Wilson: This is harassment. This is pure harassment, but it's economic because it's pretty expensive. If you've got 100 cows and he's got 200 on you—
- Lage: He's on your grazing land.
- Wilson: My land. Yes, it's open range.
- Lage: This gets complicated.
- Wilson: Oh, it is complicated because it's all part of this internal fight over who's going to run the store, and who's in charge, if you will, and what's the outcome—who gets the money, so to speak. But they've got a lot of tools they can use because they've got lawyers; they've got their foresters; they've got the loggers; they've got the grazing. They can throw everything at you. Harry [Merlo] said, "I'm the king fish. We get rid of that son of a bitch and our problems are over." That was his attitude. So he turned them lose on me. All of them were on me for one way or the other.
- Lage: You had the EIR's?
- Wilson: Yes, it was the environmental constraints. They were the one thing that I could deal with that helped. And I couldn't be run out. There were places where I could interact, and did interact, with my representation that we'll get into in time. On the public-access side, I mean coming out it was pretty much between the citizens' people and the public lands, and whether they were going to be opened, or whether they were going to be opened temporarily, or whatever. That's where that struggle was. And they did. They went right to the mat with each other and fought it out rather intensively.
- Lage: Where have we come to in time on this story now?
- Wilson: What's going to happen is they get the road down here into the basin. We'll get into the logging. We'll get into some of the internal fights between me and them, and Water Quality, and some legal action.
- Lage: That took place in—?
- Wilson: Here. Well, this would start about the eighties, and then it went back on another piece where again we went into court in Trinity County and actually prevailed in court up there. Then, almost about that time, the second wilderness bill, in '84, was coming up, and that was Pete Wilson, and Reagan, and Bosco. Bosco was very helpful. He was playing politics, but I must say in many ways he was pretty good about this issue. It was [James] Watt and it was John Crowell.

Lage: I'm just wondering what—should we finish this story? [tape off, then on]. Okay, we're back on. We were just working on how we're going to proceed here.

Wilson: What's going to happen is that the road building—we call it the Big Butte Road, or the haul road—the Big Butte Road had reached the junction to come into the Henthorne basin.

Lage: Big Butte?

Wilson: Big Butte was the name of the road up top, and Big Butte is one of the landmarks. So when they were coming in here, this also was the beginning of that drought period. I could see what was coming: they were going to do their damndest. The drought was on. We were in trouble with water, and cattle, I mean everything; this was one of those terrible times for just grazing, prices, drought. But these monkeys, they were going to try to come in here, and with all the power of bulldozers, and get in here and get in as fast as they could and out without any weather, because this is fragile stuff in here and they figured, "Well, you know, if we can just get that timber the hell out of there, and get out, then we'll be through with that." So they put Campbell in, and he had D-9s and D-8s, and they began to push and push dirt like you never saw dirt fly.

Lage: You're going to have to tell me what D-9s and D-8s are.

Wilson: A D-9 is the biggest Cat made. The D-8 is right below it. These are the biggest tractors you can buy.

Some of the places they were building were right in absolute landslide areas. There was no question. Of course, in the forest-practice rules and everything, these are the things that you're supposed to be mindful for. You're supposed to engineer them and you're supposed to do something about—well, you're supposed to pack or provide drainage, or something, so they're not slipping out. The whole point—you're trying to protect the watershed in the river.

I knew I was going to have to get legal help here, and Francis Matthews is a good timber attorney. Al Wilkins is a friend of his. He was always called the Moose, and he would take people on, like me, when normally timber attorneys wouldn't, because they all represented the companies and there always was a conflict of interest. So Francis represented me when we got into this.

Well, the public was still on top of these guys over these issues, and there were some fairly sophisticated people on fisheries and everything who also saw some of the things happening. I was on the board now—

Lage: On the Board of Forestry?

Wilson: Yes.

Lage: This also must have put you in a—

Wilson: I was in a terrible position on this. Clyde Wahrhaftig was one of the professors that was on the board at that time. I had Clyde come out here. He came down here with me, and we walked around on this thing. He just shook his head; he said, “This thing’s all screwed up. These roads are going to all fall out. There are just a lot of things going on that shouldn’t go on given the regulations we have.”

Then Water Quality got pulled into it. Herb Joseph was—no, not Herb, Dave Joseph, I think. There’s two of them—Herb’s a fisherman and Dave was head of the regional board in Santa Rosa. He was a buddy of Louisiana-Pacific and Harry Merlo. So there were a whole lot of politics getting mixed up in this thing. I finally had to find somebody as a consultant to help evaluate what’s coming in down here. I couldn’t hire any of the names like Claire Hill, or some of the big companies, because they all had a conflict of interest; they all had worked for LP. Clyde told me, he said, “You better get Don Gray at the University of Michigan because I trained him out here at Cal, and he’s a good hydrologist and geologist. He understands this stuff and he can help you.” So Don did come. He came out and I hired him. He went through this road alignment and he took—he did it site by site, and he wrote a report, and indicated everywhere he felt this thing was going to fall apart if it rained. Now, we were in the drought.

Lage: So they’re building this in the drought, without rain.

Wilson: That’s right, no compaction, and just as fast as they could get in here. Well, in ‘78 the drought broke and it rained. Every single place fell apart that Don Gray—now, the thing that really burned me up about it was that my contract—if there were violations of the contract, I could have voided the contract and thrown them out. But Water Quality had to issue infractions. They had to issue violations. The violations were just so apparent of what was going on in terms of forest-practice rules and stream protection. They were just sitting there on the hillside. Dave Joseph, he wouldn’t let it happen. They weaseled around and they made all kinds of excuses, but they would not issue a violation, because that triggered a breach of contract and they knew, and that was just too much politics, and too much money. The politics were real heavy on the Water Quality Board, at the hearings. Ray Peart was on the board. We were right up against them on this to see if they were going to do anything, and they buckled; they folded the tent and the words were all shmooze, but they would not issue a violation.

Lage: Why couldn’t the Board of Forestry issue a violation?

Wilson: Because they were so in the pocket that they were just not even close to being proactive; they were just too close to the company. They were too close.

- Lage: The whole board?
- Wilson: Well that board, the board—.
- Lage: Now what board—?
- Wilson: This was the Water Quality Control Board.
- Lage: I mean the Board of Forestry.
- Wilson: The Board of Forestry—
- Lage: Why didn't they—?
- Wilson: Well, they could of, but it was over in Water Quality's—it was a Water Quality Board issue, and Forestry had not done any—I think they were—frankly, I think they were just scared to death. [laughter] They had me on the board; this thing all went to hell; their inspector should have picked it up. Their rules were dealing with this very problem, and all they could see was just lawsuits. Because the public—not me so much, but the public would have just sued the living hell out of them on this issue if they could have every gotten—see, anybody—
- Lage: Who do you mean by “public?”
- Wilson: The citizens' groups in Willits and Ukiah that were fighting this road into the wilderness. This was a spur, but it still was part of the drainage; it was part of the Eel River; it was part of the water quality for the fish. Fish and Game was in it. Water Quality [Board] was in it. It became really the first big water-quality issue, before its time in some ways, because the issues were all here, but it was the money and the contract. They all knew that if the violation went, I'd go after the LP to throw them out. That just—even the lawyers were kind of ducking on that one because they just didn't—the politics, they were—
- Lage: Too big.
- Wilson: It was too big.
- Lage: Could you have brought a suit independently, or did you?
- Wilson: We'll get there on another—this one, what I know of it now, and with the consultants—Don was dead right, and Clyde could have been brought in. But then you would have had Clyde and me [laughing] and as members of the Board of Forestry you're involved in here, and you're not supposed to—I mean there's a cut—you understand, it's really sticky stuff. Nevertheless, what I know now, yeah there were violations. Francis was a good lawyer, but

he was a single practitioner and he was trying to protect me from getting too far into these things because they can make it so expensive through depositions. They already had. Once you start with these big firms they'll just kill you [with] time. It's all expenses and then you have to pay the bill. They'll run it, and run it, and run it just like they did on the landslide up here on the PL lands where finally Bill Bertain, the lawyer that represented the homeowners in Humboldt county.

[End Tape 7, Side B]

[Begin Tape 8, Side A]

Wilson: In the case of Bill Bertain, who had represented the homeowners up there on those PL lands, they settled for something way below what the lawsuits for damages and homes lost were. The point he told me, he said, "We could have carried this lawsuit on and it would have gone on for two or three years, and it would have just been more of this cost, cost, cost, to where we finally maybe got there, maybe we wouldn't. So we took it and called it good." They all know, I mean the corporate people know this. That's why they have these law firms and that's what they do: they just run it out.

The only people they can really and truly stand that kind of cost is the government, like they did in the Microsoft case, and you had the Justice Department, because they have the resources and the staying-power. Otherwise they'll break you, just in the process. The stake to me is when you make the corporations individuals, and they have the same rights as an individual, you've really opened the door to this kind of behavior. So I, as an individual, had to be awful careful because I had to be what you'd call a counterpuncher in a division where I was fighting in the heavyweights and I was a light heavyweight. I had to be careful that I didn't get my head knocked off completely. I took my licks and then ran like hell. If you read George Washington in his fight in the Revolutionary War, that's what he did; he retreated more and lost than he won, but he at least had the brains to run when he needed to and not lose his army. [laughing]

Lage: That's a good analogy.

Wilson: It's true. That's exactly what he did. It's just the way it is. You can't—they'll just kill you, the costs.

Lage: I can see. You must have dug deep into your pockets.

Wilson: It's terrible. Oh, it was terrible. So anyway, when that happened they got in here, and they got the timber. They were taking 250,000 [board feet] out a day. Imagine, that's 5000-plus board feet on a truck. That's fifty trucks a day going out of here to Covelo! This was like a war zone. This sounded like Vietnam: whistles, and bulldozers, and trees going down. It starts at four

o'clock in the morning. You just couldn't believe it. Well, they got in and they got out of here.

Lage: That's not what you had in mind when you signed that contract.

Wilson: It was not what that contract said, nor was it the intent. I kept telling Francis, I said, "This isn't what I—." In those days, nobody put a stream-protection zone in, and nobody put—there was a conservation clause; you'd practice conservation. It seemed to me that the intent was right. See, if I had been able to invalidate the contract, I wouldn't have invalidated stopping the sale; I would have controlled the logger, and I would have put the control of the logger under my supervision, and then we would have stopped all this stuff.

Lage: You did have that in your contract that—

Wilson: Well, it could have been interpreted that way, I think it was fair to say. And if I had that, then it would have looked a lot different had it been done. Water Quality came in, and on the very steep slopes they made them bring in that big sky-crane helicopter, which is that big one that looks like a grasshopper and it lifts logs. It's huge—they lost two engines on that thing. They didn't crash, but they lost two engines. They spent, I don't know, they spent so damn much money trying to get in and out of here in a hurry, with equipment and two helicopter engines, I don't know whether they made any money on it. They probably lost money. That was okay with Harry. He was so mad, it didn't—if there was a nickel on the table that I was going to get, he was going to spend a dollar to make damn sure I didn't get it, and make sure I paid for all his trouble.

Lage: You and Harry, this became a personal issue.

Wilson: Oh, it was! Listen, I met Harry Merlo when he first went to work for Georgia-Pacific. We had a priest in Covelo, Father Quinlan. He was the Capuchin of that order, kind of a monk order. He had known Harry in these younger days. Harry had gotten a divorce and wanted to have his next son, of his second wife, baptized in the Catholic church. Harry asked him to meet him in the airport in San Francisco. Padre asked us to come down. So it was Harry, and me, Susan, and Father Quinlan. Harry, me, and Susan in the San Francisco airport. Harry was pitching it pretty hard to get this thing fixed. My wife said to me after that meeting, she said, "I don't like that man." [laughter]

Lage: Why did you and Father Quinlan and your wife meet him?

Wilson: I don't know. It was just one of those deals where we wound up at the same table. I don't actually remember all that. [I think Father Quinlan set it up.]

Lage: That's fascinating.

- Wilson: Maybe you ought to meet Harry or something. Well, I'll tell you what, from my point of view he was the wrong man, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, and everything. He was hells-bent to make all the money he could and become the biggest lumber company in the United States, which he became. Weyerhaeuser was bigger but it was international. He bought everything and he just raised hell with his employees. He was Man of the Year in the Forbes—I remember I got the article—Forbes Lumber, because he made the most money for clearcutting the Redwood Park and selling it to the public. I think that was the essence of why he made—
- Lage: So he was the one clearcutting the Redwood Park, which was going on simultaneously?
- Wilson: Yes. He was.
- Lage: I knew he had a familiar name.
- Wilson: Stop this just one minute. [tape off, then on] Well, I think that all we've done is reviewed the fact that Louisiana-Pacific cut every corner; they had the drought in their favor. They thought they could get in and out. They got caught, and it rained. Their engineering and their slope failures were multifaceted all up and down this basin coming in. They were called on it by my geologist, Don Gray, and then Clyde Wahrhaftig came out and looked at it, who was on the Board of Forestry. The net of it is that Water Quality [Board] described these as measures that needed mitigation, and they could be fixed, and they said the road had to be taken out and realigned for my access in here, but it was all busy work. The point was that LP was able to get in and get out with very little cost.
- Lage: And you were describing the truck loads of lumber.
- Wilson: That they were hauling out, yes. They were hauling 250,000 [board feet] a day. That's fifty loads at about 5000 a truck, to Covelo, two trips a day. Then after they finished here, they went back on what is the Brown Ranch that I own. There's some open-rangeland country we call the Bake Oven and the Script. It's open grassland that lays south-face, and it's got some incredibly unstable ground in it. It's very sensitive. Well Smith and Thompson, the two foresters, built a road to get to some timber right through the middle of this. I had Gray look at it, and I told Matthews, the lawyer. I said, "Look, this is a simple lawsuit." He said, "I can win this one for you." So we went to Superior Court; we went to trial; we went through depositions; we went through the whole rigamarole.
- Lage: This is about '79?

- Wilson: Yes, '80, right about then. Again, Judge Underwood, he was not going to lower the boom on LP like he could have, but we did win, and in the mitigation—
- Lage: You did win?
- Wilson: We won the case on the road. They had to realign the road and move it, so they couldn't go through that land. They could have done it originally. We got that straightened out. They also had to build a fence for me between the Bar Z all the way to the head of the creek to stop the Bauer cattle. Matthew said, "We can't get any money out of them, but we can get that." I said, "Something's better than nothing."
- Lage: Did they have to pay your attorney's fees?
- Wilson: Nope. It's just a rotten business. I've got to tell you, it's a rotten business.
- Lage: And Judge Underwood, where did this take place?
- Wilson: Weaverville. You know, he's in the timber country. These guys are all political too. When I was the director of Forestry I wound up giving him and his family sort of a forestry award for planting trees on their property. I thought, "Guys!" [laughing] Make the best of it. Kind of a turnaround there.
- Lage: So this isn't the end of the story.
- Wilson: The end of the story would be that after that suit LP was pretty well finished in terms of cutting, and they were on their way—this was the beginning of the end of Louisiana-Pacific as a lumber company in California, but—
- Lage: Did they just cutover their lands?
- Wilson: Well, they never got out here to where they wanted to go, into the Shasta-Trinity. The Forest Service had stopped putting up sales. Their lands are so cutover that most of their lands are close to a hundred years out now from becoming merchantable again. They have a lot of small trees, but they're not merchantable trees. And they've got a lot of brush and a lot of other things, so they were done.

The problem I had is that we couldn't close the contract until we—it said we had to survey the roads to determine which roads stayed permanent, and what they had access to and what they didn't. Because they had access to my lands only—they can only go in and cut trees on those Crawford lands [where] they bought the timber, but they can't hunt; they can't build anything. They have absolutely no other rights for access except to go in and cut timber. Well, they've cut all the timber, so they really don't have anything left to keep them interested in what's out there. They don't spend any money in replanting.

They've managed to close out their contracts with enough stocking, even though it was pretty sad to get out. All they wanted to do was just go and leave, but we had to re-survey these lands. Hell, I mean Merlo—first of all, Merlo got fired as the head of the company, finally. He got into so many lawsuits in Colorado and different places, Louisiana, and different places, that they finally decided, you know, he was more of a liability than an asset.

Lage: Because of this same type of behavior?

Wilson: Yes, exactly. Also they brought in a man from, I think, a paper company to run it. They tried to do something with the lands they had here, but it became pretty evident that they didn't have enough to sustain. So all of their lands went up for sale. The coastal lands, which are close to 300,000 acres, were bought by Mendocino Redwood Company, which is the family that owns the Gap—the Fisher family. The inland lands around me, including the Crawford lands, were picked up by something called Empire Redwood Company out of Cloverdale, I guess—I'm not sure. They bought the Bar Z and these other lands. So LP is completely out of here in California. They made a run at going to Mexico to ship—before Harry got fired—ship redwood down there, mill it, and bring it back on barges. That was another failure, so that was the end of LP, but the mill and all the equipment went out. So we have a toxic-waste site of the old LP mill left in Covelo, and that's the remnant of Louisiana-Pacific. [Harry had logged to infinity and got fired!!—added during narrator's review.]

Lage: That's their legacy.

Wilson: That's their legacy. Everything's cutover. They cut everything, so there's going to be nothing for—as I say, inland, it's going to be probably sixty, eighty, a hundred years depending on the site-class of the land. On the coast it will be better, because redwood comes back faster, and they might be able to do quite a bit better over there on a shorter time frame.

Lage: Does this link to the wilderness story then?

Wilson: It does link to the wilderness story in that when this—finally, when the wilderness bill came up, the big battle was over where that boundary was going to be: is the road inside or outside? Of course they wanted it outside.

Lage: The wilderness people did?

Wilson: No, the company did, because if it was outside they could keep pushing to get it opened up somehow. That was interesting because that issue came up just—you see, there's a couple other characters involved: James Watt was Secretary of the Interior; and John Crowell, who was the attorney for Harry in Louisiana-Pacific and [in] the Reagan administration went as the assistant secretary for Natural Resources, who has charge of the Forest Service.

- Lage: So he was there, in [the Department of] Agriculture?
- Wilson: He was in Agriculture.
- Lage: He had been with LP?
- Wilson: He had been with LP, and he had been the lawyer that tried to stop me from going on the Board of Forestry. He was another piece of work. Well, those two guys were in the catbird seat on that alignment of that road, and I thought maybe I was really in trouble on that one because those two guys were going to damn well see Reagan got the road outside the wilderness boundary. But something happened: James Watt shot off his mouth about Jews and blacks, and got canned. Bill Clark—who was a good friend of Ike’s and was the appointment secretary, and then I think he worked up maybe to the Supreme Court of California and was back in Washington—became the Interior Secretary. I had some access through Ike [Livermore] and got word about Trinity County, and they didn’t want a road, and we didn’t want pot growers, and on, and on, and on. So the long and short of it: the road went in the wilderness.
- Lage: Wow, so Watt’s indiscretions had an affect.
- Wilson: Part of it. And Crowell was losing his standing too, and eventually left.
- Lage: Reagan didn’t put in the same type of resources people in Washington as he did in California.
- Wilson: No, he did not. That’s right, the money was talking louder back in Washington. It shows you just how fine a line you can get into and the personalities involved.
- Lage: So did you lobby Bill Clark through Ike Livermore?
- Wilson: Oh yes, and others. Yes, I did. Bill Clark’s family all comes from Ojai. He lives in San Luis [Obispo], now. The Twisselmans are all friends of his, so we had some access to him and talked to him about it.
- Lage: It’s nice to have this network of people who know people.
- Wilson: You have to. Otherwise you just do lawyers and spend literally millions of dollars doing this stuff and it never stops. That’s one of the things that’s very clear, is that—and that’s one reason I’ve had to stay with one foot in a political setting, if you will. I couldn’t just come here [to the ranch], because I have to be able to talk to people, and they have to know who I am. You have to do that, otherwise they wipe you out. You can’t rely on lawyers. You have to have them. It’s just the way of the—this big corporate stuff and the way they do everything, and it’s all might is right and we’re going to do what we

want. If anybody gets in our way, take them out. It's the cost of doing business, so therefore just spend the money you need to take care of the matter. Boom! That's what it's about.

Lage: But you can't rely in the government agencies either, you have to—

Wilson: That's my problem. The trouble is, the government agencies weren't doing their job. If they'd had done their job we would have stopped this stuff dead in the tracks, but there was too much politics. That's the trouble is that the science is one thing; the politics, and the campaign contributions, and all that's the other. It's always that big money stuff that gets mixed up.

Lage: I'm thinking we should focus on one more thought here on Harry Merlo.

Wilson: Harry Merlo's famous quote is, "We log to infinity."

Lage: What a characteristic! He didn't have a sense of the watershed—

Wilson: No, no, no. Harry only understood money and Harry. Whether he was chopping trees, or chasing kangaroos, or whatever it was, it would have been all the same. He wanted it the most; he wanted it all; and he wanted it all on his terms, and that's it.

Lage: Which is probably not anything new when you think of the history of forestry in this county.

Wilson: No, no. I don't think it's new, it's just his personality was so blatant. He chased the women; he ran after the money; he was the high roller and eventually he lost. But in the process he created a lot of problems.

Lage: Did he get the priest to—?

Wilson: You know, I don't honestly know whether that ever turned out for him or not. The boy, he lives in Potter or Redwood Valley, and I think raises grapes or something, and I honestly don't know.

Lage: Interesting.

[End Tape 8, Side B]

**Interview #5: April 28, 2002**  
**[Begin Tape 9, Side A]**

- Wilson: Okay. Let's test out and see how we're doing on Sunday.
- Lage: You know what's really loud?
- Wilson: The fire, and the snapping of the sparks. [Tape interruption] April 28th, 2002, at Buck Mountain.
- Lage: Buck Mountain's about a five-hour drive.
- Wilson: It's at 3000 feet elevation and about a four and a half, five-hour drive from the Bay Area.
- Lage: And this is where you were living when you were doing the work with the Planning and Conservation League. Is that right?
- Wilson: Well, this is the ranch, yes, but I lived in the [Round] Valley. We moved to the valley from here because I had to farm and do a number of things there. The boys and Marjo were raised here. We were here in the '64 flood, and all of the bridges went out, and they were sick, and it was quite a time we had. We pulled together. And I took them out. We had to build a bridge to get out across the bridge you crossed [coming in today]. Then it snowed two and a half, three feet, right after I got them out. It was quite a storm and a memorable time. And of course they talk about it as being the 100-year flood, but I suspect it was more like a 1000-year flood because it was so big, we did not have anything comparable to it before or since, and there's no record that shows anything like that. But anyway—.
- Lage: So is that when you decided to move to the valley?
- Wilson: We were already started. I had bought some property down there, so we were going to move down there. That's a little backward. We were still here until we got situated then down there.
- Lage: What struck me as we made our journey today, you were so far from the center of activity in California, and yet you got very involved through the Planning and Conservation League—.
- Wilson: Yes.
- Lage: In California planning—.
- Wilson: It seems like you do a lot of driving when you live out here. There was always a lot of driving involved.

Lage: That was the first question—how you got hooked up with the Planning and Conservation League.

Wilson: Well, okay. When I was working on Dos Rios and was really trying to get a grip on that whole thing, I went to California Tomorrow, because I was aware particularly of their publications. And Alf Heller and Sam Woods were the principals down there, and they talked about this thing. I didn't have to sell them on Dos Rios. And Sam Woods said—or Alf, both—they said, “Why don't you see Lew Butler?” because he just had come back from working in the Peace Corps, and he and Pete McCloskey were law partners together; at least, he and Lew had worked together, and so I just ran in—he was, I believe, in the Mills Building in San Francisco—and I ran in and I told him, I said, “Lew, this is what they are proposing to do.” And he, having been a lawyer with Pillsbury, Madison & Sutro and done the Peace Corps, was pretty much aware of what went on in California. He was interested and certainly supportive and indicated a willingness to help.

So Lewis, starting with him, and with the help of another man named Curtis Roberts, who worked for a lot of people, Alioto, and different people in the Democratic Party. He did a lot of work on bond initiatives and everything, but he was a fisherman. I went to see him cold; I just went in one day and told him what this was about, and he came up here to the ranch and saw the valley and everything, and he got kind of interested in this whole thing. So those two were really the cornerstones of this. And then—.

Lage: Were they involved in the Planning and Conservation League?

Wilson: Well, Lewis, yes. Now, the Planning and Conservation League [PCL] had really started under the aegis of Helen Reynolds. And then it grew up. Then it was being run—. Lewis kind of had it. This was just about the time when Dos Rios was winding up, and Nixon had gotten elected, and Bob Finch had asked Lewis to go back to Health, Education and Welfare as one of his assistant secretaries, which was a big to-do. And he asked me, he said, “Well, if you'd be willing to take over the PCL—.” At that time it was in San Francisco, and it ran out of a little office, and it was centered in the Bay Area. It was really a San Francisco operation.

Lage: A small operation.

Wilson: Very small, very small. And so I said I would do that. So it was from that point that I finally took it—. After Dos Rios, I had met some people in Sacramento—Jud [Judson] Clark and Bill [R. William] Hauck—these were all CORO people. People who had gone to the CORO—.

Lage: CORO?

- Wilson: Bill was the head of the Office of Planning and Research for the Assembly under Bob [Robert] Moretti, and Jud was working for California Journal.
- Lage: What was Bill's last name?
- Wilson: Hauck [spells it]. Bill and Jud—there was a whole group of us, and a whole bunch of CORO people. And as soon as Dos Rios was over, in just one year, we tried to get the wild rivers bill proposed, because we knew that Ronald Reagan's decision was a good decision. It was kind of a ten-year and "we'll see where we are," and it had left some daylight for these people. And if there is any kind of daylight, these engineers would never stop trying to build dams, even that. [laughter].
- And then when we got into this, it became readily apparent to me that we'd better be in Sacramento.
- Lage: You'd better have the league in Sacramento.
- Wilson: We'd better be in Sacramento with the office, so John Zierold worked for the Planning and Conservation League.
- Lage: Is that when John Zierold came on?
- Wilson: No, he was working for them.
- Lage: Oh, he was already working for PCL.
- Wilson: We moved the office, and we kind of reorganized our staff and offices. We had to be a little more aggressive in our fundraising. The number of people who came on—Joan Reiss, Dan Frost up in Redding—now I can't remember all the people. I tried really hard to get it a little more balanced, to give it more of a statewide look. It wasn't just San Francisco or Los Angeles.
- Lage: Organizations were members, as I understand it. Weren't organizations also members of it?
- Wilson: Organizations were members too, yes. And so, with that, and with the large membership, there were a lot of things in ferment. There was more fervor and interest at this time, and more people interested in these issues than probably any time since that particular time.
- Lage: Yes, it really was.
- Wilson: So I had different people. We had a pretty good group of people working.
- Lage: Were you the president?

Wilson: I was the president.

Lage: And was there an executive director?

Wilson: Well, there was, and eventually Zierold left, but eventually Bill Press came on in Wild Rivers. He came over as executive director, because John—. I had a hard time working with John [Zierold] because John had pretty much run it out of the back of his hip pocket. He never knew where anything was or what the accounts were. It was just a one-man show. John had done a lot in his own right, but I just felt that the issues were getting so big, we had to have some kind of form and structure. We were having some problems balancing the books. So we sort of—. Noreen left and we went to Sacramento, and we got—Hope Tuttle came over, her son worked for a senator with the legislature, and she was pretty good. It got a little more businesslike and a little more professionally like a business, and how they would operate, and publications as well as finances.

And then Bill came over. Bill Press came on as executive—. And we had to run the wild rivers bill twice [through the legislature], and we were having trouble getting that vote the first go-around. But we did get it in the second round. And we had a very talented group of people. The Clarks and the Haucks and this network of—.

Lage: Did they act as lobbyists?

Wilson: Well, we were a lobby, yes. It was a real good operation. I mean, they had other things, but they helped me with this operation, and then some other things, so we had a rather striking group of people. And at this time, they were kind of engaged too. It was something that they all felt strongly about, so that they wanted to participate. A lot of it was pro bono, too, because there wasn't much money for salaries. But we did get some help from some other people periodically.

Lage: How was it funded?

Wilson: Contributions, memberships, or corporate people gave some money, and we did fairly well. What we raised was significant enough to retain the lobbyists, retain the office; I mean, it was always a struggle, but we were a far cry from what we had been, and we were getting some results.

Lage: Did you spend a lot of time there in Sacramento? Or was it telephone?

Wilson: Lot of telephone work. A lot of telephone work, yes. I had to go down when I wanted to, but yes. As we got better people, somethings could be delegated—. And I stayed on. Well, Bill left, and when the Brown Administration came on—Jerry Brown—they all went over to the Office of Planning and Research, and then we had—I'm just trying to [tries to remember]—. There was a guy

from Los Angeles that was—. Hirsch. Dave Hirsch. He took it on, and he was a good man.

Lage: Dave Hirsch.

Wilson: And that gave me a chance to kind of back out. We did set up the Planning and Conservation Foundation as a vehicle to raise money because they didn't have a 501C3, so I did do that.

Lage: It's still going.

Wilson: Yes, it's still going.

Lage: Could we back up a minute and talk about coastal legislation?

Wilson: Yes.

Lage: Or is there more you want to cover before we get to that?

Wilson: No. As you know, Pete Wilson was one of the people, when he was mayor of San Diego, who was a proponent of the coastal effort to try to do something.

Lage: And I think when he was an assemblyman he had something—.

Wilson: I'm sorry, Yes, as assembly member, he was a proponent. In fact, I first met him at California Tomorrow, and he was a strong advocate of coastal protection. That's correct. And so, he used to come to our meetings, and he showed lot of awareness about the issues, so he was a really good person. But, for all the political work, as you know, for all the political work, still, when push came to shove, we weren't able to really get the job done, and that's when the initiative process started.

Lage: They just couldn't get it through the legislature.

Wilson: Well, you know, we'll come back to this, but the interesting thing that you probably know about, this decision in Tahoe by the Supreme Court.

Lage: Just recently?

Wilson: It was a huge decision. It was absolutely—. Because, in those days, the property rights argument was a big issue, and there were a lot of people on all sides who were very skittish about this property rights thing, and about the taking issue, and about the regulatory committee, and so you were always kind of up against that point, that part of our constitution. And it was playing a big, big part of—. And we were getting into some detail because this may be the guts of the whole discussion. But it was really hard to draw some lines, and I think that the legislature was not able to deal with this in terms of what

had to be done because of the impact on the California coastline, because it was just people in development. And because it's so visual, because that coastline is so visual, people like Janet Adams and people—yes, a woman named Ellen Stern Harris, of course, still works at it, God bless her.

Lage: Who was that?

Wilson: Ellen Stern Harris.

Lage: Oh, yes.

Wilson: She still's wagging away down there.

Lage: Yes, she was on the first commission, wasn't she?

Wilson: Oh, yes. She and I worked together.

Lage: I think I heard that she was the one who actually had the idea to make it an initiative. Is that right?

Wilson: Well, not quite.

Lage: Do you remember how that idea generated?

Wilson: Well, it came out of a, well, a host of people. There was a host of people. Janet Adams, there was a fellow at Rand. It came out of, as these things do, out of several—. There had been several years effort at doing something with the legislature. And it just couldn't come to closure in the legislature for political reasons. The takings, the money men, the lobby. And so, when the initiative came up, the initiative kind of really focused on something. We could get the public engaged because it was the coastline, as opposed to trying to get them on farmlands and mountains, even Tahoe was still up there. But the coastline caught. I mean, it was the right time. There was a high level of awareness, and there were some very good advocates in the legislature, but not enough to carry in the legislature. And so the initiative passed.

And the way I got into it was because I had worked with the PCL, and Moretti and these guys that I had worked with asked me if I would go on the Coastal Commission, and I thought, well, yes, maybe I will do that, because I was kind of winding down on PCL things. I don't like to do things for much more than four years. I have, but I somehow feel, to maintain a level of intensity, if you work hard for four years at some of this, that it doesn't drain on and on; it just doesn't happen. Oh, Alan Sieroty, he was another one. He was an advocate of the coastal protection. He was actually carried the bills and developed a lot of the principles. And Ellen, she was a real—.

Lage: And what about Janet Adams? She seems like an interesting case.

- Wilson: Janet Adams was another one. Janet worked her tail off on this stuff.
- Lage: Were there philosophical difference along the way between yourself and these other people?
- Wilson: I mean, there's always these tensions as to what the acts should be, and all of that, but generally speaking, I think, this one was a big enough issue that the consensus was that we had an initiative. And the best way would be the commission, get these regional commissions, set it up, with the powers, go ahead—. I mean, this was so new, it was really an experiment that nobody really quite knew how to do it. The fortuitous thing about it is they wound up with Mel [Melvin B. Lane] and Joe [Joseph E. Bodovitz].
- Lage: Yes.
- Wilson: Because Mel and Joe had worked together [at the Bay Conservation and Development Commission, BCDC], and both of them in their own ways were just perfectly tailored for this kind of a job. They really worked together; they really understood the state; they really understood the politics, and they really understood the people.
- Lage: And they'd done the BCDC.
- Wilson: That's it. They'd done the BCDC, which was like having a nice little warm-up before the big jolt.
- Lage: [Laughter] Right.
- Wilson: And that's what they did. They got a pretty good warm-up at BCDC, and it was the logical thing to—. Because I mean, BCDC had a shoreline and it had the interest, and you had kind of all the players tuned in an intense way. They were all there, and it gave them a pretty good insight. As to: "Okay, you know, now we're going 1100 miles of California coastline, so we've got more players and more people, and you've got to administer this thing." Joe, you know, Joe's as good as they get. There's nobody better than Joe in keeping a bunch of wild people, or chickens, whatever the things he's trying to run together, because [laughter]—.
- Lage: Are you referring to the commission now?
- Wilson: No, that's about Joe.
- Lage: Who were the wild chickens?
- Wilson: I mean, that commission had all kinds of people. I mean they were pretty—. You got a pretty, wiggling together—. And this was an act that was made up of many characters.

- Lage: Oh, I didn't realize—.
- Wilson: Oh, God. I mean you had Bob Mendelsohn and Roger Osenbaugh, and we had Ellen Stern Harris. I mean, these were all the people of high spirits and opinions.
- Lage: All different?
- Wilson: Oh, yes. Strong, different.
- Lage: Well, don't be afraid to characterize some of them as we go along.
- Wilson: We'll do that. Ira Laufer and then Jim [James] Hayes, who was right out of the middle of Los Angeles, supervisorial ranks. And Joe had to get the state commission up and running. And I just can't imagine the time he put in just figuring out—. And he got some good help admittedly, believe me, but trying to get this thing focused, and get going. You see, immediately, he ran right into people like this big developer down in San Diego that wanted to build hotels, and the commissioner's telling him, "No, you can't do it." Developers had never been faced with this. And of course, everybody was going to court. Everybody was going to sue over this property rights thing. And of course, what came out of all of this was this great word, mitigation.
- Lage: Mitigation?
- Wilson: Mitigation. And we got, "Well, if you're going to do this, you're going to have to make it more palatable to the public and to the act, and everything." So we got these creative characters on that staff, like [Don] Neuwirth, and Boyd, I mean, they were just smart. They were good and smart. But they were always whittling away at these guys, just driving them crazy, the developers, and try to make—. Everybody learned kind of how you came in with way more than you want because you knew you were going to get sliced, and so it was back and forth, and of course, big things like Exxon and PG&E, and some of these developments on the hotels. I mean, they were huge developments.
- Lage: And they just had free range before? Just buy up the land and build.
- Wilson: Pretty much, from local governments. You see, to this day, local government has always looked at these things as the way to get their revenues up because they needed money. And so was clearly the best way to do it, because you would get this hotel, and it's very lucrative. And they—at least they thought, they were cutting a good deal by getting these projects. Well, as you know, it's not always the way it works. In those days, that was the name of the game in California. The California coastline was primo in terms of potential sites. This was a boom time, and people had money. We had these ups and downs, but this was about the fastest game in the country. A lot of big political wheelers and dealers, and everybody. I've got to tell you that looking back on

it, if it hadn't have been for Mel and Joe, I don't know. We might have made it, but it would have been a hard—because you get these people. You get a Roger Osenbaugh who's an advocate for the developers.

Lage: Osenbaugh.

Wilson: He was really a developer guy.

Lage: How did he get appointed?

Wilson: By the governor—Reagan. And then you had people like Fred Farr, and Fred was one of my oldest friends for years, and he was always, “Quick, we've got to go down. We've got to have a meeting. We've got to get some people together and have a meeting.” I mean, Fred loved meetings. [Laughter] My God, the thing you did learn about the Coastal Commission is that's all you did is go to meetings. And I'll tell you, there were some meetings where we sat there until three o'clock in the morning trying to [stay] awake. Everybody was asleep.

Lage: Were these public meetings?

Wilson: They were public meetings and they just went on. These were the early days those, because they were pretty rough. But anyway, Fred—.

Lage: So Fred liked the meetings.

Wilson: Well, there's something about Fred the way he was—meetings were his life. He was like—“We'll just have another meeting.”

Lage: Developers I wouldn't think would like meetings.

Wilson: No, they don't like meetings [Laughter]. They like to get it done, move on.

Lage: Right.

Wilson: And then we had Ellen [Harris]. Ellen was Ellen. She stuck out as absolutely an individual bent to protect the public interest. She was a consumer advocate. She wanted everything out in the open. She was a very strong advocate.

Lage: Now, she was from Beverly Hills.

Wilson: She was from Beverly Hills.

Lage: Was she Republican or Democrat?

Wilson: Well, Democrat. Yes, Democrat. Well, we had Osenbaugh, a Republican, Barney [Barnard] Ritter, of the Ritter Press, and Barney was a good, solid

guy, who struggled mightily over these things, but he was a Republican, and then you had Jeff [Jeffrey] Frautschy. Jeff was from the Scripps Institute in La Jolla, and he was more of a science guy, but he was a good, solid citizen. And some of the originals, I think—. Bob Mendelsohn, he was an original; I mean, look out!

Lage: Oh, was he?

Wilson: Joe was constantly trying to figure out where Mendelsohn was.

Lage: Even in dealing with the developers?

Wilson: Well, yeah, you bet. Wheeling and dealing. [laughs]

Lage: And he was a San Francisco supervisor.

Wilson: Yeah, right. And I don't know whether Jim [James] Hayes was up there, but Jim Hayes—.

Lage: I have Jim Hayes in the list of the beginning commissioners.

Wilson: Jim Hayes was always for local government. "Our problem is just to get it done. Let the next generation worry about the problems. Let's just adopt it and let's go. And if there are problems, let the next generation worry about it." That was his view. It was "get the approval and let's go." And then we had—.

Lage: Dwight May.

Wilson: That's a little later.

Lage: Oh, I had Dwight May listed as an original member of the coastal commission.

Wilson: Yes, under the regions. The regions. Because some of them moved from region to the state.

Lage: Okay.

Wilson: Let me think who it was. It was Ellen, Fred, Barney Ritter and Roger Osenbaugh and Mel Lane. Somebody from the assembly that worked here. And Frautschy, Ira Laufer. Well, Ira wasn't up there at first, but he came around soon. Oh, and Rim [Rimmon] Fay. Of course, Rim didn't come up either right away. He came up from the regions, I think He wasn't an original. He was a guy fascinated by marine sea life.

Lage: I have Philip Harry.

Wilson: Yeah, Phil Harry.

Lage: He was from Santa Cruz.

Wilson: Phil Harry was from Santa Cruz. You see, the trouble is with those regions. In any event, the long and the short of the commission was, it was a pretty—. I'll tell you, whatever their political stripes were, they did have a pretty good grasp of California and whatever, and so they weren't educated people that had come from somewhere else or because of the contribution to somebody, they got appointed to this thing. They were pretty knowledgeable about the geography and where the wetlands were, where the growth was, and what the issues were, and so that with that work, and with the kind of permitting that was being done, I kind of think it was one of those things where you just want to get the characters, like Mel and Joe, and the timing. Because the timing was equally important; this was not something everybody was planning all the time. The public knew.

Lage: Even though it was restricting property rights?

Wilson: That's right, but this was done through this regulatory process and this mitigation, and of course the mitigation is what got out of control.

Lage: Mitigation or litigation?

Wilson: Oh well, both. We were always in one or the other. But the mitigation—. We had some guy—Charlie Friedberg from Pat Brown's office in Beverly Hills—he was always representing some big somebody on the coast, who wanted a great big house—.

[End Tape 9, Side A]

[Begin Tape 9, Side B]

Wilson: —a lawyer for one of the principals who wanted to build a great, big house in front of another person who had a great, big house down there in San Diego, or somewhere down there, and he was up trying to tell the commission that “This poor guy. It's like low income housing. My client can't see, because this guy's gonna put this house up, and he's gonna ruin his view.” [Laughter] I mean, it was a most bizarre hearing, because of both of them, both had built houses, all million dollar houses, but they were locked in this battle about who was going to have a view, and could you build a house that stopped this other person's view.

Lage: And this came all the way up to the statewide commission?

Wilson: Oh, yes. Absolutely. It came from the region and then it got kicked up. The regions—the theory was that you were going to get a local coastal plan put

together, and you were going to do this in the first four years. It was my opinion at the time that we got a plan done in the four years. The question is what do you do for the next act? In other words, are you going to go on with the same commission? Because this is where you are going to get new people. You were going to get Naomi Schwartz, you're going to get Judy Rosener Brad Lundborg. Brad became the chairman, and there was some talk about that I'd be made chairman.

Lage: Did Mel Lane leave after the four years?

Wilson: Yes.

Lage: After the act was made permanent?

Wilson: Yes. But the problem was—my take at that point, and I still kind of feel this way, was that the work that had been done by the first commission had been completed. We'd pretty well covered the coastline; we'd got the plans together that were going to have to be implemented. But the structure was there. It was there. What I personally would have opted for was a smaller, traditional board of maybe five members, or something, as a successor, but their job was to implement that plan, the first plan. We didn't do that. We jumped over and continued the commission. We got to fix this. We're going to change this and possibly start over reworking the first commission's work.

Lage: People decided to modify the plan.

Wilson: Well, they wanted to change things. They felt not enough had been done here and there. So, what you did is you—. I mean, there is some merit too: you have the initiative, you work the troops for a good four years, with a lot of effort, and you do the job. You say, "Okay, here it is." Then after the job, part of that is then implementing that, because that's pretty hard. Having implemented that, instead of rejuvenating another commission with another chair, with a host of all new commissioners, it was almost like starting from scratch. I think it would have been more effective if we had taken it and done the work on the first go-round because it strung it out, things were slowly finished, local government was dragging its feet, and I think it's lost a lot of what might have been some of the good, strong things that might have been put in place, and that was it. Finished.

Lage: Was that the impression you had when you—?

Wilson: I had that impression.

Lage: The plan was made; it went to the legislature for adoption.

Wilson: Well, yes. I wanted, as I said, I would have opted for a smaller commission, to take that work and do it. Use a smaller commission to implement the first

commission's work. But that is not the way it went. It was reborn [laughter]; it was built again.

Lage: New appointees, new governor?

Wilson: Yes, that was the chair. Yes, it was a rebirth. You know, it would be fascinating to talk to Joe about this because I haven't really followed up on this with him.

Lage: He stayed on as executive director.

Wilson: Well, yes, for a while, then he left. I mean, he didn't stay too long, but that was—. When you think about all the work and all the traveling and all the regions and all the—. Well, you know how this works. I mean, it's something that—. It's sort of your life. You work with people; you're used to kind of getting in the rhythm of things, and then I don't know. They go and do something and you start all over again. But there is something very different that happens. It just does. So if you've got them together, you've got the thing in hand, and here it is now; take it—. [Laughter]

Lage: It would be hard enough just to implement it.

Wilson: Yes, exactly. I mean, just looking at it, it was a big enough job. That's what I thought, and I thought, well, if I stayed, I would take this and try to implement that, or something smaller. But there's a lot of people that didn't want to do that.

Lage: So what actually happened? They started reconsidering questions of the plan?

Wilson: Yes, and they strung it out. They strung it out.

Lage: Were they making it more regulatory?

Wilson: It's more regulatory. For instance, one of the things that was very badly handled was this mitigation work. If you ever wanted to build a house, you had to give somebody a right-of-way through the backyard or through the bathroom or something [laughter], and so—. And that was not the intent. The intent was to secure access to the coast at those appropriate places that you could turn over to the local government. I told them this. I quit telling them because nobody wanted to talk about it anymore, but the staff wanted to do it. If you want to build a house, you give public access; that was an immediate quid pro quo. That's it. Well, you know, there's some—. The courts ruled many times that this was ridiculous, and you had to clean all this stuff up, because the local government couldn't take it over. But see, that's an example of where they pretty well designated where we had to get the public to the coast and the rights, that sort of thing, as you know.

Once you put a lot of money—. Putting it on a piece of paper is one thing, but then doing that is a whole other gig. It's a political process; you've got to push it through. So he [Lane] was a quiet starter, then: "God damn it, let's do it."  
[laughter]

Lage: I thought that's the way it went, that the legislature endorsed that plan?

Wilson: Well, but it was a new commission. They were constantly tinkering around with this process.

Lage: I see.

Wilson: And on and on and on. I am the type—.

Lage: You sound like you got a little frustrated.

Wilson: I did. I left the ocean and went to the trees. [Laughter] That's exactly what I did; I just went out. "I'm getting out of here."

Lage: What was your role in the coastal planning? Was this mainly done by the local regional—.

Wilson: Well, they brought up a lot of the local issues, but our job was basically to lay those areas out that we felt had to be protected or preserved, or whatever had to be done. All those wetlands down in Southern California, near San Diego and Huntington Beach, all that stuff, a lot of this coastal shelf that was good agricultural land. I was the only one who had any idea about agriculture.

Lage: Well, tell me more about that, because that was an issue—.

Wilson: Well, like the Hearst mansion. They were making some real outrageous demands on the Hearst ranch, and I said, "Look, you know, the Hearst ranch is almost—. I trust the way it's being run, so you don't have to drive some kind of regulatory things down their throat to make it unbearable. I mean, just back up a little bit." They got in the big truck; they wanted to put a watering trough on a coastal zone for a bunch of cows. It got pretty nitty-picky.

Lage: This wasn't a question of developing the Hearst ranch?

Wilson: No, no. That is later. It's just the power—people taken by the power. The point is if you wanted to do something in the coastal zone, that anybody thought you have to have a permit. There was always somebody who would say, "You didn't get a permit; I'm going to take you to the Coastal Commission." So you didn't go to court; you went to the commissioner of the region. They were dragging people back and forth from the region to the state commission, and on and on and on. I think it probably took them—. They got sick of it. It was harder to get staff. I don't know would deal with it.

Oh, Mike Fischer. You see, Mike came in after Joe [as executive director], and Mike was a different kind of guy. He was a good guy, but he was more bureaucratic and more process oriented; I don't think he is as shrewd or as skillful as Joe in terms of that kind of a job, but he was all right. He did a lot of work, and he kept it going for another—. But I mean—.

Lage: And he'd been the head of a regional commission?

Wilson: You had Mike Fischer, you had Brad Lundborg, and you had a lot of these new people. I felt it really strongly there; I just didn't have it in me to push on anymore. [Pause]

Lage: I can understand, especially with your four-year role.

Wilson: Yes. You know, I'd been there, I'd seen it. "Now we're going to do this again?" No, I don't think so, get somebody new."

Lage: Do you remember any of the—. I'm not talking about the later ones, but even in these first four years, the major controversies?

Wilson: Oh, well, there was Exxon; they'd gone to Long Beach with LPG—you know, liquid gas off the coast, in Santa Barbara, all along the coastline. Some huge developments along the San Mateo coast that were big hotel kind of issues. A lot of hotels. I mean, in Southern California, those guys all wanted to put hotels right there on the wetlands and everything.

Lage: Now, did you agree with the way they were handled?

Wilson: Well, I think we did. If you drive down there and—. See, here's the problem: if you go down the coast, you'll see that the wetlands are there, but, boy, they've got them surrounded with those pink houses. They're not in them, but they are just as close as they can get.

Lage: I like your description—the pink houses.

Wilson: They are all pink. I don't know what else to call them. They are all pink; they are all the same—.

Lage: All on the hillsides coming right down.

Wilson: Yes. And so, I think if we'd been able to cut that off and set that thing in place and say, "This is the line, boys," they would have a harder time just marching right up to it and then fighting over the last hundred yards or whatever it is.

Lage: Was that in consideration? To make a larger area around the wetlands? Or was it just—?

Wilson: I think it was just how to protect those wetlands and the continued pressures of growth. As you change the guard, the developers and the people on that side, they know. They are very shrewd; their lawyers are very shrewd. They'll say, "I don't know. This commission's kind of not too sure about their footing, so let's see what we can do here. Let's try to get them to mitigate it a little differently." That's what goes on. That's why I say, you get something in place and then you scramble the eggs again, they're not quite like they were when you first scrambled with them. [Laughter] They are a little different, and that's what happens in this game, because everybody's looking at every way you can cut a corner, and they can beat them—that's what they're doing.

And I think we lost some ground. I mean, the regions, the state commissions. Peter Douglas has been there forever. I mean, there are still big issues. How well they are holding up the coast, how much has been polluted, I can't say. There's a lot that was saved, and there was a lot of other things. Like Sea Ranch.

Lage: Yes, tell me about Sea Ranch.

Wilson: Well, it was a sheep ranch, and it was a density issue. I mean, that's what Sea Ranch was about. How many units could you jam into that Olson Ranch. I believe it was the Olson Sheep Ranch. And so we got down to basically the density, the size of the houses, where they wanted. The commission was in the business of developing this stuff, partially, because most of these developments were way over scale and way too big and way too many roads, and then the commission had to peel it down and make them acceptable. But they couldn't stop it. I mean, it was going to go through.

Lage: It was already under way.

Wilson: Yes. Transcentury [developer of Sea Ranch] was already in place, but we made the best of it. But that's what I mean, that there's an enormous amount of work trying to hold the density down, keep the size manageable, so you could live with it on the coast.

Lage: And were these property rights issues raised a great deal?

Wilson: Oh, absolutely, all the time.

Lage: Were they raised philosophically among the commission members or maybe by the lawyers?

Wilson: Well, no, some of the commission members were very—. Barney, Roger, Ira maybe a little bit, Mel. I think that there was a real sensitivity to it. That there was a real fundamental right that people had to use this property, that they could do what they wanted. But I think the commission recognized that if it didn't temper this, it's almost like this lawsuit. The commission was doing it

by mitigating, by cajoling, by trying to make the project reduce the road, reduce the size of that.

Lage: But suits were never brought against the Coastal Commission? Going all the way to the Supreme Court?

Wilson: Well, I mean there were suits, and there were all kinds of things but they—. I have just lost track of all the lawsuits. But these people were able to pretty much hold their own. I think the Sea Ranch held its own. It was a big pain in the neck. It was just endless. [Laughter]

Lage: Yes.

Wilson: But it was there. I think that the property rights kept alive some of those big projects that otherwise might have failed, had they had to go under scrutiny, but you see, I've always felt that the tail's wagging the dog. The trouble with this whole thing is the economy is always the barometer of how we're doing. In other words, the interest rate, or the GNP [gross national product], or the stock market. But this environmental thing, as you notice and of course practice it—they talk about sustainability, but the consideration for the birds and the bees and all this kind of stuff—. Well, I see it just the opposite, because if you take a piece of land and if you just keep pounding it with more of everything, eventually your water suffers, your air suffers, everything you need begins to break down. You go too far. If there's a natural system, it just will take it. And the trouble with California is that the natural system is so big and so strong that it's able to absorb enormous amounts of punishment before it breaks down.

But it does break down. We're beginning to see it in the water shortages; we are beginning to see it in energy prices. We've already seen it with trees. And we don't come to grips with it that way; we come to grips with it either via mitigation or lawsuits or something. Or, we just say, "Oh well, that isn't worth anything," and the last act of California is, if you don't know what to do, you call in the real estate agents, four-by-four the parcel, and just sell it to somebody from the city, and they are so burned out of the city, they come and buy it, and that's the end. You can't have sustainable forestry, you can't have sustainable agriculture, you can't have basic sustainable needs met, if you're out here with a four-by-four, and all four owners are in a fight as to who could be doing what. [Laughter] And on this kind of land, where you have great timberland, and wonderful agricultural land, and a great climate, and marvelous watersheds, of course, what you do is you create so many disincentives that the business guys say, "Look, I can't take it anymore. I'm leaving. Call the real estate guys and make the most out of it." And out they go. This has happened in the state.

Lage: When you say "so many disincentives" are you talking about—?

Wilson: I'm talking about regulation; I'm talking about costs. I'm talking about—. I'm not saying that the loggers and people haven't made a mess, and they haven't brought all this upon themselves. But all I'm saying is that once you bring it all down on your head—. This is really hard because there has to be some kind of balance and self-discipline in human beings in order to understand how far you can go and what you can make. Now, we're getting a little off the track. Sorry.

Lage: That's okay. We'll get some of this philosophy recorded.

Wilson: The point I'm trying to make is this last go-around with the nineties, with the dot-coms going down, and we're languishing now trying to figure out what's wrong. Well, what we've done is we've set the expectation so high, that you go to a business school, Harvard, and they say "You've got to make twenty percent to be president," that's an unrealistic expectation to be set. If the natural order of trees grows at six percent, the natural tree, if you take a tree to the bank, it will return six percent; that's what it does. If you've got to run a company on that and not on the stock market, because the stock market lost twenty percent. So when you whack it down, you don't get very many big trees left if you want twenty percent, because you're in there cutting, cutting, cutting, to hit twenty, to near twenty, and pretty soon, you don't get twenty percent, and the big trees are gone! The idea is, the reason we are in a box is that the expectations that we set are unrealistic—it's us. It's the way we live, to perform, to achieve more.

Lage: So it's not just regulations and codes.

Wilson: No. We're educated and we're individuals, we are achievers who want to do these things. But when you set your bar so high, and you keep setting it higher all the time, eventually you'll nailed into the wall. Just "Bam!" there you are. And then what do you do? Well, in water, in air, in trees, these things, in energy—when you hit the wall, then "all right, where do you want to go?" In energy, we're in a mess here. We're going to be in a mess for a long time. But it all comes down to this kind of ability to kind of constrain yourself a little bit. It doesn't mean you have to give up choices; it doesn't mean you can't have a market system, or anything, but if you push it too far, and you go over the edge, the repercussions are very painful. And I think that the natural system this big—. I don't know how many of these people we can hold, I really don't. I think they may be getting over the line at 35 million people because the immigration costs are beginning to get at us. It's the energy cost; it's the water cost; it's—. Do we have enough money anymore to try to fill in around here to make this thing run at a standard anybody's happy with? I'm beginning to think it's not. The roads are breaking down. We're 100 million dollars in the hole. How are we going to blow our way out?

I think it's been acknowledged—. When this dot-com came through, and everything went through the roof, that was done because our technology got

the jump on a lot of other people in the world, and we did show productivity for a while, and that just made everything go berserk. Well, that went, that ran its course. We sold this stuff [technology] to other people, they got more productive. Even Alan Greenspan, I don't even think, understood it for a while. He was trying to talk about exuberance—.

Lage: [Laughter] Irrational exuberance, was it?

Wilson: But the point is, that's gone. It's kind of leveled off. So you come back to is, "What can you really do?" You can [give] an incentive that gives people a lot of work, and they can make a return, and maybe stay out and not have to keep moving on to these greener pastures—and when we get into forestry, I will go into all of this in a much more detailed way. But there's only so much on the coastline, and that's why that coastal act came in, for protection, because people could see it.

Lage: People could see that was a limited resource.

Wilson: They saw the limit, and they said they didn't wall-to-wall, 1100 miles of condominiums.

Lage: So that was a land-use planning thing that worked, basically.

Wilson: Yes. People knew that we were just out of control.

Lage: As you look back, are you happy with the accomplishments? In your era, I mean.

Wilson: Well, it was a great act, and I think it saved a lot that wouldn't have been saved had we not done it, but the pressures are still fairly enormous. There are pressures all the time. It's just that there are a lot of set-asides, there's a lot of things that have been saved. I think the wetlands, and some very, very fine large areas have been saved, so I would say that there is open space. We got some nice areas, with the coastal act. A lot of the roads and the access—. I mean, if you come down Highway 1, you can pull off and enjoy some of those beaches. I do; I stop. If it hadn't been for the Coastal Act, by now it would be solid houses.

Lage: It would have been. What level income houses? I heard someone the other day criticizing the current Coastal Commission, implying that it prevented low-income housing along the coast. Do you think there would have been much low-income housing?

Wilson: Yes, I think there would have been unless somebody—. I really don't know. My theory was, make sure you had ways of getting the people from Los Angeles to the beach, and have good corridors, and you have good transportation, and you have enough beach so they can go to the beach. I

didn't worry about the houses part; that's wishful thinking. But I think if it's a big area, and it's well-policed and taken care of and cleaned, and the people can get there and they can park and they can have—. And you've got to have big spaces for this. You can't have a driveway between two movie stars, which is the way we were doing business—that's nuts! But if you've got nice big areas for people, that's what they need because they need to get out of town and go to the beach. I think it probably could have been better if we had stayed a little more focused on that.

- Lage: What about in Northern California? Do you think the Coastal Commission made an impression?
- Wilson: I think—. Well, we had a hell of a time over here on the Mendocino coast, with a couple of hotels. One of the issues that came up there was water. There's only so much water over there, and we worked them over to where we had at least a stream. But I think of Northern California, Sea Ranch is the biggest, and Transcentury, but we haven't had any great big—. We've had a few motels and made mistakes that have blown up, but I think generally Northern California is in pretty good shape.
- Lage: Was there some logging? I have a note here: Albion River logging. Was that a Coastal Commission conflict?
- Wilson: Part of it, but really it was a Board of Forestry issue, and it's a parks issue. I guess when you get over the trees and get out to the coast [laughter], we'll get to that because that's a whole other game. I believe it's now in the park system.
- Lage: Okay, we'll get back to that.
- Wilson: The coast, I think the big benefits were in the south and in the central coast; Hearst Ranch, that's a whole open space.
- Lage: Did the Coastal Commission help keep it as open space?
- Wilson: I think they realized that opportunity to—
- Lage: They kept them from planning a development.
- Wilson: Nor did they want to, but they had to deal with heirs and those types of things. You've got to take into consideration. I think with Hearst they worked things out, because I remember in Cambria, we had some very hot issues to deal with. And then right up there at Morro Bay, there were some real tough issues, but my take is that it looks pretty good, and it's still pretty good. Where you begin to see maybe some slippage is as soon as you get into Los Angeles, into Los Angeles County, and into San Diego, that's where the big, heavy developmental pressures are.

- Lage: Yes, and that's where the population is.
- Wilson: That's where the population is and that's where the money is, really, and the political pressure to develop.
- Lage: Do you have anything else you want to say about the Coastal Commission? Anything you might have learned from that experience?
- Wilson: Well, of course, San Onofre. I think the whole nuclear thing—. Fred [Farr] and I, we battled around on that one, got them across the highway.
- Lage: Now, did you and Fred come to odds on that?
- Wilson: No, no, no, well, not on that. [laughs]
- Lage: Tell me about that. But first let me put in a new tape. Hold on.
- [End Tape 9, Side B]
- [Begin Tape 10, Side A]
- Lage: —Nuclear plant. So you have that kind of issue. You have the siting of the plant.
- Wilson: I think the siting of it was important. I finally put in an amendment on that, some mitigation measures that the commission supported. They had to give a report to the Public Utilities Office every year on their performance. It's the one thing I got through more or less myself was to make them come in and report.
- Lage: On what aspect?
- Wilson: On their performance. On breakdown, downtime, performance of that reactor, so that PUC knew what they were doing.
- Lage: You mean the Coastal Commission had to come in and do some sort of nuclear regulation?
- Wilson: Well, it was. We wouldn't give it a permit until it did. Joe was adamant on this.
- Lage: Did you have feelings about nuclear in general? Nuclear power, and the safety of it?
- Wilson: Well, I just worried about it down there in these population centers.
- Lage: It is right smack in the middle of a big population center.

- Wilson: Yes. It was fashionable, and I think they were irresponsible. I thought they ought to be under as much scrutiny as possible so they could perform and be accountable. It was a good public transparency to have performance reports. If they tell you what's going on, you could often do things, whereas if nobody knows what's going on and there's bad stuff going on with this waste and how it was handled—Well, for instance, when they're nuclear, the problem is that the hot water going into the ocean; in the red phase, the heater's going crazy because you have the hot water, and the biology of water. Some people say it's good and some people say it isn't good. So, you know, you go back and forth. It's those kinds of things that are so hard to get a good and clear answer on.
- Lage: And that was part of the responsibility of the commission, to look at those—?
- Wilson: Yes, we had to look at those things. We had to mitigate them, or we had to try to control them as best we could.
- Lage: But the permit was finally granted.
- Wilson: It was.
- Lage: What about Fred Farr? What was his position?
- Wilson: Well, he was like Ellen. I mean, Ellen and I finally were the ones who were dragging our feet on that one, trying to make the most out of it. But Fred was a buddy of Pat Brown's. Fred finally got the call from the governor's office, or some high-level Democrat like Pat Brown, who said, "Come on, Fred, we've got to get this done."
- Lage: Yeah, even though he wasn't in office.
- Wilson: Oh, sure. He'd come to the meetings once in a while.
- Lage: Oh, he would?
- Wilson: The LNG [liquefied natural gas] terminal was his pet project.
- Lage: Oh, that's right. And I think Jerry Brown was somewhat tied into that.
- Wilson: Well, I don't know if Jerry ever kept two and two together to come to a conclusion.
- Lage: Was he governor when you were reappointed? He came in '75.
- Wilson: He came in when I got on the Board of Forestry. That's why I went on to the board. Jerry had more damn good ideas and could never get anything done. He was just unbelievable.

- Lage: We'll have to talk more about that. [Tape interruption and restart]
- Wilson: Okay, again we are checking on the transmission on April 28th, Sunday, Buck Mountain Ranch, up at my house.
- Lage: In general, did you have a sense of what Ronald Reagan thought about the Coastal Commission? Did you ever have occasion to discuss it with him?
- Wilson: No. Let's see. Reagan, he came in—when was he in? '68?
- Lage: 1966 to 1974.
- Wilson: '74. That's when he came in, [Jerry] Brown, '74. Reagan, I think, more or less accepted the Coastal Commission. It was there. My take on Reagan is: He had a ranch; he loved the land. He had a feeling for it. And so, being a Republican, there's a lot of these guys—the only thing they see is dollar signs.
- Lage: On both sides? Or mainly Republicans.
- Wilson: Well, both. But Republicans in the political arena. And I think—. I mean, Reagan tried to appoint people who were sympathetic to the private land owners, like Osenbaugh. Ike was there. I think Reagan, more as a governor than as a president, I think he had a better understanding of the conservation issue and was more responsive to it, because he signed Wild Rivers and Water Quality and Dos Rios. The curious thing was that he never—or his staff never let him—accentuated those things when he went to Washington. It was as though it just never happened. At least that was my impression.
- Lage: And what did you think—? Did you have any sense of why that was?
- Wilson: Well, I think in the bigger picture of Republican politics, this was a—. You see, again, environmentalism was like having a stomachache to Republicans. [Laughter]
- Lage: That's a good quote.
- Wilson: It was a word that just bothered them. And it was a bunch of hippies and long hairs and, "God, why did we even bother with it." It's not registering on the charts, when in fact you are beginning to see it register for what it really is. But in those days, there was this division between what I always saw as the conservation idea. Really, I feel strongly that with conservation, much like with Teddy Roosevelt, you still can use resources. The two sides too often are black and white, and you either go out and absolutely clearcut it to the last tree and move on, or you make a park out of it and throw the key away so nobody can do anything with it. Those are the two forces. And those two forces have made it. Because the business people, from Pat Brown and Jerry and on, they made a political issue out of it, that environmentalism is a bellyache or is just

bad for you. Don't let it influence you, because it doesn't mean anything politically, it doesn't show up on polls.

Lage: Well, it did in that era. We're talking about the Coastal Commission era.

Wilson: It did, but it showed up differently. When Reagan went on to the presidency, it did not—. If you had tried to measure environment, or even conservation, in the polls, nothing happened. It didn't show. It was the economy, it was the war, the Russians, the Cold War and all of that. This thing has sort of been slipping up on us quietly, that underneath all of this fighting, that the sort of natural system is still more or less in control of this thing. People are going to have to understand it and get used to it and then learn how to live with it. You live with it; you don't make a war on it. And this is basically what they've tried to do. Make it us versus them. In a way, they've done such a good job on both sides to raise money. Like James Watt was a gold mine for the Sierra Club.

Lage: That's true! [laughter]

Wilson: They've done such a good job of making it us versus them that, if you look back on the years of Eisenhower or something, it would seem like they had more middle ground, where things kind of worked out without all of this heavy fighting and no give, that the result is it's a standoff, and it has been. When Reagan went in, certainly as president, I think it was looked at as: "those people [environmentalists]," from a Republican point of view, "are not going to vote for us. Never got to have that issue, whatever it is. If it is a wacko issue, why bother with it." I don't think the connectivity between jobs and economics and community stability and all kinds of things that get caught in this had really evidenced themselves very well in those years. We had too many other things going on.

So, Reagan, the politician that he was—. I mean, for instance, he appointed that woman from Colorado known as the Ice Queen, and James Watt, and they caused him nothing but trouble. It was potentially a lot of trouble for me, too, with James Crowell over the Forest Service, as the director of resources in the U S Department of Agriculture, because he was LP's [Louisiana-Pacific Lumber Company] lawyer previous to his appointment.

Lage: Yes, I think you told me this.

Wilson: He was good, and that was why. So, you know, that was going to be—.

Lage: So you had your run-ins there.

Wilson: Well, yes. It was going to be tough until he got canned, and Bill [William] Clark came in and things got a little bit back to where we finally got this wilderness issue settled. But had that not happened, I don't know whether this

thing would have worked out. So Reagan, I think his heart was in the right place on a lot of issues, but these people are only as good as the information they get.

Lage: Information and suggestions.

Wilson: Yes, and I mean—. I think he—. It was about these issues that I've had to deal with, that if you could get it all on the table and give it lots of transparency, so people, if they have to go down, can see it, they'll come out okay. They'll vote, usually what I say is the right way. But if they don't, or if it is slanted heavily, or if only one side's getting information, well, sometimes people at the other end of it, they don't have anything else to go on, and that's all they hear, so everybody says, "Well, this is a bum deal, let's get rid of it. Hell, let's get rid of it and move on to the next one." That's the way it works.

So I think the man, Reagan, had a good sense of the land, and I think he had a love for it, and unlike Jerry Brown. He didn't have a clue. He had [Jacques] Barzagli [Jerry Brown's assistant] and the beads, and they were all doing Zen. And Huey [Johnson] tried to give him some direction, but I mean, the guy—. He had these sort of ideas that—. I think the ideas fascinated him more than ever trying to do anything. Even now, he makes more sense than the way he did when he was a governor. But he was again—. Here he was, with all these ideas—[tape interruption]

Lage: You were talking about Reagan. Do we have more? I wanted to ask you about something that was very intriguing, and that was the Planning and Conservation Foundation's task force on land-use planning.

Wilson: That was done in an effort—. When Jerry Brown came in, my take was, "God, here's this guy that's talking about all these things we should be doing." So I primarily assembled that group, which was most of the big businesses in the state of California—Edison, PG&E, Standard Oil, Sierra Club, the League of Conservation Voters. [The grant came from the Michael Connell Foundation, followed by some other funding.—added during narrator's review.]

Lage: Irvine Company.

Wilson: Irvine Company. John Reece was on that, yes.

Lage: Lung Association?

Wilson: Pacific Mutual, Lung Association, Bank of America.

Lage: I have Security Pacific Bank.

Wilson: Security Pacific. Anyway, the big players.

Lage: Trust for Public Land?

Wilson: TPL, I think, was there. Uh, I don't know about that.

Lage: They were in some written thing that I'd seen.

Wilson: I'm not sure.

Lage: I remember 1975 as being a time when Sierra Club and other environmentalists were very distrustful of Big Business.

Wilson: I know.

Lage: Now, how did you get those people together, and why?

Wilson: Well, they trusted me because I knew them, and I said, "Well—." Again, you see, we're getting into a lot of trouble between this environmental stuff and the business people and trying to get things through. Dwight Steele was on this panel, [I believe representing the Sierra Club. Dwight was a wonderful man and worked tirelessly until his death. He had a great love for Lake Tahoe.—added during narrator's review.]

But anyway, I said, "Look, we've got to go through these issues." They had all been gone through by California Tomorrow—"but we've got to go through them and do this report and lay out a strategy for the new governor, an idea." That was the point. [Bill] Press was going over there to the Office of Planning and Research. It seemed like it would be a real opportunity to lay something in front of Jerry Brown.

Lage: Did you have good expectations for Jerry Brown?

Wilson: Yes. So that was pretty much of a road map as to what you could do by taking this—. My theory was, here was a constituency that was willing, if you put a bill in, to get behind the bill and work it in the legislature, the way that report was set up.

Lage: Was the model the Coastal Commission?

Wilson: Not that big. It was more of a State Water Board, Private Land Use Task—. Well, it was more of an information but also an ability to, at a statewide level, deal with these problems and try to weigh them out so that there was more balance to them, because we were getting into these heavy, heavy conflicts about nuclear power. I mean, we had had some pretty bad fights. And I thought, "Okay, if the governor was willing to put his name on the line here, to get behind this thing, we'd put a bill in, and it might take a year or two, but there it is." We got a lot of press; we got good play in the papers.

- Lage: So you spent a couple of years developing the plan?
- Wilson: Yes.
- Lage: Or the report.
- Wilson: Really, it was a whole year of sitting again in meetings. We spent an awful lot of time, but everybody participated.
- Lage: Did you have a staff person?
- Wilson: We had Bill.
- Lage: Bill Press was a staff person?
- Wilson: Yes. We didn't have a lot but we had some help. We had outside consultants come in. We had John Hart. Now it was a rather remarkable effort with these people; the only division was over this ag-land thing, whether you could freeze the ag-land, or if in fact it would always be subject to the property rights where a farmer could sell the land. This was a sticker. That's the only one.
- Lage: So that one, you didn't resolve?
- Wilson: No, we did. Well, it was two things. The rest of them pretty much took care of themselves.
- Lage: The only ones, so you got people to come together.
- Wilson: Pretty much. And so it went over, and somewhere between Jerry Brown's mattress and his Plymouth, it got lost. [Laughter] And that was the end of the report. I mean, that's just about what happened.
- Lage: So it didn't get any—?
- Wilson: It didn't get anywhere.
- Lage: Now you say Bill Press was involved with it. Was he involved before he went to Office of Planning and Research?
- Wilson: Yes. Before he worked for [State Senator] Peter Behr.
- Lage: So he went over to Office of Planning and Research. Couldn't he push it when he got over there?
- Wilson: No.
- Lage: Or did he try?

- Wilson: Well, I think so, but I don't think he could get anywhere.
- Lage: So Jerry Brown wasn't interested in large-scale land-use planning?
- Wilson: Well, it resonated to a constituency that he like to talk to, so it did fine. But whenever it came to doing the hard work of putting a bill, or supporting it, or knowing anything beyond the rhetoric, no. And that was Jerry Brown. That was a great opportunity missed, because he had a constituency that was willing to go to work.
- Lage: Yes. Did you try to get any legislators involved? Or were there any?
- Wilson: Oh, well, there was Charlie Warren who would certainly have got in behind it, but this was one the governor had to take, because this was getting into property rights, and this was still heavy lifting, and without him, we wouldn't get anywhere. It would never get off the ground.
- Lage: Now who did you have—? What type of individual from, say, Bank of America or, I think, Standard Oil was another one?
- Wilson: Yes. Standard Oil. They assigned people. They were intermediary vice presidents, but they reported to the top so they were given authority.
- Lage: Did their corporations endorse the plan?
- Wilson: No. They signed it off when they finally made the report, which was what it was. Yes, they all—.
- Lage: So they were willing to put their name as a corporation.
- Wilson: Yes.
- Lage: And how about Sierra Club. Did they?
- Wilson: Yes. The League of Conservation Voters, yes.
- Lage: I think it's pretty remarkable that you got all these people talking together.
- Wilson: Again, like I said before, the Coastal Commission, because of the events, the timing, the will of the people, the coastline, and the cast of characters, it worked. Here's one that lined up pretty well, but you were missing one big thing: the governor. Without the governor, you know, you could go out and just cruise Main Street and enjoy yourself, because it wouldn't get anywhere. It was in the air.
- Lage: Did you ever think of doing an initiative with that?

Wilson: No, because I think at that time it would have been very hard to do it because you couldn't explain it.

Lage: What was your goal? Tell me more about what you saw as happening?

Wilson: Well, because of the misinformation and because things were so fractured, that if you could coalesce this thing and bring this thing into at least some kind of a form where we had the data and we could apply. I mean, at California Tomorrow, we had all kinds of evidence as to what was going on in terms of water, in terms of transportation, and all this stuff. And from the top, the governor forced the legislature and forced people to address the issues, and not let them skate away politically, which is what they do. If it's a hot one, off they go. You know.

But this thing was zeroing in on them, and you know, this is the way you get things done. You take these issues, and you can't take them all, and you take them one or two at a time, and you really hone into them, so people, after they've seen it for six or seven times, and it clicks in, and you know, "maybe that is an issue, maybe that is something that we ought to be interested in." But if you don't have that ability to focus and keep on it and work it, there are so many distractions and people are so busy, that you can have a headline—we had that headline in the Oakland Tribune, and it was huge thing. And then it was all over.

Lage: It's discouraging, after that incredible amount of work.

Wilson: Well, it is. It is discouraging, because again, you are caught up—like gambling. You never know. You might get it; you might not. But, I mean, same thing with Alan [Chadwick]. That project had a lot in it, and it was worth working with him, in spite of his behavior, and yet, when he was gone, that was it. There was no way to sustain it without him and his personality. The younger people, even though Steven Decater and others are doing it in their own way, doing quite well, but just as a focus on the issue and having help, it was like having a prophet out of the Old Testament, just raging up and down, raising hell, and pissing everybody off and doing what he did, but he did certainly cause some waves, which is what you need to do. And he did. And if he was on the loose today, I don't know. I think this whole organic movement and better food and healthier living is a testament to what Alan always used to talk about, that you start in the garden and you grow your food and know something about taste, I mean, all of this. I mean, he did it in a poetic and a very vituperative, very—. Well, sometimes he just got out of hand because he used a lot of mythology, which is fun to listen to do but—. We had a meeting in Covelo one time, and a bunch of oil guys came up, and I think they were under the chair by about the first fifteen minutes of the meeting. He was too much for them.

Lage: Oil guys?

- Wilson: Yes, from Standard Oil.
- Lage: How did they know to come to see Alan Chadwick?
- Wilson: They were chemical guys. Sprays.
- Lage: They tried to sell sprays?
- Wilson: They wanted to know what the hell was going on with this guy and his biological controls.
- Lage: I see. They were investigating. Oh, that must have been a funny encounter.
- Wilson: Oh, it was a funny one.
- Lage: But I don't know that it's any funnier an encounter than seeing Standard Oil and Irvine Company and what not—.
- Wilson: They could see that they could achieve their ends, and still—. Again, this is sort of what I told you earlier in this conversation. It's that sort of inner discipline, trying to bring this thing down to something that—okay, we want to do this, we want it any way, but can we do it in a way that has parameters on it that seems to be working around some of the rough edges and smoothing them out, so this thing doesn't just go off the roof. Now there will be sometimes those guys will go off the wall, and you won't be able to do anything with it. But at least you have the access and you can talk about it. [It's like trying to run a two-track economy, one traditional and one sustainable.—added during narrator review.]
- Lage: Did you think it would end up with a state commission, sort of, to help make land use decisions?
- Wilson: Yes, it would.
- Lage: Well, that's sort of like the Coastal Commission, in a bigger scale.
- Wilson: Well, it was. It was a bigger scale, but not the regions, as it had in all that. It was not that size of a budget. It was for the governor to do, if he wanted it.
- Lage: If the governor had been Alan Chadwick. [Laughter]
- Wilson: God forbid.
- Lage: But somebody enthused about it.
- Wilson: Well, if he had been able to apply himself, and give somebody direction to make it happen, it could have happened. In California Tomorrow, with Alf

[Heller] and all the work they did, there was a wave that was bringing the tide in on these issues. It was awareness at the public level, to Jerry. But like all this stuff, it kind of—. The tide recedes, and we get off on other things, whether it's education or Chinese or Russian, you know, something seems to always—. And you have to kind of grasp that and do what you can.

Now, when you think about the Reagan years, which is a time you would think is a very good time, it was the Coastal Act, it was the Water Quality, it was the—.

Lage: Wild Rivers.

Wilson: Wild Rivers, yes. I mean, when you think about it, those were big deals.

Lage: They were.

Wilson: And we haven't seen much since of what I would call big legislation. We've had a lot of working around things, and life goes on, but you just sort of come along and you hit it right, and if you're right—. I was in the right place to be able to push these issues—Dos Rios, Wild Rivers, wilderness. Whether it's Wild Rivers or something, I knew I had to keep the Board of Supervisors on that, because if you lose the Board of Supervisors, in those days, that was the kiss of death, because that's local government. And then everybody else runs, "Well, we can't do that because local government..."—you see?. You think you're going to start at the top. You don't start at the top in California. You've got to start at the bottom.

Lage: Did you follow that rule with this land-use planning idea?

Wilson: We tried to. We tried to get them interested in it, but it was a much bigger task. What we had to do with the task force is we had to lay out the issues, lay out an explanation of what they were, and what the options were. That would have been one of the jobs of trying to sell this thing, because in California Tomorrow, they had Charlie Warren, and he went around the state, and they had hearings that talked about all this stuff, but it just didn't stick to the wall. That's all. The timing wasn't bad, but it just didn't stick to the wall.

Lage: And now people have pretty much given up on the idea, it seems, of this large-scale land-use planning.

Wilson: I think we're back to—. And of course, regional, at the time, a regional idea would have been a good idea because you would have broken it down into the Bay region or something. But nobody wanted or could talk about regionalism in those days. It was the kiss of death.

Lage: Why was that?

- Wilson: Because that was the layer of government above local planning.
- Lage: Oh, I see. A regional government.
- Wilson: But I mean, dealing with this now, people are beginning to realize regional issues are big issues because it's affecting them at the local level. So now it's kind of different than it was in those days. But that was then. [Today the concept of bioregions in California has emerged, but only at the talking level. It should be pursued further at the state agency level.—added during narrator's review.]
- Lage: They tried for regional.
- Wilson: Well, the Bay Area Transit. All of this stuff. BART. But it just didn't fly. So it was real disappointing to see Jerry Brown turn out the way he did, because he had a few good people, but the thing was—. He was so goofy and so unpredictable that nobody ever knew whether he was in the state or out of the state or where he was. You couldn't ever depend on him.
- Lage: Did Bill Press get disillusioned with him?
- Wilson: Oh yes. He used to work for—. Bill had always had political ambitions, and he was always trying to figure out how to run for something. He did a few times, but not successfully. Jerry Brown wasn't a very good launching pad, or anything like that. I can't remember what Bill did after that. [I think he was Democratic Party state chairman and then gravitated to Washington DC and various TV programs, representing the liberal outlook.—added during narrator's review].
- Lage: He did some journalism. TV shows?
- Wilson: That's right. He was a commentator in Southern California. That sort of thing. Here you have Reagan, the most unlikely person, but they always make them say, you know, your chances are better with a Republican than they are with a Democrat because you get the Democrat, and they are so busy doing so many different things, they can never get focused. I mean, they can't get anything done. Whereas, the Republicans, well—.

[End Tape 10, Side A]

[Begin Tape 10, Side B]

- Lage: Republicans are a little more disciplined, you're saying.
- Wilson: As an example, all of, or a lot of my friends were so glad that they got rid of Pete Wilson and that they were getting Gray Davis, and now they don't know why they ever voted for Gray Davis, for example. And this, as we've seen

over and over, all the Democrats are sensitive. Oh, they feel they understand all these issues and everything. They never get anything done. They just kind of rattle around in a box and bump off one corner down to the next, and everything, and at the end of the term, nobody's done anything. The Republicans—. And my position is, if you confront them with some kind of economic issue, so there are some numbers in the thing that they can enjoy, because they love numbers [Laughter]. So you make an economic issue, that this thing is better for you if you do it this way than this way. And then they might get on it. And then they get on it, and the top goes along, you can do some stuff, I mean, there are some possibilities. And I think this is kind of the story of this thing, so it's a crap game, and we never know how these people are going to work out.

I had high hopes for [Richard] Riordan, even though Riordan, by Republican standards, would have the right wing going crazy, but Riordan to me—he could have beaten Davis—and Riordan knew enough about the state, and he would have at least capable and knowledgeable people in there talking to him, because he didn't want to do it all, but there was a good chance that some of these big issues on water, energy and things, something might've come out of it. And he isn't going to run for president. What's the other one—. He's not going to run for president; he's just going to do this. Well, it's almost made to order. And then he runs the stupidest campaign that you can envision and down he goes. And we wind up—. In fact, this is the first time in all the years I've watched politics in California, where you had one man running against himself for fifty million dollars. [Laughter] And that's the difference. [speaking of the 2002 California gubernatorial election]

Lage: You think that's a—?

Wilson: That's what Davis is doing. Nobody knows [Bill] Simon, and Simon never says anything anyway. So Gray Davis—.

Lage: You don't think Simon will surprise people?

Wilson: Well, Gray Davis may have this state in such a mess, that it is just hopelessly tangled up, and made such a mess out of it, everything he's done, by the things he says, that people might just vote for Simon because they don't know what else to do. But I mean, there's nothing coming out that shows any sort of leadership or anything.

Lage: Oh, it's quite a state.

Wilson: Well, it is.

Lage: Do you think if we stop now and finish today, we can start tomorrow with Board of Forestry and have a forestry day.

Wilson: We'll have a forestry day tomorrow. We did pretty good.

Lage: I think we did.

**Interview #6: April 29, 2002**

[Begin Tape 11, Side A]

- Wilson: It's the 29th of April, 2002, at Buck Mountain, Ann Lage and Richard Wilson continuing with the oral history project. It is now about 9:30 in the morning, and it's raining.
- Lage: Right. And I think we can just keep going because we are on here.
- Wilson: Okay. Well, you set the agenda as you will.
- Lage: Last time we talked about Coastal Commission and Planning and Conservation League, and I thought we'd get into your term on the California State Board of Forestry this time. Do you want to start by saying how that came about?
- Wilson: Yes. Let's start discussing about the Board of Forestry. I, of course, had left the Coastal Commission, and Huey Johnson, Jerry Brown—.
- Lage: Can I just ask one thing? You left the commission, it seems, kind of in mid-term?
- Wilson: Yes.
- Lage: You had spent six years. Are the terms four years?
- Wilson: Yes.
- Lage: So how did—? Was there an incident or anything?
- Wilson: No, I was just tired.
- Lage: Just tired. The meetings.
- Wilson: Yes. Well, and what I said yesterday is that I felt that we were just rewinding the clock and had run all over the same stuff again, almost, and in some ways changing things, and that we weren't really taking what—. The legislature couldn't handle the coastal issue. Eventually it was taken over by the public. The public passed Proposition 20. We did Proposition 20 with Mel [Lane] and Joe [Bodovitz] and all the [regional] commissions. It was set up, it delivered a plan that was to be adopted. Period. After all of the thrashing around the legislature, it wound up that we recreated the commission, as it were, again to do a lot of the same things we had already done.
- Lage: So that was frustrating.

- Wilson: I just couldn't do that. No more for me. And I'd been away; I wanted to come back here [to Covelo]. So anyway, I did.
- Lage: So were you out of the loop? Out of the government business for a while?
- Wilson: I was out of the loop a little, but because of the Board of Forestry and because Dwight May, who represented this area—
- Lage: On the Board of Forestry?
- Wilson: Yes. He died; he was a rancher. So Huey [Johnson, secretary for Resources under Governor Jerry Brown]—. I mean, I knew Huey, and Huey asked me if I would take his place. So what happened was, I took his—he only had, I think, a year—I took that, and then I was reappointed from Jerry Brown.
- Lage: I see.
- Wilson: And Henry Vaux, who was truly one of the great people of California—he was the professor of forestry working in the Department of Forestry [at UC Berkeley].
- Lage: And chair of the State Board of Forestry.
- Wilson: Well, he was chair of the board. But he was so far ahead of anybody before or after in terms of his understanding of the world of forestry and silviculture. His enormous skills at dealing with people in a very difficult subject and industry included—it was a big part of it—and environmental people—.
- Lage: Is this in the context of board meetings?
- Wilson: In the context of the board. Dean Cromwell was his assistant. Dean still—he works for CDF [California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection]; in fact I brought him back. He retired and he came back, and he's working for the FRAP—the Forest Resource Assessment Program—in Sacramento and raising rabbits in Marysville. He is now working in Sacramento.
- Lage: And he was sort of the executive director?
- Wilson: He was the executive—. He basically was there longer than anybody else and knows more about it than anybody else at the time. And of course, there had been the Nejedly-Z'berg act in the seventies—that was the Forest Practice Act—and Vaux was really there to try to figure out how to implement the Nejedly-Z'berg Forest Practice Act. Vaux was basically there to try to make this thing a reality, this Forest Practice Act.
- Lage: To write the rules that would implement it?

- Wilson: Well, the fundamentals are this. Fundamental timber management is to manage the forest on the sustainable yield principle, a very important phrase—to find a management plan which will achieve continuous high yields of timber production that contribute to local employment and tax revenue, consistent with an environmental constraints related to watershed, wildlife, fisheries and aesthetic and recreational enjoyment.
- Lage: Now was this in the Nejedly-Z'berg Act?
- Wilson: That was it. That was the heart of what that was supposed to do.
- Lage: I see. And that was '73.
- Wilson: That's it. Continuous high yield of production was the fundamental. Then, followed by local employment, tax revenue, consistent with the environmental constraints related to watershed, wildlife, fisheries and aesthetic and recreational enjoyment. You see where I talked yesterday about how the environment came in on the tag end. Here it is. What I'm saying is it's up on front. Those environmental constraints, those environmental needs need to be met, and they have to complement the economics of sustainable—. They have to be part of it; one can't travel without the other. Here there's a separation; it's sustained yield and then . . .
- Lage: I got that. That makes me think of one other thing. Did you have any part in the forest practice legislation under PCL?
- Wilson: Oh yes. We did. We worked with Nejedly and Z'berg and yes. I mean, we were part of that.
- Lage: Were you happy with the way it worked out, or did you see that there was an imbalance?
- Wilson: Well, it was always a fundamental glitch in this thing about sustainable yield, because fundamentally, the Forest Practice Act really got hung up on stocking. And stocking means that somehow you are going to leave enough trees on the ground when you get out of there. But it never got into the kind of management of a forest that kept enough merchantable trees—this will come up over and over—enough merchantable, sustainable trees on a yield basis. In other words, this whole effort and all the lawyers in the industry—they did not want anything to do with anything that says you couldn't clearcut. We dealt with that the whole time, clearcutting and the science of clearcutting, and so forth. But the idea of trying to manage a stand of timber so that there's a continual crop growing that reaches sustainability every x number of years, five, seventeen years—.
- Lage: Now, was that written into the law or not?

Wilson: Well, that's what this says. It's written in. It says, "To produce sustainable yields of high quality timber products."

Lage: So that's in—.

Wilson: High standard yields of high quality timber products. The only way you can get those is to grow trees that are sixty, eighty, a hundred years old, depending upon the class and soils and everything you're growing them on, but those trees coming online so that they produce a high standard, meaning of grade. A tree grows, and you can tell by the number of clear sixty-foot sections without limbs, straight. Oregon, except for the coastal redwoods, has better grade than we do because it's wetter and more sturdy; they have some better soil. We have some very good grade here too; this is slower growing in California.

But the rub on this whole thing is that when you are geared up—again, this is where you begin to get the conflict—when you are geared up to make production, the efficiency or size of the tractors, the size of the roads, the size of the trucks, how much you are hauling, the production of the mill, how much they are cutting, to get the sales, to get the performance that you want as a manager of a company corporation—to get there, you can't have, you cannot have sustainability. That's the sum of it.

Lage: Now, how did that work out on the board with Henry Vaux?

Wilson: Well, that's when we spent about the biggest part of our time trying to work through this idea of making—. I mean it had everything. The way it first started, the first part of the act, I think, addressed road-building and some stream protection, but I mean those two things were addressed and corrected pretty well—by that I mean building the roads that were sliding and collapsing in the streams. I mean, I think those things came along well. But when we get around to this issue about those trees, and the merchantability and the grade or the class, you know, you're really talking about some sort of selection, and selection costs money because it takes more forester time to mark trees. You've got to be more careful when you're moving around with equipment in there, banging around, so you're not wrecking the next generation of trees, and the easiest, most efficient way to do it is clearcutting; you don't have to worry about it.

Now, redwoods would grow so fast you could squeeze out rotations of sixty years. You know, it comes out of a crown, so you can come back in sixty years, better if it's a little more, but in even forty, it's still so-so, but you if you go too young on the redwoods, you get sapwood—that's the white wood—and that's not very good. But when you get into pine and fir, you do have to have more time. On the coast it's less because it's wet, soils are better over there. In this hot, dry country, you've got to be very careful, because of the sun. If you don't have shade for young trees and take some care on that

canopy—you need a canopy to give those trees a chance to have some cover for the new ones coming up—you’ll just burn them up.

Lage: So clearcutting doesn’t work as well here.

Wilson: No, not in this inland country, because you get brush cycling. You get manzanita. Eventually you’ll see some pine come up under the manzanita, if it doesn’t burn up in fire, which is always a danger. It’s got to push that manzanita, it’s got to shade that manzanita, to kill it off, so it doesn’t thrive. Then the fir comes up under the pine. All of that takes time.

Lage: It takes a while.

Wilson: And time is money. So that’s all factored into these corporate company people because time is money, and bankers, and particularly if you’re on the stock market and trying to compete for money and all that kind of stuff. So that’s always at play in these rules. So when they say that we’ve got the toughest forest practice rules in the country, that sounds great, but then why is it we don’t have a merchantable class of trees left, and why have all the mills left and gone somewhere else?

Lage: Is that a failure of our Board of Forestry?

Wilson: Yes. It’s a failure of the regulatory process, standing fast and enforcing rules, going to court and making a fight. Basically the board—. Henry was trying to get this thing worked out in these rules, and how you advance what the act was saying on all accounts—on the roads, the stream protection, and particularly those stands, and how you cut those trees, and what kind of a stand was left, and restocking, and restocking. It was just a huge issue because initially we wanted to say, “Okay, if we have enough [tree] count on the ground, that satisfies the intent of the rules.

Lage: New trees growing.

Wilson: Yep, but they’re all this size.

Lage: Two feet.

Wilson: In a long time, right?

Lage: Yes.

Wilson: That’s exactly what went on and on and on, and up until this day, well, there’s nobody here, almost, for that reason.

Lage: So Henry Vaux was writing the rules at the same time—.

- Wilson: Well, the rules he helped write them, but the point is he was trying to make it work—.
- Lage: And then he had to—.
- Wilson: There are two things going on here. Rules and regulation is a word-smithing game. And that's where you get all the lawyers and politicians and everybody fiddling around with this wording: "maximum sustained yield." That's a mouthful that you can choke on for a year because of how you interpret this. Of wood products, or forest products, or timber. This says timber. The industry wanted "wood" because they wanted to be able to grind smaller trees and glue them together. That's not timber. They were fighting around on that one.
- Lage: But they are producing that [type of wood product] a great deal.
- Wilson: They sure are. They're chipping away, until they haven't got anything to chip. And then they leave. It's the key word, but the idea is that the tug-of-war is on, and we're, "Okay, we've got these great rules and everything. How are they implementing the rules, and who's going to enforce them?" The CDF [California Department of Forestry] was the lead agency, and they were in power. They're supposed to do this.
- Lage: And that was their job, to enforce the rules.
- Wilson: That was their job, to enforce those rules.
- Lage: But wasn't it the board's job to approve the timber harvest plans?
- Wilson: No, not the board. The CDF approved the timber harvesting. The board set the policy. The board—if there was a problem, you went to the board for appeal.
- Lage: I see.
- Wilson: And that's where the industry camped with all its—.
- Lage: Let's just get the process clear.
- Wilson: The process is that there is the act and there's the Board of Forestry, which is the policy board, which sets the policy for CDF to implement the rules.
- Lage: And CDF investigates and approves timber harvests limits?
- Wilson: They've got all the appeals. They do all of the hearings. They do all of the field regulations, and again, how much do you do? How many visitations do you do? Do you call in Fish and Game and Water Quality, or do you do it

yourself? CDF had that authority, as the lead agency, to pretty much do it themselves.

- Lage: But if they denied a plan, then that could be appealed to the board?
- Wilson: Eventually, yes. It would go to the board.
- Lage: Very complicated.
- Wilson: Yes.
- Lage: And the board is a volunteer citizens—.
- Wilson: Well, they are appointed by the governor. But the problem is it's a nine-man board subject to political appointments, depending on who's on that board.
- Lage: So, let's talk about the board.
- Wilson: Well, the board when I was on it with Vaux was an extremely good board, simply because they had George Duscheck, who was a TV guy [science reporter for KQED]. Benioff—Mildred—was on that board. Jim [David J. ] McCollum was on that board for the logger from Redding, a fine man.
- Lage: What was Mildred Benioff? What was her background?
- Wilson: I think she came from the coast. I had heard that she had worked for Caltech, and I don't know—. Mildred had been on the regional coastal commission or coastal commission. Jim McCollum, Phil Berry.
- Lage: I'm just trying to think what kind of expertise they'd bring to it.
- Wilson: I'm trying to give it to you. Let's go with this. Jim McCollum was a logger from Redding and worked with Sierra Pacific, the largest timber company in the state.
- Lage: Okay, he worked for Sierra Pacific.
- Wilson: Duscheck was a retired TV guy from San Francisco, I think, KQED. Phil [Phillip S. ] Berry was an ex-president of the Sierra Club. Henry Trobitz was Simpson Lumber, on the coast side in Humboldt County.
- Lage: So you get a lot of industry people.
- Wilson: We had Virginia Harwood, owner of the local mill up here, the Harwood Mill in Mendocino County. Bud and Virginia. Me. I sat on the ranch seat, for the livestock industry. I took that seat. It was the range seat on the Board of Forestry.

- Lage: Oh, I see. You were there as a rancher?
- Wilson: Yes. And Henry Vaux.
- Lage: Who was a professional.
- Wilson: Phil Berry was a lawyer at that time—he was the vice chair. How many have we got?
- Lage: [She counts] One-Two-Three-Four-Five-Six-Seven. Eight, counting yourself.
- Wilson: Eight counting myself.
- Lage: Clyde Wahrhaftig?
- Wilson: Yes. Clyde was a U. S. G. S. geologist. Now, look at those, and you've got a pretty interesting board. You've got a logger, you've got a TV kind of guy with Duscheck, you've got Berry of Sierra Club, Trobitz of Simpson Lumber—big, corporate—Harwood, small Mendocino lumber mill owner, Vaux, a professor, me as a rancher.
- Lage: McCollum—another—?
- Wilson: McCollum was a logger. Anyway, when you look at that, for a board of political appointees, that's not bad, because you've got a pretty good mix. You've got public, you've got academia, and you've got industry. They are all there. It was very unusual to have that.
- Lage: Were they appointed by a variety of people, like the Coastal Commission?
- Wilson: The governor.
- Lage: It was the governor who appointed them all?
- Wilson: The governor. That was [Jerry] Brown. You know, he was—. I think I was appointed because Vaux wanted to get some things done, and of course, he was aware of the battle I had been having with Louisiana-Pacific, and of course Louisiana-Pacific tried to stop my appointment.
- Lage: Did you know Vaux before? Had you—?
- Wilson: Not really. I just knew of him.
- Lage: You were just aware of what was going on.

- Wilson: So, that was really the original board. It changed from time to time. I think Henry Vaux had a really good working relationship with the members.  
[interruption by Sophie, the dog]
- So with that, I think you had about as good a board as you'd get. [Dave] Pesonen was the director. Pesonen was a lawyer, so he was virtually embroiled most of the time.
- Lage: And he had a strong environmentalist background, kind of a fighter image.
- Wilson: Oh, yes. A fighter. And then we had Dean Cromwell as the executive officer; he was a very capable fellow and in fact, he was one of Vaux's students.
- Lage: Oh, he was?
- Wilson: I think so. At Berkeley.
- Lage: And Pesonen was educated as a forester at Berkeley.
- Wilson: He was. I think he was Vaux's student.
- Lage: And he'd been on the Board of Forestry previously.
- Wilson: Okay. So anyway, there you have it. And so, the board was—. You know, we'd come through the Redwood Park. That was a big struggle.
- Lage: And that was before you—.
- Wilson: Yes. And then after Redwood Park, we ran into this whole thing with the Forest Practice Act, trying to figure out how you were going to make this thing work. And of course, we also got into the issue of registration and making the foresters registered, licensed professional foresters. I was not keen on that idea, just because it seemed to me you were setting up another bureaucracy and another club, as it were, and the foresters then, they could be registered, they had a license, and they had a licensing committee on the board to look at if there were bad practices. It had to be aired by the board, and they could charge more because they were licensed professional foresters and, boy, I'll tell you. We got into some nasty incidents where, again, they didn't want to discipline their own. I mean, that's the fact of the matter. They did not want to discipline their own. So we would get a Wheeler case or a case that's just awful.
- Lage: Give me some examples.
- Wilson: Well, they were cutting deals on their own and not representing the landowner and, you know, totally misrepresentation of their license.

- Lage: So foresters—.
- Wilson: Okay. Under the act, if you wanted to cut trees, you would have to have a licensed professional forester make the plan, approve the plan, and sign off. Period. That's it.
- Lage: I see.
- Wilson: And that's on conifers, not on hardwoods. Hardwoods are out; they were left out of this requirement.
- Lage: Just left out of the regulations totally?
- Wilson: Yes. So we wound up with that as another issue. It took a lot of staff time, because there weren't lots of issues, but environmental people were getting more aggressive in going after foresters when they saw what they perceived to be real conflicts within the practice and how they represented themselves to the public, because they had a responsibility and they should be challenged and so forth. So there were some big fights over these things.
- Lage: So this became another responsibility of the board—.
- Wilson: It did indeed.
- Lage: To oversee the practices—.
- Wilson: —that came up. Then of course, yes—. And so the board was trying to get ahold of that act; it was trying to deal with these foresters and somehow bring that thing forward into a working situation that—. If you look at it, the number of foresters, they'd grown a little, maybe, but as far as work, there's certainly less and less work, and whether their standing has been enhanced or not, I don't know, because I think the fact is that they approved more [timber harvest plans] than they should have. It was more accommodation to the industry because, if you look at it at the coffee shop level again, which is a fundamental place, who has coffee together? The corporate forester, the CDF forester and inspector—these guys see each other every day, and that's what you look up to.
- Lage: So that's a kind of sociological reality.
- Wilson: It's a sociological—a reality of life. And that does show up as how rules are interpreted and how deals are made. It's just that simple. And then you get the CDF foresters in that same—. You get the CDF forester, the company forester and the private forester. For instance, Bob McDougall and Larry Camp represented me for a couple of years, the foresters in Ukiah—. But they were a key and integral part of this, and again, there are a lot of ways to interpret what the rules say and what you do. And there's a lot of discretion. And

whenever you have a lot of discretion, you have potential conflict, because it's in the eyes of the beholder. I'm an environmentalist, and you are a company logger and a corporation. I don't agree because I read the rules this way and you read them the other way. You go to the board, appeal after appeal. Pacific Lumber is a great example of that. We'd have to spend most of our time on appeals.

Lage: Is this a later time you're talking about?

Wilson: Well, it started and it always was a fact of life. People were appealing because of these rules. Again, these things are not hard and fast. It's the way these things are crafted.

Lage: Of course they are.

Wilson: And so, you get the lawyers and all the political groups.

Lage: Can you remember an incident to try to demonstrate how these things played out on the board? You also had these different interests on the board. If you could think of an appeal—

Wilson: I think when we get to—. Yes, when I think when we get around to the Pacific Lumber Company.

Lage: But from this earlier period, when you were a member of the board, would there be?

Wilson: Well, yes, but without calling Dean—I'd have to put that on hold and ask Dean. I'll research it. But anyway, as I said, Dave [Pesonen] kept it stirred up, and there was a lot of friction there. There were a lot of people hearing each other out but also gearing to fight over issues. John Callahan was a representative in those days of the California Forestry Association, and John and Dave were apparently nice to each other as professionals, but John was one of these people that had an issue with every environmental issue. Every issue that came up was an issue: how you interpreted the word, how right or wrong it was, whether you cut a tree too close to a stream, all you had were things to argue about, loggers versus the public. It didn't matter what it was, he'd challenge it, and then they'd have to fight it out in the department.

Lage: How did Vaux handle this?

Wilson: Well, he knew it. He recognized it. He tried to keep an eye out as much as he could on a policy level and not get too much into the mudslinging. The department had to try to handle the issues at the ground level, and of course, at times, they sent things up to the board and the board would have to make a decision. These boards, just like we've seen with the PUC and everything, they do some things well and some things they aren't very good at, and

usually it's an accommodation; it's a mitigating measure. "Well, we're going to let you go but . . ." I can recite back just my problems with the board. The work the Department of Forestry did up there in Henthorne basin was criminal, because there was absolute breakdowns between what the rules said about road-building and what they did. In other words, they built roads without impactation and pushed into the basin when the drought was on. That was the early seventies.

Then, when they got in, because they wanted to get in and out of there as fast as they could because of these new rules.

Lage: This was before the Forest Practice Act?

Wilson: Well, the road was just coming on. I mean, this was brand new. The Forest Practice Act was in effect, in a sense, early in the seventies. And Forest Practice Act was implemented, it was basically in effect.

Lage: Oh, it was.

Wilson: And what happened was—. To show you, they had slammed around these roads, and I had taken Clyde Wahrhaftig up with me to look at the job, and he just shook his head and said, "This isn't what we are supposed to be doing, the way we're trying to do this." And I had eventually hired Don Gray from the University of Michigan, who had been trained by Clyde as a geologist in California, at Berkeley, to come out representing me, because I couldn't hire these big firms, because they had all been hired by Louisiana-Pacific, or something, so there was a conflict of interest. And Don Gray pinpointed every single point on these roads going into the basin, and it rained—that was '78, I believe—and they all collapsed.

Lage: Did you take that to the Board of Forestry?

Wilson: Well, yes. Not only that, it went to the point where it became a water quality issue more than a board issue because it was in itself—. The roads collapsed. That should have been a citation. And then long before that happened, when it washed into the stream, it was a water quality issue. Well, again, the Department of Forestry just ducked the issue, no action.

[End Tape 11, Side A]

[Begin Tape 11, Side B]

Wilson: And so they were losing the access to the Henthorne timber. Claire Dedrick was involved in some of this. She was secretary of resources.

Lage: So this went on up into the Jerry Brown era.

Wilson: You bet. And then, nobody could—. The one thing that they did do is that they stopped the crossing of Hoxie in '63, I think. And that was Jack Fraser from Fish and Game, from the Redding office. That's the first one that was ever issued that says you're not going to cross the middle fork of the Eel and jeopardize the summer steelhead run in the state. So that was it. Boom. That was the end. No crossing at Hoxie.

Lage: I see.

Wilson: But the idea is, my contract said that they had to comply with the rules. There were so many clear violations that any one of them could have triggered a stop. But they had enough muscle in those days, to the governor's office, and all the things that go on—. They would not write a violation to be a trigger. The staff knew it; Water Quality knew it; CDF didn't immediately—I mean, they just dodged the whole issue.

Lage: And was this CDF under Pesonen?

Wilson: Yes. But they had inspectors and they just didn't want to get into it. Again, if they'd have gotten into that, and that contract, that would have been stopped, all hell would have to have been paid. They just moved heaven and earth to stop that happening. And they did. But you know, we had hearings. I had a lawyer who went to the Water Quality Board, Francis Matthews. And Ray Peart, who was on the Regional Water Quality Board, and had worked on the ART project and California Tomorrow. Ray Peart was a supervisor from Humboldt County.

But when push came to shove, and Dave Joseph over there, who was the chair, he was in tight with [Harry] Merlo, because they came from down there, from that area. They just never—. Mitigation was the big thing. We were mitigating all kinds of hokey deals. Where there was an oak tree that was a little unstable, we'd put an old cable around the oak tree and anchor it to another tree so it didn't fall into the creek. I mean, it was—.

Lage: So you were looking for a clear, definite issue of violation?

Wilson: And that would have been it, because what would have happened was that I would have renegotiated [his logging contract], and I would have gotten a different logger, and they would have complied, because then I would have had the hammer. Well, I couldn't get the hammer because the contract was written in a way right then. At that time, I put them—. The stream and lake protection zone, I put in—. The first one in the state was a hundred foot setback around Henthorne Lake. You can't cut any trees. That's the first one in the state of California. That was in one of the contracts of 1960.

But, I did not signify that I would determine who the logger was, or that the logger would have to come under my direction.

Lage: You were doing this way back when.

Wilson: I know. So, you know, this is one of those things. So I was beholden to the Department of Forestry and, of course, Fish and Game and Water Quality. They both failed miserably; we all did. And we fought them and fought them, and finally we did bring a suit, where we made them realign a road differently because of the impacts it would have made on unstable ground. I think with the road, from the start they knew clearly, but they did it in a way that they were just in your face. And we did make them move it. But the cost to LP was just part of their operating overhead. I mean, that's just the way they did business.

Lage: And when they are that big a company, they can afford it.

Wilson: Yes. So you see, you're really stuck. You really get jerked around on that string. Well, those were the problems in the early days, where the department enforcement actions were mostly mitigation trying to massage it, but fundamentally the policy was to get the trees cut and off to be timber. That was the overriding issue.

Lage: Over the environment or the economy of sustainability.

Wilson: Absolutely. It was just clearcut.

Lage: Now, aside from your own issue on the land here, when you were on the Board of Forestry, did things change at all? Or was that always overriding?

Wilson: That was still the fundamental policy of the Department of Forestry. The regional chiefs and the guys writing the resource language, the foresters, were basically—. They somehow felt, politically and for other reasons, that their job was to get the trees cut, because they were foresters and this is a big, macho feeling about being foresters. Stopping the cutting or doing something like that is just not in their ethic.

And so, as we talked yesterday, the lines were getting harder and harder on both sides, because there wasn't any accommodation. The environmentalists were getting tired of fighting and fighting, and they were having to give up when they shouldn't. And the industry was tired of being followed by these nutcase people, who were running around acting stupid, with long hair and smoking pot, [laughs] which was totally out of the character attributed to the United States citizen. So they had a war, and that's what was going on.

Lage: Yes, polarization.

Wilson: And then you've got these rules that are supposed to make these the toughest rules for forestry in the United States. Well, maybe they were in word, but not

in application on the ground. For all that was said and done, they were rather [inaudible]. That's the sum of it.

Lage: So you don't have a really positive view of what the board and the department were able to do. I'm talking now before your tenure.

Wilson: Again, I think Henry did an enormous amount trying to get some of this stuff written better. Yes, I mean I think protection for streams and road building—all of those things were advanced to where they were in good shape. And as far as the trees and trying to get it down to trying to manage a selection or something of a selection type, as opposed to clearcut vs. this never-log-don't-touch-a-tree attitude. We struggled with that all the time.

Lage: Okay. So that one was not a success. What was someone like Henry Trobitz, who seemed so clearly a big industry person, how did he function on the board?

Wilson: He functioned as an industry person; they knew what they were doing. He was a pretty classy guy. I think, when all was said and done, that's what he was for. You know, they have a business of growing and cutting trees. And "we don't need to have bureaucrats or the public telling us how to do it because we know how to make money at it and we know how to do it," and that's the way he took his job. That was his job.

Lage: Yes. That was his role on the board.

Wilson: Yes.

Lage: And someone like Phil Berry, who represented the Sierra Club—well, didn't really represent the Sierra Club.

Wilson: No, but he represented the Sierra Club point of view—that you're cutting too many trees, that you're screwing up nature, you threaten the wildlife. He took the second half of the act and kept talking about it.

Lage: Was he a reasonable guy about it?

Wilson: Well, they would fight, but at least it was a discussion that was worth listening to. It was an education to see the two of them having at it, but yes, they went at it. Yes.

Lage: Was it an education? Now, you don't have a professional forestry background, do you?

Wilson: Well, no, I do not.

Lage: You have on-the-ground experience.

- Wilson: I've been on-the-ground, but I didn't have a degree, but I—yes.
- Lage: Was this a learning experience?
- Wilson: Oh sure. Being with Vaux, you couldn't help but learn, being with Vaux. He was a great teacher, and I learned a lot about forestry from Vaux, and the field trips we used to take, and everything. So he was—.
- Lage: What kind of field trips would you take?
- Wilson: Oh, you'd go to different places—inland and on the coast. We'd go to all the different sites, and we'd go through the sites. We'd go to the mills; we'd have a field day with any number of environmental issues, with logging issues, and the companies would show us—. I mean, the companies—they clearly were headed to a tree-farm mentality. By that, you do a clear cut and then you plant a lot of trees and you get a tree farm, all even age.
- See, that's the even-age system. And then when you get a tree farm, you can chip it or plant what you want, like Monterey pine, short-growing stuff. But they are terribly prone to fire. We had one in the Sierras that burned up; it was 10,000 acres that just all went up because it didn't have any insulation against fire going through it. It just went boom, and that was it. That was the story; it was all burned down.
- Lage: So this is another aspect of fire, aside from accumulation?
- Wilson: Oh absolutely. I want to check up a fact here, so if you'll just hold for a minute.
- Lage: Hold on. [turns tape off] Okay, we're back on, and you were just talking to Dean Cromwell.
- Wilson: I called Dean Cromwell, Ann, because we had talked about some very specific areas of the Vaux tenure on the board and the membership of the board and everything, and I think we did pretty well. But I just wanted to go back, and having talked to Dean, reiterate a few things that stand out in the Vaux period. One, there was a very, very important debate that went on between Henry Vaux, Phil Berry and John Callahan; Vaux was able to get them to agree that in the intent language, that basically water protection had standing with timber.
- Lage: I see.
- Wilson: It wasn't lesser. That was a big, big rattle-battle. But he got that out of both Berry and Callahan, and they agreed. That was a big deal.

Another thing that he did, which we'll get to, which I worked very hard on, was that he insisted the university get back into the research role, and advise the legislature, And he got the legislature to really promote forest health. That was very important because the university was just dead on its feet; it was dying in this particular period. I mean, the university—unless there's an advocate that goes to the university and says, "You will"—because they are, by charter, supposed to advise the legislature, but they don't do it, because you are a professor, you have to get out of your office and get in your car and go do something beside sit around and talk and have thoughts about things you never think about. You have to work, sadly; I mean, that's hard work.

Well, he got on them—.

Lage: He got on the professors? Or did he get money for the projects?

Wilson: Well, both. He got the legislature and he got the university, because of his standing, to get on forest health. Yes, both. Money and—.

Lage: I wonder if this was through the Wildlands Research Center? I know he pushed that inside the university system.

Wilson: Yes. To some degree, I think that's true. Along that line, when we were talking about him, how he dealt with the implementation of the Forest Practice Act and the maximum sustained productivity, he did not come right out in front on maximum sustained yield. He knew that was a hot button. What he did was he tried to make silviculture and forestry compatible. You had to understand that one traveled with the other, and so—.

Lage: That maximum sustained yield traveled—?

Wilson: Maximum sustained yield was a buzz word, and if you fought the battle over those words, you were going to have a hard time. So he tied it to silviculture and forestry, so if you're practicing forestry, you're practicing silviculture. Silviculture means you will practice maximum sustained yield. That's the beef.

Lage: I see. So he was a pretty good politician, for a professor.

Wilson: He was an excellent—. Well, he was. And the thing was—. I think the date that Dean—that strikes him at the CL—California Licensed Forestry Association started in 1978. —that Vaux saw that the forester was accountable to both the public and the client, meaning the corporations, to grow a basically sustainable forest, and that basically he, Vaux, was not fighting clearcut, but he was against overcutting to the detriment of sustainable forestry. [phone interruption]

- Lage: [Reviewing list of topics to discuss] Okay, now let's see. Licensed professional foresters.
- Wilson: Okay. Vaux, the way he handled things, like high grading, just taking the best trees. He was against that, because that wasn't good forestry or silviculture. So I'm trying to distinguish that he was a good enough politician that he didn't take that word like clearcut, or a word like high grading, and rub it in their face, because it would make them mad, so he worked around it. Silviculture implies you don't do that, if you are a forester, and if you are going to be a licensed forester, you better damn well live up to your license and your obligation. That's the way he worked.
- Lage: And your obligation is partly to the public?
- Wilson: Yes. Then, this whole issue about your obligation being not only to the industry and the landowners, but, and here we go, your obligation is to the public, and that made the industry so mad that they never could get themselves together. That just infuriated them; I mean, they were just burned to a sizzle over that.
- Lage: Now, this was the industry. How about the foresters themselves?
- Wilson: Well, they didn't like it either. It was much more complicated. This is going back—. We mentioned this landowner's right to do what they want with their land. There it is, front and center, and they had been ingrained that they knew best for forestry and the landowner, and they were going to do what the landowner wanted, and that was to get the tree from here to the mill. That's about it.
- Lage: And to heck with the stream—.
- Wilson: And all this other baloney—"let's not get bogged down with this stuff." Vaux was on to that, but it was a tough one, but he came to that—. See, it was too early to get into cumulative effects, because cumulative effects is really what we talk about when we talk about all these issues. It wasn't ready. It wasn't right as an issue, a worry.
- Lage: So that wasn't brought in during his era?
- Wilson: Well, he was bringing it in through this silviculture forestry practice—introducing it. He was not going to bring cumulative effects forward, but he, in a way, put out the first Forest Assessment Policy through FRAP, and you see, FRAP, Forest Resource Assessment Policy, he and Barry Keene got that passed as a budget item and put into the CDF and not the agency, because traditionally there's always this friction between the agency and the department.

- Lage: Now, what's the agency?
- Wilson: The Resources Agency, under Huey [Johnson]—that was not a happy relationship between Vaux and Huey.
- Lage: What was the problem? We have Vaux, Huey Johnson, and then we have David Pesonen.
- Wilson: Yes, but it's an interesting triangle. Look at it this way. You had Phil Berry, you had Dave Pesonen, you had Huey, and you had Vaux. Huey, as you say was a free spirit. He's a little different; he does things in his own way. And for a guy like Vaux, who is more orderly and disciplined, swinging in Huey's chair in his office is a little distracting.
- Lage: Their styles of thinking seem very different.
- Wilson: That too. Now, Pesonen was a good buddy of Huey's and was a forester, and he respected the intellect of Vaux enormously, so between Huey and Berry, they acted as a pretty good little bridge in there, to try and keep everybody all together.
- Lage: Now, Berry's role was what?
- Wilson: He was vice-chair of the Board of Forestry. But he'd been president of the Sierra Club.
- Lage: So did he have an in with Huey?
- Wilson: Yes, sure. That Pesonen-Berry relationship kept the world kind of together, whereas if it had been just Vaux and the agency, it could have been just chaotic.
- Lage: I see. That's very interesting.
- Wilson: But there's always a battle, because when Vaux left, and [Governor George] Deukmejian came in, Hal Walt and [Gordon Van Vleck, who was the agency secretary, got on fine.
- Lage: And Walt was the new chair of the board.
- Wilson: Yes. And he was a good chair. I mean, I think he was a pretty good chair.
- Lage: And who did he get along with, did you say?
- Wilson: Gordon Van Vleck, who was the Resources Agency secretary [Huey Johnson's successor]. All I'm saying is that whoever is the director, there's always that agency issue. And so, if you get along good, you get along; if you

don't get along, well, it doesn't. And I'll come to that because we hit a real stump that caused enormous problems.

Lage: During your tenure?

Wilson: Well, yes, because when Walt went out, we got Terry Gordon and that was a mess.

Lage: We'll come to that.

Wilson: We'll come to that, but the point is—.

Lage: Did Walt serve for a time as head of the department?

Wilson: Just a little while.

Lage: Just a brief time.

Wilson: And he wasn't a great director; he was a much better board chairman. But he was a pretty nice man; he's dead now. And I succeeded him.

Lage: But the board deals with more than the Department of Forestry because it has all these issues of [the Department of] Fish and Game and water resources.

Wilson: Oh yes, and I think, you know, that Vaux was very helpful in getting those things up and running in FRAP and using FRAP.

Lage: Now what was FRAP? You've mentioned it several times.

Wilson: The Forest Resource Assessment Program. It's the one that did the investigation, the science, the research, and they brought to the board the kinds of things they needed to establish policy on the whole idea of silviculture and forestry meeting maximum sustained productivity, fish, wildlife, as science, etc.

Lage: Not investigating individual timber harvest plans, but the bigger picture?

Wilson: No, not unless it affected that, but the first FRAP report was—. The first Forest Assessment Policy came out under Vaux, and that talked about California and its forest lands and what the forest lands were, and it tells you a lot about what it is, what the lands are, everything. It's just an assessment. Well, that was Vaux, and he got that going.

Lage: He had a big picture for the whole—.

Wilson: He had a big picture, and he was a good enough politician in that he didn't take one of these hot button issues and just rub it in their face, really to just

drive them crazy, because it didn't take much to drive them crazy. They got crazy fast.

Lage: Sure. [Laughter]

Wilson: And it was bad enough when they put me on the board. That got them completely.

Lage: They didn't like that? You had already had your battles with them.

Wilson: Well, they knew it, and they were just going crazy. But I think that pretty well closes the Vaux period, and we got through that. And in the Walt period, there wasn't a lot going on.

Lage: Were you on the board when Walt was there?

Wilson: No, because Deukmejian did not—. Anybody who worked for Jerry Brown was out. So I was gone.

Lage: I see. He didn't reappoint anybody.

Wilson: So I came back to the ranch and I was busy here. Actually, that's when we started the county Forest Advisory Committee. I helped start that in Mendocino County to deal with our local problems, and Jim Eddie was the supervisor, and I helped him run the first time many years ago. We put that on line and really began to focus on Mendocino County, which eventually led into the Pete Wilson campaign, and the forest practices committee, more or less written to influence the new governor.

Lage: Let's not get too far ahead of ourselves. This is an overview?

Wilson: Well, I'm just saying that when I left the board, I came back to the ranch; that's it, in essence. And that was Deukmejian. I had very little to do with him.

Lage: What did you think about the quality of Deukmejian's governance?

Wilson: He didn't want to do anything. Deukmejian was simply "Don't do anything. Leave everything alone with business." He was very pro-business. That's okay. It was quiet, and they did their usual fighting and things, but for the most part, the industry had the ear of the governor's office, and they ran the board through Walt, and Hal did a decent job of managing it.

Lage: So it was sort of a quiet—.

Wilson: It was, I'd say, pretty much of a quiet period.

- Lage: Did he make any good appointments in the other resources agency people? Fish and Game?
- Wilson: Oh, there were some characters there. Well, Charlie Fullerton was a good appointment—.
- Lage: Well, he was in there all along.
- Wilson: Well, I know, he stayed. He was a pretty good director of Fish and Game. Water Quality was new and getting its legs under it and it's never been really defined. The department pretty much still was lead agency and kind of doing what it had always done, which was in the final analysis, moving the trees to the mill. That was the attitude. However, Walt did say that there was some overcutting. He did stand up and take the heat on that one. It was the first time somebody as much as suggested they were cutting too much timber. I mean, that's okay. That was a major step.
- But I don't think there was really—. We were in a boom. Timber prices were pretty good. There was a lot of activity. Harry Merlo was flying high. They were cutting a lot of trees. There were a lot of jobs, and we hadn't really hit the wall yet. They were thinking. In other words, we were overcutting, but we just hadn't hit the wall, and all of a sudden—. Once you overcut, you can only go so far before the forest plays out, the cycle kicks in, and finally, you know, you can't cut anymore, because there isn't enough on the ground. You need stocking and so forth. Because if you don't meet stocking on a natural basis, then you've got to go out and plant the trees. And they didn't do that.
- Lage: Okay. So we've got you back to the ranch. And what's the next step here?
- Wilson: Well, of course, I was working with the county on this Forest Advisory Committee, setting it up.
- Lage: Now how did that happen?
- Wilson: That basically came out of the ferment in Mendocino County, the political action and the environmentalists—and most of it is coastal; most of the things that happen are on the coast in the redwood country, because that's where the action is and that's where the people are, and they were getting into more and more fights with Louisiana-Pacific and of course—.
- Lage: Your old friend.
- Wilson: My old friend Harry. And then also, up the line, with Hurwitz, and the redwoods, and there was a lot of synergy there between—. They were somewhat different people. Judy Bari, you remember. She was involved in the marches, and there was a lot of struggling, mostly over the redwoods, but all over. Everything.

- Lage: So the action was not just in Humboldt County but down in Mendocino?
- Wilson: No. It was down in Mendocino too.
- Lage: So, how did the Advisory Board task force—. Why was it a task force?
- Wilson: Well, it had people like Eric Swanson and Hans Burkhardt, and others. We basically showed, I think, pretty clearly, what the cut was, and how they were overcutting, and that if you didn't stop this, you were going to get to where we are today, and that the department and everybody better wake up and smell the roses on this and do something about it.
- Lage: The Department of Forestry.
- Wilson: Yes.
- Lage: Who called the advisory task force together?
- Wilson: Well, I helped do that with Jim Eddie and some people on the coast. Henry Gundling was another founding member.
- Lage: Were they ranch owners?
- Wilson: Well, they owned land or they owned property, or they had an interest in forestry. Yes, they had some interest in the timber side. And there were some environmental people too. Kathy Bailey, a Sierra Club representative.
- Lage: Did the board of supervisors appoint the task force?
- Wilson: It was official through the board of supervisors. And so we fundamentally started trying to write some kind of guidelines. Again, we were trying to get back to this idea of sustainability so that the bottom didn't fall out of it. And the Harwood people—. There's a good example; they're a local company that's totally almost beholden to the local landowners. We had Georgia-Pacific on the coast and we had Louisiana-Pacific on the coast and inland. They just sop up so much of the market and everything, so the small mills like Harwood are always struggling to get enough product to keep running their business.
- Lage: And they are basically a milling business, so they need lumber from all over.
- Wilson: Well, they had bought a lot of property, one of them the adjoining piece to the Jackson Forest, and it almost broke them. And they were good people to work with. I had some timber and sold it to them, and they would work with you. And if you had to build a bridge or didn't know how to fix it, whatever, or something, they'd be more than happy to do it, whereas the corporate guys

would be in your face and do absolutely nothing but just do nothing. It's unbelievable; they won't touch it.

The Harwoods were good neighbors, and they kept them in line by being good neighbors.

Lage: Did they get involved in this task force?

Wilson: They did, yes, because they knew they had to somehow—. You had to get on the side of the agents a little bit, because all of them—. It was no big mystery that these GP/LPs [Georgia and Louisiana-Pacific] were going to leave when they got through. When there wasn't enough consumption to feed all their mills to capacity and meet their expectations on return and investment, they were going to be gone, and Harwood was going to be here alone. So they would keep the land—. I think, basically, they are still small landowners still. They have a fair amount of timber; half of it, the state owned, and private timber. They're small landowners. It's not corporate.

Lage: And are they more amenable to a sustained yield approach?

Wilson: Well, yes, because they are more amenable to listening and working with foresters. You see, I mean, most people—.

Lage: They are not responding to Wall Street either.

Wilson: They don't have to cut it every year. They cut it two or three times in a lifetime maybe, but it's a different mindset. They enjoy the property; they do want to get some money out of it eventually. Maybe they've got education or something coming, but they do want to have the right to harvest, and they don't want to be cut off at the pass. And Craig Blanco, Wayne Miller's son-in-law—Wayne was a great Board of Forestry committee member. Wayne did a lot of hard work on this stuff at the board level. Craig, his son-in-law, is a great forester but a small operator. And he really understands it—on the coast. And they're the ones who needed help.

[End Tape 11, Side B]

[Begin Tape 12, Side A]

Wilson: The forest landowners, before they had an organization, FLOC—Forest Landowners of California—and they had an organization, then made up mostly of ranchers and people who were small owners. And they were concerned too about this. There was always a lot of tension because they were always scared to death that if the big mills didn't have timber, they were going to leave, and who was going to buy the timber to mill their product? I mean, that's always been the feeling. If they have trees and you don't have a mill to sell to, you can't sell the trees. Well, that's not likely to happen because if

there's enough like Harwood—. If there's enough mills and enough trees to keep the mill going, they'll get the trees. I mean, that's the nature of these things. There was always this threat that the big guys said, "Well, if you don't sell it to us, if you don't do something to keep us in business, we're going and you're going, so you better do it our way."

LP had started some kind of a hokey deal that they were going to manage private property owners' timber, and they were going to get a part of the cut. But it was a misrepresentation. Nobody could live with the foresters and what they were doing; it didn't last. They were trying to do something for themselves.

So we were—. First of all, we wanted to show what actually was happening to the economy in Mendocino County, and Hans Burkhardt and Eric Swanson did a great job with the math and with just hard work.

Lage: And who was Hans Burkhardt?

Wilson: Hans is a retired Caltech colleague who has a place on the Noyo-Skunk railroad line. It's over near our woods and they have a garden, and he's a chemist and he's got a very ecological ranch. Everything is solar and water turbiner from a stream for power. But he's a fascinating guy. He's a total advocate for sustainability. And Eric grew up in Laytonville and was killed in an automobile accident [in 1992], but he was very handy with computers and understood timber issues in this county. What we had, what we were in, how we were going to sustain these timberlands.

Lage: So they wrote a comprehensive report?

Wilson: Absolutely. Of course, what we were trying to do was to enforce local rules. You see, the industry, depending on where the power is—if it's a local level, then the local, if the state, then the state—it's wherever they can control the game. The legislature of the state, or the local [government]. Well, it was pretty much state—the CDF and the forest practice rules, but they knew they could control that. They didn't want to come back to local government and have a local representative get all the control. They could do what they wanted to do. So they didn't like it. They were challenging everything. Then there were things like sustained yield bonds that the companies were supposed to produce for the state, and we challenged that because the local companies--.

Lage: Would you challenge it at the Board of Forestry level?

Wilson: Well, first at the local board of supervisors, eventually up there, but we'll get to that. This is where things really fell apart big time. But this is what the county was doing essentially.

Lage: So this is another level of activity?

- Wilson: This is another level of activity in Mendocino County that, next to Humboldt, had the most timber.
- Lage: Were you the moving party on this task force? Getting it started?
- Wilson: I was one of them, yes, and it sustained itself right up to now.
- Lage: So it's still going on?
- Wilson: It's still going. I think it's done a pretty decent job. It's just the players are getting kind of rickety. Harwood's having a hard time. LP's gone and GP is sold to somebody. There's a lot of distance between the ownership and the people on the land who are having some hard times getting their timber. And prices are not good. It's not an easy time to be protecting these timberlands and getting converted to something else.
- Lage: I see. Because there's not a lot of money in the timber land?
- Wilson: Right. Well, there's money in the land, but—.
- Lage: I mean, in timber.
- Wilson: —not in trees.
- Lage: Why not in trees?
- Wilson: They've had a glut up in Canada and Washington, and you can get all the trees you want on a barge and get them down here and keep them right here. And the market's down. It's been down when we hit the nineties and the dot-coms. All of it. The redwood stock went from seven or eight hundred dollars back down to five or six. It's just one of those times.

And the other things is that because of the cost, we are beginning to see more and more steel and aluminum structures going up. That's an energy-intensive alternative to wood. I mean, again, it comes back to this thing—. Depending on how you count, if you count all the energy in every little bit of steel or aluminum stuff, if you look at it that way as opposed to a tree. You go over in the sunlight and all the natural elements, supplying the irrigation. Well, it's not much of a tradeoff but if—the way you count on the economy, just to be fair, the cost of a timber harvest plan, the trouble with getting it through, the litigiousness and all of this, has discouraged a lot of people. So we're in a real difficult time. Whether you know the land is zoned, timber protection zone, simply because that was its highest and best use, but to hold that zone together politically you've got to have enough revenue to make an incentive; in our system, incentives will drive it—to keep the thing alive. And if you don't, people get discouraged and they want out and then they got into real estate.

We've already seen that with Sierra Pacific in Placer County. The first big one.

But they are not reinvesting. They are now selling land that was zoned TPZ [timber preserve zone].

Lage: The money is in real estate.

Wilson: You bet, you bet.

Lage: Rather than production.

Wilson: That's right. Which has never been debated. It's just literally a zone; you go through legislature and everything, and now, because there's an out, if you can get the county to give you the—. You need two things to get out. You've got to get the county and the CDF, and CDF has never turned one down, because they've just always settled it completely and then—it's just the way you do it. So, they can. The point is they can turn it down, saying it's TPZ land—we've got a zone. So that's the way it's supposed to be done, but the tip-off on all this stuff is when these LPs and other corporations don't reinvest some of this money—the real money they've made—back where they've harvested. They're not reinvesting it in stand improvement, not a damn thing. It all gets logged off. Henry Vaux talked about this. It goes to the stock market or some damn place, but it doesn't come back where we want it. When you don't reinvest, eventually you wear something out. It's like your car. Eventually you run it, and then the engine quits and then you start walking.

Lage: But there seems to be that happening, but also the poor market for timber?

Wilson: Well, in the market, you get a glut. Or the economy goes down so you can't—you know. Home building. Right now, home building is quite high, and even so, the market is—because we've got so much coming out cheap. If you recall, just recently, they put a tariff on this Canadian timber. The reason they did was because they were competing so heavily in here that they were hurting our market.

Lage: So I wonder what kind of practices they are using there? Their harvest practices?

Wilson: Not very good. But they're subsidizing timber at the stumps so that they are getting a real advantage. So they slapped a tariff on them, and now that's a big—I don't know who this—GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade] stuff. You know, in GATT—over that tariff, because they were cutting maybe our producers. That's where the cheapest timber is so, it's finding its way to L. A.

- Lage: These are very complex issues. You mentioned the burden regulation, which kind of amused me because you are also an advocate for regulation. But then you see the burden of it.
- Wilson: But then you see the burden of it, and if it is overdone, it becomes a burden. You see, it's this terribly difficult problem of balance between—. Regulation is like having some rules in a fight or something, where you've got two people and you've got a referee, and you're bound to hit below the belt. Someone looks the other way, and they lobby for it. The idea is that you can only go so far or you're in trouble. Well, we've overdone regulation and caused a lot of trouble. It just makes it impossible and falls harder on small landowners than the big ones, because the big one has the people and the capacity to deal with it. The smaller guys got to eat it; it's going to come right out of pocket.
- Lage: But on the other hand, it does provide protection for things like your road site.
- Wilson: Yes, it works both ways. So you've got—. You need it. You cannot have it without regulation, or you might have it, so then the question is "How do we do it?" [interruption by Sophie, the dog]
- Lage: She's okay. She'll lie down in a minute. I don't know why she's so—. She needs a little affection.
- Wilson: She got tired of sitting there alone. So anyway, yes, it cuts both ways. California, being with the large population, we just have more action and more protests and more people fighting over fixed landscape. Like I say, if you're going to hold the land together and keep your timber protection up and keep it big enough to support growing it and the cost of doing business, you've got to give it some protection, some buffers in terms of—. You've got to keep the public out. But in order to do it, to do that, you have to be able to define what is forestry going to be in the twenty-first century. And we haven't done that. It's going to meet the needs of the environment, meet the needs of economics. We have not done that. So what we do is we go as far as we can go with these big companies, until they run out, and they leave. Then you've got the small people left that have timberland, but it's getting harder and more costly. Can they hang on? Can you transition with enough small landowners in this to keep it viable?
- That's a good question, when you have the possibility of chopping stuff up and signing with people from the city for large amounts of money. My thought was always to take some of these threatened areas that are very good and try to slice out those non-productive pieces that would make the best residential and try to pool that to get enough people from the city to buy into that, and then keep the remainder at large open only for timber production and grazing, if there's grazing, but don't let it ever be cut up. Let the purchase of that, either with the development and stuff, the CC&Rs [covenants, conditions and restrictions], those are the controllers, to keep that together, to hold the

best of the timberland, because that would provide the money to do it. And you can do it—.

Lage: You mean, selling some of it for real estate?

Wilson: If you sell it, so that they're contained, like the Hollister Ranch in Southern California, where the homeowners are contained—on 10,000 acres, 100 of them, whatever it is—so they can only build and have one hundred buildings, so that basically the ranch is still a ranch. It still runs cattle, and homeowners are still happy with what they've got. It's up there at Goleta, near Santa Barbara. But they are assessed an amount of money to keep the place up, the roads—.

Lage: The whole area?

Wilson: The whole area.

Lage: So they actually own a portion—an interest in the ranch?

Wilson: Yes, they do. But they own a lot, a specific parcel that they can buy and sell. But the ranch at large is held in trust, as it were, to use for agriculture, grazing, whatever in our life, and that the homeowners—. If the cattle, for instance, don't carry the cost, they're assessed a small amount to pay for that.

Lage: Who came up with that idea?

Wilson: Well, that's the old Hollister Ranch. It's been twenty-five years when Charles Kimball was the lawyer from Santa Barbara. It's working, and it looks to me as what the future—. Kind of what I tried to do with LP and I couldn't do it.

Lage: With LP lands?

Wilson: My land.

Lage: Oh, on your land.

Wilson: What I wanted to do was to see if I could pool our resources together up at this end of the world, just up here, to do just that. But the amount of money, and timber was not that good, as to take something better and use that, but put the rest of this in an easement in perpetuity so as it will grow trees, and have the money generated from those homeowners over time to do that.

Lage: That's an interesting way to go about it.

Wilson: Well, it works. It can work, but you have to change, shift gears a little bit. And it's just real hard with the corporate thing to function very well.

Lage: Let me just stop for a minute. [Break for lunch] Very good. We're back on after lunch.

Wilson: Well, I think that at the end of the Board of Forestry, it was certainly appropriate for me to come back to the ranch because we were going through some really difficult times. With the Carter years, in '78, we had that enormous inflation; there were 20 percent interest rates. This all started the whole cycle of insurance going up, of fuel going up, fertilizer—a by-product of oil—went up. The PG&E rates doubled and tripled because we used to get a break on pumping water. The more you pumped, the lower your rate. That turned around, and it was just the opposite. The more you pumped, the more the bill went up. You had unemployment insurance coming into agriculture. And I had farmed fairly intensively down in the valley and drilled wells, and fed cattle. I worked with Grover Turnbow, who is a former dairy prof who started Foremost Dairies. He had a large ranch and feed lot in Chowchilla. I bought a lot of cattle for him to send to his people, and then I had cattle of my own, plus some others that I took care of here. They started among the corn silage we raised in the valley and then we sent them all down to his feedlot in Chowchilla, and he finished them, and then they went to a slaughter plant they had close by.

So all of that energy, as it were—. It was energy-intensive to the extent that it used fertilizer, it used power, you had to use trucks to get the cattle in and out of here—all of that stuff just went out of sight, reason; it just went off the charts. So it occurred to me that Turnbow was getting older, and eventually, he passed away, and I was concerned that the older people that I had working for me—Frank Weymouth, Herbert Dunlap, Gene Rehner—these were older people who grew up in the valley, and they knew all about farming, and when they did it, they knew how to do it. It didn't matter whether it was cultivating or watering or whatever it was. Also Ralph Rogers, he was with me for years, as well as Mel Phillips, but there were no real young people coming along who seemed to have any of the background or the willingness to work.

Lage: The young kids in the valley did not go on into ranch work?

Wilson: They didn't want to. They had welfare and lumber business and things that let them make more money. The people who had any ambition were in the woods with a chainsaw or a cab or something. They were quitting agriculture. The upside: you could make yourself a little money, five or ten dollars—. The downside being taken care of these cattle down south, in the feedlots, you could make fifty dollars or you could lose a hundred dollars. So the risk side of this thing, just the whole thing. The banks, they didn't want to work with you because of the risk. Everything was on the downside, so I decided that we'd better sell some property, get rid of it, and cut this thing down, way down, farming and everything, so that myself and maybe one person or so would take care of it, and that's it, because it was just no use beating your

brains out for about this much on the top and about this much on the bottom, meaning the loss side was just too big a risk.

Lage: Looks like you're talking about a 2 percent profit.

Wilson: If that. Maybe nothing. Maybe you weren't—. You're looking at maybe seven negative years and three good years. It was getting accentuated. So, those were hard things to do, but we sold some of it.

Lage: You sold some of the land?

Wilson: Yes, we sold some of the land and we got rid of some of the equipment, and we structured it more toward just cows and calves, and I kept somebody out here at Buck Mountain. So I had somebody here, and I was in the valley, and I raised hay; I did most of the farming and took care of that, watering, and Denny Brush, I had Denny up here, and he took care of the cows out here, and we worked our way back kind of down that road.

Lage: Did you sell land out here or land in the valley?

Wilson: Oh, we had a ranch over across the river, out on the mountain, and then I had some leased. I had the Travis Ranch leased, just north of me. That was 10,000 acres, and I had Baxter Ranch to the south of me, another ten or fifteen—. I got rid of those leases. And I was more or less taking care of things. The thing was that you spent your whole time fighting overhead when there was just no movement in price or anything. There was just no movement. You couldn't do anything on that side of the equation. You couldn't raise your prices because you didn't have control of that market. They could take or give you whatever they wanted to give you. So we got rid of a lot of that, a lot of our bank debt and land and overhead and a lot of things, and just headed back to what, as I say, out here, where the cows did more of the gardening, and then I raised hay. I had some high school kids who I had help me in the summer, so I had some help then. But that's where I went to, where we kind of needed to go.

Lage: Did your own kids help on the ranch?

Wilson: Oh yes. Alex—they did. Alex [Richard Alexander Wilson, Jr.], he was a terrific helper. He was a child that knew this stuff. I think he was born with the ranch in his head. He knew it without me even teaching him. He liked it, he knew it, that's what he wanted to do, and he knew it had to be done. He was an unbelievable boy. I just never saw anything like it.

Lage: He was just ready to take over the ranch?

Wilson: That, and then he went to Cal Poly, and he was on the rodeo team. He had inherently good judgment about all this stuff and recognized it for what it was. It was just a lot of hard work and a lot of things that you had to do, that he

wanted—. That's what he wanted to do. Of course, I wasn't too keen on the rodeo, but I said, "Well, go to school, get trained, so that you know as much as you can about this business of bull-riding, so as to cut the risks down as much as you can."

Lage: So where did he go to school to get trained for that?

Wilson: Well, there was a place in Oklahoma—they have these, just like tennis camps and all that stuff. They have bull-riding schools in places.

Lage: Oh, I see.

Wilson: He worked at Cotton Rosser's rodeo training when he was at Thacher [School] and wrote a thesis on that.

Lage: So he was really into that?

Wilson: Oh yes. He was into the finals for the state championship, and he was on the rodeo team at Cal Poly. So, anyway, he got killed in 1984 at a rodeo in Red Bluff—.

Lage: Oh, dear. And were you there?

Wilson: No, I was not. I was here. I got word and flew over there. He was basically hurt so badly that—. We had to go without the rodeo for three years. George Stevenson—I knew George because his kids went to Thacher and knew Alex, and George was on the staff over at Redding, the hospital; but the bull stepped on his neck, cut his blood flow to his brain.

Lage: That must have been devastating.

Wilson: Well, it was, because Susan's parents had died a few, several years back, but they both died in an airplane over by Red Bluff—killed. And then Alex came along, and then my brother died the same year, in July. That was just really kind of—taking on a lot.

Lage: It must have just set you back.

Wilson: It was. It was really—. Well, we were trying to get lined up with the times we had to live, We either had to stay up here, or get out of thing altogether. There was always the thing of selling it out and quitting.

Lage: Did the loss of Alex make you think about giving it up or make you want to hang on longer?

Wilson: Well, it was between both. We had this terrible drought. There was also the seventies drought, 1976-77. That was terrible. I mean, it literally didn't rain at all.

Lage: Yes.

Wilson: We had the LP problem. It was an ongoing problem with these people. We contracted in 1960, when the Crawford people died, and Georgia-Pacific came in about 1968, I'd say. From 1968 to 1990, we did nothing but fight with those people.

Lage: That takes a lot out of you—.

Wilson: Everything. It was just all the time. Roads, gates, locked gates, you couldn't get through. Just endless trouble. So that was going on, and the contract ended in 1990, we got them out in 1995, before it was broke; it was about two weeks. But that was a long drain, and we had a fight over wilderness, and in the end we had LP problems, and the cattle business wasn't very good. It was enough; we kept going. But it wasn't an easy time, and then Alex, he got knocked out. Those were not happy days. And Susan, she was having a hard time, it was hard.

Lage: Very hard.

Wilson: [Yes, it takes a big piece of your life away, as it did to Susan and me. I don't think we ever recovered from this, but you have to carry on.—added during narrator review] Just trying to adjust to this thing with Alex, and Alex was a big brother to Chris, and Chris kind of followed Alex. He was really thinking of Alex.

Lage: How much younger is Chris?

Wilson: Well, Chris was born in '62, and Alex was '60. Two years, a few years. And so, then he was going to college, and Marjo was coming along. And it was just—. Like these things you go through, you go through these changing times, you know; conditions change, you adjust and you make adjustments, so that was a lot of work, transitioning through all this and kind of personal grief, and where the county was, the family things going on, and I was healthy enough, but not the best. It was just the pressure; all this damn legal stuff with this LP corporation. That stuff just goes on you all the time, unrelenting, because they wanted the road, and they were going to go to any extreme to get it.

So I think, when we look back, I think we did what we had to do to keep the core together. We got rid of the edges and peeled it up, as it were. And it gave me some time to do some sorting. Of course, as we moved to—the Deukmejian period was ending and Wilson was coming on, and I mean, the

ranch was doing better. I mean, we were getting along, and I thought, maybe this would be a good time. I had been fighting this timber all these years. I thought, maybe—. My memory of Pete Wilson was his days as an assemblyman. In fact he was involved with this thing regarding the wilderness as a U. S. senator.

Lage: The Yolla Bolly wilderness?

Wilson: Yes, he and Cranston. In fact, they took several runs at the expansion, and it was when Wilson was the senator and Cranston and Reagan, it was the combination that finally finished it and put the new boundary in. Again, this was a little bit like the Land Use Task Force, which seemed at the time to be the right thing to try to put together a watershed project. Wilson knew more about California, having been an assemblyman, having been a mayor, having been a U. S. senator, and was a pretty decent kind of guy. The people around him were good. Otto Boss [Pete Wilson's press secretary] was, I thought, a fine man. I thought, well, if there is one person who has come up who potentially has the capacity to grab ahold of these big issues in resources—. That's what I was looking at; I was looking at the water, agriculture. But he's the best we've had, and maybe this is the time to get in there and see if maybe we could do something.

Lage: Did you work for him, his campaign?

Wilson: Yes. I helped with the forestry like that. John Amodio and I were both involved as outsiders. And then Susan, well, of course, in the nineties, she got cancer, stomach cancer; that was like in February, and she was dead in June. [It seemed there was no end of struggle of the human kind.]

Lage: My! In 1991?

Wilson: In 1990. And then, there I had Sarah, who wasn't very big.

Lage: Who was how old? Not very old.

Wilson: She was born in '78, so she was maybe in the sixth grade. I think it was the sixth. Anyway, I had to get ready to cross the Rubicon, because I was just stuck. And I had things pretty all shut down. I mean, I could leave somebody here to take care of it—.

Lage: Had you moved when Susan got so ill? Did you have to move?

Wilson: No, no. Well, we went to San Francisco; we went to UCSF.

[End Tape 12, Side A; Side B blank]

[Begin Tape 13, Side A]

Wilson: The best thing I could do was pack Sarah up and go back to Ojai and the Thacher School, because I had been a trustee for seventeen years, and the San Antonio School is a good little public school in the east end of the valley, and I knew a lot of the people and the environment was good. And the ranching, as it was, was just to get up and get out, because where we lived in the valley was kind of separated from the valley ranch, and it allowed me to sell that off. It wasn't part of the ranch, [something falls, loud noise] 160 acres; my house and the home were separate.

Lage: This is down—?

Wilson: In the valley. And so, we had the main ranch where Chris and Tina are now, which went over to the kids when Susan died. But I got out. I just left.

Lage: You sold the house.

Wilson: Well, eventually I did, but I rented it for two times from down in Ojai. I put Sarah in school—.

Lage: In the Ojai area?

Wilson: This was a major life change. Anyway, I took her down and put her in school and said, "Well, it's just the two of us." And she, you know, she stuck there and did well enough for a couple of years. And then [Pete] Wilson tried to come on as governor, and during that period, I had put my application in with the Resources Agency, and there was the election, and I helped with some of the campaign stuff. But fundamentally, I lived down there. My cousins Richard Grant and Maria have two girls that were really good to Sarah.

Lage: They live down that way?

Wilson: Pasadena. Richard and I—. He just had his thirtieth wedding anniversary the other day. I was his best man, and he is my cousin on my mother's side. And so, you know, when I went to Sacramento, Sarah went and stayed with them until she went into Thacher, so they did a great job of dealing with my Sarah. It was great. And she went to Westridge before she went to Thacher.

Lage: In Pasadena?

Wilson: Yes. And it allowed me to finally—. Then I got back on my feet and got into the Wilson administration. That's when I came on as the director of the Department of Forestry, because I did not get selected for resources secretary. Doug Wheeler came back from Washington for that. Wilson had called me and asked me if I wanted to take over Parks and Recreation or Forestry, and I said, "Well, it's probably a headache, but forestry is what I know, and I could

probably head it, with my work in Mendocino County, and everything, and I should do that.

Lage: But you had put in to be secretary of resources?

Wilson: Yes. And so, he appointed me to the [Department of] Forestry. And then I of course went to work, and Sarah went to Thacher then, and that's why I bought a house. So I almost was home on every weekend, up and down, from Sacramento—not every, but every so often to keep track of her for the four years she was down there.

Lage: And Marjo was saying last night that she lived with or helped care for Sarah.

Wilson: She helped a little bit, but more later. That was more—. I think Marjo stepped in and was more active when Sarah finally got out of Thacher and started going up to school in Santa Cruz; she didn't finish. She went up there to community college, and Sarah kind of—. She didn't do too good in the school; I think Marjo really threw herself into that, trying to get Sarah so she was moving along in life, and she continues to do up there. It's frustrating, but she really worked with Sarah and helped Sarah a lot, all of the time. She's been a great sister, a great daughter too. You know, we worked her through. Not easy times.

Lage: It takes a long time to work it through.

Wilson: It takes forever. So then I made my move. I did buy the house, and then I moved to Sacramento and got an apartment and commenced my career as the director of the Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention [CDF] in 1991 when Wilson effectively took office.

Lage: And you didn't start until August? Is that because—?

Wilson: That was the appointment process.

Lage: It just takes a long time. You had been on his transition team.

Wilson: On that, yes.

Lage: What did that involve?

Wilson: Well, it was partly making the campaign speeches up and talking about some of the resource issues. Again, it wasn't the big issues. The big issues were money and budgets.

Lage: Did you go in there thinking you could—? Did you have an agreement with Pete Wilson? Did you think you were going to get some of your ideas across?

- Wilson: Yeah, well. That, of course, was the thing that was so hard, that I went under the assumption that having written that thing about forest practices and Mendocino County, that he would be willing to work with Mendocino County.
- Lage: With that model?
- Wilson: Yes, and the sustainable forestry idea. And of course, that didn't work out, which we'll get into.
- Lage: How do these appointments work? Did you talk to Pete Wilson?
- Wilson: They talk to their friends and we talked. Yeah, all of it. There's usually somebody that's in the appointment position, and they ask friends, and we exchanged information back and forth.
- Lage: You told them what your visions were?
- Wilson: They knew. Yes, they knew. I mean, I was a pretty good prospect, having been with the Reagan thing and of course, Wilson. Everybody knew what I was.
- Lage: Yes, but I'm thinking about whether they made any promises to you?
- Wilson: I mean, the commitment was that—I obviously wrote it down—and the campaign commitment was about as much of a commitment as you could make, I guess, in politics. But it didn't hold up. [Laughter] But they often don't hold up. And as times change—that's the point—politics changes.
- So when I went to work, the problem initially—right off the wheel—was we were fourteen billion—'b' as in billion—in the hole, and so—. And after Deukmejian, I think everybody was shocked that the problem was this big.
- Lage: Here we had another Republican governor.
- Wilson: Deukmejian was not considered to be a spendthrift; I mean, here we were. But it was real. So the finance director immediately started in about these cuts. Cuts, cuts, cuts, cuts, cuts. That we just cut and trim, that's all we heard.
- Lage: Who was the finance director?
- Wilson: Hayes. Jim Hayes.
- Lage: Does Jim Hayes come up earlier in another capacity?
- Wilson: That's a different person, our supervisor in Los Angeles.

- Lage: Who was on the Coastal Commission.
- Wilson: Yes. And so, in a way, it opened some doors that of course never would have opened. I kind of looked at the department, the way it was organized in the four regions, and the way the state was. And I had known Loyd Forrest for years. Loyd Forrest was somebody that had been in the department and was a contender for the directorship after Jerry Partain. You know, we left out Jerry Partain. Jerry Partain came along.
- Lage: Oh yes. He came along after. After Walt?
- Wilson: No, before Walt.
- Lage: After Pesonen?
- Wilson: No. It was Deukmejian. Yes, Pesonen, Jerry Partain and then Walt.
- Lage: Jerry Partain, where did he come from?
- Wilson: Humboldt County. He taught up at Humboldt State. And he was a lumber guy, and I think pretty close to industry, and he didn't like hippies and environmentalists very much. But over the years, he changed his views too, after he got inside and really out in the real world.
- Lage: And then came Walt, and then Loyd Forrest was in the department?.
- Wilson: Loyd was in the department as a forester.
- Lage: As a deputy.
- Wilson: As a deputy, and then he was a contender for the director's job, and he did not get it. So eventually he retired, but he was very close to the department and had a lot of real contacts, and knew—. He had been in the Department of Transportation. He had worked for the guy that was running Business and Transportation.
- He was in CDF as a forester. He had moved up and then he ran into government and then he'd had that experience in commerce, transportation and, sure, finance and then Department of Forestry, and he really, really understood the nuts and bolts. And I had known Loyd; I think I wrote him a letter for the directorship back home. So when I went in, I got him almost as a mentor. I said, "You know, Loyd, I don't know Sacramento anywhere near like you do, and I'm going to need you to give me a little help to steer this thing around for a while until I get my hands on it."
- Lage: Now, was he retired at this point?

Wilson: He was in private business.

Lage: I see, so you kind of took him on as a consultant?

Wilson: Yes. I didn't hire him. He just knew all the parties and all the people; he knew everything, which is a big help, a huge help. And he helped me find a few key people. He helped me find Elaine Vann; that was the first woman deputy for personnel management. And we did a number of things. But I had told him, "Well, here we are; we've got everything cut. Cut, squeeze, pull-in, cut fourteen billion dollars, cut back on the—. Cut back on everything." These were not easy times. You know, when we went into this whole thing.

Lage: And you had never run a big bureaucracy before.

Wilson: No, not a bureaucracy like this. So anyway, I told him, I said, "I think that maybe this is a great time to look at the organization of this department. This department is in four regions, and you could really look at the possibilities of a split between north and south and putting it into two regions, northern and southern. It was more or less cut through Sacramento, kind of diagonally, and Monterey. Everything south was south, and the north was the north. It was Cascade.

Lage: So you made two regions?

Wilson: Well, that was what we were really talking about, but in order to really think that through, we had to deal with the department; we had to deal with the people in it, who would be losing a region. This is tough stuff.

Lage: Was this to cut back on personnel?

Wilson: Well, it was to deal with the budget problems, but frankly to try to see if we couldn't use our resources a bit better than having them scattered around, and also to try to bring the technology into play, which we did not have. We didn't have any expertise; we had telephones and pads, sticking stickers up on the walls. We had phone banks and pencils and papers. So trying to make a transition to being more technical, being able to do better control, being able to distribute your resources a little more efficiently than they had, because with four regional chiefs instead of two, all the regional chiefs were competing for the pie for their region. And it came down to budgets and everything, so you were fighting four of them instead of two of them. It came down about like that. And I thought it would be better to see if we can't get down to two and get some of these other internal matters really dealt with, in lieu of the fact that we've got this awful budget problem.

And it was very fortunate that while I was there that my budget overseer, who ran the senate budget committee, was Quentin Kopp, and we went to Dartmouth together.

- Lage: Oh really?
- Wilson: And so, there was a little connection there, not real close, but a connection that proved invaluable over the years because I had to get everything through this committee, and Quentin was a very abrasive, overriding kind of guy. When he liked you, he could be awfully helpful. If he didn't like you, he just would drive you crazy.
- Lage: But he must have liked you, or you wouldn't have such warm feelings for him.
- Wilson: Well, we got along fine. Things like the air program, where we had to upgrade the whole the air tanker engines. I mean, we went through some very, very interesting things, but the thing that I want to get back to is that when I went in, I had thoroughly thought that I would be kept dealing with the forestry issues, because those are the things that I really had spent my time on. When I went in, they appointed Terry Gorton as the chair of the Board of Forestry, and of course, this proved to be a total, unmitigated disaster.
- Lage: Does the governor discuss with his new department head anything about the appointments in the Board of Forestry?
- Wilson: Not that one. Terry Gorton's husband was George, and he was the governor's political guy. He was his chief guy.
- Lage: His campaign manager.
- Wilson: Yes. And George—. They had just got a divorce, fairly recently. They had an only child, and I always believed that part of the alimony was that the governor would give Terry a job in one way or the other to keep her out of the way.
- Lage: Did she have any connection to forestry?
- Wilson: She didn't know Sikkim from Chihuahua, but on the surface she seemed to be as green as a gourd when she started talking about forestry. She couldn't—. She was going to be an environmentalist, and she was going to change things to do that.
- Lage: It's such a difference from someone like Henry Vaux in terms of preparation?
- Wilson: Let me just tell you what happened. Then we got into [Douglas] Wheeler [secretary for Resources] and the Grand Accords, the Sierra Accords. We got into all these things that they cooked up in the [Resources] Agency. Wheeler as secretary did not like the forestry issues at all, didn't know anything about them. Got heavily engaged about trying to cut deals with the timber industry. It was before I got there, and frankly, the thing was so screwed up—.

- Lage: I don't want to interrupt your story, but at some point you are going to have to back up and tell us what the Grand Accord was.
- Wilson: This was about the sort of settling of timber wars. We had had this Big Green Initiative with what's-his-name from Santa Monica—[State Senator] Tom Hayden.
- Lage: There were two competing initiatives: Big Green and Forests Forever.
- Wilson: And Old-Growth and For—.
- Lage: And they both lost.
- Wilson: Yes.
- Lage: And then we also had all the negotiations going on over the redwoods, and we had redwood summer.
- Wilson: We had redwood summer. We had nothing but trouble. Well, Doug, John Amodio and everybody, they were all trying to put together this coalition of the enviros and the industry.
- Lage: I see, and that was the Grand Accord.
- Wilson: Well, that was one of them. The Sierra Accord, the Grand Accord—.
- Lage: But were these all staying on the state level, not getting into the federal realm?
- Wilson: No, they were state. This was meant for just the state.
- Lage: Okay, I've got a better picture now.
- Wilson: And of course, politically, it was Willie Brown versus Pete Wilson. I mean, Willie Brown wasn't going to give Pete Wilson anything, and I'm sure it was mutual. But these accords—. I mean, John [Amodio] had done this whole thing about maximum sustainability and the trees, and the industry was dragging its feet, being pulled along, but the long and the short of it was they still kept this stocking stuff, to where you could cut, cut, cut down, as long as you had trees this big, you had clearing that could go on. Well, of course, that didn't solve anything. You just didn't solve anything.
- Lage: But Wheeler was not—?
- Wilson: Well, he didn't know it. He didn't know enough about it and he was trying to make deal, and the industry lobbyists were in control of the whole thing over in the governor's office. I mean, it was just a—.

- Lage: And what about John Amodio? What position did he have?
- Wilson: Well, he was in the Resources Agency. He was a deputy, and John's a swell guy. He didn't know anything about it either.
- Lage: I thought he had some redwood forest preservation background.
- Wilson: Well, he did politically but not forestry, technical stuff. So it got so tangled up that when I finally got over there and with my feet under the desk, I found the staff and said, "Take out a meeting and tell me your angle, first of all. Lay out some stuff—we had fourteen principles—what it was we were trying to do in terms of everything from old growth to the whole spectrum. I mean, the governor—. You had to meet with the governor, you had to go through these points, run it by him, so whether he agrees with it or not, at least he's got to understand it, and understand what they are. So we met.
- Lage: When you say "we", who all met?
- Wilson: Me, the department and the agency's and the governor's staff.
- Lage: Did Wheeler sign on to your fourteen points?
- Wilson: I mean, yes. He did sign on. I don't think we had anywhere else to go, the way things were going over there, at the governor's office and the fighting. So we did. We got this thing at least laid out, about how a tree goes on a growth cycle, how it starts slow, grows fast and then tapers off, and all these kinds of fundamentals. It was some idea of how the tree acts on landscape, along with harvesting, cutting, and hauling it to the mill. So it got a little bit of—. Whether it was historic, it was quite a chaotic situation.
- Lage: Did Pete Wilson seem to sign on?
- Wilson: He seemed to be all right. He seemed to be kind of at least aware of what the pros and the cons were and what the issues were and whether it was really being—. Because that was one of the good things about him, he was smart and he could see pretty quick what the issues were so that he politically could make the decisions, and if they had to be political decisions, what they were.
- So I was pretty well immediately engulfed by the reorganization of the department. All of this Accord business with the industry and the people on the environmental side—they were at each other pretty big time in that whole effort to get something done, which ultimately never made it—inevitably, you might say, Willie Brown was going to stop everything dead in its tracks in the assembly, because he wasn't going to let Pete Wilson have any kind of success.
- Lage: The politics again—.

Wilson: Yes. Now, we go back to Terry Gorton in that—. Cromwell was the executive officer [of the Board of Forestry], and, boy, she was going to be Miss Green, and she was going to make this thing work, and she was having meetings. First of all, she was chairman of the board. She wasn't in the department. She acted like she was running the department, but she wasn't, so it was a real problem for me. She was having meetings at night. Sometimes I knew about them and sometimes I didn't.

Lage: Would you ordinarily go to those meetings?

Wilson: Well, if they were appropriate I would, but she was one busy little bee with her deals. But the board changed. The governor started making appointments to that board, and Sierra-Pacific—. They put Tom Nelson on it, and Tom Nelson eventually was removed from the board, but he represents Sierra-Pacific and Red Emerson, the biggest timber owner left in the state of California.

Lage: So that was one of Pete Wilson's appointments?

Wilson: Pete Wilson's appointments. He also was one of his contributors, big time. Well, Terry's green turned to gray fairly fast, because it was very evident that those campaign contributions and the role of Red Emerson and what SPI—Sierra-Pacific Industries—wanted was going to be a big issue on whatever was done in the Board of Forestry. And Terry was supposed to be the chair. Well, she didn't know anything, so she slowly fell into the grasp of SPI's tentacles. And the board just—from the Vaux years, it was a functioning board that kind of knew what they were about—began going down the hill. I mean, they unraveled to the point where they couldn't tell the time of day with a Swiss clock. It just was tough.

It was largely because of Terry; she politicized the board with political appointments against other people. She played all kinds of little games. Whether they were things that Sierra-Pacific wanted, she'd get into—.

Lage: Amazing.

Wilson: Well, it is. It was just a mess, and the board has never recovered from that time, never, because she just—. The way the board was constructed, the role that the department and the director had, the role industry had, and the role of just protocol you follow and the ways the things are set up—whether you win or you lose or whatever you are doing, there are certain things that need to be done that you follow. And Cromwell's point of view were crazy too, because he was executive officer, trying to deal with her, and she was running around with all these deals, and she didn't know half the time what the deals were, because she and Tom Nelson were cooking up things with the industry.

Lage: She didn't follow just basic procedures?

Wilson: No. She didn't know anything. She was a political appointee, or I should say, more a political hack, because she just saw that the side her bread was buttered was to be with the industry, not green. It looked like it was green, but it turned the other way. And then she went the other way completely. So I was getting to the point where I really had almost—. I just had just about reached the point where I couldn't try to deal with these issues with her running around doing what she was doing, so I shifted over to the fire focus, and that's where we really went to work on the California fire plan, upgrading it, computerizing it. We made it a model of how to deal with fires in the twenty-first century, because Loyd Forrest and I, together, started first improving the department, teaching these guys about what the possibilities were, trying to get them to meet, to organize, to really work through an exercise like this to develop a plan, to get the money from the department, the finance people, to give us the money to allow it to be implemented every three years.

It was just the sequence of events you've got to do. First you've got to define what it is. Secondly, you've got to get your employees to buy into it, at least a majority of them. And thirdly, you have to put it together and do it.

Lage: Well, let's back up and tell us what the impetus for it was and what were the basic changes?

Wilson: Well, the impetus for it was this. We were pretty much a series of rangers who were good firefighters and everything, but there wasn't much in the way of a proactive—. One of the things that Pete Wilson came to do that I think was very good was the prevention program. The prevention program—it didn't matter how the fire—. Whatever. You should take preventive action. The distance you clear around your houses. The kinds of materials, and what you put on new houses. All of these things, you can call it a prevention program. And I thought that was a great way to make this into a different department, to see that we have a program in the department that really focuses on prevention. Prevention leads to cutting costs because you don't have these huge fires.

We had, by the way, two big ones: up in Redding and down by—. What is it?

Lage: By Oakland.

Wilson: Well, Oakland. Well, I remember that one when I went to work on this thing. We tried to get our tankers off another fire, and communications were not responding. That was a bad situation. That was a tough—.

Lage: Should we cover that a little bit or hold it for later?

Wilson: Well, we can cover that right now. This was—here's again a question, communications between Oakland and our tanker-base in Redding, and the CDF at headquarters, and the tanker guys being assigned to other fires. There

were other fires down there, and the ability to pull them off those fires and divert them back to the Oakland fire. That did not get done.

Lage: The communication broke down?

Wilson: They didn't have the authority and they didn't have the means—. It just didn't work.

Lage: It wasn't technical. It was the chain of command?

Wilson: The way things are used. The locals didn't get on it. They may have begun it, but they broke down—statewide, local, it just didn't work.

Lage: And this was shortly after you came on. It was October '91.

Wilson: It was just about when I got here.

Lage: So that might have helped—.

Wilson: We really saw it. I mean, I saw immediately what some of the real shortcomings were, with everything from where you water up tankers, where those tankers are, where they are directed to, everything you do, and that's where you had real opportunity to make some tremendous inroads.

Lage: So that was one of the impetuses.

Wilson: That was one. And then of course we had the big fires in Redding and over there by where they have the frog-jumping contest.

Lage: Calaveras?

Wilson: Calaveras County. And there there were these huge major screw-ups. I saw them in bunches, and I thought, "What the hell are they doing?" Well, what they were doing was what anybody would do if they were around in it, was that if you've got a big fire and everything seems to be running away, you just order equipment, equipment, equipment, because you want to have more of anything just before you need it, rather than having yourself organized with someone in command, and having somebody in charge of that fire who basically is monitoring to make sure that you are ordering up the equipment as needed so you can use it as needed, rather than having it parked two miles down the highway waiting to be used with nobody there to tell them what to do.

Well, really with both of those fires, we had stuff coming from the state—. What we deal with in the department and do very well is the mutual aid program. The state down to the locals. What happens is that if the fire gets big enough, it triggers the mutual aid program, which means that you have some

of these other counties funneling some of their resources into some of these big fires.

Lage: Even the wildland fires?

Wilson: Absolutely, and then we back up and others come in behind to fill in while they're gone. It's a rotation.

[End Tape 13, Side A]

[Begin Tape 13, Side B]

Wilson: The heart of this is really important because there has to be somebody in charge of the whole thing. And this is particularly true if you get into these campaign fires where there are huge amounts of strike teams, fire trucks, and crews all traveling from one end of the state to the other. I mean, this whole thing is a logistical—. It's like a war, like the Persian Gulf where you move in the troops and armaments and all that stuff.

Lage: It does use a warlike metaphor.

Wilson: It does. You set up a camp and you provide food and shelter and all this stuff. In those two big fires, we did some pretty good logistics, but it was not coordinated as well as it could be.

Lage: You were looking at costs?

Wilson: Yes. We'd done a lot of things that were out of order.

Lage: When you say "out of order," you mean this—?

Wilson: By buying Blagg's—the guy who had the contract was Blagg Food Service. He could virtually sell any amount of food he wanted. There was no effort to order frugally or to hold that down; it was a blank check to just bill the department. But we wanted an accountable system to see if he was delivering what he was supposed to to these camps. I mean, a million dollars a day. Easily you'd spend a million dollars a day. Well, all of this stuff took coordination at all levels of government—finance, personnel management, of how we operated on the lines.

So the fire plan basically looked at the whole state. It really looked at everything and asked the questions about those areas that were at risk due to weather, whatever it was, the history of fire. In other words, wherever we noticed fires showing up over and over and how we deployed our manpower. We're all here where we were four years ago. How are we relating to this now as opposed to where we were. Nothing had changed. It was just pretty much the same.

These kind of questions we really got into, and we showed some of the weaknesses. It showed a huge amount of wasted motion and time lost trying to make information to people through telephones and sticking paper up on boards, to say “tanker so-and-so left Redding at fourteen hundred hours, due to arrive at about fourteen-thirty hours, due to be back” and refueling, and goes wherever it is. That was all handwritten. So we were bringing that into the computer age. I thought we could start that.

Lage: And who helped you with that? You must have had a deputy with that kind of expertise?

Wilson: We did. We had Elaine Vann, who was very good. We’d start them. We were hiring some people and were up to speed to do this technical work in the administration section.

Lage: You had to bring in new people.

Wilson: Yes.

Lage: Would these be civil service or did you have a certain number of appointments?

Wilson: Some. Well, these were approvals. They were civil service, but they were mostly up from CDF. And I had to make some changes in staff and that was done.

Lage: Is it also hard on the department? The changes in staff? Did you have morale problems?

Wilson: Yes. To get people out and to bring new people on can be a morale problem, because they don’t like to change. They don’t like to be told they can go somewhere else. It was just part of the job, and I had to do quite a bit of that. It was slow. We had trouble in the regions, up at Butte. We had a guy up there who thought he was an independent fire department. They had their own t-shirts made, and he wasn’t accountable for his budget and had huge amounts of budget overruns—half a million dollars. There was just no way that would be allowed, and I finally got rid of him. I mean, you just can’t fire people.

Lage: It must be difficult.

Wilson: That personnel management position is so important, and Elaine Vann was the very best they have. She’s about as good as they get. And she made a lot of these position changes possible that never would have been possible without her.

Lage: How did you find her?

- Wilson: She was in Loyd Forrest's days.
- Lage: She must have been tough also.
- Wilson: And smart. She is. She's going to be retired in May.
- Lage: So you did these reorganizations.
- Wilson: We did the reorganization, did the fire plan.
- Lage: Is that the California fire plan that I see referred to?
- Wilson: Yes. Conceptualizing how we were going to work and how we were going to be organized. And then we had to go into the field and train our regional chiefs [in] how you apply these elements to their very way of doing business. They were having to look at their regions and their rangers units and get a technician trained up on a computer so they understood how the system worked and everything about it. So they were all plugged in to either Redding or San Bernardino, Riverside. We didn't have it going all over the place; you didn't need it in Sacramento because it was the staff that wasn't necessary other than people in Sacramento who just wanted to know what was going on, but we didn't need it. So the decisions between Redding and Riverside, and moving it, all of this equipment, up and down the state.
- We had a firestorm like you had [in Oakland] down in southern California. It was the first year, and considering it was the first year, it went surprisingly well, but I mean, now, they are over the hump. They've got it mastered. They know how to move information and keep track of where these people are on a real-time basis, and they can say, "Now, turn around. You're going somewhere else." They can get on a telephone, the telephone gets to the radio, the radio gets to the dispatcher, all that's the way you do it.
- Lage: Well, that sounds like quite an improvement.
- Wilson: So it is. We got that done.
- Lage: Was the prevention aspect built in to that or was that a separate initiative?
- Wilson: Well, the prevention came to the Fire Safe Councils, because part of the fire plan was to go into these communities and organize Fire Safe Councils, which are a public enterprise of homeowners that would take on a plan for their communities. And CDF would help them organize, whether it was a controlled burn or whether it was clearance, or whatever it is, but these councils acted independently and had their own little organizations, so that they began to take hold. One of the problems had been, well, when they just target this house and target that house because they hadn't cleared the brush,

and taking them one by one; that's a very hard way, to go to court and fight everybody.

So you need something that's cohesive that people fundamentally understand, and why you're doing this. You're not doing it just to harass them to clear the brush and protect their buildings. So you get them to buy in. These Fire Safe Councils are run out of these local communities, and today they've got, I think, well over 175 already in the state now. We just had a kind of convention in Sacramento; a friend of mine did the speaking. It was surprising.

Lage: They are fostered by the state department but they are actually local?

Wilson: They are a local entity, yes. And their job is to work with their local constituency to show them how to fire-safe their communities, to encourage the builders, to encourage everybody.

Lage: So it's an educational thing.

Wilson: It's educational and you make them get some help from the state.

Lage: So that was another innovative idea.

Wilson: So that's worked really well, and it's a legacy that's going on today, and I'm happy to see that going on, so I'm going to take a break now for a few minutes because I just get tired of talking.

Lage: I don't blame you. You've got the hard part of this job. [Interruption for brief break]. We're back after a little break.

Wilson: Now it's about 4:30 and still raining outside on Buck Mountain. We have talked about the fire plan and getting it basically organized. We didn't talk about the fact that Gorton moved on from the Board of Forestry, and Bob Kerstiens came on as the chair.

Lage: Do you remember when that happened?

Wilson: Well, that was in our second term, and Bob, having been an old CDF ranger chief and a gentleman, he made it so we could work well. With Bob at the board, he pulled the board back together and got it functioning, not as well as it did when Vaux was there, but he did pretty well, and he understood fire, so we were able to do a lot of the work with the fire plan through him, and his support. And he was very much for it and understood it very well, and the board came along nicely.

It showed what a good chairman can do when somebody works with the director, and you don't have a lot of this nonsense and political backroom

games that Terry Gorton played. I mean, she played it with board members. There was a fellow there who was a biologist, and he got so disgusted he left the state and went to the state of Washington. And he was a good, able fellow. I mean, we had some talent that just wouldn't work with her until she got out of there. And I might add, of course, later Tom Nelson was removed from the board by Gray Davis. So that whole thing—.

Lage: So the two trouble-makers were gone.

Wilson: Yes. [Adjusts the fire] Anyway, Bob [Kerstiens]—Cromwell worked well with him, and so it was a situation that came back together, and the forestry issues were still pretty hard to deal with because of Sierra-Pacific and the role they played over in the governor's office, because they pretty much didn't get anything they didn't want. The governor was very much indebted to them for campaign contributions.

Lage: Now, is Sierra-Pacific a big national—?

Wilson: It's the largest landholder and the biggest out here in California, a million acres.

Lage: I see. Bigger than Louisiana-Pacific or Pacific Lumber.

Wilson: Well, certainly out here. Yes, volume-wise, yes, biggest in the West. Not bigger than Georgia-Pacific, but in California for sure.

Lage: So does the Board of Forestry have something to do with the fire plan as well?

Wilson: Well, the Board of Forestry is charged with the fire [plan] and the CDF is responsible for almost half of the state of California for fire suppression, along with the timber—.

Lage: I didn't realize the Board of Forestry also oversaw fire.

Wilson: And they oversaw the policy and they oversaw the budget, because it's the biggest budget item in the Resources Agency. In fact, the budget in the Resources Agency was over a half a billion dollars, and the biggest part of that is fire, because we had the largest air tanker fleet, which we overhauled into the new S-2Ts that we brought on line, and rebuilt the old S-2s. It was a turbo engine and a very good airplane, and it was a big ticket item that took three years of struggle with the Department of Finance and Wheeler in the agency, and all of them. I finally got around them. We did retrofit—. The department got the OV-10A, which was a spotter plane, and the tanker, which was the S-T2, that was excellent. That is now on line, having been built down in Arizona. It's made a huge difference because it can climb out on one engine even, if it had to, whereas the old turbos were those navy attack planes with radial engines, and when one went down, it torqued that plane. It could tip it

over; it could cause trouble if it died. I mean, it was a dangerous airplane, and it was getting hard to get parts. So this was a big issue.

Lage: It must have been hard to convince them in this tight-budget era.

Wilson: Well, it was, but we were coming out of it in the second term. [And I had a lot of help from Quentin Kopp in the senate; he was my budget committee chair. So we had the money; it was better, and we had Bob [Kerstiens] on the board. And we clearly—. Even Finance, who doesn't—it gives in grudgingly to everything. It acknowledged that we had to do something about these older planes. So we converted the spotter plane, and that airplane was fixed up, for a good ten years now. It's in excellent shape. And then, of course, we had the on-going problem of, well—. The Forest Service—. There was a huge problem with the Clinton administration on policy.

Lage: On fire still.

Wilson: This was all fire. The Forest Service went under—with Al Gore and the spotted owl, and that whole period that we went through that we haven't really got into the details—.

Lage: Well, we will. [Laughter]

Wilson: The spotted owl and what the Forest Service was doing with the spotted owl was causing just endless, endless trouble out on the forest lands. And of course, we mentioned, it eventually got us to the Quincy Library Group. But before that we were involved in their whole fire budget. And they had been moving away from wild—. In other words, their wildland capability was greatly being diminished by Washington, in terms of how they were budgeting and how many people they had staffed.

Well, let me back up on one thing. We had one big fight in the Wilson administration related to fire, and that was over the staffing of engines. In the budget cuts that I had to take when I first went in as director, the minimum on an engine is really a three-man engine crew. You have a driver, you have a hose-layer that lays the hose, and then somebody who carries the hose up to the fire. You've got to have three. We got down to where we were down to two-man crews on many engines in many of the ranger units simply because of these budget cuts.

I argued just vehemently, and we ran out of money—it was about '98, upwards of '98; we were just in a terrible budget crunch. We had to have a supplemental bill. We have a fund called the E-fund, that's the emergency fund. It's the only department in government that has it, simply because it covers fires. And so the finance people, they'll allocate \$45 million extra for the E-fund that we can draw on as needed. If you go over it, you need what we

call a deficiency bill. A deficiency bill is really what it's called, and that means that the legislature has to authorize the money to make up for it.

Well, we had a big pull on the E-fund, and we were just in a real bind on this thing, and I took the side of the union and really demanded of the governor that we put this third man back on the engine instead of this, because we were shifting through a lot of fancy footwork, and shifting around, managing to get through, but we were not operating what we call our maximum efficiency on initial attack. And initial attack is fundamentally the thing that happens, where you respond to a fire at the first instant in ten minutes. And the record shows that maybe ninety-five percent of the fires are always put out because of the initial attack, and initial attack implies that your engine is staffed and trained to three people. If you reduce that, you basically have put initial attack in jeopardy, and that simply means it takes longer, and if it takes longer, the chance is for a little fire to become a big fire.

The governor, he was ticked off, because he didn't like the unions. He thought this was a union ploy, and that somehow they were getting something, although it was because the damn cuts had been made, and he didn't get it through his head. He was stubborn and bull-headed, so he was really ticked off. But Bordonara was the guy who carried the bill over to the assembly [AB169, 1997], Tom Bordonara.

Lage: Bordonara?

Wilson: We were able to carry the bill and we got the staffing.

Lage: Against the governor's wishes, you mean?

Wilson: Yes.

Lage: That's a little unusual.

Wilson: Oh, he was ticked off. He had to come and have a picture as he signed it. He was an unhappy camper. I'm sure he would have fired me if he could. He was so mad at me over that.

Lage: Did you work through Wheeler at all?

Wilson: Well, Wheeler, he didn't care. I mean, he just didn't like it. Those things he didn't get involved in. [Michael] Mantell was screwing around downstairs in the stuff. And Mantell was the key—.

Lage: Who was Mantell?

Wilson: He was the deputy secretary.

- Lage: I see, of the Resources Agency.
- Wilson: He runs the Packard Foundation now. I had no use for him when he worked in the agency, in the sense that I thought he was always working behind everyone's back. Working against me in the department because we had the biggest budget, and he wanted to take care of the gnatcatcher in southern California, so he was trying to protect it and had all kinds of silly ideas about fire and the gnatcatcher and not burning. He never would follow any kind of good science, but frankly this whole gnatcatcher and NCCP, Natural Community Conservation Planning program, that they cooked up in southern California was fundamentally to help Don Bren of the Irvine Company build more houses on Irvine land, and that was a payoff because he was such a big supporter of Pete Wilson. That they carried into Riverside and San Diego County, this NCCP thing, and that's where we have these huge fires down there in southern California. Of course, it burned up the gnatcatcher habitat, which it's done for centuries anyway. The gnatcatcher has flown out and flown back and survived these fires. But Mantell was having a fit about the gnatcatcher because they were trying to protect it.
- Lage: As an endangered species?
- Wilson: As an endangered species, exactly.
- Lage: And how were they trying to protect it?
- Wilson: By not doing anything. By saving the habitat, and obviously they thought fire destroyed the habitat. They didn't know anything about fire.
- Lage: So did they want protective burning?
- Wilson: No, none. And of course, our whole burning program was having a difficult time down there, and there were a lot of houses burned up that never got off the ground because we didn't get some burning done around the perimeter and in those costly, high-priced canyons because of this kind of nonsense that was going on with this gnatcatcher.
- And then we had the kangaroo rat in Riverside. That's another one. These animals have all survived fire in the past, and they will survive fire in the future. So to make a big thing—that's just a misuse of the Endangered Species Act and crying wolf. That's all that was about.
- Lage: So they were objecting to your plans to do some managed burning?
- Wilson: They didn't like prescription burning, and it got into the whole problem of something like the gnatcatcher, which was their hallowed ground because they were trying to make a big legacy and spent a lot of money and time horsing

around down there, putting aside this ground; they realized that it was all going to be public acquisition.

Lage: This was Irvine Company land that they were setting aside?

Wilson: Not just Irvine but Riverside and San Diego; there's all that back country of San Diego. It's huge. There was a lot of trouble over that issue. And they were overreaching themselves, but they were pushing it pretty hard and spending some of our money and our budget down there with people they'd hired to try to promote their program. Of course, there's kind of a program for it.

Lage: Were there other state departments that were pushing it?

Wilson: [Department of] Fish and Game.

Lage: Fish and Game.

Wilson: They were in the forefront, and Rumble, the guy from Fish and Game, their so-called person down there, and somehow they got [Secretary of the Interior Bruce] Babbitt interested in it, and they were running around in the eastern press. NCCP was this great new way of conserving. I think they were pushing the envelope over something that was of marginal benefit.

Lage: What did it stand for?

Wilson: Natural Community Conservation Planning. NCCP. Anyway, the point was that fire is part of the landscape, fire will always be part of the landscape, and if you are going to follow a prevention program, you go and you keep working that brush down so it doesn't get away, and of course, that firestorm in southern California after that just burned the hell out of all that country down there. From Ventura to San Diego, the whole country was on fire.

Lage: Did that happen during your period?

Wilson: All of that happened on my watch, and then normally we'd reseed some of that to rye grass because rye grass seed is an annual; it comes back pretty well, if you get any moisture, just to hold the ground. And Mantell decided that rye grass wasn't native to the area. The only thing to use was natural grasses. So we, I don't know, stopped the seeding and spent an awful lot of money finding only natural seed that had been collected in those areas, to reseed, which meant we didn't have very much. And so—. I'm telling you, this is the worst part of government [laughter]. So we were throwing seed around and we finally paid ten times over the cost of just using the run-of-the-mill annual rye. Well, that was a fiasco from the beginning to the end. But plenty of that happened in Southern California.

Lage: Was the grass successful?

Wilson: I don't know that it really left enough to make a difference. The birds probably ate all the rest.

Lage: So you were not a free agent. You had this structure within the Resources Agency to contend with.

Wilson: You've got endangered species, and Doug and Michael were all caught up in it. And I had a hell of a time because we had the convention down there, the Republican convention, in San Diego, and we were having these enormous [border] crossings that were beyond the fence in the Otay Mountains, because the fence ended, and they were coming across from Tecati. We estimated that as much as three thousand people were traversing that mountain. It would take them three days to get across the river, and then they climbed through, and it was brush about as high as half that fireplace, and they had tunnels. And of course, if there was a fire in there it would burn them all up. The Immigration Service could not get into the area, because it was so brushy, and they had no road down into Otay because it was a wilderness area for a special pine. Anyway, it was a stretch, but the agency was all wrapped up around this. It was part of the NCCP; it was part of this issue.

Well, it politically got so hot simply because if they were down there in San Diego, and that all caught on fire, they were going to have hell to pay about people getting burned up, and immigration. So I put together in San Diego, a special fire safety council. We had the Immigration Service, we had the federal justice department, we had Mexican government guys from across the border, we had the board of supervisors from San Diego, we even got the conservationists, and really what it amounted to—. It was Ed Hasty [California state director] at the Bureau of Land Management—. I said, "The only way we can really get around this is to build a road down through this river to get the Immigration Service down there, because I'd walked the whole thing out—to get them down there so they can begin to get these people before they start coming up. Well, this road—. They brought this damn thing over the top, which you could barely run a four-wheel drive over before you'd lose all the floorings and your teeth. And they were trying to catch them up there as they crossed and went down to Riverside, and they were missing most of them, and they were all flocking over to San Diego.

Well, of course, Mantell and Wheeler were screaming about a road in a wilderness area, and finally they just lost that battle. In fact, I took one of the D8 cats [caterpillar] tractors down and started building it myself.

Lage: Yourself!

Wilson: Anyway, it was quite an event, and it didn't take us long. I mean, Washington and everyone backed off from that one without screaming about wilderness and endangered species, because they knew this had to be done. So we did fix that, and the Immigration Service got set up to be over this whole situation. It

was terrible; it was full of these people. There were some dying and dead; they were in trouble with each other over coyotes; I mean, it was a mess, just a total mess.

So we got that done, and I got that pulled together in San Diego. I mean, it went through faster—. You're just amazed how fast things can happen when you have some real trouble.

Lage: And having the convention there was an impetus?

Wilson: Oh, well, that's it. It had nothing to do with—.

Lage: Because they didn't want something bad to happen during the convention.

Wilson: They didn't want that going on. No, they did not want that going on. Absolutely.

Lage: That's amazing.

Wilson: Anyway, that was going on. That was the deal. The deal then—. That was the Department of the Interior, and Ed Hasty was very good helping with that whole project, and helpful getting it put together. He kind of took care of the federal side, and I took care of the state, and accounts, and getting it down there and built and all that.

But the Forest Service went to the administration and the Gore people to cut the Forest Service back, and they cut back a lot of their fire capabilities and their ability to meet their requirement on the initial attack. In other words, they are supposed to have the contract with equal treatment for equal kinds of land. So what we did was we did initial attack on our lands. We did it on their lands. If we were the closest, we responded. Conversely, they were supposed to do the same thing. And they were rapidly getting to the point that they didn't have the engines, they didn't have the crews. They were untrained, and it became very evident to me that when they had a fire up around Reno and Truckee and up through that country, they couldn't even get the command center organized, and we had to go up and help them get organized.

And so, with the fire plan and with the work we had done, I had worked very hard with the Forest Service to get them to adopt the fire plan, and there was always this tremendous sort of friction between the federal agency and the states, like California—whose name is on the thing and who did it. I said, "I don't care if we call it Monkeyjinks, or whatever the name of the crazy thing. Just do it. We use this because it is the most efficient way we've got to implement our resources in this time when there were budget problems." Before Montana, before that all blew up and they had all those huge fires in Montana the year before Clinton left, well, they were undermanned like they

were, they were not the best cooperators, needless to say, and they didn't really care.

[End Tape 13, Side B]

[Begin Tape 14, Side A]

Wilson: The California fire plan wasn't their plan, and they were jealous and they didn't like the state initiative, the way they were taking it, and we were very successful with it. And the interesting thing about it was—. Well, for instance, to give you an example of how things break down. Before the Montana fires that were so damaging, right there in Whiskeytown, the BLM—this was the Department of the Interior—they wanted to do a prescription burn for star thistle. We have a ranger right there in Redding. Normally when you do these things, you coordinate with your other agencies. When we burn, we always have a backup, so if there is a burn, somebody's in backup to order air and to bring in resources so that there is one commander, incident command. There is one commander; there is none of this committee stuff. And they have the power to do anything they want to do, if the fire gets out of hand, or if they have to make any changes.

Then, if there are errors, you deal with that after the fire. But you don't leave them where they don't know whether they have the authority to do something, nor do you jump in and start changing things or correct them. That's what they were trained for; that's why they're incident commanders, and that's why they go from beginning to end on an incident.

Well, the BLM had a person up there, and [Secretary of the Interior Bruce] Babbitt—. I had talked to Babbitt about the fire plan, and he somehow decided that he thought it would be wonderful if the Department of the Interior got into the fire business, because he was a westerner and sensed that there were some political benefits for him to be out on the fire land, and kind of this pulling and tugging between the Forest Service and the Interior Department as to who was on top, and he wanted to be the 800-pound gorilla. So he'd come out on the fires.

And I told him about the fire plan, explained it to him. He got all revved up about it, and so he tried to implement the fire plan through the Department of the Interior that hasn't got enough people trained in fire or enough fire departments to be up to speed with the BLM when it comes to really running fires.

Lage: Seems like an odd thing to compete with the Forest Service on.

Wilson: Well, it is. It didn't fit. And he got them started, and when the big kahuna at the top says, "Go," then all the Indians run. Well, in this case up near Lewiston [the Lowden Ranch prescribed fire, 1999], they wanted to do this

burn. It came up, and the CDF warned them the day before that the winds were going to be not good; we don't recommend it. And the guy waited until noon, and he touched it off, and the wind came up—.

Lage: Was this an Interior person who did this?

Wilson: Yes, BLM. It burned the town down; it burned the sheriff's house down up there in Lewiston. It burned the whole damn town down, and it was the worst mess you ever saw, and largely because, by the time we got there and got it under control—they didn't have anybody—the horse was out of the barn. It got away and just raised Cain—.

Lage: How sad!

Wilson: All because this guy didn't get the backup, or listen to the weather. Ninety percent of this is weather. It's all weather. Weather puts the big fires out; weather causes the trouble if one gets away. This one got away, and just away she went.

Well, this repeated itself in New Mexico exactly the same way. They got down there burning when the weather was wrong.

Lage: At Los Alamos [2000].

Wilson: In Los Alamos. And they did not have an incident commander that could call in extra help and know where the extra help was at the federal level. The fire got away. They were all running around as government does having meetings to find out whether California—. Was it good to make the call? By the time they all got through with that, they burned the whole town up.

Lage: Was this BLM again?

Wilson: This was at the Interior Department.

Lage: Oh yes.

Wilson: I didn't rub their noses in it or anything; I just said, you know, we've gone through this, and it just so happens we're the best in the business that does this. We've got the most advanced technology. We're available here, but don't call on us and tell us any news after the fact. That ain't the way you do it. You start before and get it set up. So that's Interior.

Now, the Forest Service was having its share of problems with fires, too. And one of the worst things is they had a gal running fire in Washington DC, Mary Jo Lavin. She was from the state of Washington; she was a Ph. D. Somehow, she got into the wildland fire management. The big deal is the urban interface. The urban interface is where you have all these houses encroaching against

the boundary of the federal lands, of these resource lands. She got it in her head that the Forest Service was going to have nothing to do with structures and forbade the U. S. forest firefighters from engaging structures on this urban interface.

The problem with that is this. The reasoning was, well, Forest Service personnel aren't—. First of all, the Forest Service does not work twenty-four hours. They only work twelve hours, sunup to sundown. They are not on call twenty-four hours. The CDF is on call twenty-fours. Secondly, Forest Service doesn't train its personnel to go through the roof on a fire, as they do here. So if the structure goes up, let it burn. Well, the firefighter—. Wouldn't you know it? Urban interface is a huge problem in California. The criticism is that you save the structures, you're saving some guy's million-dollar house or something, and it's burning up the whole country. There's that feeling; some of it is true. But when a firefighter goes out to put out a fire, the first thing a man does is to put out the fire. They are not worried so much about the structure or anything; they just attack the problem as it stands.

When you get out of this gray zone, whether we're responding or the Forest Service is responding and vice versa, and the Forest Service people are being told not to do anything about structures—. We had an incident down in southern California, where this thing happened. The Forest Service people didn't want to deal with structures, and some of them got burned, and there was a lot of hard feeling about that, because there was this question in the U. S. -wise federal Forest Service plan, well, "We're not supposed to save houses." Well, to make a long story short, they got past that and they got it out of their regs and Lavin left, and it ended. But there was a period there when there was real chaos and confusion when we had a joint operation or about whose responsibility—. And furthermore, how you made the payments. Because if we responded, they reimbursed us and vice versa. Whether it was their responsibility or state responsibility in federal lands, you get paid back. And there were some problems in that for a while where they were all hung up in the middle of this crazy thing about this business of saving structures.

Lage: So that they went out on fires, sort of acting in your place?

Wilson: In our place—.

Lage: But they wouldn't save the structures?

Wilson: They didn't do it. Yes. And then politically, somebody says, "Well, how come you let the structure burn, and somebody else didn't get saved?" Or they would look at somebody else: "You saved this one and didn't save that one," that kind of stuff.

Well, it did get resolved. But the long and the short of it is that I did not have good cooperation. I had their respect, but I didn't get cooperation from

Washington. Largely, I think, because Wilson was a Republican governor, and the fire plan was coming out of California, and they don't like California, and there's all kinds of—. And frankly, I made them very nervous because I even suggested to Office of Management of Budget that they might want to contract out to the state to do some of their firefighting because of their deficiency in personnel equipment and training.

Lage: They didn't like that, I'll bet.

Wilson: They hated it. [Laughter] Totally mad.

Lage: I think you enjoyed it, though.

Wilson: I did. [Laughter]

Lage: That's where the fun comes in.

Wilson: So we muddled through, and we had huge fires. There's one up there on the board there, the big one on that brass thing [points to a plaque on the wall], when southern California was on fire [October-November, 1993]. It's the second, right below the first tier, next to Nixon up there. Those are the things. And California is a mutual-aid program. We do share because, you know, 100 million acres, and half of it is potentially going to burn up, and fire is such a big thing, and we need to have mutual aid. And now, the one thing I did get them to do is that they joined us on the incident command, putting in the technology, so we got them in the command center with us, with the good information.

Lage: With U. S. Forest Service.

Wilson: Yes, so that's Redding and southern California.

That thing just works like sucking on a whistle, as opposed to having our regions and their regions and all doing their own thing.

Lage: So it's more coordinated than it was?

Wilson: It's really a good system.

Lage: Didn't you have some differences with them over prescribed burning, also? I seem to remember—.

Wilson: Yes, well, I mean, they just about gave up prescription burning, and we'd been forced to give up some prescription burning too, simply because in the old days, when prescription burning didn't take so much time and effort before the urbanization of the dry lands, if you will, of the state, we used to hold our rangers accountable by the black acres, which is how many acres did

you burn? Usually in the thousands. Well, any more in a county like Napa, you don't do a thousand because there are houses here and there and everywhere, and you can't afford it, so it's almost, where do you do it, and it's smaller and more costly and harder to do. And the later you—the chiefs—well, they are very skittish about it, because the fire gets away and it burns houses. So it is much harder to do with the liability side. And smoke. The air board is constantly raising hell about smoke, the impact of smoke on population centers. The liability is a big issue and hard to deal with, and they only give you so many windows for days to burn, say, and if you miss the window, you can't do the burn until next year. There are just all kinds of obstacles now to get CDF out to do the burning. It isn't that they don't like to; it's just harder. It's the air board, you've got the Endangered Species Act, and Fish and Game and that, you see. So there is a myriad of problems.

What it does is it tends to make that ranger chief reluctant; there isn't a motivation for his career to go out and set up a burn, simply because it's a risk. The risk is higher than it used to be, and costlier.

Lage: So there you have greater—. The other side of the risk is greater risk of a big fire.

Wilson: That's it. If it gets away. And costlier. So people kind of look at their interests in a different kind of way, if you burn. It's just not an incentive; it's not a career-path choice. Why don't we do that?

Lage: Did you learn something about the bureaucracy during your term as director? When you talk about career-paths choice?

Wilson: Oh yes. My God, yes.

Lage: Had you realized when you made your decision—?

Wilson: I knew something about CDF because I worked with them here [at the ranch], and I did a lot of burning myself with some of the older guy and had a kind of working knowledge of what they did at the field level. I didn't understand the finance, so I spent most of my career on the finance side, helping them get airplanes and new trucks and putting firefighters on their engines, doing training and all of that. A lot of my work was there, but I had a pretty good idea of the field. CDF is an example of a government organization that has incredible capability to deliver on emergency services. In fact, they do everything in the world when there's an emergency. That's not their business; their business is fire. But boy, they are good on floods. We used them on floods, we used them in Watts. We had these kitchens when the riots—. We went down there and set up and fed people. They didn't believe you could feed five thousand a day in these kitchens, these mobile kitchens. We did all that stuff.

When the earthquake took place in Northridge, and we had FEMA, and we had—. Well, the Forest Service was mixed up in that, and they were all down there, and I'll tell you, I flew down there, and the region chief, Glenn Newman, was down there, and we went down to look over that situation, and I never saw such chaos. They were all in a building of about four floors, and the elevators were going up and down with people going to some place, but there was no meeting. Total confusion. And I talked to Glenn about it; I said, "Do you think we can fix this?" He said, "I know we can fix it in two days. Just give me the order, and I'll have this fixed. I'll have a finance team, I'll have a communication team, I'll have an incident commander, I'll set this thing up." And I told Dick Andrews, who was running the Office of Emergency Service [OES], which is in the governor's office of the state of California, and he was lost. And I told Andrews, because there was a little friction between CDF and OES about who was running the show, "You know, I'll do it." He said, "Go ahead." I saw Newman and said, "Get them together." And in about two days, we had that whole place organized, everybody was in the right place, the CDF had everybody working, and everybody was happy as a clam. And everything from food to water and you name it—and that's what they are very good at.

Lage: So they are kind of a natural disaster response team.

Wilson: They understand it. People understand response, mainly through the fire. But the fire—when you have some of these big fires, you set up a city. You set up a kitchen. You set up incident command, you set up supplies. They know how to do that, and they do very well.

Lage: So over all, did you think well of the department?

Wilson: Oh, highly. Highly. And what they needed was somebody to give them a lead and tell them what to do, and to get the right people. I had a lot of trouble with some people I had to get rid of, and some things like that. But if you get the right people in, and tell them to go, because they are a bureaucracy, and if they are not sure you aren't with them, it ain't going to happen. They'll crawl in the foxhole. And they know how to play that game, as they are playing it today. They won't stick their heads up. If we tell them what to do, and give them their lead—. Boy, they did great in the riots; they did great in the big fires, they did great in the earthquake. I think the governor was so happy that he had the CDF at his disposal to bail him out of some very bad points, and they did it. They did fine.

Lage: Let's look at our cooking. [Break for dinner]

Wilson: Well, we've kind of finished our effort on the fire side with the federal agencies and the Interior Department and the U. S. Forest Service, and we can look a little more into the whole issue of timber and forest practice rules. I think that one of the things that occurred—. Well, for instance, we were having a real fight with the environmental people about this old-growth issue.

And industry and everybody was pretty out of sorts over that, and so I had been of a mind to get FRAP—FRAP is the Forest Resource Assessment Program—to do a preliminary effort on defining the issue of old growth in a way that it was more adapted to what do you mean by old growth: un-entered forests and trees that are forty-eight inches DBH, diameter at breast height, or trees that were here before settlement, 1849? I mean, there were all kinds of ideas of what old growth was, and the problem with old growth and the problem that has cropped up over and over again in this whole forestry issue is we can't define what a working landscape or a working forest is because it's in the eyes of the beholder.

For instance, if you go into the Sierras on some of the Forest Service lands that were logged during the boom town days of the gold rush days and then left for close to a hundred years, and they are in a stream, a lot of people call that old growth and immediately say that should be saved. That's second growth. And there's a lot of that around. I mean a lot; there's a significant amount around. But it's not old-growth ancient trees. So the whole concept of what is that old-growth tree issue, how do you get at it? Well, we tried to do a kind of study of it to show what role older trees played in a serial-stage age classification through the forest, from small trees, intermediate trees, large trees, old trees, ancient trees, this whole spectrum. It was my thought to take that staff work and put it in front of the Board of Forestry and let them sit there and have hearings on it.

Well, the governor's office got wind of that, and Terry Gorton called Boyd Gibbons and I, because Boyd was getting a lot of heat from his people about it.

Lage: Now, who was Boyd Gibbons?

Wilson: He was the director of Fish and Game. And Terry Gorton called us down and gave us this stupid talk.

Lage: What was the objection?

Wilson: Industry didn't want an old-growth study put before the Board of Forestry.

Lage: Oh, the industry didn't want it?

Wilson: Absolutely not. They didn't want this discussion. You know, there's an initiative on old growth now.

Lage: Yes.

Wilson: Well, it's always been there, but they didn't want any more of it. They didn't want it. That was to be killed, finished, that was it.

- Lage: So that was still in the first term, when Terry Gorton was—.
- Wilson: She was floating around just before she left. She had moved to a deputy in the Resources Agency under Wheeler. But nevertheless, that didn't get off the ground. So that was an unresolved. It still is unresolved, except that the industry is getting rid of as many old trees as they can, because they know their days are limited.
- And then Louisiana-Pacific was very troublesome, because Harry Merlo was floating around in that job before he got fired. And I had said, in the paper, that they were overcutting, and Ward Connerly was the bag man for Louisiana-Pacific in the Wilson administration.
- Lage: Ward Connerly?
- Wilson: The famous Ward Connerly.
- Lage: What was he doing in that venue?
- Wilson: Well, he was arranging the use of the LP jet for Pete Wilson to fly around in and had become, through various contacts with Harry and God knows what, their boy. And so if I said something, Ward called the governor's office, and the governor's office called me, and we had one of those kinds of things.
- Lage: So he was working for LP?
- Wilson: Yes. So anyway, it was quite a to-do about my saying to LP, "You're overcutting." That got him—. But actually—.
- Lage: Were you saying it in the newspapers?
- Wilson: Yes, it was the press. And LP would complain. That's what they did; they'd go to the governor's office.
- Lage: But you actually, in 1991—. I don't know if it was you, but you got the Board of Forestry to admit, or they just did it themselves, that there had been two decades of overcutting.
- Wilson: I did. Two decades. That was the industry; I didn't mention LP personally.
- Lage: Just the industry over all?
- Wilson: The overcutting in California.
- Lage: But that was quite a statement.

- Wilson: It was. And it caused some furor, too. But this one really—. They were getting in trouble in so many ways in lawsuits, and the coast was so up in arms, and we had some real trouble with the board of trying to get—. I mean, the Mendocino County rules were still an issue, and it was in the governor's package. I had been sued over this, on the Forest Practice Act, by the group in Mendocino County. It didn't ever get off the ground, but depositions and a lot of talk about what they were doing and what they were supposed to be doing, which they weren't, and the department wasn't doing what they were supposed to do for the—.
- Lage: Now, what group was suing you? The environmentalists?
- Wilson: Yes. The environmentalists, yes.
- Lage: So they were suing you on the one hand, and LP was attacking you on the other.
- Wilson: That's right, that's correct. That's why—. That's part of the problem, just being in that job.
- Lage: You're the man in the middle.
- Wilson: You're the Gaza Strip. You're getting shot at from both sides and getting well ventilated. And then you had Sierra Pacific over here on the other side that also was immediately accessible to the governor for the large campaign contributions, and Red Emerson that runs it. I know Red; I used to rent a ranch from him right next door. He's a wonderful businessman and a man I like as a personality, but he just runs that company for the stockholders, whatever their needs are. He put Tom Nelson on that board and Terry Gorton, and that whole thing was an SPI [Sierra Pacific Industries] cabal as far as that mess that she created, but nevertheless, that's business.
- So they had the lawyers, and then we also had [Charles] Hurwitz up there on the Pacific Lumber Company, and the Pacific Lumber Company was way out of control. The Headwaters [Forest] was coming up, and that was an issue, and then there were side issues to Headwaters. And Pacific Lumber was not complying with the directive of the streamline protection zone. And burning practices, they were breaking those. They simply weren't complying with the regulations. Our inspectors were finding this stuff, and traditionally they didn't do anything. I said, "You tell me about it, and I'll deal with the governor on it." So we just—. I just got tired of it, you know, and I said they're out of bounds, they're breaking the rules, and I took their license away. I did it twice. [This was when my chief deputy was Jim Bronham. He has since moved to work for Pacific Lumber in Scotia.—added during narrator review.]

It got their attention. They could log the contracts [with independent contractors], but not with company people, so it didn't shut them down.

Lage: It didn't sound like it made a decisive change.

Wilson: It didn't make it decisive because they had outside options to exercise, but it was still John Campbell and Hurwitz—they were still playing games, at a different level. Eventually we got to the Headwaters acquisition but, you see, Headwaters was always a hot-button issue. The whole deal was that Hurwitz said, "It's a taking; I'm going to sue you [the state]. Let me log my land." That's when Doug and Michael and everybody got into this HCP, Habitat Conservation Plan, where you study the world, and you turn over every rock and you find every bug and try to apply all this information to use of resources, in this case the timber. So Hurwitz said, "Okay, if I do an HCP plan, then I can do the rest of my land; I can log it. I'm not going to have to go through all this horsing around." That was kind of the deal; that was it.

Lage: The HCP plan was a bigger plan than a timber harvest plan?

Wilson: Well, yes. That's the second part of the Forest Practice Act; it's the birds and the bees and the aesthetics and water and all this stuff. But see, nobody had ever really done one of the magnitude that came out of this Pacific Lumber plan. And like anything unknown, when you start discovering things, you can get all kinds of questions. You can cause nothing but trouble, and this one just opened up a can of worms.

And then Doug and Michael, the Resources Agency, they were all embroiled with NCCP, and they thought they needed the feds, so they brought the Fish and Wildlife Service in and the National Marine Fisheries [NMFS], on top of Fish and Game and Forestry, and I said, "Look. If we can just—. We know what to do. If somebody will just help us enforce it; we don't need the feds in here." "Oh, no. We need the Fish and Wildlife—." They loved the federal government.

Lage: Did Doug Wheeler and Michael Mantell feel your agencies weren't strong enough agencies?

Wilson: They just felt that the federal government was much stronger, yes.

Lage: But on the other hand, above them, Pete Wilson was not sympathetic with the federal intervention.

Wilson: I know, and but as I said, that's politics, the way politics works. So Doug and Michael, they just were having a love affair with the feds, so they brought in the Fish and Wildlife and NMFS, and then they had their interpretation of habitat conservation on top of Forestry and the state of California, Water

Quality, what are called the three agencies: Water Quality [Resources Board], [Department of] Fish and Game, and CDF.

Lage: So you've got three state agencies, two federal agencies—.

Wilson: Correct.

Lage: And what were the other departments in there?

Wilson: Well, basically the Fish and Wildlife Service in the Department of the Interior and National Marine Fisheries Service. Well, let's see, the Forest Service had somehow gotten into the appraisals but didn't have much to do with it, but Interior, because of Fish and Wildlife, they were engaged.

Lage: And someone brought up the salmon in connection with this?

Wilson: Well, of course. Oh yes. The coho salmon. Everything you can conceive of was mixed up in this.

Lage: The other issue was salvage logging by Pacific Lumber in these old-growth areas?

Wilson: Yes, and that was a very hot issue, because that's old growth and getting them milled. That's right.

Lage: Do you think they were just using this as an opportunity to get in there?

Wilson: Yes. That's the Quincy—. That's a little different. I'm just dealing over here with Hurwitz for a minute on the coast.

Lage: Oh, I thought that affected Hurwitz.

Wilson: Well, the biggest thing over on the coast was the incursion on those streams and the overlogging. The heavy impact that those watershed projects were having on fisheries—recurring cycles, very short turnarounds, and the disturbance on those lands, and the effect on all these freshwater creeks and all, that were going through Eureka and getting into people's land, causing sedimentation and water supply problems. That's where the real troubles were. Then they had the landslide there at that town, where the whole mountain came down on top of a bunch of houses, that people claimed might have been the result of logging. And then, of course, there was this Headwater issue cooking where they were going to buy a half a billion dollars for 3,400 acres—.

Lage: The feds were buying.

Wilson: The feds and the state: that was a hot issue. So PL, no matter what was going on, was overcutting, trying to get every big tree out and trying to use every end-run they could to keep—. And redwood [lumber] was still at a very high point at that time, and there was a lot of money. And so they were out of control, and I was struggling around with it. As I say, I called them in and went through it and made them acknowledge that they were not in compliance. They had Jerod Carter, an attorney from Ukiah, hired him, took him up there as a lawyer and vice president under Campbell, and he was ranting and raving as he always did about the injustices of the Forest Practice Act, and how unfair they were to the private sector investor.

Lage: He was a PL guy?

Wilson: He was a lawyer they hired as an executive vice president.

[End Tape 13, Side A]

[Begin Tape 14, Side B]

Wilson: Most of this was handled through John Campbell, who was then president of the Pacific Lumber Company, whom the foresters worked under. I don't think John ever had a real necessarily total control over everything out there, and so it was confusing on the ground, but nevertheless, they were tough to deal with. It took pretty strong action to get their attention, to make any headway. [Well, Tom Herman was resource chief for PL and was released by PL after they lost their license.—added during narrator's review] We were getting there before the administration—. That all changed when Gray Davis came along because he let everybody out. He basically let Pacific Lumber do pretty much what they wanted.

Lage: Do more logging before the HCP deal came on?

Wilson: Yes. Well, the HCP and all this stuff, basically. He sort of passed the word that—. Dianne Feinstein got heavily engaged in the Headwaters and was a huge proponent of that acquisition, and so they got Dianne Feinstein and Tommy Boggs, the DC lawyer who was the brother of that gal, Cokie Roberts, on the show with Sam Donaldson, and that's a law firm, big old-time law firm in Washington, DC. And then you've got Denny Carpenter, the lobbyist in Sacramento, and they were all working for Hurwitz.

Lage: Was Dianne Feinstein fighting the good fight or—.

Wilson: No, she didn't know what she was doing, except politics. She felt that the acquisition was important and that Charles [Hurwitz] should get his money. She got heavily engaged in it; it was a political issue. I think she didn't ever understand that this particular land was symbolic more than it is critical because it sits pretty well back and up on the side of a mountain, so it's not on

a stream, and there's a lot of better places with better timber, but it got a name and a nomenclature and a following, and pretty soon it took a life of its own. And she got into it as a proponent, and so she was leveraging the Democrats and everybody for the money. It got to be kind of a cause célèbre.

Lage: How would you have handled that if you had had free rein?

Wilson: I would have taken it back to the deal and what we were doing. First of all, I think we paid too much money for it. And secondly, the deal was that he was going to get to cut his land if they approved this HCP. Well, the whole process of the Habitat Conservation Plan, and all these agencies was a very disorganized and confusing exercise. There were times in the agency when there were forty people in that room at a table, and I remember one time, some guy for some reason, "Has anybody tried to harmonize all these facts and figures, you know, as though it could make any sense?" Well, of course, nobody had, because everybody had their own squirrel and their own salamander and their own something. The thing was about this thick [picks up an object to demonstrate]; it was this kind of data, just mind-boggling to try to put it together. And I'm going to come back to the Jackson [state forest] over this very same issue. So it was a mess, it was a total mess, out of control.

I think they paid too much for it, and I think we were pretty close to having it—. If we'd enforced the rules and just—. The big issue was there was a set-aside on those streams, fifty feet, one hundred feet, two hundred feet, three hundred feet, and some people wanted one hundred yards up every slope, which is a lot of a slope to have no logging. And Hurwitz had leveraged that thing, to the tune of \$800,000,000. He had leveraged it, borrowed money and done everything you can. He just wanted all the money he could get and all of it, as much as you can get. And he didn't care a bit about it. This was all just a bunch of peripheral garbage, and everybody was—.

Lage: He was probably happy to see all the confusion.

Wilson: Oh, sure.

Lage: —after all, he would get more money.

Wilson: Yes, and then they'd buy another set of old-growth forest from PL. That's about right. They kept dumping more and more money in the pot all the time for a few more things.

Lage: Was there any way you could introduce your own views about watershed protection?

Wilson: Well, if I had been able to—. The second time I took the license away, if I had stayed there, stayed on [as director of CDF], I think we would have had a little different posture, depending on the governor's office. I mean, if he was going

to buy his way through, forget it; we can't do anything around this sideways. That's just a fact of life, and that's the way we were. He had the lobbyists over there, and everybody working at it.

So, anyway, the acquisition went through—.

Lage: But after your time.

Wilson: Yes, I stayed on and negotiated part of it, and there's a lot of things wrong with that, too. Byron [Sher]—. A lot of the details that could have been hammered out, but Byron Sher—the Democrats wanted to take credit so badly that they were all almost on Hurwitz's side to get the deal, so that they could claim victory on the Headwaters.

Lage: And what role did Byron Sher have?

Wilson: Well, he is the environmental person in Sacramento, who is kind of the king, the queen bee, king bee, king of the hill—.

Lage: In the legislature?

Wilson: In the legislature, and his staff—.

Lage: Did he get involved in negotiations?

Wilson: Well, his staff did, very involved. [He submitted AB1986, which committed the state to additional acquisitions beyond Headwaters. The state committed \$130,000,000 plus some additional monies and made the state a very big partner.—added during narrator's review.]

Lage: So you stayed on for a time during Gray Davis' term?

Wilson: Yes, I stayed six months past. There was nobody there left to do anything but me. Everybody left. And his people didn't know anything about it. In fact, there was a violation where we—. CDF had done an investigation where we were pretty sure that they had an endangered species violation. The murrelet was the big issue over there, the murrelet and the trees and where they have some nestings elsewhere, the murrelets. We were ready to do a raid on their office because CDF staff believed they were lying, frankly. And we had pretty good evidence to move and to do it like I did in southern California on Edison over a fire down there.

Lage: You did a raid on them?

Wilson: Well, we took the helicopters on the roof with Edison, when there was a big lawsuit over a lot of damage in southern California that had burned up a lot of houses, and it was Edison's fault because they had had a pole and they hadn't

cleared around it, and it arced and caught fire and everything, and it was their obligation to do that. They didn't do it, but they had confiscated the evidence purposely, so we couldn't do it, because we do the investigations. We knew it, and they'd done it before, so we went in at night and just landed and impounded all the material, and showed that the evidence was there.

Lage: Was that held up in court?

Wilson: Well, then Davis came in, and he was a big buddy with John Bryson [CEO of Edison], so that all got washed away, too.

Lage: This is not a happy story. So you felt that Pacific Lumber had behaved somewhat the same way?

Wilson: Well, they had done it, and there was probably good cause to really nail them, and we could have taken their files and really done a complete workup on the suspected violation. Get an order from the court to do those, which you have to do. Of course, I didn't do that either, when Davis came in, because that was all shut down. So all that stuff disappeared before Davis.

Lage: It didn't sound like it had really been in the forefront under Wilson. He wasn't a crusader for the ancient forest.

Wilson: No, he was not. And you know, he never was, with the role that Emerson was playing on the board, forest practices were not going to see much change, with the relationship between Sierra Pacific and Pete and the Board of Forestry, even after Gorton left. And Bob Kerstiens and I, you know, we both recognized the facts of life on that and worked as well as we could with things that were what we could do with some of these issues. But fundamentally, no. [PL was viewed more as an outlaw in the Wilson administration but became a very cozy ally with Gray Davis, a relationship cemented by campaign contributions.—added during narrator's review.]

Lage: How did the activism of EarthFirst! and other groups affect the course of the Headwaters deal? Did they kind of push in a direction of—?

Wilson: Well, there were court decisions that certainly have some things to do with how some of the streams were protected. And some of the issues that took place on the ground, on specific THPs, there were some issues that were settled in court. But generally, I think what we were seeing was that CDF wasn't going to get the backing, Fish and Game—. I mean, what we were able to do was change some things. I tried very hard, and we had some success at saying with all these controversial plans that we should go out on the ground, but Fish and Game and Water Quality go with a representative, because what happened is, we'd go, there'd be an appeal, somebody would want us to go back. Fish and Game, with the OR, the review, they had not gone out; they had not looked at it. So then you had to go back and start them over, or they

didn't look at it at all; it was all written commentary. So I just demanded, I said that on these kinds of issues that "you go out and sign off early on what your opinions are, so we don't do this two-step," where we'd go in, we'd come out with a report, it was challenged, and then it all comes back around, and everybody was saying—. Water Quality was saying, "No, that isn't right; we think it's this, not that."

Lage: So, a lot of conflict within the resources agencies.

Wilson: Oh, we had a lot of trouble, and what was happening is, the shift of power which took place with Davis really is that they really shifted it over to Water Quality and away from Forestry and Fish and Game, because water was getting more attention and more money. The Water Resources Board has more authority, and water is a political—. It's like the coastline; water catches people's attention. It's water related to people, water related to fish—.

Lage: More than trees.

Wilson: Well, trees hold the whole watershed together; I always thought that was pretty important. But we didn't quite get watershed in context with water. [Laughter] They haven't gotten that connection, you see? It's hard. But they're very much a part of the whole thing. You've got to hold it together; you know, it makes sense. You've got the money in those watersheds, if you are going to keep them viable and make sure they are in good condition. The soils hold water, retain water, and all the snow and all of that.

So I think we had quite a successful run on the fire side and all the things we were going to do with fire safety and protection and the quality of our equipment and the organization of the department and all that. As far as forest practices, politics and a lot of political heavy lobbying and everything really kind of kept that pretty much in the hands of the industry, which is fundamentally trying to liquidate its lands of older stands. And I think one of the tip-offs that just has come up recently that shows you that the industry is not reinvesting what they are taking off the landscape, we'll come back to when we talk about Jackson.

Lage: Yes; that may be one of our next topics here.

Wilson: But what happened was, just recently Sierra Pacific has come in for a conversion of 850 acres in Plumas County of TPZ land to ten-acre minimums, which is another way of saying they are through with California. Now they want to sell it to the people down south for these little ranchettes, because they'll get more money. They're not interested in trees any longer. So we've tripped right over—. Now, CDF, the county has to give them a green light. And CDF, they didn't want the zone change. I don't think they will for political reasons, but that's the point.

The signal is, they're not willing to stay with the cutover lands. They didn't reinvest, they don't want to reinvest in that land. They want out; they're in Washington, and now they're prepared to start up again on other lands out of state.

Lage: So that will be just less forest land.

Wilson: That's what's happening. That's the problem with ag lands, and it's happening to forest lands. They are converting over, away from agriculture and resource timber management use. And as soon as you get the cut offs, you're all through. You can't go on. This doesn't work.

I think we ought to maybe stop here, because I'm getting tired.

Lage: Okay, that sounds fine.

[End Tape 14, Side B]

**Interview #7: April 30, 2002**  
**[Begin Tape 15, Side A]**

- Wilson: We're on Tuesday morning, about 9:00, Ann Lage and Richard Wilson, at Buck Mountain. The weather is still drizzly and rainy; very nice to have the rain but it's hanging on, so we're pressing on forward with the oral history project. We are coming to urban forestry, Jackson State Forest, and some issues, I guess, of legacy, and state forester, and the working landscape issues in this category, before we go to the last segment. Is that what—?
- Lage: That's the way I see it, too.
- Wilson: Okay.
- Lage: Do you want to start with Jackson State Forest or the community urban forestry?
- Wilson: I think we'll go to Jackson and then go to the urban and California One Forest stuff—it's another issue, part of the urban forestry.

Following on Henry Vaux's interest in the university system and research and teaching and education, which was, of course, one of his great strengths—the forest system was established in the administration of Earl Warren, and I guess, even maybe before Earl Warren. But Jackson State was purchased under Earl Warren in 1945 from the Caspar Lumber Company. That was a time there when the war was over, and there were a lot of really heavily cut timberlands. These were the days when they had the old railroads along the creeks and the oxen and mules, and they just really tore up those river watersheds, and just left them looking like they were a bombed out area.

So the state got Henry Bigger, who was a state senator from Covelo, of all things, to carry the bill for the acquisition. The interest was—through the state forester—but to get a bigger state forest system. That was it. In the process of this, we acquired Mountain Home [Demonstration State Forest] and the Southern Sequoia, Jackson, Soquel, and Boggs over by Lake County and Redding. We have state forests up in Redding. Different Places. We had coastal—. Jackson's the biggest at 50,000 acres, and then Soquel is a great urban forest right in Santa Cruz. Of course, now it's in the midst of a community and the growth, so it presents itself as a real opportunity in early forestry, which we can talk about a little bit later.

So the Caspar Lumber Company had owned the Jackson land, and they wanted to sell it, and so the state bought it for a million dollars. It lays between Fort Bragg and Ukiah on an east-west axis, so it's in two distinct zones. It's in a redwood zone on the coast and a transition zone of pine and forest cedar and the hardwoods going into the hotter, dryer side of the forest, which is on the Willits-Ukiah side. That forest was so heavily depleted that

the state put it all in a state of protection for twenty-five years. In other words, they just said, “Well, we’re just going to have to put this to rest and let it regain a lot of its footing of what it was, because it is totally cut. More of it’s just a replenishing, regeneration period.” So for twenty-five years, they basically did that. They let the forest come back, kept it closed down, worked with it as much as they could in terms of maybe some thinning, a little bit of brush control, and bad erosion things, but let the trees come back. And the redwood, of course, being the crown that they were, they came back faster than the other species. But the other species, pine and fir, did pretty well because they were in a pretty good zone, too.

Lage: That’s the sound of the fire, by the way [referring to a boom and crackling sounds], not an explosion.

Wilson: That’s right. So, you know, they worked at it, and that would have been about ’65. And then, much to everybody’s amazement—I think everybody was quite surprised—how fast that forest reclaimed itself by just getting off the land and letting this thing rest and come back. It was really proof of what a forest could do in this climate we have, particularly a coastal climate, and the soil we have and the temperature conditions if you take care of it and if you work with it. And of course, as it came back, then it was the board that had to begin to assemble a management plan to deal with it. That, of course, was at the beginning more just very small selection and thinning and everything, and as it got better, and we got up to the seventies, there was quite a number of trees, of big trees.

The industry had put a lot of pressure, from LP, because it’s a big deal in Mendocino County to the extent that it’s about five hundred jobs in that whole area, plus it pays the county in income tax, the payroll, and it also has a significant recreational element along with the harvesting. One of the main functions of that forest is to do research and to really do work to try to figure out what that paragraph we discussed in the Forest Practice Act really means, between maximum sustainable timber products and all the rest. And all the rest—they’ve got a fish hatchery there, they’ve got some excellent streams for salmon runs, they put people to work on research. The net effect is we have more data on the Jackson than any other forest in the United States, I think, in terms of research.

Principally the people working on that were Humboldt State [California State University, Humboldt], University of California, a little bit of Cal Poly, but mostly Humboldt State and UC. Well, when we were in the big, big heyday of logging and there was a lot of pressure, the people that had been appointed and put on Jackson were kind of timber-oriented. Hal Slack was one.

Lage: When you say, “Put on Jackson”—?

Wilson: As a manager. They were running it from CDF with Hal Slack. And Hal was influenced by the industry, and he liked being part of the industry crowd, and so they thought this—not very much research, not very much of it, and get the cut out, and get the logs, and all that. But still, it was still under some constraint because of what the forest was, but nevertheless, that was the mental state of the people over there and what they thought that they were supposed to be doing.

Lage: And what era was this?

Wilson: Seventies. That was the seventies. And that ran probably through a good decade, or a little more, and again, this was all in the zone of the activism of Earth First! and all that. This stuff was all coastal environmental action groups, and looking more and more at what was going on in a forest like the Jackson. Of course, at the beginning it was not particularly well organized, but there was the usual criticism that—. And because there is a piece of the park system right there on the south, coastal side, that adjoins it, so the park people and the logging people—.

Lage: What kind is it?

Wilson: Well, they have a camp—where they have the music camp, and they have to come through the Jackson to get in their campground. It's right there. But the point is those people are not chain-saw people or bulldozer people and everything. They are rather laid-back and like the finer benefits of aesthetics and quiet and so on. Not loggers and noise and bulldozers and four o'clock whistles. [laughter] And they of course were always in there. And then there was some question as to whether that land along with that particular camp there—whether that was really all park, I mean, totally under the park jurisdiction. In other words, whether CDF had access to the camp, and the timberlands, where they could do some logging. Well, the park side of things began to get more active. The park mentality got more active, and they were pressuring more and more to get the darn logging out of there and stop it, at least right around where their activities were.

Lage: I guess that's not very compatible with music camps.

Wilson: Well, no, it isn't. You know, this is the problem. And so, Jackson had a mission of research and logging, and they were providing for it. I think that they had the largest stand—40,000 board feet per acre—it was the largest stock in the middle of the state in terms of what they had grown back, and they were only cutting a fraction of that in terms of what the harvest was. So when we say there's a 2 percent POI, a 2 percent percentage of inventory means you are taking 2 percent of the inventory, which technically means it's growing as fast as you're cutting it, the 2 percent. And Jackson was probably 1.3 percent, so it was well above the line on growing trees as opposed to cutting trees. But even with that, the park people and the enviros, and from

those people still there were always agitation circles. And they were focused. The Albion, Noyo, I mean, there's a whole bunch of people involved in preservation.

Lage: The Albion River?

Wilson: And the headwaters. Yes. There are a lot of hotspots around there.

Lage: Does the Albion run—.

Wilson: Well, it's south. Well, you've got to go south of Jackson, but it's in the district. You've got the Noyo [River] and that's right next door to it, and the Albion. But it's all there, and it's the same people. And they were all getting restless, you know, going to the Board of Forestry.

Lage: Are we moving to your time with the county?

Wilson: We're getting there.

Lage: Oh, we're still at—.

Wilson: And so, when I came along, right at the nineties, that was one of the things I got on fairly fast, that it seemed to me that the Jackson had a clear mission. In fact, I was reading from it. In fact, I want to read you the first [objective]. Here it is. I read you the second. The first formal objective was research and demonstration [reads from the management plan for Jackson State Forest, 2001] "Improve the amount and quality of information concerning economic forest management and timber management methods that is available to the general public, small forest landowners, resource professionals, timber operators and the timber industry." So it was what Vaux was saying when he was trying to make the forester responsible to the public interest that was dealing with the small landowner—.

Lage: Is this from the Forest Practice Act?

Wilson: This is the management plan that's being drafted, the new one, because the management plan was supposed to be done every five to eight years right in there, and it had lapsed when I got there.

Lage: The Management Plan for the Jackson Forest.

Wilson: Well, that's number one. And number two is timber management. I read you about the sustainable yield. We talked about—. I can read it to you again if you want.

And number two is the timber management. Goal number two is to "manage the forest on the sustained yield principle, defined as management which will

achieve continuous high yields of timber production that contribute to local employment and tax revenue consistent with environmental constraints related to watershed, wildlife, fisheries, and aesthetic and recreational enjoyment.” That basically sets in place the local economy, the stability, the sustainability, and keeping a flow of timber going at the same time you are trying to make this marriage, as it were, between use and the public, and still keep the thing economically viable. Which is exactly the kind of thing we should be doing, but we’re not there. We’re between the clearcut and the no-cut. We either clearcut or no cut and everything else is out; it’s not there. Well, this says it.

Lage: So this is really an attempt to—.

Wilson: Well, that’s why it’s there. In the management plan, there are various options.

Lage: Had it been in previous managing plans?

Wilson: Pretty much so. This is, and I won’t read it all, but number three is watershed and ecological processes. And that was to promote and maintain the “health, sustainability, ecological processes, and biological diversity of the forest and watersheds during the conduct of all land management activities.” And these are detailed out. Number four was forest restoration, “achieving a balanced mix of forest structures and attributes in order to enhance forest health and productivity.” And again, Vaux talked about health instead of coming right at these guys in the industry and trying to ram cumulative effects or something like it down their throats. And number five is recreation and aesthetics, enjoyment. Six, information planning. Number seven is protection from damage and preserve the peace within. Number eight, minor forest products. Number nine, property configuration as expanding the forest.

So those are all part of it. The first two pretty well say it. Research and use with the constraints. Well, there was considerable deviation in the seventies because it was very oriented toward number two, which was the use side. And also, it provided the revenue that ran the resource side of the Department of Forestry.

Lage: Oh, it did?

Wilson: Because that was \$15-\$18 million a year. And so therefore, we did not have to go to the general fund to get that money, and there was always a tug of war between the Department of Finance and the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection over—. If there were surpluses, they wanted it back, so there were multitudes of ways of keeping that money in the department, which is a bureaucratic skill—hiding it. But the point was, because timber money and sales are not in sync with the budget process, so you overlap. Some years you’re behind, some years ahead. The way the sales come, as opposed to the budget process. So it takes some internal management and finance, and others didn’t always understand it. Nevertheless it ran itself pretty well, and

everything was coming along pretty well in terms of sustaining that side of the department, because the general fund took care of the fire and all. That's all, and the E-fund.

Lage: Would that make more incentive for the department to more cuttings?

Wilson: You could argue that, but on the other hand—. Yes, you could argue that it might be an incentive to do a little more, and I think that maybe in the seventies, there might have been a little of that, but I don't think it was a flagrant abuse. I think it was an incentive somehow to do that, to get funding. But the forest was still pretty well running along the way it was supposed to be running in terms of harvest and the POI and it never—. I can never remember over 2.0 POI. It stayed under, so it was still growing.

But nevertheless, when this thing—. When I got there, I did make a change. I made a change, first with Ken Delfino, the deputy. The director has a deputy in resources, and I asked him to change jobs, which he didn't like at all. He had come from the Los Angeles fire department and joined CDF. He had been in this job all of his career.

Lage: What did you move him to?

Wilson: To another slot in the department, but he just wasn't the deputy. And Ken, he ran it. I mean, he was very regimented in his manner. He didn't have much imagination. He was a total bureaucrat, sort of always worried about the cut and getting the money, and as long as the money was in the bank and everything, that's as far as he would go. He never got to the second phase of what this thing was all about in his mind, and the people who worked under him. So I did make a change there, because we were glad and he would coast along to retirement. And I got one of my top foresters that had been in the industry but was a CDF employee for a number of years, named Jameson, Marc Jameson, and he replaced Hal Slack as the manager of the Jackson forest. And we began to really focus on what the Jackson really was supposed to be doing, and with the leadership of Marc, trying to get the thing up and running so that it was doing all of those things.

And one of the things that I wanted to do was reinvigorate the good old university [connection], particularly Berkeley in the Department of Forestry. Well, it's Natural Resources and Environment now; they don't call it forestry. And so, I went to Henry Vaux's son, Henry Vaux, Jr. He was the vice-president of the university. I had gone to the department at Berkeley and talked to the professors and students. Nobody was doing anything. Humboldt State had a little bit of research on some fishery things, but for the most part very detached. A man named Rice up at Humboldt was doing some fisheries work, and it was good work. But as far as the forest, the university was deader than a mackerel. They just weren't contributing anything or putting people on it, and really they didn't want to, because like I say, you've got to get out,

you've got to go out in the woods with your students and so forth. I worked around to where we bought a little trailer, and fixed up a place, so that they might be able to stay up there on the Jackson.

I tried to start up a thought about creating a learning center on the forest that actually would incorporate people from the University of California, Humboldt State and Cal Poly, to bring professionals, help graduate students and PhDs to come into the forest and stay on the forest for a long period of time. They could do some lab work and have some facilities there and begin to try to get the information that we really are lacking in forestry today about—. The question is, with old forestry dying and going away, is there going to be new forestry, and if so, what is it and how does it work, what does it cost, what kind of equipment, everything? We needed to have a good picture of everything you're going to do for a small landowner to justify them wanting to grow timber, because they get a break on taxes if you have a TPZ zone, and you're supposed to have some incentive to grow timber. And if you wind up with no incentive, and you can't sell your timber and find out you've been locked into a park by political action and regulation, well, then nobody's going to grow timber. That's what it comes down to.

Jackson is the only forest that's set up to really get at the bottom of this whole thing. At the department, we had people at FRAP, Cromwell, and Bill Stewart; we had plenty of people who could do some good work, including incorporating watershed work. It started with Cromwell, when he came back on that side of it, to work on that part of it. It touched the Jackson, so that we were getting into that. They were—.

Lage: I just wondered if Henry Vaux, Jr., took you up on that?

Wilson: Coming back to Henry Vaux, Jr., what I had really pressed him on was that I was having trouble with Pacific Lumber on some specific watersheds, Elk Creek, Jordan Creek, Freshwater and others, and the trouble up there was the overcutting of Pacific Lumber, continually recurring. Because of the Headwaters interest, I finally had to take PL's logging license away twice for a multitude of violations. Hurwitz got that. PL had to keep going over this land to get the volume out, but it was causing more trouble in slope instability, erosion, and water quality problems.

Well, of course, Hurwitz had his own interests, which was to get the cut up, to get the performances and to get into that honey pot of money, which is what he was trying to do. He didn't care about anything but the money, and that was really causing political problems with the landowners downstream, on the streams. That's the thing that was really getting Water Quality kind of geared up more than CDF, who was coming up under more and more criticism for just being an advocate for the timber industry and giving them THPs they weren't entitled to.

So what I did was I told Henry, I said, “Look, I need a team—. Here’s the problem. Pete Wilson ran using good science. Well, everybody runs on good science. But it depends on *whose* good science.

“Is it my good science and your good science? Now, if it comes out my good science then it’s good science, but if it doesn’t come out as my good science, it’s not good science.” And because the academic world is so beholden to grants from the industry corporations, they are very reluctant to jump in and do anything that’s very critical, because then they don’t get their money. This is the old story. There’s nothing new about this.

Well, we have some of the very ablest people on this subject. Tom Dunne of the University of California [Santa Barbara] Bren School [of Environmental Science and Management] is one. He’s on watersheds. And Don Gray, who’s at the University of Michigan and worked for me on Henthorne logging. He’s another one trained by Wahrhaftig. And then there were some others from Humboldt State that were brought in that were the top in their field. So we came up with five people, and I had told Vaux, I said, “Henry, now. They won’t do it if you don’t make them do it.” The reason is this: an academic person doesn’t have to put themselves at risk in a thing like this, charged with so much politics, because they get caught in the crossfire between the corporations and the environmental people. And from their point of view, it’s kind of a no-win deal. On the other hand, they can do research, they can publish papers, they can take papers to peer review, they can get that through and publish it, and that’s it. They’re done. You know, you don’t take your scalp taken and handed to you over your hand, saying, “Nice going.” That kind of thing. So, I told Henry, “In order for this thing to go, you have to give me cover, at least through the governor’s office. In other words, if there’s flak, you’ve got to say, ‘Look, what’s the matter? Take these people on and let these scientists do their work.’ Otherwise, they’re not going to do their work.” So they got the team and they got started. And of course, this was a big step forward.

At the same time, I had been working with the citizens’ group on the Jackson, and we had some awful meetings. There was one that was so bad at night that we had to have armed security in there; it was in Fort Bragg.

Lage: This was all about the Jackson Forest?

Wilson: Yes.

Lage: And what was the citizen group concerned about?

Wilson: They were sore about the management plan. They didn’t want big trees harvested. They thought the roads were being used improperly. They were doing—. They were laying down; they were protesting. Finally, I took a few

of them to jail in Mendocino County, to let them cool off over there and quiet them down a little bit.

Lage: Was this over your management plan?

Wilson: Yes. Well, they were arguing the management plan was inadequate; it wasn't being implemented. The CDF was doing too much for the industry; the cut was too high. The bottom line is that they wanted a park. They did not care. And they got something called the Dharma Cloud Foundation to help them fund a lot of this.

Lage: The Dharma?

Wilson: The Dharma Cloud. [Spells Dharma] Cloud, I think. That provided some of the money for them to question the practices and the intent of the management plan, and to mess around with the courts and ultimately, they did go to court.

Anyway, when we were in this thing and redoing it for the new management plan, there was a real inherent problem that I saw coming, because we had gotten into—I told you—with the Headwaters, with the HCP, Habitat Conservation Plan, and the Forest Practice Act, these two things. And after seeing that HCP growing like Topsy, and getting so, just—it was so out of control in terms of the content and who was doing what, trying to make some sense out of it. I thought, well, we'd better get the management plan done and to the Board of Forestry and then follow with the HCP to try to make sure we had incorporated those things. But not the HCP first, because if you put the HCP first, it's—Katie, by the door—you just throw up your hands and you never get anything done. It's just going to be lawsuit after lawsuit after lawsuit.

Well, they wanted me to shut down logging. Two big issues on the Jackson were herbicides and clearcuts. Well, I stopped the herbicides we used. I did stop the herbicide use, specifically Garlon. And we went to clearcuts on what we called a group selection, which is a small clearcut to open up the ground in a series. Not a big block cut; a small one, which—there is strong indication that is, if you want to maximize the growth of redwoods, you need that simply because they need the sun. And I've got to take a break here.

[End Tape 15, Side A]

[Begin Tape 15, Side B]

Wilson: Continuing on about Jackson and the bones of contention over herbicides and the clearcuts, and how we were pulling down size to group selections. So these were smaller clearcuts that certainly demonstrated that they increased the productivity of the redwoods, that they came back after they were harvested.

Lage: I'm guessing most of this controversy was in the redwood zone.

Wilson: Well, it is. It was in the redwood zone; it was coastal, centered on the Albion. You know, there's fir in there. It's mostly redwood zone in its water and its tributaries, because this is where the trees grow bigger and faster, and it's coastal. And of course, there was that whole background of Pacific Lumber and all the trouble with them.

In any event, to kind of bring some things to closure, Vaux got Dunne and the team to go north up there and do something about this watershed business and got that started. He took that on. Dunne took it on. Those scientists are busy traveling the world so they need direction from the top. And as I said, unless somebody at the top says, "Do it," they aren't going to do it. That's all there is to it. It's just that simple. That's the university's problem, that if somebody doesn't take a poker and poke them along, they'll find places to go and nobody bothers them, they publish and have their careers, and everything's fine. Well, unfortunately, they have to make it happen.

Lage: But you helped. You provided some money, I'm assuming.

Wilson: I provided some money and I provided the push, and Vaux was willing to work with me on it, so we got it going. Some of it. If you don't push it—. And when I left, the department went into a long sleep like Rip Van Winkle. It finally got there, but I can tell you, it didn't take fifteen minutes before it cooled off, real fast, when I wasn't there any more.

Anyway, the activists were constantly pushing their agenda; they wanted a park. They didn't like any of the management plan, and they wanted an HCP. Well, as I say, the HCP is not the thing, believe me, to get the management plan out. And I tried really hard before I left to get it, and I tried to get my successor, Andrea Tuttle, to oversee this, and she didn't do it. So the long and the short of it is, Jackson—they got into a lawsuit, and the environmentalists found a judge that said, "Well, you haven't done a management plan, so you can't harvest timber. So you're going shut down." This was a year ago. [I believe it has been shut down now two years, no logging.—added during narrator's review.]

By shutting them down, that whole cycle is now gone. In other words, they're out of money this July. They got a loan from the state of three million dollars to keep going, but if they don't start running some logs, and I wouldn't bet on it, they won't have any money. They'll start their layoffs of personnel in the Jackson. This is exactly what the enviros wanted anyway. It's working out for them by default. But the idea of the Jackson doing what it's supposed to be doing may well be gone. It could be lost because if you try to put this thing back in the general fund, and the general fund is twenty billion dollars in the hole, the Jackson ain't going to get any money. It's just that simple. There's

no votes, there's no political power, and a guy like Davis could care less. That could mean that that forest is going to just lie idle.

Lage: Sit for a while.

Wilson: Well, sit, until somebody rejuve—. And then it's going to be a battle, because you'll—. The problem is you keep getting new people. You kind of get 'em going and you get 'em working. You get Dunne and you get Vaux, and I got the university, and we were getting the place and the learning center, and the idea of having a learning center there on the forest. All those things were things I put in place and were moving. We were moving.

Then we changed administrations. I took the new director and tried to get her oriented on what was going on. I spent six months before I left to try to get her engaged "up here" [points to his head], but the Davis people, they—. They put her in charge of forestry, and Woody Allshouse came over—he was president of the union, had never been any more than a battalion chief—as deputy director, and the only thing he wanted to do was to change everybody into a blue uniform. That was his number one, because blue is what the metropolitan and all the rest of the fire people wear. I never allowed that when I was there because they wore their own uniforms. They were distinctive because they were a wildland fire department. That is not a metropolitan fire department. It's different. It's different skills. Fighting fire in a wildland is different from fighting fire in metropolitan structures. That's all structures, and that isn't what CDF is.

Lage: Why would the union guy want to have similar uniforms to metropolitan firefighters?

Wilson: Because the whole union pressure was to get that Unit 8, which was the CDF, their own union, into the CFA, that's the big union, the national. So they want it all under one.

Lage: To get—?

Wilson: To get control.

Lage: —more leverage?

Wilson: Oh sure. They get control of it; it's just more members and more dues, and they all look the same. As I said, "You all look like a bunch of Kmart security guards running around in blue suits. I doubt that they can tell what you are."

Lage: What color suits did they wear before?

Wilson: It was a brown—a khaki suit. They stood out as independent from the fire departments. They were very different.

Well, he did, because he got, because they were the first union to endorse Gray Davis, and of course—.

Lage: So he became deputy.

Wilson: So he became deputy.

Lage: And what was Andrea Tuttle's background?

Wilson: The director. None. She has a masters in environmental studies from the University of California.

Lage: In what area?

Wilson: Kind of environmental science administrator. She did a lot of consulting in forestry. She's a real nice lady, but she hasn't a clue about what CDF is about. This is not her bag.

Lage: Why weren't you able to get the management plan out—I'm not clear—while you were still director?

Wilson: Because we just didn't have it done quite, to get it to the board, and if I had gotten to the board, the board probably wouldn't have been able to act anyway because of the election, and it got caught. It just got caught right in this time, the election and everything.

Lage: I see.

Wilson: And we had only so much time. One of the problems was that we had to spend so much time on Pacific Lumber and that habitat conservation plan, and Headwaters. And the staff was just going nuts trying to deal with all of that. Then we had this, and this was a sizeable thing, but it wasn't top priority, because of these other pressures, so it just didn't move as fast as I hoped it would. It got caught in the election, and then they got the lawsuit, and then they shut them down, and there they sit.

Lage: So maybe some day it will become a park. Do you think that's possible?

Wilson: Well, I think by default. Yes. Still, this is what they're supposed to be doing. This management plan is supposed to go to the board. But the problem is they've lost a year of cutting, and for that year there's no revenue coming through, and if they have to make cuts, to get rid of their people, they go to the general fund, or wait a year until the revenue gets going. Once you break the financial chain here, the way it's set up for Jackson, once you break that, then you've got big time trouble. You've got the legislature. Nobody knows anything about it in the legislature. Then the Department of Finance, nobody—. In other words, the continuity problems were very difficult,

particularly today when it's so urban-oriented, and everybody's coming from somewhere else. You know, they just don't get it.

Lage: And don't seem to have a sense of the community, responsibility to the community.

Wilson: Not at all, and the people that are there, the guys that work for GP and everything, in their own way, they have meetings. But the trouble with the loggers and the timber guys is they all talk to themselves. They don't have any outreach communication skills, terrible, and then they get mad. [Laughter] That kills the whole day. So they don't get anywhere, so you know, the department's in very deep trouble, budgetwise. The Jackson's in very deep trouble. And to compound the problem, Water Quality has been getting more budget and more people, and people are shifting to Water Quality to get the kind of controls over PL. That's where the battle was being waged, between Water Quality, not CDF.

Lage: Is that the state Water Resources Control Board?

Wilson: It's the regional board.

Lage: The regional board.

Wilson: Yes. But they've got the bigger stick right now politically. The CDF was supposed to be carrying this pretty well—.

Lage: The CDF used to be the lead?

Wilson: Well, technically they're the lead, but politically they're not. It's shifted to Water. And water is the big—like we talked about the coastline. In California, it's always this problem. What's that thing that gets the people's attention? The coastline does. We need it in forestry; we need it in ag land, but it's not the coastline. If you were going to run an initiative, it's so hard to get the public up here to perceive why it's important. But these are the things the governor could really maybe do if they'd take the bully pulpit and start working and putting bills in and everything to raise the consciousness level, to make people understand that if the legislature can't do it, they're going to have to step in and do something like Prop. 20 on ag lands and forestry lands in California. Short of that, I don't think we can survive.

I think we're drifting into some kind of a third-world economy, which is just houses and people and services. There's huge problems that are beginning to form out there because we don't have any sort of strategy for the future. It's just wherever the market takes us and [market] demand, very short-term thinking. And then as you keep putting more people on top of each other, they're going to want to get out and run around in an accessible playground, which is this. And then when you run resources into the ground, you bring in

the real estate. When you bring in the real estate, that's the end of the resource. It's just that simple.

So the sad story on Jackson is that it has a good history, it has a good record, it's got more information. The university should be in there four square, the state should be backing it, and because of the transition in forestry, there should be an effort to try to figure out, if forestry is going to viable, how's it going to be viable, what's it going to cost and how does the smaller landowner, who owns half of the private timberland in the state of California, how does that land stay in timber, stay in TPZ, and have an out. And that's everything from incentive payments, market, everything. In a place like Harwood, the small mill over here in Branscomb, over in Mendocino County, they depend heavily on Jackson as a place to bid and get timber, because it's right in their backyard. They're in trouble. They're having a hard time.

Lage: It has a chain of effects.

Wilson: It is a chain of effects. Of course, there is no leadership. The CDF can't do anything because they, as I say—. CDF, if you give them the lead, tell them what to do, they are spectacular and do it. But if they're left to just do it politically, cagey, they'll crawl in the foxhole and just wait it out. Sometimes you wait things out, and they don't turn out too well, when you finally come out of the foxhole. It's a sad story. It has a great history; maybe it's not over. It could be rejuvenated, but I don't know. I'm concerned that, after this July, if they don't get some help, nobody out there is going to do it.

Lage: How about this Dunne report? It finally did come out, in 2001.

Wilson: Well, now that—. Going back to the Dunne report, it went into a long period of rest and sleep. But the fact is that Tom Dunne—. They did run into some problems, that we talked about, political stuff and everything. Through Vaux and Dunne, they finally got the report out, and I think it showed that there's a lot you could do from the technical, scientific way of managing those watersheds that are not necessarily complementary to Pacific Lumber and with how things are going. Frankly, there was a gal from the Forest Service that wrote a scathing report, who also was a watershed person, and she—. Some people say she was out of her discipline, and the CDF people jumped all over her. I wasn't sure if she wasn't more in mind with Dunne and what he was saying—she took her PhD under Dunne—but again, I say to you, if the science isn't your science, then it's no good. And of course, PL didn't like it. They didn't like it.

Lage: The question—.

Wilson: Now the question is, whether the Water Resources Control Board picks it up, and if they begin to use it as a recommendation, then that's a different scene. But CDF did not pick it up, so that's where they are.

Lage: Oh. CDF didn't pick it up?

Wilson: No, they fought it. Andrea Tuttle suppressed the report. She didn't want it [because the governor's office had pressure on her to suppress the Dunne report.

Lage: The title, "A Scientific Basis for the Prediction of Cumulative Watershed Effects"

Wilson: Cumulative watershed effects are the big issues. And that's everything in the second part of the Forest Practice Act that we talked about, and things like—. Vaux didn't want to jump in with cumulative because it was just not the time, and he couldn't deal with it. This is the cumulative effects on watersheds, and that's what runs the background, and it's the foundation of the whole timber deal.

Lage: So would this provide a basis for making decisions?

Wilson: Yes.

Lage: If they picked it up.

Wilson: Well, and some of it is going to say you can't go and reenter these every six or seven years and keep whacking away at it. You can't do that. It's the level of cutting. Whatever you're doing; there's a lot of things. If there's road, there are buffer zones you need to maintain. It's like healing the Jackson took a long time. PL doesn't want any of that, because they want that timber that goes along the streams, to get that timber cut out, so they can get into the honey pot of money that's tied up, so Hurwitz can get that out and then probably bankrupt the company and move on. He's got a guy over there, this fellow [President and CEO Robert] Manne, that he brought in. He's nothing but one of these closure people. They've gone from sixteen hundred employees to eight hundred employees. They've closed the big mill. They're winding it down. The point is, there's no money going back into that company. It's all being taken out. As near as I can figure, they've hauled off about \$2.8 billion over the period that Hurwitz was on it, which is just a complete reversal of the Murphy family, who started it and let it grow on a sustainable basis. They cut big trees but not the way Hurwitz has.

So we had Merlo out at the coast. LP went out, broke. He had to sell out because they couldn't sustain themselves. This one's going to go. Then we had Mendocino Redwood Company that bought out LP coastal redwood lands, and whether they'll make it, I don't know. That's the Gap family, the Fisher family. How they're going to make it, I don't know. Again, they're up against some of their time constraints, but there's no question that the Jackson forest can come back, now that it has had a good twenty-five year rest.

- Lage: So they got the LP lands that were cutover.
- Wilson: The redwood lands, not the inland.
- Lage: Just redwoods.
- Wilson: They paid a good price, perhaps around \$1,200 or \$1,500 an acre. They need the time to let that stuff heal up and grow, because they cut some awful small stuff. If they could do that, I do believe that the future would be terrific, much like Jackson. This idea of patient money, and being able to hold it. And the only people that are in the position to hold that are the state. But then to bring it back as a working landscape, and the Jackson is a working landscape, much to the chagrin of some of those people over at the coast and the environmentalists that wanted the park. It's a gorgeous forest; it's just a great place.
- Lage: You can't really combine the recreation with the logging, can you?
- Wilson: Yes, you can. Absolutely. The Jackson's got some wonderful recreation lands.
- Lage: Would you move them around, as you're resting them?
- Wilson: The logging's not done in such a grand scale that it just obliterates the recreational opportunities. It's done in a way that they're more compatible. Yes, you have to give up. It isn't a wilderness, where it's totally untouched.
- Lage: But you also have the logging trucks coming and going. That's what I was thinking.
- Wilson: Well, in some places you do, but not all over the forest. There's some noise and some of that goes on in the course of the year, but there's also areas that you don't have that, at least, it may be in the distance. But it's still big enough that you can have some recreational use and you don't have to put up with it. The music camp, the Woodlands. Mendocino Woodlands, I think, is the name of it. The trucks came right by and, of course, they went right through the camp.
- Lage: That's not such good PR, I would say. [Laughter]
- Wilson: That's a problem.
- Lage: You couldn't have asked for a worse combination of things.
- Wilson: No, you couldn't. Jake Brakes going "bump, bump, bump, bump, bump," and somebody going "WHOOOOOOOO," trying to play a violin. No, that doesn't work.

- Lage: What about the Gap family? Are you in touch with them at all?
- Wilson: Well, I was. I mean, I was trying to help them get situated in Mendocino County, which is a hard county because of all this action at the coast, and then I tried to encourage them to hang in there a little bit. [They have a good perspective because I believe they take the long view. I hope it works for them and for Mendocino County.—added during narrator review.]
- Lage: Yes, because they came under a lot of criticism for cutting redwoods.
- Wilson: Oh, yes, they came under a lot of criticism.
- Lage: But were they trying to be responsible over there?
- Wilson: Yes, they were, and are. But they're not getting much help. The problem is that noisy people are the ones unfortunately that are on the preservation side, and the people who are working [just don't have the time to go to meetings and engage in political activism. They are tired after a long day and want to rest.—added during narrator review.]
- .
- Lage: There are noisy people on both sides, it sounds like. What about the loggers, the actual working men?
- Wilson: Well, they just have a hard time.
- Lage: Do they understand—.
- Wilson: They know they're not working.
- Lage: —that Pacific Lumber is going to cut and run?
- Wilson: Well, what happens—I saw it here and saw it everywhere. As long as the check comes in, they will not take a stand and say how they feel about company policy. The ability to translate their interest over the long term into sustainable policies is nil. It just doesn't happen.
- Lage: So you don't get help at that end.
- Wilson: No. Because they're getting paid. And then, if they get out and do other things, then they're going to get criticized or fired, and they'll get another logger. There are so many loggers; if somebody sticks their head up and says something, they'll just get rid of that logger and get somebody else. That's always been the way it is. And that's the way it was here and everywhere else. If you get a bad logger who does a poor job like Jack Campbell did here in Covelo—he ripped off the country for his own road-building gain and

everything, made himself a lot of money, and then sold out and moved to Oklahoma when LP left.

Well, it's this attitude. I mean, if you've got people with this attitude, they're going to milk this thing to death and strip it and move out, and eventually of course, in time, a hundred years from now, if it was left to its own devices and some fire jumped through here, you'd see it come back slowly. But it won't wait, because you'll have real estate opportunities and promotion deals with the—. I mean, as long as you keep adding people to this state, there's always going to be the pressure to get out in these wilder lands that heretofore haven't been particularly attractive. These are a little more marginal than the Sierra foothills, but still—. I'm going to fix the fire here.

Lage: You're going to fix the fire here? [break]

Okay, we're back on.

Wilson: We really have kind of gone through the Jackson, and the plight of the Jackson is that its role now, at least its status right now, as to whether its future is going to upheld in terms of its mission goals, or whether it's going to lose funding and eventually drift toward becoming more of a park. But there still is a quest in Mendocino County of people that are trying to find a way to buy this cutover land that comes up. There are the LP lands and then there're the GP lands that were sold to a consortium in the state of Washington, known as the Campbell group. In order to do that, it gets right back to this problem of getting some money at a low enough interest rate that you can have a long-term bond that will amortize over a long time, fifty or a hundred years or something, so that you can allow these things to regrow. What you're doing in essence is what CDF did when the state purchased Jackson; it was that rest period. So you could have a very low cut; you let this stuff grow back, and you hold it, buy bonds that are a very low interest so that you can take the time that's necessary and then eventually cash in when you begin to get that growth back, and your harvesting yields are up, and the price hopefully goes up in the market.

So Henry Gundling, who's worked with me on the forest advisory committee in Mendocino County, and some other people have been very helpful and have worked toward legislation in Washington, DC, to try to get a bond through legislation, to get it incorporated into the federal government, that could be issued for resources, namely timber. I guess you'd call it a resource bond, but its principal purpose would be to buy these lands and hold them, rather than let them escape the future in being timber and going into real estate, this kind of thing.

Lage: The community would buy them?

Wilson: There would be an organization like the redwood foundation; they've got a little foundation set up to do this, and the people own it. So they will just need the financing and money, which really needs to be done through the federal government and the Congress. It needs to be Congress, but again you need somebody to do the management. Congress would never do that. The Republican party from the state of Washington has done some work with Weyerhaeuser, and some of the land around Tacoma, in there, that's getting to be an urban interface, and very, very difficult to work, as always when there's a lot of people agitating about logging on the urban interface. Jennifer Dunn, the congresswoman from Washington State, has been instrumental in setting this deal up for Weyerhaeuser.

Lage: A congresswoman?

Wilson: She was their leadership, of the Republican party, but she, I think, has helped get some of that started up in Washington State, where that land is being purchased by an entity to hold it, and Weyerhaeuser has been selling it, because they don't want to fight the public and have that kind of a battle. And this is the same kind of a thing that these folks here, and the Harwoods,, and Henry Gundling, and Greg Justy, the farm advisor—you know, they're people from Mendocino County that would like to see this land still held in some kind of a forest working landscape. In a way, it's in a trust.

Lage: Sort of like an agricultural trust? A forest trust?

Wilson: Yes, to hold it, but you're going to be able to harvest some day. It's just to manage to keep it together; you won't lose it or chop it up, and that's what they've done.

Lage: Is that working? Are they going to get the bonds?

Wilson: Well, they haven't got the money yet, but they've got a little interest started. Again, it was looking pretty good. I haven't followed it too closely, but I think the issue in Washington was working out, with Weyerhaeuser. Jennifer Dunn is the congresswoman's name. Weyerhaeuser started it up there around Tacoma, and I think it's the same—. Again, with the budget deficit and all the troubles and all the terrorist stuff, these things tend to slip down pretty low, and unfortunately they don't get the attention or the help that you'd hope for.

You see, instead of the farm bill paying for these farmers to grow things we don't need, we ought to have money to buy these kinds of lands and not put them away forever, but to rest them. It's good farmland; some day, we'll need it. In time, we will need it, so let's keep it. And you can make it a preserve for some wildlife and for soil. Let's build some soil for a change, instead of houses.

Lage: Well, you wrote some articles that you sent me, when you were with the department, about community forests.

Wilson: Yes.

Lage: And I thought that was one of your visions for Mendocino.

Wilson: Well, because of the urban forest, my effort—. Well, there were a couple of things that went on in urban forestry. There is a distinct difference between the community in Fort Bragg and urban forestry in southern California, but first of all, let's talk briefly about the community. Of course, significantly, that was Jackson. One of the points I made was I used the Green Bay Packers as an example of what happens when the community buys something that is a going economic program, which is the Green Bay Packers, and those people own the team. The Green Bay Packers are owned by the public, and they can't own more than one share, or something, so nobody gets control of it. The team can't be sold out of Green Bay, and they're actually going to build a whole new stadium themselves. The point is, they are owned by the people, and the people—. It is a big economic incentive, which is great for the team, for Green Bay, Wisconsin, to have them there because they are not for sale, and all this stuff going on that happens so much in these franchises.

And I tried to take that example and translate the same idea to the Jackson Forest in Fort Bragg, that that forest was a huge anchor to that economy down there in terms of employment, in terms of future people coming for some recreational outlets, and some way, if people could buy these things and own them—. Unfortunately there's this time gap we've created by overcutting these forests, but if they owned them, and they continued to kick back into the economy of the community as well as employ a lot of people, I mean, to me, that makes a lot of sense, instead of having speculators and people from somewhere, in Japan or some other country, trying to buy this stuff from elsewhere, speculate on it, and then sell it off, as we've seen in the Willits Woods, the one adjoining the Jackson, which is between Willits and the Jackson Forest.

Of course, Rich Padula, one of these fellows—he's a promoter around here—he buys these lands and sells these lands. It's just pitiful what happens. The Willits Woods—the R & J was the name of it. For a while, that property had been sold so many times, and each buyer paid too much for it, so it got cut and cut to where it eventually got sucked into a real estate scam that has fallen on hard times, from what I hear.

[End Tape 15, Side B]

[Begin Tape 16, Side A]

Lage: You mentioned the tan oak growth.

Wilson: Like manzanita comes up here, tan oak comes up on the coast. And when the tan oak comes up, it presents another huge problem. The tan oak stifles other growth such as your redwood and your fir, and if you let it get ahead of everything, as it does in a situation that's been cutover so badly, then you've got the problem of getting rid of it.

Just for instance, I felt that that adjoining piece between Jackson and the Willits property, between Willits and that R & J property that Padula had had, would be a great acquisition to add to the Jackson, because it's another property that badly needs rest and rehabilitation. And it could, because the tan oak is so thick. I mean, if you fly over it, you say, "Gee, look at all these trees." But it's tan oak; that's the problem. It probably could cost anywhere from five to eight hundred dollars an acre to get that tan oak out of there and either restock it or let those younger trees, if they're there, grow; help them to the next stand, the next generation. So you'd have to buy the land, and then you'd have to systematically go and try to reclaim it from the tan oak.

Well, we're right back to this problem of patient money. Somebody has to have the wherewithal to just buy it and hold it. Some day it's going to pay out, but there's going to be a generation there that's not going to see a paycheck from their land much, because it's too long a time.

So, the worst part of that was that after it had fallen to the point where they couldn't sell it for timber anymore, Padula—they were messing around—he sold it to some outfit that bought it. Some forester wrote a glowing report about the stocking, and some out-of-state outfit, from Oregon, bought it, didn't know what they were doing, and paid too much for it, and of course, the whole thing got into a lawsuit over the misrepresentation and everything. But just before I left, as an example of what we talked about, Padula and these people had sold it. They came up with a scheme that they were going to make it an investment. They were going to sell stock. I think they got Smith Barney to back it through a strategic timber trust set up in New England and pedaled to the public. They were going to issue stock on these lands and other lands. There were some lands over here—Commander Industries over on the other side of the divide here, on the Sacramento side. They had some other lands, and they were going to make this pool and sell it on a stock option they were offering to widows and orphans and people [laughter] as a growth, long-term investment.

Well, I finally got the Securities Exchange Commission, and there was a woman on the coast that was terrific on this. She was raising holy hell over there in the papers and everything. In any event, I did get the SEC and I just said, "You fellows, this is just fraud, flat-out fraud. There's misrepresentation, and you guys, if you do that . . ." This is what's on television right now that they are looking at between these bankers and these analysts. It's junk.

Lage: So they were sort of junk bond—.

Wilson: Well, junk stock. They are never going to get anything out of it. It was a complete rip-off. Well, they finally got stopped. I mean, the SEC, and the report came back that it wasn't viable as an offering. Well, it sure wasn't viable. So that property is sitting there in a lawsuit between whoever owns it—. Now, these things get all tangled up, and God only knows where it's going to settle out. But it's just overcut to the point where it's tan oak, and the future is probably somewhere between sixty and one hundred years out. That's the kind of land that Henry Gundling's foundation, if they could get the bonds to buy it and put it in a land trust—. Those two things. Eventually we'll come to this easement issue in the last discussion we're going to have on this whole subject. But there has to be a way to take the heat off, hold it and keep it together. We don't want it to just become part of the second home and playground for the urbanizing centers of the state.

Lage: Did you have similar problems on the other state forests or is the Jackson State special?

Wilson: Now, Soquel is small, down in Santa Cruz. Of course, it being right in the middle of that whole Santa Cruz area is a terrific place to really try to demonstrate what real urban forestry needs to be, and by that, I mean it needs to have a high-level presence in terms of managing the forest in terms of some logging, management of water courses, stream protection zones. Santa Cruz still does a significant amount of logging in that county—well, there's one lumber company down there, and they've done a pretty fine job of managing the public and all of the troubles that come from a heavily urbanized area, which it is.

And Soquel, I was really interested to see it upgrade its presence in terms of having a center in there and an opportunity for people to come in and have people right there, to take them through it and explain to them how a redwood grows, what the impact is—it has a fishery stream—and what you do have to do to maintain the stream. So it presented itself as truly an urban forest.

Well, Mountain Home, down in the Sequoia country near Visalia is also a very well-run inland forest by CDF. We've run that; Dave Dulitz has run that for years as a CDF forester. He demonstrated how fire and cutting some Sequoias and re-growth—well, it's very, very slow—was a management tool that worked. It's well run. It demonstrates a different type of management system than the coastal, because of the climate and the temperature. But it has lots of opportunity for people to go into it.

Lage: For the public to go in and get educated?

Wilson: Yes. Well, or just camp. It's just a very nice forest, but different. Frankly, the thing that's scary about it is Dulitz is retired and the new CDF fellow—I'm sure he's a good fellow, but he doesn't have the passion for it that Dave had, as you will find in some of these other jobs. It takes a certain kind of person

who, well, takes care of helping around and really works at it. That's hard to find; you have to fall into those people.

The state forest up by Redding, again, it's a good forest in a coastal sense—not used much because it's still pretty much out of the way. Mountain Home is not used much because it's off the beaten track. Boggs, over here in Lake County, is a little small forest that doesn't have too much activity. So really, I think that as far as state forests, Soquel and Jackson are the two main pieces of the state system. I don't like to use the word, but the jewels around the ring. Jackson is the crown jewel, and you've got some small ones that are around it. And that's it.

Lage: Okay.

Wilson: Now the urban forest.

Lage: The urban forest.

Wilson: Now, urban forestry is something primarily in southern California. We've had two fellows down there who are really active in urban forestry. Urban forestry in southern California is very different because it is utilization of a lot of hardwood species, and with this kind of green waste problem, it's okay. We've got a lot of green waste.

Lage: Well, what's green waste?

Wilson: Tree trimming and taking out branches and cutting some trees or dead trees or maintaining trees.

Lage: In what kind of a setting are we? Right in the city?

Wilson: Yes. In Riverside, all that country through there. It has a huge amount of everything from the byproduct from trees as well as grass. I mean, the whole green waste, cutting of the trees and stuff coming off the lawns. Parks. There's a lot of stuff. I mean, everything you have, you have to do something. You've got to maintain those things; you can't just walk away from them. They get all cluttered and burn down. Do something; you've got to manage them. So there's a lot of waste, everywhere. Some of it comes off the forest in terms of some smaller hardwoods and dead stuff.

And then you've got the cities. The cities have a budget for trees and beautification that comes and goes within the economy, but it still, it's a fairly sizable budget in many places. What they trim, what they do, has to go somewhere. So an effort was really to made to promote trees in the city.

Lage: Through the CDF.

- Wilson: Through the CDF, and other organizations, and that's where I worked with them. Janet Cobb [president, California Oaks Foundation] is a big player in the hardwoods and urban forestry side, because oaks are her passion.
- Lage: Is she the, kind of the oak lady?
- Wilson: Yes, she's the oak lady. Ellen Harris was the coastal lady, and Janet was the oak lady. Janet spends time and effort and does a lot of work on oaks. "One California Forest" is something I worked out with her. We did some papers and some talks on it. What I was trying to get at was that we all are engaged in the forest, whether it's an urban forest, or a U. S. forest, or a state forest, or a private forest, it's a forest, a California forest. And then it all has its needs, and it needs to be looked after and promoted, and it has to be presented to people so that they actually see the advantages. Southern California is more arbor culture than it is silvicultural processes that lead into harvesting the wood. But there are a lot of arborists, and there is a lot of effort made to beautify those cities by planting trees, and that leaves a lot of waste and hardwood, and what do you do with it? Our people were really working with these little portable sawmills to try to get this hardwood out of them, to see if there are some niche markets that people make.
- I went East, and there was a lot of that done on hardwoods, where they have small parcels of land, and they use it more efficiently than we do out West.
- Lage: So you were trying to do something useful with the waste?
- Wilson: Absolutely, absolutely, and to promote everything from growing trees for shade and for public aesthetics as well as dealing with the waste problem, which in communities of that size is considerable.
- Lage: I've never thought of it that way.
- Wilson: Well, look at the waste, if you want to call it this, but look at the trimming piles out here that came off of these fruit trees. We'll burn those, but you can also chop those. We had a project in Ojai; we were doing waste for some of the—. Well, the point is, there is waste, and so what do you do with it? Some of it composts out; you return it as compost. Some of it is hardwood, and you try to figure out somebody who might need that hardwood for use. This is niche work, but CDF was pretty much involved. And Dave Neff, who was principal down there in southern California, was one of the primary people, working with UC Irvine. And we were working in biomass, we were trying to find ways to use some of these wastes into small-type biomass type things to burn it, and develop electricity to go back into the grid of Southern California Edison.
- Lage: Was urban forestry a new initiative with you?

- Wilson: No, I jacked it up. It was always there in southern California, but again—.
- Lage: Why just southern?
- Wilson: Hmm?
- Lage: Why just southern California?
- Wilson: Well, because of the people. I mean, San Francisco, too, but some of the small towns have it. But most of it's southern California. That's where the interest in this sort of potential use of waste and doing fire, it's all down there, and of course, because of the species. It's more of, I would say, sort of Santa Barbara south, getting into the whole field.
- Lage: You were starting to say that you—.
- Wilson: Well, I kind of got them some more money when they had promoted it a little more, and helped the guys in the department who were—got them a little more attention and some press and gave some talks. It was okay. There are other groups down there that are very much engaged. In a way, it kind of has that same feeling in the forest fire councils, which did extremely well—the fire and safety, those things that are on people's mind. Urban forestry is harder, because it doesn't capture people like fire, and the coastline—you know, it's just like, go grab some locals.
- Lage: Yes.
- Wilson: So, it's kind of, again—. I think that—. I don't know; I don't hear much about it any more, so I don't really know it's getting much attention.
- Lage: Are the programs to plant street trees funded by the CDF?
- Wilson: Some. Some of it has to do with that, but there's other organizations that the CDF can match grants with. There's a lot of matching—. The agriculture people; there's a national organization for the trees in Nebraska, beautification. Yes, there is a genuine effort and interest in this, but again, if it has leadership and it has somebody out beating the bushes. Somebody has to kind of lead the charge a little bit, and the CDF guys are, I think, pretty good at that, and trying to do that. But if they don't have encouragement or the budget help or something, and an ability for—you have to give a damn. What you do often as a director is make your presence known and talk to the people and get them interested and try to come back and see what they are doing. If you've got an entrepreneur that's trying to compost and build a business—there's one or two down there who get all this stuff—to sort of help them to get this much access and support to get this stuff into the return, as it were, to become economically feasible, to get the material. And the CDF can help

those kinds of things too, because they know where most of the stuff is and they try to organize it.

So it's a small part, but urban forestry is—we'll keep it as an issue, an element in front of us and work on, but again, it's hard when budgets are tight. There's a very good man in Sacramento—I think he's on the city council now—he's worked on planting trees and is a terrific, a real proponent of trees, and Sacramento is a great example, because it's got some great parks and shaded areas.

Lage: Well, their street trees there make so much difference.

Wilson: I believe there's no question of it.

Lage: Such a hot climate.

Wilson: And if you go up to Chico, in the old town, street trees shade those older houses, and when you go out to the pink houses, they've got all their air conditioners running, and there isn't a tree on the horizon, so it just shows you that they are important. They've proven that many times over in studies of how much energy you save with those trees.

Lage: I like that One California Forest thing.

Wilson: Well, there's a plaque in my office, if you look at it, it talks about that. So, I mean, that's kind of the urban forestry side of it. And the oaks, again, we've had a hell of a time with the oaks. Oaks were fashionable to the industry when you had a big chip market, running around grinding them up. And that was Japan, and that eventually ran its course. Or running biomass also, fueling biomass plants using the oaks. When that cooled off, that kind of stopped, and now, the oaks have been threatened a lot by these grape people, going into Santa Barbara and cutting down all the oaks.

Lage: The grape people? Oh, yes.

Wilson: To make vineyards. Kendall Jackson is a big player in Santa Barbara County.

And this is true of some of the other conifers. It's a conversion, and we've been involved in that, too. I think they've done a little better up here than down south, but there is a lot of furor. I think Santa Barbara passed an initiative, but they don't let them do that anymore, strip these hillsides just to make grapes and cut all the oaks. Because oaks are very slow-growing, and they're really are a part of our landscape. But they are not under forest practice; there's been an effort. [Break to address a beeper]

Lage: We're back from a break. I think we're in the wrap-up stage on the department. We've covered the "what-happened;" maybe we need to get some "how you feel about what your major accomplishments were."

Wilson: I think basically whatever I left behind as we reorganized the department: technical competence in the management of the fire side, and the fire plan was part of that, so that they are the most sophisticated and the most efficient up-to-date system in the United States. And then I think the fire plan and the Fire Safe Councils and these things have moved on out and really become parts of communities and have done extremely well. In fact, I'm on the board of something called the CREW in Ojai. It's the CREW, the Concerned Resource Environmental Workers. What they are, they're the youth—. They've had a run-in with the law over maybe some drugs, but they've been in a little trouble. They're not in jail, but the juvenile system might have them, and then there are some who are kind of lost and are wondering around in school and in high school. These are sixteen and seventeen year olds.

So basically, they've been doing community work. They do the Ojai tennis tournament clean-up. They do tree planting. They do a whole host of work around the community. When I, a couple of years ago—the fellow who runs it—. Actually it was through Tony Thacher, who is the grandson of the founder of the Thacher School, he grows oranges in Ojai, and he had been a member of the CREW board, and he solicited me because I sit on the [Michael J.] Connell Foundation Board of Los Angeles, which is an old Los Angeles foundation, very small comparatively speaking, the way foundations are today, but most of it really is in Los Angeles. Because Los Angeles is spread out so, I thought this was really a good place to look at the funding.

So he asked me about helping, and I thought this is a really good opportunity to take some of these funds that Clinton dumped into the Forest Service after the Montana fires and the coast. It was typical. There was more money, but they didn't know how to spend the money, that was the problem. The CREW in Ojai—. Ojai is one of the highest fire areas in the state in terms of the brush, the Los Padres [National Forest] and it all kind of comes down the mountain right through the community.

Lage: High risk, you mean?

Wilson: High risk, and it has a high fire history, some of the biggest. Maybe the biggest fire, may still be the biggest on record by size. And you get the sundowner winds coming off the mountain, pushing it down, which are just vicious down there in that southern California area. Well, it occurred to me that the Forest Service, at the local level, they had pretty much 75 percent of the land around the valley, in the periphery, and they were doing nothing. And they had no—. I mean, the Forest Service no longer has any—what I call slave labor—anybody who does real work. They all sit in the office, they all have computers, they all have pickups; each one, everybody has a pickup, no two

people ride in a pickup together. They go to training and they go to coffee and they go to conferences. That's all they do with their lives.

Lage: In their separate pickups.

Wilson: In their separate pickups. So when they're meeting, the whole parking lot is full of pickups. That's their mission because the spotted owl kind of took them out of the timber business. We never touched on the Quincy library, did we?

Lage: No. That we have to go back to, or go to as part of the lessons.

Wilson: Anyway, they fell on hard times in terms of what to do because of the Gore-Clinton people and the shut-down in cutting. They were sort of more or less acting more like a park or the Department of Interior, than the Forest Service. It seemed to me that this was a natural for the Forest Service to help with the funding of this CREW project and these teams of kids that had two supervisors, and they had about eight kids, and sometimes, they'd put a spike out and they'd stay on site for a week or just work on weekends, mostly in the summer and some during their work week, or doing the school year, but mostly in their summers.

So Michael Rains, who was the deputy in the Clinton administration before the Forest Services was broken by the presidential election—the forest section was the biggest, the logging, and they had a section to do research, but then they had this whole community service side. They were called State and Private Forestry. And State and Private has always traditionally been giving out money from the federal government; it would come to me, as the director of the state department, to use on things like urban forestry, and that's where a lot of the money was coming in for the foresters, because they had that budgeting through the Congress. And I thought, well, this seems to me just a perfect project for this money that they were trying to spend. And I called Michael Rains up. He went to Humboldt State, and I knew him for many years when I was a forester and had worked with him in the Forest Service through State and Private. And when I went to the conventions for the state foresters, he was always there from the Forest Service because he represented the regions in the east, but they were all present at this. They go to all the meetings.

I talked to Michael, and I said, "I think you people ought to be in here four-squares helping fund this project. We've got kids that need work, they need supervision, we need what I call 'slave labor,' because they did get about six bucks an hour." But still the Forest Service wouldn't do it. No way were they going to get out and do anything, and this is a lot of handwork because it's right up against the community. This plan, in concert with Ventura County which helped to set this up, was to build a twenty-five mile field break three hundred feet wide around the perimeter of the valley, by hand and then maintaining it continually because brush grows back.

About four years ago, we almost burned the whole place down, because in the upper Ojai some kids, including the sheriff's son, were playing with firecrackers, and it took off, and the wind took it, and it would have burned all three schools up there including the Thacher School if had not at the last minute the wind took it up the mountain in the forest and not down. Or the fire would have burned them all down. I mean, it was that big. That's how important the weather is in these things, because the L. A. guys who were in there said, "We can't help anymore. There's too much smoke, too much wind, we can't see. We gotta leave." And they evacuated everything.

Well, that was a pretty good wakeup call. This again pointed out the need for some kind of prevention program. So Rains and I talked about it, and Michael said, "I think it's worth it; I'll take it from here." I said, "Well, I'll take it from the bottom." There was some work to do with the local community and with the people on the CREW board and everything, so we got resistance all the way, and we got resistance from the local forest—except from John Bridgwater, the district ranger in Ojai. We didn't get any help from the Goleta people, the supervisor, Darby, this lady that runs the Goleta. And we didn't get any help from the San Francisco region.

Lage: This is all USFS.

Wilson: U. S. Forest Service. And that's typical. It wasn't their project, and they had things they wanted to do, and this was somebody else. And so Wally McCall, he said, "This is depressing." I said, "We'll just write these proposals and we'll get some feedback. Don't give up. This is the way the system works." Well, the long and the short of it is eventually, between Michael and Washington and constantly really working hard through the chief's office, because that's where he is, we got about \$150,000 out of them.

Lage: For this CREW project?

Wilson: Yes. Then also, with the Connell Foundation, I had arranged for a three-year grant of \$35,000, over three years each year, to help them. So what we did is we got them up from just struggling—they were very small—they immediately became a significant corps of workers from Fillmore, Santa Paula, and Ojai, into Santa Barbara and up. It's all Los Padres Forest, and then up to Frazier Park and from the Grapevine country, which is a little town that doesn't have anything to do with these kids, and setting up these conservation CREWS—"crew" meaning the CREW, because that's what they are, and working on a lot of this Forest Service land.

Lage: Good, hard work.

Wilson: Good, hard work. I mean, we had to fight them for a year, and even the CDF was initially against it. The net effect was it ties in with the Fire Safe Council, because I had Wally as the speaker of the last meeting of the Fire Safe

Council. I got him up there. And they were just quite excited. The idea could go into other communities.

Lage: Yes.

Wilson: The Forest Service has money. They waste most of it, so if you get a Fire Safe Council, really the public, and the public gets to choose how the money is spent.

[End Tape 15, Side A]

[Begin Tape 16, Side B]

Wilson: I did go on the board of CREW and helped them along with this, and I think in two years it's grown into the best in the United States. In fact, it's so good that the Forest Service sent out all the brass, and David and me who were saying, "But listen—" We had a gal who is a Latina come up and tell them, and explain the benefit, because some of these kids are in one-woman, one-mother, there's no father—.

Lage: Single-mother [households].

Wilson: Single, yes, and this little money they bring in really helps, that they get, not to mention the training and the work. So now, in Washington, this is the poster child of the Forest Service.

Lage: Interesting.

Wilson: Now, this we did in the Quincy Library Group.

Lage: Okay.

Wilson: Because I want to explain something here that is very important. The Forest Service was just acting like a spoiled brat, not cooperating, fighting it all the way, and we just kept going, you know, patting them on the arm, "Be good; we understand"—just keep going. And eventually it took hold, it got a life of its own, and they saw that it was good for them because they were getting bad publicity on this fee problem, that was being charged for the use of the forest. This made people sore, because what's happening is that you have to go get a pass to park and to go in the forest now. The people say, "Well, fine and dandy; it's our forest, and where's the benefit." Well, they're not spending it on camps and improvement. They're spending it on personnel to keep them employed. And this has made two congresswoman—Bono and Lois Capps—are both against the fee program. I think it might survive another year, but it's caused a lot of problems for the district rangers and John Bridgwater.

So here comes this CREW thing, and they get all kinds of praise, run around and put this thing in all the bulletins, and of course it's really something. It's a winner.

Lage: Yes.

Wilson: They didn't do a damn thing but fight it, the point is. [Laughter] But they came out fighting, and that's the bureaucrat.

And the reason that fits in is that it kind of comes back to the Fire Safe Councils. Now, the CREW is kind of tied into the Fire Safe Councils, because we have a Fire Safe Council in Ojai that backs up behind the CREW, and the Fire Safe Council is that political arm that keeps the Forest Service in line, because they've got the ranchers and a lot of the people that are the leadership in the community, and the Forest Service knows it. So they can't just run away from this, you see. It's in place.

Lage: They're part of the community, too, the Forest Service.

Wilson: They have to be. Well, the reason I brought that up at this time is that we go back to the Quincy Library Group, because the Quincy Library Group—. What happened was—and this is interesting too—is that I could see that my ability to do much with the forestry side with the administration was going to be pretty tough. I said, okay, we'll take fire and we'll make something out of fire and prevention and thinning forests. Because, you see, the timber industry had always fought fire, because they were trying to get people like you to pay a tax and have people fly in an airplane to see if there was any fire because all they wanted was to suppress, suppress, and suppress. That was their belief.

Lage: They fought fire protection.

Wilson: Yes, they wanted to stop it. Well, the light occurred to them: without fire, the timber was getting pretty brushy. Potentially they had lost some big stands in the Sierra side forest fires just because, when you get all the brush, you get a ladder. When you get a ladder it goes up into the big trees and kills the tops and kills the trees. Whereas if you systematically burn the underbrush out, the fire travels along the ground. You'll see black butts on all big old trees; that just means they run into the fire and it went on instead of climbing the ladder and burning the tree.

Well, you know, I think it finally dawned on them that maybe fire had a place in the ecosystem and so forth. It had public acceptance, whereas logging didn't. I had taken fire and made a real political thing out of it on the Fire Safe Council, the fire plan and everything. So of course, the industry's sitting over there thinking, "Well, maybe we could use this. We need to get on this fire thing. It's a big deal and there's money in it. We need to sort of thin the forest

and make fuel breaks. That way, we're going to get some more timber on the fuel breaks and still meet this safety thing."

Lage: I see. So they saw an opportunity.

Wilson: They saw an opportunity, and they saw it in Tahoe and Plumas and in these areas right around the high-use areas. So the Quincy Library Group—that was the name because they met in the Quincy Library. It was made up of a lot of players, the Forest Service, and Sierra Pacific primarily, and the community.

Lage: Where is Quincy?

Wilson: Up the Feather River. Well, they all got started, and then, again, it was a good name. Quincy Library Group—it's just a real winner. Sounds like a "what the heck do they do?". Fire protecting? Logging?"

Lage: What was their focus?

Wilson: To thin the forest, to cut down the chances of a big fire burning all of the timber, but also the focus was to move some timber off that nobody could move because of all the spotted owl problems and all the road blocks the Forest Service was putting up. So this was frankly couched in a way for fire safety and prevention in the community and better forestry, with the use of fire to advance the project. But instead of burning, they were going to do some thinning and get the logs out. To take what the Forest Service basically perceived as a second-generation stand that should be there, and thinning it. It made sense, and it did make sense to get off the dime, because they couldn't cut. I mean, they were shut down. They couldn't log on the forest to this day.

Lage: Because of the spotted owl?

Wilson: Because of the spotted owl and because of the public and because the Forest Service lost the trust, and the industry couldn't—. They didn't blame the industry either. The Gore-Clinton administration was against everything. They wanted to stop everything, and they did. The Quincy Library Group was a way of breaking out of stopping everything and using fire and safety and prevention and all of this stuff. Frankly, I endorsed it, because I thought they were on the right track, and they had a lot of people in it. I thought it was fine.

Lage: You didn't initiate it. Were you a member of it?

Wilson: No, but I was always, because of being a state forester—I felt this was a very good beginning to get a working landscape in place. The way the bill was written, it was an authorization through the Congress that had to pay; the Senate, the Congress and the president had to sign it. And it was done on a five-year time frame, so after five years you'd get a call to say "that's—." It either worked or it didn't work. It's a little bit like Jackson; you were going to

go in and do something in the forest. It will be reviewed. It's under all of these agencies; in fact, it has to be blind. All of these had to be in place before you could advance this program. It went to the Congress, and it only had one vote in the whole House against it, one. It went to the Senate and it was passed. It went to the president, and Clinton signed it. I even think—. Feinstein and her congressman, they were all for it.

You would think that would work.

Lage: Yes.

Wilson: Well, it didn't.

Lage: What happened?

Wilson: The industry and, with the Quincy Library, some of the people were just so mad at the Forest Service prior to this. The Forest Service never liked this. You see, they were doing the same thing they tried to do with me and Michael Rains; they were fighting it. It wasn't their plan.

Lage: I see. So they didn't sign on to it.

Wilson: They did not sign on to it. Not only that, but internally, they got into their foxhole and set up a meeting, and by God, they may have signed this in Congress, they might have passed it in the Senate, the president might have signed it, but we're not going to do it. They took that attitude: "We're not going to do it. We're just going to stonewall it."

Lage: Were these the regional foresters? Or does this go up to the national—?

Wilson: Well, it's the whole region. Yes. The California region. And then the rangers—the units for different districts that were involved. You know, that became part of the Forest Service culture. It grew out of that even into other areas. That was a bad project from their culture. And to this day, they've never got the Quincy Library Group off the ground. It sits there today with the authorization, and they keep trying. You see, the Forest Service has been trying to write a forest plan for the Sierras and everything, and every time—. The trouble with the Forest Service is that it never gets—. It starts a plan; it runs out of gas; it starts a plan; it runs out of gas. This is the history. It never finishes; it just goes from one to the other. They tried to grow forest plan together, and of course this could have been—. It was part of the forest plan. And of course, they don't like it. The forest planning process is totally fractured, fragmented now and broken, so they can't get anything done.

Lage: Do you know what the objection was? Did they want less logging? Did they see—?

Wilson: They did not want—. The Forest Service is—. They want green trucks; they want certain things done their way. They are very institutional in terms of how things are done and who's on top. They are the federal government, and they are supposed to know what's best. And when the state comes along and goes to the federal government and passes a law that overrules them and tells them what to do, that is heresy.

Lage: So it's just more of a turf issue than a forest issue?

Wilson: But the point is, the people in Quincy went after them publicly and they went to the press, and the press jumped all over this because it's just another way of scam-logging. The people who were opposing Quincy—and they had environmental people in that group that were pretty strong and for it—but the Forest Service got the public anti-people together, and they never got it sold. They were always looking for, you know, something wrong. It was only five years, but they had to strangle it to stop it. It was a test, just like the way Jackson is a test, and they didn't want anything done over there.

So the CREW got on okay, because the Forest Service always came out looking good. The Quincy Library Group was cast in a way that the Forest Service always looked bad, because somebody had to tell them how to run their business, when it was all said and done.

Lage: Maybe the Quincy Library people didn't know as much about the Forest Service as you did?

Wilson: They didn't. They didn't know it all. They mismanaged the whole thing.

Lage: Hmm, that's interesting.

Wilson: They didn't understand that they had to accept all this belly-aching, you know, as they were going along, saying, "Guys, you're doing a great job," and keeping them on board. They lost them. And when they lost them—. These big organizations of 40,000 people, they get a culture, and once it gets ingrained in the culture, if something is good or it isn't, it's really hard to change it around. And they've learned how hard it is. And to this day, it's still just flat on the ground and nowhere.

Lage: After it got so much publicity.

Wilson: Yes.

Lage: A lot of ink wasted on it, perhaps.

Wilson: Yes, and a lot of things. So I think, between the CREW, these are two things to show the distinctions. I think the department was—. We did a long-range plan, and most of it was fulfilled, everything in terms of, you know, all of the

things: the air program, getting the computer working in place, getting the ranger units reorganized—oh, an awful lot. This is one of the only departments in the state that had done any of the long-range planning. Now that they've developed a strategic plan and almost got it all working by the time I left.

- Lage: For a guy who has worked mainly just on your own—.
- Wilson: Yes.
- Lage: —I mean, you've been on the boards and commissions, but you've never been in a position to run a big enterprise?
- Wilson: No, I didn't have any power.
- Lage: And it didn't bother you either, it sounds like?
- Wilson: No. My main problem was to get rid of the dead wood and get good people, and once I'd got the right people, and it took me some time—. So it takes a couple of—. I was there; I was the longest sitting director in the history of the department to that time.
- Lage: Oh you were?
- Wilson: But it takes time to do these things. There's a long time you don't get anything done because you're building your base.
- Lage: Right.
- Wilson: You've got to build your base. You build your program, build your base, in the department build your base in the Department of Finance and the governor's office. Then you go public and you get all the parties involved.
- Lage: Who did you talk with the most as you were doing this? Did you go into [Doug] Wheeler, the resources agency?
- Wilson: Of course, I had to deal with them, yes, but I spent a lot of time with my local people at the region unit. I spent a lot of time with Loyd Forrest, who had a real good insight into a lot of that, the mechanics of state government and how they worked and where the stops were.
- Lage: Did Wheeler—?
- Wilson: He didn't like the fire; he didn't like it.
- Lage: He wasn't interested in it.

- Wilson: He had this other—NCCP—going around. Doug’s a federalist at heart. Doug’s a nice man; I like him. He hated the logging side of it. He felt they never gave him a fair shake.
- Lage: Did he run his agency—? Did he have cabinet-type meetings?
- Wilson: Well, he had directors.
- Lage: Did you all meet together on a regular basis?
- Wilson: Oh yes. We all met, and we all sat around, yes, at director’s meetings.
- Lage: And was the Water Resources Control Board part of that?
- Wilson: No, they were over in EPA.
- Lage: So they’re in a totally different agency?
- Wilson: We had the Department of Water Resources, and Dave [David] Kennedy is an old friend. To this day, I see him.
- Lage: How would you evaluate him? We have coming up through this program—it’s called the State Government Oral History Program—possible oral histories with David Kennedy and Doug Wheeler.
- Wilson: Get Kennedy first.
- Lage: In order to get some background from him?
- Wilson: Well, it will help you with Wheeler.
- Lage: Well, how did you with Kennedy?
- Wilson: Well, he and I got—. We were the two biggest departments in resources that were considered—. He and I were both usually fighting against Doug Wheeler. And Mantell was his alter ego—good guy/bad guy.
- Lage: Mantell? His deputy.
- Wilson: That’s his deputy. Doug loved to go to meetings and give speeches, the talk guy. I always said Doug was the king of eco-babble.
- Lage: Eco-babble?
- Wilson: Eco-babble.
- Lage: Not Ego—?

- Wilson: No. Eco. He loved the Endangered Species Act, and he loved the federal government, which is where he got—. I think he got into that in Washington, because he was part of the Sierra Club, and he went back to Washington DC for a period, and worked at the American Land Trust.
- Lage: And he's in Washington now.
- Wilson: He's in Washington now, working for a law firm. Doug's biggest problem was that he came to California without a following. You see, I had a constituency from the Land Use Task Force. I knew California well, when I'd want to go to talk to people. Doug didn't have any of that.
- Lage: He really didn't have time here. He had a year and a half at the Sierra Club in San Francisco, but that was not California-oriented.
- Wilson: All he knew was the governor and resources persons, but he didn't have any contacts. That hurt him a lot. And Dave Kennedy, he's just a good engineer when he goes about it, and he's a good guy. I like Dave a lot.
- Lage: Now, you've had your battles with water engineers. Did he have a different mentality?
- Wilson: No. Bill Gianelli was the battler, and Dave was the engineering. Gianelli was sour, and probably bitter over Dos Rios.
- Lage: Did David have the same kind of engineering priorities?
- Wilson: I don't know. I've never asked him, "Do you think that thing should have been built or not?" I never asked him that. Dave, I know he knows that water has its limitations, and we have a problem between farmers and the habitat problem for the fish and the wildlife and the MI, the Metropolitan and Industrial, and he knows that hard decisions have to be made. And he also knows that there is no magic wand for somebody to get up and proclaim victory on that issue. It's one that you do small battles at a time. You try. That's what you can do. At other times you can't do anything; it's got sort of market itself, which I think is a realistic view.
- Lage: So you and he—?
- Wilson: Well, we were not budget—. We were in ways kind of flying on the same curve. They had thoughts, and we were always had our priorities.
- Lage: Did you have—? Did he listen to you with respect?
- Wilson: Well, he and I were doing very different things in a way, and we got along. He ran his shop, and we didn't really have places to cross. Fish and Game,

however—. They had a terrible time between Fish and Game and Water Resources.

Lage: Did you work well with Boyd Gibbons [director of Fish and Game]?

Wilson: I got along fine with Boyd, and I was sorry to see him get cashed out of the Wilson administration because of his bad judgment, to some extent.

Lage: What happened there?

Wilson: Oh, well, he was hanging around some lobbyists. Boyd made some unfortunate statements about wildlife issues, the bears. You know, you've got the bear hunters all inflamed over hunting, and that went right into the governor's office. You see, the governor's office is happy if nobody brings problems. If you're out running something and you're getting at the governor's office all the problems from this damn director, you know they get restless.

Lage: They don't like it.

Wilson: They don't like it.

Lage: Was that Wheeler's job? To keep his directors with him?

Wilson: He has to keep them, but then he himself was always in trouble with the governor's office. [Laughter]

Lage: Oh, was he?

Wilson: Oh, Bob White, Wheeler drove them crazy with this NCCP stuff and all this crap.

Lage: So Wilson was not into that kind of "eco-babble"?

Wilson: No, Wilson was not. Wilson was more of a pragmatist. He had a good understanding of politics in the state, and conservation, environmental issues, but he liked to deal with cutting a deal on a budget process or on a need basis or something. He didn't like this fuzzy-headed stuff, and Doug from the beginning was just not very good at making ecology a comfortable word in the Wilson administration. He was flying with the angels. He was a big buddy of Al Gore's.

Lage: It was kind of a funny place for him to be, then, over there in the Wilson administration.

Wilson: It was a very funny place for him to be. It was just that he was—.

- Lage: But he was a Republican?
- Wilson: Well yes, but all his friends are Democrats [Laughter].
- Lage: You have a lot of Democrats as friends.
- Wilson: I have a lot of friends too—.
- Lage: What would you say Wilson's overall record was? Were you disappointed? You did have high hopes at the beginning.
- Wilson: Forestry needs help. Forestry is on its last legs because of the policies that were enacted. Of course, on fire we are in great shape, but they left me alone. They didn't care. That's prevention, and that was good, something you couldn't get along without. The industry couldn't care less about Jackson; they don't care about small landowners. They have their agenda, and they were doing it, so they didn't bother too much about that. I was getting most of the trouble from the enviros. [Wilson's environmental statements didn't always square with my policies.—added during narrator's review.]
- Lage: But didn't it disturb you—I forget when it was, '93 or '94—when Wilson gave a press conference in Scotia. Was it at Pacific Lumber headquarters? Kind of undercutting all the things that you had been working on?
- Wilson: Well, Wheeler and—. They undercut me completely. He undercut me, and they were in the bag. I mean, they were playing games with Hurwitz. Hurwitz's aims worked through that. But they didn't talk to me. So I say, Wilson did not live up to his campaign promises, particularly concerning Mendocino County, but then, that's politics. And Doug was duplicitous. It was pretty much over the line what they were doing to get campaign—. It's campaign contributions.
- Lage: You can really see it working.
- Wilson: Denny Carpenter was in there with money, and money was available, and whatever was out there. If you skinned the big boys, they were in the governor's office and on my back, so I had to pick my openings rather carefully and just work with it the best I could. That's the facts of life. I can say that I wouldn't go back and work with the Bush administration even if there was the opening, because [Dick] Cheney runs the policy people to follow the Big Business line.
- Lage: Yes.
- Wilson: I had more hope for Pete Wilson. But Pete Wilson got the presidentialitis. You get the people who are running the state policy like me, and then you get the political side, and they, of course, when they beat Kathleen Brown [in the

gubernatorial election], they thought the presidency was the next hoop. And that was all fund-raising, so you weren't going to do anything to jeopardize that money that was coming in, without a call from the governor's office. And Ward Connerly was all mixed up in that stuff.

Lage: So Ward Connerly was out trying to raise money also?

Wilson: Sure. Well, for Pete Wilson and them.

Lage: He's an interesting figure.

Wilson: I'm reluctant to say that we achieved a working landscape. It's a word that I used and used and used to get people to understand and accept it as a place where you ought to be, but I still see the hard side of both sides and I don't see the working landscape idea prevailing.

Lage: You introduced the idea?

Wilson: Yes, the idea, and the use and why we need it, but there's still enough friction and hostility between the two power groups. It's like this thing we've got with the Palestinians and the Israelis. They fought each other for so long and they're so imbedded, their hatred and anger is so deep that it's almost impossible to reach—. [He starts to get up]

Lage: Do you want to take a break?

Wilson: No. I want you, if you would please, hand me that book over there by the lap of the chair. That's so hard, to get them to move to a more neutral position or something they can work with, like a working landscape, and what I would like to do here. I wonder if I can find this one—this is really good [he looks through the book].

Lage: This is a book called *Walking the Bible* by Bruce Feiler.

Wilson: I'm going to read you—. This is rather short."In 1980—. Yes, this is *Walking the Bible* by Bruce Feiler [spells it]. I'll read it." In 1980, a local Jewish high school student was murdered in Hebron, and later eight more were shot in front of the building. Jewish settlers swarmed the neighborhood seeking retaliation. That began a cycle of murder and revenge that only worsened after the 1992 Oslo Peace Accords, which gave the Palestinians control of the city. Twenty percent was reserved for the Jews, an area the size of a few city blocks. The fifty-five families who occupy the Jewish Quarter today are like the core of one of those stackable Russian dolls. A Jewish enclave surrounded by an Arab city. An Arab city surrounded by the occupied West Bank. The West Bank surrounded by the Jewish State. The Jewish State surrounded by the Arab World. The Arab World surrounded by the West.

Who has the upper hand? Who is more vulnerable? It's not that the answer is complicated. It's just that there is no answer." You see?

Lage: That's very good.

Wilson: That's really good. This thing we've been talking about in some ways has that same thing in it. That the thought of working something out—. The industry is "Look, we can't fight any more. We're going to get all the big trees and leave and go somewhere else because there's no future for us." The enviros are saying "Well, we've tried to work with them, and they've screwed us so many times, there's nothing. Go to court, shut 'em down, get 'em out. The sooner they leave, the better." In the midst of that, you leave this sort of no man's land. It's neither fish nor fowl. It's a working landscape, but your infrastructure is all but gone. So the idea of having these productive lands, in this case timber, to be sustainable, is getting shakier all the time. Because where's the advocacy, where are the people to sort of step up for it?

Lage: And as time goes on, your support groups are gone because they have left the business.

Wilson: It's like Art Harwood, who brought in Jim Little, who is their forester. He and I were talking just this past year, and I said, you know, "It's getting harder and harder to keep a crew of loggers and people around here. The seasons are getting shorter; we're having a harder and harder time getting logs locally." And he said, "These guys just can't make a living three or four months and be on unemployment. They're just having to leave and go elsewhere to find the work, because it's just so hard to make ends meet." And that's the infrastructure. And as you lose that—.

Lage: You leave the forest.

Wilson: Yes. That's your cat skimmers, your truck drivers, and your fallers, and the people who do the work. The more you drive it into the ground—. This is why I say the enviros kind of win the de facto way. The thing just gets so unworkable. By the time the scale is ratcheted down to something that doesn't provide a living, you see that people are going. And that's what's happening.

And I don't know, I think California—. Look, we've had the Clinton years, the dot-com thing, we had this whole economic thing we've slipped into, we've had the stage just come up on this Wall Street thing, where bad information is shaking down people because of analysts and brokerage houses. We have so many things right now up in the air that are uncertain, and people just don't know what to do. We've got the terrorist thing, we've got the Arab world mad at us. We're in a position where people are beginning to feel "What brought us in to this predicament? What are we going to do? What is it we're supposed to be doing as living citizens of the state of California?" And there's no, to my notion, any citizenship taught in the schools any more or

anything that kind of brings that out. Bush's public service ideas are good and Clinton had some too, and the CREW was an example of that. That's something that keeps people focused and that they can do. Also, they have a stake in it because they live there, and so they can look back.

[End Tape 16, Side B]

[Begin Tape 17, Side A]

Lage: You were talking about Watts as I changed the tape.

Wilson: Well, okay. This was when we really had a program on tree planting, and we were taking a lot of these people that were out of work and really in trouble, and we were teaching them how to plant trees and giving them a certificate and then going out and planting trees. I was impressed because talking to these people after they had gone through the program and actually done it, they had a real sense of pride of having done this themselves. They planted the trees and they looked at it. They were really surprisingly responsive positively to the whole thing. I mean, that's the kind of thing, I'm thinking, in terms of agriculture. I mean, our forests need thinning by people. You can't do it with machines. It bangs things up.

Lage: And the thinning is for fire prevention? Fire is so dangerous.

Wilson: Fire is so dangerous. But it's the cost and it's how you allocate. Again, I mean, to me instead of paying all this money to farmers to grow things you don't need, you ought to pay forest land owners the same kind of subsidy you're giving farmers to grow things we don't need to thin those forests and make those trees, those stands, so they are going to be a really fine stand. Even to the extent that, sometimes I've thought, that we ought to have a corps like the army and use the forester to be employed, to take over and be responsible for, I don't know, a thousand acres of cutover lands, and you would get paid like you're in the army, and to go out there and bring that thing through a generation back. And you would be paid, a salary and benefits and everything as an employee, to do that. And it would then come back into the stream for productivity.

Lage: Well, that makes sense in the long run. Maybe not in our short-term economic thinking.

Wilson: It doesn't make any sense for the short run. But that's why I say, in some of these, if you don't have a long-run perspective, you can't do it, because it's always a budget year to budget year, and everything, and everybody's—. It's work, it's training, it's jobs, and it isn't as though you're just throwing it away. You're going to get a product, as Jackson got a product after twenty-five or thirty years. But somebody had to pay for it. In a way, the Jackson Forest is an example.

Are we going to pay for it? Not the way we think today. We're going to go to Chile or Australia to find some trees—run around in GATT and NAFTA and all that. But some day, we're going to have to figure it out. We've got the sun, we've got the land, we've got the soil, we've got moisture, we've got all of these things right here at our fingertips, but we just can't get it together.

Lage: It sounds a lot like a story of the ranchlands.

Wilson: Well, it is.

Lage: Very similar.

Wilson: It is. I mean, I think that we're up against it. If you go into the ranchlands, again, you can't make it with the cattle. What you have to do, as has happened on the Hollister ranch in Santa Barbara County, you have to figure out some kind of an easement program where basically you take away the development rights but you keep the productivity active, so that you can continue to keep some growing trees and some grazing alive, as well a recreation, because those are compatible uses. But the development of that is in the landowners' hands. There's a contract that has to be made, but it's not for all these land trusts or people living in the cities to dictate how this is going to work, because they don't even know what's going on. There's got to be a clean-enough deal that they pay to get the easements, and that's it. Then how that is administered over time is pretty much up to the people of the family, or whoever is there, if there or not.

Lage: Is there such a program?

Wilson: Yes. As I did it. I did it, where it took me sixteen years, for God's sakes.

Lage: You did it with your lands here?

Wilson: I did, yes.

Lage: What kind of an easement? How did you do it?

Wilson: Well, it's an easement through the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Most, not all, of the land, but most of the land was set aside so that you can't subdivide it. You're not cutting trees. You can thin, but you're not going to cut trees for fifty years. While LP took care of that, they pretty well cut it so there won't be any trees for at least fifty years. Fundamentally, those two uses—grazing and wildlife/recreation—as long as it's within compliance with the state law, are still available to the owner. By this arrangement, the taxes and everything have to stay low, because you're eliminating the higher price options like real estate development. Because if it weren't for this, we'd be in some kind of a real estate thing; there's no other way we could go on.

Lage: Because you have such high taxes?

Wilson: Well, not the taxes. It's just the overhead and the land, and there's no money coming off from the cattle.

Lage: Did this give you some money?

Wilson: It took some debt off. It just cancelled, got rid of debt on the ranch, in exchange for the deed restrictions for fifty years.

Lage: I see.

Wilson: And also, it gives me some cover in terms of the future, in terms of estate taxes, because we're limiting the use of the land. You're limiting the use of the land to resource purposes. Hollister is much the same way. Now, they sold some of those parcels and made a lot of money, and the Homeowner's Association was there to help that, but I'm not doing that. I'm doing more of the stuff with Marjo [daughter] and Henthorne, trying to get that up and running so it makes enough money to kind of keep it altogether. That's the cash flow; it's not big, but it's okay. If we run it. But the point is, it can go on without having to sell off parcels of land to the city folks fleeing the urban center. And then we've got some parcels outside of this. If we had to, we have some places that probably could be sold as parcels if we had to in the future. As opposed to what Sierra Pacific is doing—when they're through with the timber, they're doing ten acre cut-outs in Plumas County of 850 acres, and they are going to sell it to the people from the city. And they're through. They're going to take that land out of TPZ [timber preserve zone] and sell it for real estate with a zone conversion.

Lage: And those people really won't know how to manage that ten acres.

Wilson: They won't know anything.

Lage: Yes, it does take some management skills.

Wilson: Yes, of course, because you've got to know the country, you've got to know what's going on. So we will be able to get some of this conservation and the new farm bill will help us with things here, some things we can do. I think people can probably go on around here like I'm doing, and still keep it, and not have to be under the big estate tax here, at least I hope so. And the easement is one of the vehicles that you do, just like the Hollister Ranch down there that Kimball, my attorney, worked out twenty-five years ago.

And the other way is—the bigger picture—if some of these lands could cluster up and get some cluster like Hollister, so that is the core of their money, then the homeowners can keep the rest of it going for growing timber and things.

The problem I have with some of these conservation groups is that they want to be too much engaged in the management.

Lage: The land trust groups?

Wilson: Yes. TNC [The Nature Conservancy]

Lage: Would that include trust or public land?

Wilson: All of them. They want to tell me too much about what you can and can't do, too many restrictions.

Lage: I see.

Wilson: And who has access to it and all this kind of stuff.

Lage: Did you investigate those for this county?

Wilson: Yes, but I always thought if we could work it out through this vehicle that we set up—. I had a hell of a time with the Farmers Home Administration. You see, during the Carter administration, I was having a hell of a time with the drought, and we were getting really hammered with our losses, we were incurring some pretty good-sized debt, which I had to figure out. "Well, how do I weather this storm?" Drought, cattle were down. We had all these high interest rates. I mean, it was a hideous period. And the Farmers Home people, they were making loans to farmers that were in bad shape, and I got some help from them. That was a form of indebtedness. The banks didn't want anything to do with me because they wanted to loan to me to pay back in a relatively short period of time. So it took me a long time, because within the farm bills at that time—. Every five years the farm bills were coming along, and they were basically talking about this kind of thing. The trouble was, the bureaucrats didn't get it, and I had to deal with the U. S. Senate, and different people in Washington, and constantly go back over and over this stuff, and it took sixteen years, literally, before the road issue was settled with Louisiana Pacific, and then the wilderness bill was settled in 1984. That was one of the issues.

And then we got into all this discussion with Kimball—I primarily worked with him on this easement thing to try to get people to understand. What they want to do, is they'll give you an easement. You can't have any cattle, you can't do anything so there is no revenue. So you say, "Well, what's the point?" That's exactly what their mentality is. "Well, what's the point?" They don't have a clue. This is the problem with a working landscape.

Lage: Yes, yes.

Wilson: Well, anyway, finally we got there, and—.

- Lage: What was the agency that you worked with?
- Wilson: The Farmers Home Administration; it's in the U. S. D. A.
- Lage: For this easement?
- Wilson: Yes.
- Lage: Oh, so they had a program like that. You mentioned the Natural Resources Conservation Service?
- Wilson: Well, the Natural Resources Conservation is the element that works with the ranchers on things, and they're the ones if you're getting a cooperative fencing program, or something, NRCS is where the extension service of the federal government, like the California—.
- Lage: But they're not the ones that put this—?
- Wilson: No, the Farmers Home—. They're different, but they're a huge bureaucracy, and we got into a nasty fight. They thought I was Pete Wilson's brother or something. [Laughter] We got into a huge fight; they thought there were political things going on. Oh, man. It poisoned—. It was a bad scene. It was a bad scene, a long one.
- Lage: When did you get this easement settled?
- Wilson: Well, about a year and a half ago. It took us sixteen years.
- Lage: Do your children agree with you, that this is the way to go?
- Wilson: Well, there was no other way to go. The only other way to go was to sell off parcels.
- Lage: They are committed to keeping—?
- Wilson: They don't want to sell the ranch if it can be avoided.
- Lage: Will your son, do you think, use the land as a cattle ranch?
- Wilson: Yes, obviously, some grazing. If Marjo and Sarah need to divide their interests so each can better pursue their own interest—. I think there are things here that both of them can do, once we get all this other stuff cleared out so we can kind of get it organized. It takes a little doing.
- Lage: Do you want to just talk about the plan for Henthorne? We've only talked about that off the tape.

Wilson: Well, Henthorne to me is rather a rare place because it's in a wilderness area, but you can support some activity. You can get supplies in, get a shower and hot water and some structure. You can't do those [things] in a real wilderness area. It's out here at the end of the line, and there's not many people out here. It stands alone. I think that it's a great place for people that want to spend a week to get out, whether it's for a little conference or a family gathering or something, because it's not big. It's something that probably can accommodate twenty people, but you can set up and have anywhere from eight to twelve, fifteen people, and you can take pretty good care of them. Just so you don't have to go to too many programs and spend too much time entertaining, because that's another problem.

So it could potentially add some revenue to lands that are really starved for revenues, with cattle and timber about over for the foreseeable future—to pay the bills and keep people busy, doing something. Hunting can help a little, at least wherever the cattle are. Of course the—.

Lage: People would pay to be able to hunt? Is that the way—?

Wilson: I have a little club; I only have four people.

Lage: Oh, I see.

Wilson: It works fine. I have four people.

Lage: Do you put them up?

Wilson: No, they have a place they own next to me, and they've built a cabin over on the ranch that belongs to the ranch.

So we sort of buried the hatchet with Farmers Home and we've got the issues settled, and I think Tom Schott, who runs NRCS, is a good man, and he introduced some fencing to control the livestock. It gets very expensive; it's three dollars a foot. It's \$15,000 a mile to get a fence in place. You see, it's really expensive. And you need to have some kind of cooperative effort or it's too expensive.

Lage: But the farm bill has some money in it.

Wilson: On the conservation side, yes, it does. So it would probably be a seventy-five/twenty-five. You put up twenty-five and they put up seventy-five. And there are some other practices, even burning probably could be put together. And so that would be helpful. It's tough going. It's very tight, trying to get yourself in a very tight hole to keep things going, but I'll tell you, the alternative is to give in to these real estate people. You can do that; you can go down here and get 160 acres on a stream and sell it to somebody for \$300,000-\$400,000 from the city. That's the way it is.

Lage: Just to kind of wind back to Covelo, because that's sort of where we started with the Dos Rios and all that—.

Wilson: Well, Covelo is just a time capsule. It's never, I guess—. With little work or job opportunities, and the Indians are the only source of major funding. I mean, they moved the CalTrans place out. The Forest Service has an office for a district ranger in Covelo.

Lage: Does the Forest Service employ many people?

Wilson: Oh, a few. It's getting smaller. They moved the main person over to Lake County. I mean, this is kind of an outpost really, because they don't do anything. They are not fixing up the campgrounds or logging. They are not even taking roads out. CalTrans has gone over to Laytonville since the governor cut payrolls. You've got the school, which really needs, desperately needs, to get money. The question is, what do you do when they seem to be interested in building houses? I just don't understand it. Houses? There are no jobs. When you get here, what do you do? Well, it's welfare and growing the bud. It's kind of a cul-de-sac. You're in, and then what do you do to be here and to work?

Lage: You've tried several ways to stimulate different businesses?

Wilson: Yeah, we went through a lot of different things. The Indians have worked with gravel and different things, but nothing has worked very well, in a sense. Nothing has taken hold. They have small land, and they do go out, and they're working on their land. They've got a little more land that they acquired from Harwood to add to the reservation, about 10,000 acres. But there's no—other than the money from the city coming up, it's state money, and federal funds. The flight from the city brings some money to build a summer home.

Lage: And those are the wealthier people from the city?

Wilson: Yeah, and then you've got people that buy these bigger tracts of land and break them up periodically into 160s and sell them off. I mean, there is some of that. Fetzer [Vineyards] is in the south end of the valley.

Lage: They are going to do wine, a vineyard?

Wilson: I don't know. I don't see anything in the near future that is of any significance, or changing much.

Lage: You don't hear anybody saying they wished that the dam had been built, do you?

- Wilson: No, no. The My Ranch controversy and Dos Rios are over thirty years back, and people forget. They don't know. These things are all things that have passed into history.
- Lage: There should be a plaque.
- Wilson: Well, they've got the mini-plaque on the Indian lands. There was a big brouhaha over that because it was geared to the white settlers' needs. That was a historic change, and that was a problem.
- Lage: We stopped and saw that.
- Wilson: That was really—.
- Lage: I think that deserves to be said.
- Wilson: It deserves it. Marjo wrote a song for them and sang it for them.
- Lage: But there's more of the history, too. It's too bad there's not just a little bit more.
- Wilson: Oh yeah, to record the history before it gets lost. You know, some day, it is going to change here. It's the people. What it is, I don't at this time really know. I think this sort of tourism and ecotourism and the opportunity to probably move people around through here. It's a big area; there are several hundred thousands of acres on top of the ridge here.
- Lage: Ecotourism in your backyard. You can say that to the San Francisco Bay Area.
- Wilson: It is. I think it is. It's just that we have to put some effort into it. It's going to be seasonal, and it's going to have to be done in a coordinated way. And the Forest Service again ought to be something that works with you and helps you. That will make the job long, but not impossible. It's something that could be done. Again, if there's enough pressure for this kind of thing, and there's a need, that could happen. There's pressure, as you know, all the way in the Sierras, the foothills, at Mammoth. Mammoth is just out of control.
- So that's out there. I mean, it's something that time will tell. In the meantime, the thing I think is to try to work on these little projects like we have here to try to get them going, and we'll just have to wait and see.
- Lage: Do you have allies in this enterprise? Are there people in Mendocino County that you've worked with that are carrying the torch the way you have for so long? To find an economic, sustainable solution?

- Wilson: Well, I don't know. Again, the county is changing so fast. The people that come in are—. So many people on the coast. The money is coming from the south. People are buying land and building houses. It's mostly shifting over to that kind of economy, and it's really—. Timber is nothing. It's fallen off.
- Lage: Timber and ranching are really going to be part of the past.
- Wilson: We don't have an auction yard any more. The mills are almost all gone except for Harwood. I mean, I don't think people that move up here think about this, because their livelihood comes from elsewhere. Like I say, with all the people that used to live here, I'm the only one left. There isn't much here beside me and my friends that live down the road here, but they were plumbers and have a little place they bought that you see, but that's about it. There are some ownerships.
- Lage: There are houses that you pass.
- Wilson: Well, I mean, that land is owned by Empire, a timber company in Cloverdale, and they own a big chunk of the Bar-Z Ranch, which adjoins us, and that is owned by a city person. I mean, there's somebody who bought it. That was one of the things, when LP left, the Empire people bought about, well, parcels of LP that were around me, and they were probably 20,000 acres. That's owned by Empire, and that's a young stand; there's no merchantable timber to speak of. So they're holding it. I don't know, whether they are going to break it up or what. There's no immediate revenue there that I can see. North of me is the Travis Ranch, or used to be. I'm sure they're just there. Whether they are going to do something when timber is over, and Craig Brown and Sons is just there, doing the best he can, with nothing going on. But, I mean, there isn't much, but open space and the wildlands.
- Lage: In a beautiful spot.
- Wilson: And a lot of places. A nice place to be! [laughter]
- Lage: So we are going to go up and see some of it this afternoon?
- Wilson: We might just do that, because I think we've pretty well covered this. Don't you?
- Lage: I think we have. And if something else comes to mind, you can write it in, or we can do a brief segment, you know, when you are in the city. But I think we pretty well covered it.

[End Tape 17, Side A]

**Interview #8: February 6, 2004**

[Begin Audio File 18]

Lage: We're recording and today is February 6. [This is our first videotaped interview.]

18-00:00:04

Wilson: February 6, in the year 2004.

Lage: Okay, Richard Wilson is in town. We've done quite a bit of interviewing, and we decided today to do a little bit of an overview of you as an environmentalist and a figure—

18-00:00:30

Wilson: Well, I think I would distinguish between environmentalism and conservation. I think I have a strong bent to conservation, simply because it implies that as we live on the land, we can work on the land. We're not just putting it into parks and buying it up and then just walking away and saying it's saved. And I think that we've made some errors in trying to spend enormous amounts of public money on these set-asides. And that isn't to say that some of these aren't just very, very good things to have in the inventory for set-asides. But still, there's been this kind of tension between environmentalism and conservation, that you can't trust conservation because that implies somebody's going to use it; and boy, if somebody's going to use it, you just know they're going to [laughs] do the wrong thing. So therefore, we'd better make it the hard-core environmentalism, it's a museum, because once we get that key, it's going out the window and we're not going to let anybody know where we've tossed it.

Lage: You have talked to me previously a lot about the working landscape.

18-00:01:52

Wilson: I did. That's conservation.

Lage: Yeah. Now, is that a term that you came upon yourself?

18-00:01:59

Wilson: I sort of developed it as my thought process, such as it is, as I worked these issues for so many years and realized that unfortunately, in my experience—whether it was a Dos Rios or whether it was a My Ranch, or whether it was a wilderness road issue; all of these as examples, among others—that we got into this black and white problem. That seemingly, there was no middle ground. It's all or nothing. It's Dos Rios, in the second stage of the California Water Plan, and shipping it out North Coast Rivers; or no, it's not Dos Rios. And furthermore, wild rivers put those rivers off limits. That's no. It isn't going to happen.

Lage: Yeah, right. No, never.

18-00:03:09

Wilson: Well, no never, if never means anything. But from a federal and state point of view, at this point, that's true. But the sad part is that there probably were some negotiable areas that might've been worked out that could've had some real benefit.

Lage: That could've involved use and saving the river?

18-00:03:28

Wilson: Yeah, you didn't have to have all the rivers, the Eel and other North Coast rivers, and you didn't have to have all the big dams and the interlocking systems. There were a lot of ways to look at that. But no, that wasn't part of the option. Or good old Jeff Dennis [the person who promoted the My Ranch subdivision for 30,000 people in Round Valley], with his 8500 half-acre lots.

Lage: Now, give a little explication here.

18-00:03:50

Wilson: That's the My Ranch subdivision. And that came right after Dos Rios. And we'd had a year off, and I thought, oh, my goodness, here this comes. And here this fellow comes into the valley. He'd been involved with Boise Cascade. He'd put them in the second-home business. [laughs] Almost broke them on it, but nevertheless, he'd been over in the valley with Jackie Gleason and buying these things and doing all these developments. And he came in and bought the south end of the valley, and he was going to put this—timeshare is what it was.

Lage: I see.

18-00:04:30

Wilson: There were 8500 half-acre lots, where you could buy one of these and you could come and go. There's some others around the state that are like this. I said to him, I said, "Jeff, it seems to me that this is a little more than Round Valley can really swallow. It's kind of big and the water issue is critical here. Not only the available water, but the drainage problem on the property in the winter." And he said, "Well," he said, "Look," he said, "I'm entitled to \$65 million. And that's what we want. Nothing less."

Lage: You mean entitled because he owned the land?

18-00:05:17

Wilson: He owned the land, and that's what he wanted to make out of that development. And I said, "Well, I guess if it's that or nothing, I guess we just have to square up, and one of us comes and one of us goes. This is the way it works." And so that's the way it worked. And the ultimate was that we fought our way through the planning commission that overruled him; and then they overruled the supervisors; and then the supervisors gave him the green light; and then I had to get organized and we had to fight that on through—We had a campaign. We had an initiative.

Lage: A public campaign.

18-00:05:56

Wilson: Public initiative, referendum. And that went through the Mendocino County Fair, where there was a “No on My Ranch” booth and a “Yes on My Ranch” booth. [laughs]

Lage: It was very contentious.

18-00:06:06

Wilson: Oh, very contentious. But what I learned, again, from this issue was that Dennis had all the arguments up there about the property rights and the right to do with your property and so forth. But the environmental constraints were real. And having battled about it for so long, the public had a pretty good understanding of what the pros and cons were. And when they did come to a vote, except for one subdivision down on the Gualala, on the Mendocino-Sonoma Coast, they overruled that and voted no. It was all over. And one supervisor, Al Barbero [a very vocal county supervisor supporting Jeff Dennis’s project], lost his seat, and that just changed the whole climate.

My point is that—see, this is it—if the public has time—and of course, time is hard to get these days—but if they have time to digest it and understand it, and are presented with all the facts and given a chance to vote, I believe they’ll make the right decision. And the fair decision.

Lage: You first fought a dam that would’ve flooded Round Valley.

18-00:07:30

Wilson: Everything.

Lage: Then the next thing is sort of an upper-class subdivision type—

18-00:07:36

Wilson: Well, middle class or—

Lage: Middle class?

18-00:07:39

Wilson: Yeah, cars and vehicles.

Lage: And these are classic examples of what’s happening to the West today.

18-00:07:43

Wilson: Oh, and it’s just getting accelerated in California.

Lage: Right. Right. Now, what you’re left with then in Round Valley, the ranching, the timber operation, and what else? Tell me more about how the working landscape works out in that area.

18-00:07:57

Wilson:

Well, we're in a very difficult time because the timber is gone because fundamentally, the big companies came in, Louisiana-Pacific came in and overcut, cut as much timber as they could legally cut, and when they were through, they just left and—Well, left, that's all. They, in essence, went broke in California and walked out the door, leaving nothing, really, as a follow-up.

Lage:

So that takes away one leg of the working landscape.

18-00:08:21

Wilson:

That takes away one leg. And then the other leg is the ranching, which is coming on hard times, too, because of just agriculture and the way agriculture is practiced, and where the small man doesn't really fit very well anymore. And so that's not one of the big options. And so what you have is, from a working landscape, you have a growing Indian population. Whether they're going to take it up now and move it further ahead from their immediate needs of housing and what not, I don't know. And there're more and more people moving into Round Valley from the cities, buying lots where they want to have a place to live out of the urban centers. Which is what I wouldn't call working; it's a settlement type of a landscape.

Lage:

A different type of My Ranch, perhaps?

18-00:09:12

Wilson:

Not as intense, no. The density is—We're talking about forty-acre parcels.

Lage:

I see.

18-00:09:17

Wilson:

So you're not getting the density of My Ranch. So you have a large, large area of ground that has a wilderness area, that has open ground, that has a slightly growing population. And my hunch is that the next whatever is going to change is still yet to come. Well, I guess one way of looking at it is the options are there for the future. It doesn't necessarily have it all on the table right now.

Lage:

Do you see any future in that area for—I guess I'd call it boutique ranching. Sort of the organic—

18-00:09:56

Wilson:

Well, they're already there. Out of the Chadwick years in the seventies, we have some people now that have carried on. The Decaters are there [Live Power Community Farm], the Palleys [Covelo Organic] are there. And there's no question but those people are established and are connected with the city. And that's the important thing.

Lage:

But that's the vegetable, fruit; what about beef?

18-00:10:19

Wilson: The beef is coming—

Lage: Organic beef.

18-00:10:20

Wilson: —not in Round Valley, but in Potter Valley there's one of those already. And in parts of Oregon, there are those people. And there are clearly people moving in the direction of not so much the organic, but the idea of a relationship—because it is a working landscape—that they're making a relationship between the plant life—For instance, if you're in the cattle business up in Oregon, on the border there between Idaho, they have a large group of people that have said, "It isn't working the way we have been doing it. We have to do something else." And they've done that, to the extent that they, as a group—And I can't tell you how many there are in the group, but they have something like 10,000 cows under their ownership. And they have really sat down and figured out the rotation of their animals, the feed and the kind of grasses on their ground, making sure that they're all taken care of, the grass, the feed. It's like [André] Voisin said in his book, *What is grazing?* It's where the cow meets the grass. It's a two-way deal.

Lage: You've got to leave some grass. [chuckles]

18-00:11:34

Wilson: You've got to not only have to leave some, but you have to have the right grass.

Lage: Oh, I see.

18-00:11:38

Wilson: In order to have the right grass, you have to tell the cows to get off, and we're going to grow this back, and get over here. Or with the water, sometimes you have to fence them out to protect the water; but that doesn't mean you have to quit. Well, they're achieving not only a high level of, I think, success; they're tied in with, I believe, the Whole Foods market chain. They're going to take all their beef. They don't sell it organically, but they are going to sell it—It's a product mostly of harvesting the grass and converting it—

Lage: Grass-fed beef?

18-00:12:17

Wilson: Grass-fed, and I honestly don't know whether they're putting a thirty days of grain into it or not, but it's very, very controlled.

Lage: But sort of a sustainable agriculture thing.

18-00:12:25

Wilson: Yes. You see, there you are? This is something that can go on.

Lage: Now, is that something that when you think about working landscape, is that the direction you'd like to see it go?

18-00:12:33

Wilson: That's the direction I think we have to go. And I think if you went up there and talked to those people, you'd find that the government people, the soil conservation people, they all understand it and they support it. But what it really comes down to, Ann, is a change of heart. It really is. What we're doing hasn't worked. Now, what is the discipline and what is it we need to do to change this, so we can have a lifestyle and be productive? What can we do?

Lage: Now, the change of heart on the part of the rancher—

18-00:13:07

Wilson: Yeah.

Lage: —or the consumer?

18-00:13:09

Wilson: The rancher.

Lage: The rancher.

18-00:13:10

Wilson: How he or she or the family—They're more realistic about taking care of their land and protecting their grasses, making sure the relationship of the animals to the land is the right density. Having a cooperative, there's more than one in it; they've managed to all agree that these are the guidelines that we're going to subscribe to, because this is what we want to do, and we think it's right. I believe that. And for that reason, they're slowly getting stronger and doing a better job of putting this kind of an effort together to where they are—

That isn't to say there aren't ranches that are going to be subdivided up here, perhaps, too. But the point is that this is a core of people that have made a change in their minds, they way they want—And it goes back to this critical word of sustainability. And that means that people collectively have to get together and identify what they're going to do, and then say, okay. Now, to do that, what are the parameters? What are the disciplines? Because what's happened so much in the timber business is that it's quarter to quarter; cut, cut, cut; production, production, production. So that the tree can't keep up with the capacity of the mill and the board feet. And so big trees just kept getting to be littler, littler, littler. Pretty soon you've got all these little trees that, in sixty to a hundred years, may get there; but the point is, what happens in the meantime? Well, that's the fragmentation of the land that is happening in the West and California.

Lage: Now, that's an area you also worked on. We talked about ranching, but you've also worked on sustainable timber growing.

18-00:15:04

Wilson: Well, and again, it's exactly the same—More so, I think, now in the redwood country than it is—

Lage: Well, Mendocino County's a great case study.

18-00:15:15

Wilson: It is, indeed. It's a great case study. [Jackson State Forest has a working on-going developing plan for its management. The Fisher family is successor to Louisiana Pacific coast redwood lands; they have a management plan compatible to the Jackson forest plan.—added during narrator's review]

Lage: What's happening there? I've read about the protests on Jackson State Forest. And there is the Gap, the Fisher family plan.

18-00:15:22

Wilson: Well, we've got two examples that I think state it eloquently. The Jackson State Forest. Here we are in 1945, when Earl Warren purchased that forest for a million dollars. And it had been absolutely blitzed out. It had been burned and logged and donkeyed, and it just didn't have any more resiliency, and so they bought it. George Biggar, the state senator from Covelo, was one of the principals in that, and the state forester. And they bought it. They wanted to buy more, but they bought 40,000 acres of the Jackson.

Lage: In Mendocino County.

18-00:16:04

Wilson: It's in Mendocino County, and it is more or less on an east-west axis between Fort Bragg and Willits. So you get both the coastal, the redwood, the fog; and then as you move inland, you get more into the pine and fir country and some of the hardwoods. Well, the Jackson probably, from '45—for twenty, twenty-five years, under the state, was rested. In other words, they maintained it. They allowed those redwood crowns to come back, they did a little bit of thinning and everything, to where then they began to get some pretty good results. They began to see, well, look, here we've started to get some very merchantable timber. And redwood has a really good price. And so they began to do some harvesting. And so for the last, say, certainly fifteen years or even a bit more, the Jackson Forest is cutting less. Now, this is important because they use something called the percentage of inventory, a 2 percent POI. Meaning that's kind of—If you've got 2 percent of the volume, that you're growing and harvesting, that's about an even split. Well, the Jackson isn't even doing that. It's cutting maybe a 1.3 or 1.4. So it's growing more wood than it is cutting. The net effect is that it's been sort of a cash cow for the CDF [California Department of Forestry] and the state, of about \$15 million per year, on 40,000 acres. Boy, would anybody love to have that today in a company, and that kind of a resource.

Lage: So it's economically viable.

18-00:17:53

Wilson: Not only is it economically viable, it's a job producer. It also has a hatchery, it has a fishery, it has recreation, it has hiking and camping. But to get a sustainable forest takes discipline.

Lage: Is it a model for the private forester?

18-00:18:08

Wilson: It is, indeed. It's a model, as well as the place that we should be doing more research. The hard-line environmentalists, again, have been trying to stop everything and make it a park. And that, to me, is the wrong thing to do, because Jackson was set up as an experimental forest. And I think if you look at it today, you'll find that it's done exactly what it was supposed to do, and it should be encouraged. And furthermore, it should be allowed for experimentation, for the private landowner to figure out how they're going to deal with the future. What is the future? And how do I grow trees and work with this urban society, if I'm in a timber protection zone, a zone for timber? Well, that's the Jackson. There are other forests, but the Jackson's really the mother house of this.

Lage: Has the CDF been responsible in managing the Jackson? I've read articles from the environmentalist point of view, and they just blast the management.

18-00:19:10

Wilson: I know. They do. I think that perhaps there've been some mistakes, but in general, yes, I think the CDF has been very responsible. And also I believe that any kind of logging that some of these folks see, they don't like. They just don't like it. It is a little messy, even if it's good logging, for a year or two. But if you see what's happened after it comes back and rebounds, it's amazing how fast that stuff comes back and grows. So the Jackson—again, like we talked about the grazing—the Jackson is a model. It demonstrates it can be done. And that perhaps transfers over to the Mendocino Redwood Company, which is the Gap.

Lage: The Gap family, the Fishers.

18-00:20:04

Wilson: And they've cut back and they're working. I think Mike Jani, their forester, is very conscious of these things and is working hard to put them on a sustainable basis.

Lage: And they've been boycotted for cutting the redwoods.

18-00:20:20

Wilson: I know. They get boycotted, see? And that's why it's so hard, because these people—Look, they've got to generate some cash. They've got a lot of money in that. I don't know, \$1000, \$1500, whatever they paid an acre for it, but it's a lot. And they need to generate some money. And I think they've been more

than willing to work with the public people. It's just that some of them will never, never accept it; it's a commercial enterprise and so on. But generally—

Lage: Well, what's the alternative? Because I think this is telling, also, that I've read that the alternative to sustainable logging in that area is resorts, and homes, and subdivisions.

18-00:21:08

Wilson: That's what's coming. Georgia-Pacific, which sold to this group in Washington, the Campbell Group, they paid too much money for that. And that was the old Union Lumber Company lands.

Lage: Is that Mendocino?

18-00:21:20

Wilson: Oh, yes. That's 200,000 acres that joins some of the Gap lands, the Louisiana-Pacific. It's fine land. They've got a problem because they've got a young stand that someday is just going to be fantastic. But they need the money. They need the money, so that they have had to sell off parcels to keep it all going. And that's what happens, see?

Lage: And they've sold it to subdividers?

18-00:21:56

Wilson: Well, some parklands and yes, some commercial, yes. But that's the point, is the pressure is such. It's that thing—we may have talked about it before—the idea of some patient money. That if you go too fast on any of this stuff, you pay a price. Cut too fast, you have a time lag, which prohibits you from being able to get back into the sustainability area without buying time. Grazing, you lose the plants, you have to let them come back. So you've lost a period where you have to rehab, rehabilitate.

That's the problem. And so the question we have is, are we going to be able to pause? Are we going to be able to kind of realize that if we want some of these things to stay in place—We have to ask the question, do we want a productive timber resource, unique to California? Which is obviously redwood land. Do we want some of the great lands in agriculture, the great soils, particularly out around Davis and that, do we want to keep those, rather than have them farmed over? Well, if so, what are we going to have to do to make sure that we can keep those lands productive and keep the people on those lands capable of making a living? That's got to happen. Fair enough.

And the farmer, he's lucky if he can, two out of ten years, make some money. He's going to, oftentimes, have to lose money. And he has his land, and the land keeps appreciating. And if you go and drive the state—because I'm back and forth a great deal—and just look at places like Highway 33, in places that you'd never think of seeing housing, you see houses.

Lage: Now, where's Highway 33?

18-00:23:59

Wilson: Well, it comes up the west side of the San Joaquin. You come up from like Taft and you go through Blackwells Corner, and you go up towards Los Banos, and then you cutover to I-5. And if you just keep going up 5, you'll come to Williams and Willows. And you'll look over there, and by George, here's a housing development, affordable housing. Well, that's the story that's happening to California.

Lage: Now, you were a city boy. You started out as a city boy.

18-00:24:29

Wilson: My father saw that I had a lot of time spent on the ranch since I was young, but I was raised, yes, in Los Angeles and Pasadena, correct. [laughs] Right.

Lage: Do you have feelings about the virtue of the urban life versus the virtue of the rural life?

18-00:24:47

Wilson: No, I am very, of course, sympathetic and probably partial toward the rural thing, because I think we've been so fortunate out here to have this beautiful mixed landscape in this state, with so much wealth and ability to produce on it. And I think we've probably squandered a lot of it by just letting some of it slide into—For instance, I'll tell you one of the biggest disappointments when I was on the original Coastal Commission. We really wanted to keep that Oxnard Plain open. The Oxnard Plain is as good soil and as good a piece of ground as there is in the world. If you drive into the Oxnard Plain today, it's getting covered up by commercial—

Lage: That's the coastal plain north of Los Angeles?

18-00:25:38

Wilson: Coastal plane in Ventura County, prime agricultural land. Oh, it's just gorgeous stuff. You can grow anything all year round down there with their climate. They have a twelve-month growing season.

Lage: Good agriculture.

18-00:25:48

Wilson: Oh, it's the best! It is absolutely the best. And yet it's getting chipped away. They had an initiative in Ventura that was run here several years ago, called the SOAR, which is Save Our Agricultural Resources. What it said in Ventura County was that you can not, as a farmer, convert your lands to housing unless—you don't go to the Planning Commission, you have to go to a vote of the public.

Lage: Wow.

18-00:26:24

Wilson:

Which is another way of saying you can't develop your land. Now, for an orange grower that can't sell his Valencia oranges anymore because of these trade agreements and just the prices—you can get them offshore, Chile or places, or Mexico—they've got to find another crop. They have something called a pixie, which is like a sweet little orange or tangerine with no seeds; they find some alternatives. But that guy or that gal or whoever the family is that's struggling around, they're kind of locked in. And I think that's pretty darn harsh treatment, on the one hand. On the other, it may have to be tested in court to see if it's going to hold up, because there will have to be some relief given to these people.

What it really says is the pressure of population, of housing prices and land, is just out through the roof. And those great soils that have been so productive are feeling the pressure. And we're losing. That's one of them. And I think in general, in California, with this burgeoning population, that's the fact of life. We're losing. Now, how we're going to turn that around kind of comes back to this thing of sustainability and what can we do to get the people, the resource, the things we can do to make incentives, and to wire it together in a way that there's enough of them that they can sustain themselves? Can we get Jackson and can we get Mendocino Redwoods? And whatever happens to Pacific Lumber, and maybe Simpson. But are there enough of them that can collectively hold together and be productive in a world economy and everything?

Lage:

Yeah, it's a big issue—with the global economy, NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] and—

18-00:28:17

Wilson:

Well, you see, it's big. It isn't just a local issue anymore, it's a huge issue. And I don't know whether we're aware of that. I mean as individuals. We're kind of dealing with our lives and trying to deal with them; do we see that? Well, it's pretty hard to see it because it's coming from—And I think that probably the best issue you see all the times on the news is the Walmart issue and the strike with the grocery stores. It's visible to people; they see it. And that's kind of where it is. It's out there and it's the real world. It's money and work and jobs, all of it.

Lage:

Now, do traditional parties have a role here? You're a Republican, or have been.

18-00:29:00

Wilson:

I have been; I'm kind of an independent.

Lage:

You're an independent. [laughs]

18-00:29:03

Wilson:

Yeah, I'm a Repub—I lean towards the Republicans because I always thought they were a little better about some of this individualism and making an effort. But on the same token, I recognize that they have their shortcomings, too. And when it comes down—Generally, Reagan, I think, was terrific. And I do know, having read quite a few books about him, that he loved his ranch and he loved the land. And I think that's one of the reasons he was good on some of these land issues, because I think the man really understood it. I think most of the political people in political life are creatures of the city.

Lage:

So whatever party.

18-00:29:49

Wilson:

Yeah. And the money talks to both of them, and the pressure's on. And it's as though California and this budget, I think, is kind of witness to the fact that the population and the expectations of the population are overreaching the ability of the state to produce, really produce, and support people at a lifestyle level that they expect. Here at the university, great example. They're having a terrible time with their budget and everything. And we haven't come to grips with that. But there's a relationship. Like Victor Hanson has said, the land is everything. And I read sort of a preface for that, I think, as I recall, trying to make that distinction, is that the founding fathers were landed. And there were lots of problems in those days, but the point is they understood the land. And I don't think you can get away from the land. We've got technology, we've got stuff. We can make more down records and tables and everything, but finally, somebody has to take a hold of a shovel and dig a hole. [chuckles] That's the fact. Commuters don't dig holes very well, right? We've got to do it. And that's where the rubber meets the road. Somebody has to do it.

Lage:

So that does seem to be a place where you've really—Your point of view is shaped by the fact that you have dug with the shovel. Would you say that's so?

18-00:31:28

Wilson:

Dug a lot of fence posts with a shovel. Oh, yeah. I've done a lot of that work. Yes, sir. And my dad was the same way. He was a doctor, but he did a lot of that. But he always told my mother that—My two brothers were quite a bit older than I, and they were up at the ranch, and he was making them build fences the old way. My mother'd say, "John," she'd say, "We've got to get these boys to school." He says, "Ah, the hell with school. They're learning more building a fence than they ever will in school." [laughs]

Lage:

Well, as I look over your career, it strikes me that here you're really a very independent person, you're very rooted to the land, you drive that truck— [laughs]

18-00:32:09

Wilson:

I drive the truck, yeah. It's a good truck [Tundra Toyota pickup].

Lage: And yet because of your love of the land, you've been embroiled in politics, and actually working with a political system very strongly throughout. Is there a tension there?

18-00:32:23

Wilson: Yeah, there's a tension because I didn't start that, but I was pushed into it. When the Corps of Engineers comes and tells you that we're going to save you because we're going to put 300 feet of water on your head—That's interesting. That's a thought I've got to think through.

Lage: So you've fought the battle of Dos Rios. You went on the Coastal Commission.

18-00:32:50

Wilson: Well, and then I had Jeff Dennis [and his proposed second-home development in Covelo] right after that, and I've had the wilderness going on for twenty years, and on and on. And I didn't go out into this to make a career out of it. But I just found myself just—As I said when we started, it's kind of your way or the highway. These are interests and people that want to develop and they want to open up country. And a lot of good things have happened, and a lot of bad things have happened. And as I say, you find yourself right at loggerheads with them. It's like when I was absorbed in the Dos Rios [controversy], they'd say, "Well, you, man, you don't know anything about this, and you really shouldn't be messing around." And I would say, "Yeah, I guess so. I'm going to have to learn it fast or—" And learning how to print a newspaper and get the public organized, yeah, you had to do that. And then some of these wilderness issues. And then the Coastal Commission, the Board of Forestry.

Lage: Well, you've had issues where you've fought campaigns. But then you've also had your involvement in the public process—the Coastal Commission, Board of Forestry, and director of the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

18-00:34:11

Wilson: But I will say, there's an important point there that you've raised, and I'm glad you did, is that the work in the Coastal Commission, the work at the Board of Forestry, and my years as the director were fundamentally regulatory.

Lage: Right.

18-00:34:25

Wilson: In other words, you're a policeman. And regrettably, that does not enhance this idea of the working landscape, which is where you're trying to get this thing up and running where you don't have to be a policeman. That's the hard part, is why the hell do you have to keep fighting and fighting and fighting all the time to try to hold these people at bay, because they're going too far, too fast, or into something? And I think one of the things that has bothered me is that we have pretty good science. And you hear of political people saying,

well, we use good science. Well, you've got to watch out because good science for who? If it's my science, it's good; but if it's not, then it isn't.

Lage: You mean science is political.

18-00:35:19

Wilson: Well, yeah. I used to say there's a lot of biostitutes running around loose.

Lage: Biostitutes?

18-00:35:27

Wilson: Biostitutes. [Professional people in academia and the business world that will hire their services out to produce the results wanted, whether accurate or not.—added during narrator's review]

Lage: Oh, I get it.

18-00:35:29

Wilson: They're out there running around loose, for hire. They're hired guns. And you can get them to write anything and do anything. That's fair game. The question is, how do you get the best to come up and—. The whole issue of academia and work, say in watersheds, which to me, are so critical, and having Tom Dunne down here at the Bren School in Santa Barbara, one of the best hydrologists in the United States, and having worked with him on some of this—After having been on these both sides, for instance, on the North Coast, trying to deal with one or—The environmentalists are here and the industry's over here, and they can't agree. And they're talking about, fundamentally, watersheds. Well, after a while, I just got worried and that's when I talked to Henry Vaux, Jr. And I told him, I said, "Henry," I said, "Look, we need you to get a team together. And just tell me what the state of the art is, what is possible, what isn't possible, so that at least we have the best professional mind on it. We don't have it in government. We're regulators, we're cops." And I agree with that.

Lage: You were looking for some independent scientific—

18-00:37:12

Wilson: I wanted to know the best we could get, to say, "This is reasonable, this isn't reasonable, this is—"

Lage: To protect the watershed?

18-00:36:21

Wilson: Yeah. Yeah. Overuse, non-use, too much use, whatever it is that's out there. Most of this is money and monitoring. It's getting enough money to put people out there and through the course of the year, do the monitoring, and then find out what the heck's going on. That's what happens with the guys like Dunne. He'll get graduate students and they'll do it, do the field work and

bring it in, and he'll do the evaluation and make some kind of a recommendation that this is kind of where things are.

Lage: And were you satisfied with that report?

18-00:38:00

Wilson: Well, I think it was a great start. I don't know that they've ever gotten to the implementation, though.

Lage: I see.

18-00:38:04

Wilson: You see? It ran into political troubles after I was leaving, and then a lot of people didn't want it out, and they didn't want that kind of information floating around. And so therefore, it finally got out and then they got another committee, and they were still mucking around with it. And to this day, I think it's still an issue that hasn't been—Well, I'll tell you what happens is that—See, the timber harvest process is a license. You can go log if you do this and this and this, on the checklist. The issue underneath this for so long has been water. Well, finally, this Burton Bill that was passed last year, which is EPA, if you will, Environmental Protection Agency, that bill more or less transferred the real power from CDF and the foresters to the biologists, water.

Lage: Ah. To the water.

18-00:39:10

Wilson: Yeah. It shifted it over. Because the ultimate hammer is in the hands of the EPA, which is the science agency at the federal level.

Lage: Within the state.

18-00:39:19

Wilson: Yeah. Well, that's right.

Lage: So the water quality people are primary.

18-00:39:23

Wilson: Water quality. They're the ones that are in charge.

Lage: So water quality becomes the driving thing, rather than forestry?

18-00:39:31

Wilson: And that takes us right back to the watershed, see.

Lage: So do you subscribe to that shift or not?

18-00:39:37

Wilson: Yeah, now. Water is the issue. Yeah. A forester that's trained about trees is not the same as a forester—somebody that's—They still need better people, too.

Lage: The water people.

18-00:39:52

Wilson: You bet. They've got to have good consultants to tell them. But at least I think they're kind of in the right track there, of focusing on that critical issue, whether it's the Sierras or the North Coast or whatever. But those areas are the ones that need the most attention. They're the ones that need it, to get the best information and then get it out there and let the legislature and people know, look, this is the way it's coming down. And maybe you can't do this over here; you can do it over here and here and here. But for some reasons, whether it's landslides or instability or rainfall or road building or whatever it is, you either ought to get out of there or arrest it or do something.

Lage: So you'd like to see more real scientific application.

18-00:40:45

Wilson: I'd like to see it freely done, and then let the politics deal it, once you get it on the table. Let's try to get the real hard science on the table, if we can. And then those people can clear away, and then let the politics come in and let them have at it.

Lage: It sounds like you're always going to need these strong regulatory efforts.

18-00:41:09

Wilson: Always. Oh, I think so.

Lage: Because not everybody is thinking about sustainable forestry and sustainable ag and—

18-00:41:15

Wilson: No, no. And we're a long way away. I hate to say. We've got these little blips, but California and the budget and the shape of the economy and the demand for revenue—We're going through a hard time, I think, right now, trying to get ourselves through this. I don't know anybody in Sacramento, either that's kind of trying to—I wish somebody'd kind of look ahead. I get emails from people that I was on the Coastal Commission with, and others, that get so frustrated about this stuff. Here's this San Onofre thing. I was involved with that, the nuclear reactor down there. And of course, one of those reactors has gone down. They have to get rid of it. And Edison is saying [laughs] down there, they don't know what to do with it. They can't ship it anywhere on the rail, they can't ship it on a truck. They've tried to put it on a boat and take it around Tierra del Fuego or the Panama Canal. They haven't been able to do that. So the only thing they know to do with the darn thing is to put it on a boat far enough offshore [laughs] and hope nothing's going to happen. That's exactly what this thing is. Well, to me, that just shows you how incomplete our thought process is. You want nuclear power? Well, what do you do with the waste?

Lage: Right.

18-00:42:35

Wilson: Oh, well, it'll happen.

Lage: And yet on the national level, apparently the Bush administration is back to supporting nuclear power.

18-00:42:46

Wilson: I am opposed to that. No, they've got to—They better come to terms, whether you're going to put it in Nevada, what are you going to do? And then, see, they can't move the darn thing anywhere because nobody wants it. They don't want it in the Panama Canal, they don't want it coming around the bottom of the horn there. And it's a huge problem. Well, there's the short term. You get the nuclear reactor, you get the power for a little while; and then, well, what do we do? Well, that's always somebody else's problem. But it's a real problem. And that's not thinking sustainable.

That's what bothers me about this whole thing is that—We're going to have oil for a long time. But wind power, solar, all these things that—My read is, people want to do it, if they're given an incentive and allowed to work it up so their houses are better insulated. They have solar in California; we should all have solar of some kind. To me, this all makes sense. But there's just peanuts thrown out on that. Very little. And again, it comes back to this collective thing we've touched on with the ranchers, we've touched with the timber. See, the urban [people]. Give them some incentives, let them—People will do it. I know that.

Lage: Yes. You still have faith in the population.

18-00:44:06

Wilson: You bet. If the darn leadership would just get the heck out of the way and have enough sense to say, okay, we're going to help you get there, folks. That's what they should do, not be telling them all the time that it's got to be this or got to be that. Or not telling them anything.

Lage: But giving incentive for correct policy.

18-00:44:29

Wilson: Absolutely. And try to sell it, and get it out there. You can almost retrace this thing. I know that the Japanese are going to come in here, and they already are, with the Honda and the Prius or whatever those two battery hybrids. They're here. And to say, is that going to work? [chuckles] Go try to buy one. It's a waiting list. [laughs]

Lage: Yes.

18-00:44:52

Wilson: Now, where are the Americans? Well, they're talking about bigger cars. Well, doesn't that say something?

Lage: [laughs] Yes, I think so.

18-00:45:00

Wilson: It says something to me. [laughs] I just don't know.

Lage: Now, you've mentioned population a lot, and it's kind of a background to the story of California.

18-00:45:09

Wilson: Yeah.

Lage: Do you get involved at all in population politics?

18-00:45:13

Wilson: No. Victor Hanson, as I say, he wrote a book about Mexifornia [Mexifornia: A State of Becoming]. And must say to you, I happen to agree. What he really is saying is that you better do something about the border and the impact of the population coming in on the state. I think I generally agree with this, for this reason. That these people have been brought up here to work. People don't want to mow their lawns, people don't want to do their gardening, people don't want to work in the fields. And so these people, having been in Mexico with no opportunity, anything's almost better here than what they came from.

In the valley, where he's lived all his life with this issue, they come up and they go to work, and there's very little assimilation in this whole community. In other words, they work till they break down, at maybe forty years old. But they're here. And they fall into whatever system, care system we have. They have families. And those kids, for the most part, also kind of follow the parents. There's not much assimilation. There's very little movement up. They get into the same track and break down.

Lage: You mean they overwork?

18-00:46:56

Wilson: Well, they get injured. Yeah, they overwork. But as far as an education and going on and trying to become more a part of California or part of the state, they pretty much stay to themselves, do the things their parents did. They're not moving up. And I think the record will show that both in high schools and the state college system and everything, that they're simply not there or trying to aspire up to become better citizens, if you will, once they're here, wanting to be a part of it. They're kind of looking back fondly on Mexico; but at the same time, not wanting to go back because somehow they've been able to live here.

Well, the net of that is—I think probably we’re not—We’re subsidizing this. In other words, what they’re doing, the work they’re doing and the kinds of work, I don’t think is paying their, in other words, their overhead. Their kids, the hospital care, the school, the educational system, all of this. And so I think we have to consider some kind of a stricter policy on the border, where the people that come here come for a reason. And then I think that they ought to have to be more of a player and willing to become a part of California, a citizen, and learning about the state and so forth, than to be just kind of a labor force and that’s the highest rung on the ladder. That’s one of the problems.

So therefore, we have this burgeoning population. I know it used to be something like 600,000 people a year in California, born or moved in here. And we’ve got to deal with them. And I think probably this budget—And the problems we’re having is we simply are not able to meet all the requirements. If you look at our hospitals, or you look at our emergency rooms, everybody is scrambling, just barely—trying to stay alive. They’re not doing much more. And it’s mostly the cost. It’s terrific.

Lage: Does a lot of that seem immigration-related to you?

18-00:49:25

Wilson: Oh, I think so.

Lage: Or are there other—

18-00:49:27

Wilson: No, I think a lot of it’s immigration. I think it’s immigration related. And also it’s the size of the population and what resources we have, how we allocate those resources. That’s one of our problems. Are we efficient? Well, I don’t know. Again, we probably could do a lot of things better. Prevention, trying to get these kids earlier in schools, on health—a lot of things that haven’t happened. But I think numbers. I think we definitely have a numbers problem in the state. When you see it in the south [southern California], you see these streets just lined with people trying to work. Waiting for somebody to take them and give them a job.

Lage: And is it true, do you think, that the Americans don’t want those jobs?

18-00:50:17

Wilson: I think what you would have to do is, I think you have to pay the Americans more money, to some degree, to get them to do it. I’m not sure they wouldn’t do it on that. And that means that maybe we don’t have as much discretionary income to put other places. But I’m really concerned about this population, on the one hand, and shipping all this stuff offshore, these jobs. Because these are jobs that we should be trying to keep. And what came to me the other night—Lou Dobbs is one of the people I occasionally watch, because he’s on this issue about jobs, and talking about it. And he had a tool and die man on. He’d apprenticed, and this is what he did. And he said, “I had nine people. And now

I'm down to three. And I'm juggling and I'm trying to stay. I'm trying to be competitive. But," he said, "I'm just getting run over by offshore and the wage discrepancies and work conditions and everything." And he said, "It's just an unlevel playing field." He said, "We can do the work. And we're good. But the government, when they negotiate these NAFTAs and everything, they've got to make sure that those people are complying with some of the same environmental standards and the issues that we have to, so it's a little fairer."

That isn't just money, either; that's just how they operate. He said, "If our people would do a better job of negotiating, we'd have a better crack at it, and we'd probably stay in there, because we're good. But we can't do it unless we get better representation on these negotiations." And I think that's true. I think a lot of our people are the best and want to be here, but there's a lot of people trying to ship it all offshore because it's cheaper. And we better look out.

That's why I think we better work on our case right here, to try to make sure that we're keeping skill—Look, these are basic skills, tool and die and these kinds of people. We want to be sure we keep them and don't ship all that to China or some darn place. And I don't know, I don't know whether we get it. I think that if you're a corporate person and you're looking for the best result, if you can get it done in India or China or someplace that's cheaper to bring it back here, you obviously do it. And we're not asking the right question, What do we want for ourselves?

Lage: What kind of a country? What kind of an economy?

18-00:53:01

Wilson: Do we want to have stability? Do we want to have sustainability? Do we want to have jobs? What do we want our kids to do? And I think our kids are the ones that are going to have to suffer this, till we figure it out. Or at least ask—I would like to see more dialogue. Let's ask the question, What do we want to do? And here at the University of California, we have a great system that's rocking along. Are we going to keep it and maintain it, because it's good in that way? Or are we going to begin to lose it? I don't know. There is constant pressure on the University of California budget to cut, cut, cut.

Lage: Are you looking to any candidates or any organizations to take the lead on these issues?

18-00:53:46

Wilson: No, I honestly don't know of any that are out there at the moment that seem to—The governor, Schwarzenegger is a young, ambitious, hard-working young fellow that I think is trying. And the question is—I don't think he knew what a plateful of problems he's getting. [Lage laughs] Whether it's the corrections systems or the educational system or the budget. I don't think you realize till you get into those positions, what a hell of a place to be in.

Lage: Has he put good people into the resource agencies?

18-00:54:22

Wilson: I don't know. I think it remains to be seen what they're going to do. It's unclear where they're trying to go. They've talked about reorganization and they've talked about a number of things, about what they might do. And we could reorganize and do things better, I think, for sure. It's hard to do that when you're just over here trying to get through the budget. It's a crisis.

Lage: Right.

18-00:54:53

Wilson: So you're busy down here. And when you talk about some reorganizations, we have to think. I had to do that for three years, working through the Forestry people and trying to reorganize those departments. And got it done, but that takes time. And the opportunity is here, the budget problem is great enough to warrant it; but the question is, is there time enough, or the people, to sit down and try to think it through? I don't know. But it's an opportunity.

Lage: I think we should wind up because we're coming close to the end of our tape. And we've talked a lot about working landscape and ranching and timbering. Do you have a feeling about the value of wilderness or saving the biodiversity and protecting the ecosystem? How do you come down on those issues?

18-00:55:48

Wilson: Well, again, you've got to have enough of it together so that it can function as an ecosystem. Wilderness is really important. And I think that we better be careful, so we don't start making all these little mini-part-wilderness things that sort of, here's a subdivision, then we're going to have a little something here. That doesn't work. You've got to have a big enough—

Lage: The kind of mitigation—

18-00:56:11

Wilson: Well, now, mitigation's a dangerous word. You better watch out.

Lage: Like what's happened down on Irvine company land?

18-00:56:16

Wilson: Oh, I think that's a good example, yeah. Yeah. Be careful. Because the impact—

Lage: But what's the danger there?

18-00:56:22

Wilson: It's the density of the projects versus the mitigation; which sounds okay, but is it big enough? That's the problem. The animals. Animals need room. Now, there's no two ways about it. And in order for them to survive, they've got to be able to move and be migratory and have some relief from the human. And when I say human, in the urban areas—And remember that all those people

have dogs and cats, and they all hunt. And they're all running around out there. So we've got to be mindful of that on the border, too.

Lage: So some of these projects that are sort of high-profile projects may not be so great.

18-00:57:07

Wilson: Projects, when you talk about the projects at the Tejon Ranch near Castaic [on the I-5 Grapevine going into the Los Angeles basin], these are virtually new cities of 30,000 people that they're talking about, with cars and buildings for offices and jobs. This is huge. See, this just overwhelms the infrastructure, the transportation corridors, the sort of physical relief. And that's why when you buy these—as mitigation, you buy a big hunk of this land that sounds like something as a trade-off to somebody, but is that marginal land that they can't use for anything else?

When you think about the Grapevine and what's going on at the foot of the Grapevine in Kern County, and the amount of capacity there for storage, and then they want to build a city up there.

Lage: Not going to work.

18-00:58:11

Wilson: Yeah.

Lage: We've got about two minutes, if you want to make a completing statement.

18-00:58:18

Wilson: Well, as an overview of California, it's still one of the most desirable places and beautiful places in the world, and it offers people this. And the question is, have we got enough resolve amongst ourselves to first, start asking the right questions about what do we want? And if so, what are we going to do to see that we want to maintain this for the future? And this is going to take education and commitment. And it's going to take people to take some risks, and step up to the plate, and say, well, this is the way I see it or, this is something that's wrong, and then let her go. Because short of that, you will—You're going to have to shock people a little bit. Get them up to think, oh, my God, this is—But in the final analysis, these things often, after the initial contact, people get used to it. And once people start, geez, I never thought about that; maybe that's not so bad. Because I think I told you—this has been way back—I said, “If you can get it down to the coffee table in the local coffee shop, you're getting somewhere.”

Lage: Right. Right.

18-00:59:33

Wilson: But you've got to get it there.

Lage: Maybe get it on the talk shows.

18-00:59:36

Wilson: Well, that's a place, too. But that local coffee shop, see, mostly they're all sitting down there saying, I think maybe this is something we ought to look into or something. The message is beginning to get somewhere.

Lage: Well, we'll hope it does that, then. We're just about out of time.

18-00:59:49

Wilson: So how's that? We did it.

**Interview #9: May 19, 2009**

[Begin Audio File 19]

Lage: Today is May 19, 2009.

19-00:00:14

Wilson: Election Day.

Lage: Election Day, a big day for California. And I'm interviewing [videotaping] Richard Wilson. This is our last interview, in a process that started in 2001.

19-00:00:26

Wilson: A bit of time has elapsed.

Lage: Right. And this is the eighth session. I believe that's correct, and tape nineteen. [ninth session]

19-00:00:37

Wilson: My goodness.

Lage: [chuckles] So we've delayed this, because you've been involved in a lawsuit. And now we're going to wind up this story, maybe one of the most important stories of your tenure, with the state anyway, the Headwaters story. Some of this we discussed earlier, the background. But I wanted you to kind of help set this whole recent lawsuit in perspective, by going into the background of your involvement with Headwaters, starting, I would guess, from when you agreed to be state forester.

19-00:01:11

Wilson: Director.

Lage: Director of the Department of Forestry.

19-00:01:12

Wilson: Which was 1991, with Pete Wilson.

Lage: Right. So let's start there.

19-00:01:19

Wilson: Well, let me try to frame it and we'll start our conversation.

Lage: Good.

19-00:01:25

Wilson: When I went to work for Pete Wilson, one of the conditions that I requested of him—There were fourteen points that I had set out for Forestry. And one was a sustained yield plan. And I felt we had to get something on a sustained yield plan into the Forest Practice Act because the forest industry was liquidating their inventories far faster than they were growing trees. Net effect is, we were losing mills, mills were closing down, consolidation was taking place. And the

industry wanted to take and get rid of that older growth and convert to younger growth and different machinery; and that's understandable. But it was a big move. And so therefore, sustainability was a key principle that I thought we had to incorporate into—if you recall, the Negedly-Z'berg Act of 1973, which required the timber harvest plan. In other words, you had to file a plan in order to harvest timber, with conditions. And that was to make harvesting just cleaner, better, and more healthy for both the trees and the environment, and marginally, roads and landslides and so forth. But it was a good step in the right direction.

All right. That was in 1973. In 1991, I came on board as the director. We were moving very fast. And we will revisit these two terms as we go through this. One is sustainability, and the other is liquidation. And they are very different terms.

Lage: Right.

19-00:03:21

Wilson: Liquidation is, look, I've got this much in my savings account, and I'm going to spend it all; and when it's gone, then happy days start somewhere else. Sustainability is a bit of a different way you approach this, because sustainability implies there's a future. Not just for yourself, but it implies that there's a future for your children and your grandchildren. And also for, in this case of resources, the critters—the owls and the murrelet and the fish and all the other little things that have to make their living in the same habitat that the folks do that need to get trees and make boards to feed the mill. Sustainability is a long-term look at the future. In this discussion, a hundred [years] is going to come up a little bit later. But very significant, because we don't like to think much past quarterly reports, corporate reports and all those sort of things that we live by for performance. And if you're a corporate executive, that's what you get judged on, your quarterly and your annuals, and are you making more cut, more volume and so forth. So I came to work and we—

Lage: And did Wilson agree with you here?

19-00:04:43

Wilson: He did, he signed it as the Fourteen Points. And so we did thrash it around with the Board of Forestry, because we had to get this through. I worked, through the Board of Forestry, that were basically appointed by the governor, the members. And then through them, as they adopted rules, which the sustained yield plan was a part of, they become part of the law and the practice in the field of forestry. And in 1994, we eventually got the sustained yield plan as a part of our regulatory process. Now, this did not come easily, and there was a lot of thrashing and pushing and shoving. But the industry and so forth, it became part of our regulation. That's 1994.

It was also very clear that the big operators—meaning Georgia-Pacific on the coast redwoods, Louisiana-Pacific on the coast redwoods, Pacific Lumber Company on the coast redwoods, and Simpson Lumber—they were the big players on coastal redwoods. I’m not talking about inland forests now, even though they’re part of it, meaning the fir and the pine that Sierra Pacific and Emmerson and those companies really had a huge stake in. But I’m talking about the coastal. These are the companies, right? Well, it was very, very clear that Georgia-Pacific and Louisiana-Pacific were in the process of liquidation. But there was this issue of sustainability that now was something they had to deal with.

So both companies filed sustained yield plans. And in order to file a plan, you had to show your inventory. And your inventory would disclose the age-class of trees that you had, from ten to fifty, sixty, eighty, ninety years. And when you begin to get those figures in, you will begin to see what we call a J curve. A J curve is like this. And a J curve is if you start at the bottom with the ten-year-old tree and it grows, well, when you get to twenty, thirty, then it really goes up to, say eighty; and then it begins to mature and slow down to older ages. But it’s between that thirty, forty to that sixty year that those trees are mature enough to cut and to really make wood out of. Now, remember, this is second generation. This isn’t liquidating great big old thousand-year-old—

Lage: Yeah. This isn’t old growth that we’re talking about.

19-00:07:47

Wilson: This is not old growth. See, we’ve gotten through; we’re into the second growth here. All right. GP and LP filed sustained yield plans. And of course, the sustained yield plans went absolutely nowhere because the staff, when they looked at it, says, “Well, there’s nothing to really talk about because we don’t have enough trees, looking ahead to the future.” Remember, we said that a sustained yield plan is a future. Well, a future might be out there, right, eighty years. But for now, there’s nothing we can do, unless something changes dramatically.

Lage: You mean they weren’t really doing a sustained—

19-00:08:29

Wilson: No, they were not interested. They were liquidating. They were purely—

Lage: I see. They filed the plan, but it didn’t really show a sustained yield.

19-00:08:35

Wilson: Well, not when we looked—Because you see, there was always this issue of confidentiality, about how much trees—and this is part of this little tale, is that Louisiana-Pacific—I had a contract with Louisiana-Pacific, and I’m totally versed as to how they cut trees. They’re in liquidation—go; go, go—with Harry Merlo leading the charge. “I log to infinity,” was his great claim.

Well, anyway, their plan came in. And it was so obvious that [chuckles] they didn't have enough trees to do anything, and they folded their camp. But when I saw this, I had remarked to the press that we, the department, had spent about \$200,000 on the sustained yield plan for Louisiana-Pacific. It was wasting our time and our staff, to review this. And the fact is there just weren't any trees and the plan wouldn't be approved. Well, that just got everybody excited. And Louisiana-Pacific got all excited about this being in the press because they hadn't quite disclosed yet that they wanted to sell their property. And they just were so unhappy that the director suggested they didn't have the trees that they were putting in their sales brochure that they went over to the governor's office and just roared and ranted and raved. And ultimately, nothing came of it except they were terribly upset.

Lage: And did you get reprimanded?

19-00:10:15

Wilson: Oh, yes, of course. And [Douglas] Wheeler [secretary for Resources]. Everybody got, "What are you doing over there?" Well, I was just reporting the facts of life, [Lage laughs] and they did not like it, and it hurt.

Lage: You weren't the typical bureaucrat.

19-00:10:26

Wilson: No.

Lage: Hold on one second. [audiofile stops and re-starts] Okay, we ended there, with your being in the doghouse.

19-00:10:32

Wilson: I'm in the doghouse at the governor's office. So anyway, of course, the so-called operator for Pete Wilson was Ward Connerly, who happened to be—I'm not sure whether he was a regent. But he was beholden—or Louisiana-Pacific was connected with Ward, and Ward kind of—

Lage: Now, tell me more about that connection. When you say he was the operator, did he have an official position with Pete Wilson?

19-00:11:01

Wilson: Well, no, no, no, but [chuckles] in government, various prominent people become attached to certain interests, right? And Louisiana-Pacific got ahold of Ward and I think through jets and—He was able to get the Louisiana-Pacific jet for Pete Wilson to get around the state. They had a relationship, let's put it that way.

Lage: Was Ward Connerly a lobbyist for Louisiana-Pacific?

19-00:11:27

Wilson: Yes, of course. Of course. He was representing—And then he would lobby into the governor's office and the governor's office would get ahold of

Wheeler. So he said, “What is Wilson doing over there?” [Ward Connerly was a lobbyist for Louisiana-Pacific and carried their corporate problems with government into the governor’s office. Pressured to put the LP complaints into my office through the governor.—added during narrator’s review.]

Lage: I think this is very interesting.

19-00:11:40

Wilson: So anyway, ultimately, they, meaning Louisiana-Pacific, put the company up for sale. Everything. Inland and out on the coast. And as I had suggested, they were headed for bankruptcy, to the extent that—Remember, trees continue to grow. And if you listen to Rush Limbaugh, you’ll hear that we have more trees than we ever had. Well, [laughs] we’ve got more trees about this big, but we don’t have big trees or big, old trees; we just have all these trees. Well, they had a lot of these kind of trees, but they—

Lage: So if someone was willing to hang onto it for a hundred years—

19-00:12:23

Wilson: Yeah. Well, that’s so important, because we’re getting to this whole thing about patience and time and sustainability and the things you have to do. And this is going to be a very critical part of our discussion.

Lage: Well, we’d better move our discussion towards Palco.

19-00:12:37

Wilson: All right. Well, we’re getting there. So anyway, LP’s out. GP, same story, right? Cut out, up for sale. Out they go. So Louisiana-Pacific was purchased—the redwoods, right?—was purchased by the Fisher family. That’s the Gap.

Lage: Okay.

19-00:12:57

Wilson: And they, in turn, became Mendocino Redwood Company. And I must say, their conduct was managing the forests and giving them time to come back. And Mike Jani, their forester, who came from Santa Cruz, down in that country, he knew redwoods. Well, they’ve done an exemplary job. They are a model of running a forest, giving it some time to grow back; and at the same time, maintaining what I would call a working landscape. This as opposed to a set-aside, where you have a preserve and nothing comes in; it’s all sealed up, throw the key away. Museum, whatever. They have done a good job.

Georgia-Pacific, the Campbell Group from Washington, it’s a holding company, and they’ve bought it, and they’ve been trying to—They paid too much for it. And they’ve been selling off land to the state, sensitive areas. But in any event, they’ve had their problems and they’re kind of there. But that’s the story of Georgia-Pacific. And at some point, we have to come back to the

whole Jackson Demonstration State Forest, because it sits right here between Fort Bragg and Willits. It's primarily a redwood forest, with some fir.

Lage: But you have talked about it quite a bit in previous interviews.

19-00:14:27

Wilson: Yes, but we'll come back just to make a point shortly.

Lage: Okay.

19-00:14:32

Wilson: So anyway, here we are. And now we've got—I'm still wrestling with Palco [Pacific Lumber Company]. And Palco and Charles Hurwitz [CEO of Palco's parent company, Maxxam] are saying, look—And Jared Carter, the lawyer in Ukiah, and this guy Bacik he picked up, they're going to sue. And he isn't able to cut his trees. And so Wheeler was very much engaged in discussions with Hurwitz. And Dianne Feinstein got into this.

Lage: And there was also a lot of public pressure about this Headwaters area.

19-00:15:08

Wilson: Oh, well, absolutely. And of course, out of that pressure, which was the environmentalists on one side and of course, then the industry; they had different views, too. But the idea of Hurwitz—What Wheeler and others, and Feinstein, and the Clinton Administration, the hierarchy of [Bruce] Babbitt and those folks—They got together in Washington. I was not party to any of this. They got together, and there was a tale that, well, they developed the Headwaters deal on a napkin in a restaurant, with Dianne Feinstein and Wheeler and I don't know who was there. Whatever it was, 1996 was the initial start of this saga that we're talking about as the Headwaters. And the deal, generally, of the Headwaters was that the state and the federal government would purchase the Headwaters Forest. Now, the Headwaters Forest is, say, 3700 acres. And then there's a buffer around that to give it protection. So you don't just have this little thing and no buffer, right? And this is really important.

Lage: And the Headwaters was old growth, let's just say that for the record.

19-00:16:36

Wilson: Ah, this is ancient old growth. And it's in the 211,000 acres of Palco's—what I call the biggest redwood tree house in the United States. But anyway, here it is, right? It's sitting there, 3700 acres. And then around it is another, oh, four thousand acres as a buffer. So it's roughly 7500 acres, of which 3700 acres is this ancient old growth. Okay. And if you look at it in the quality of some of our big trees in the Redwood Park and elsewhere, it's not super-good-good. It's okay. But it is an old growth, all right?

Lage: But in terms of comparing it to one of the redwood state parks or something, it's not—

19-00:17:27

Wilson: It's not—Well, I'll tell you, it's high, it's inaccessible. It's okay. It's good. Hard for people to get to. But there it is.

Lage: But habitat.

19-00:17:38

Wilson: Well, absolutely. And it's an icon. And remember Headwaters [chuckles] became kind of an icon. It's the [chuckles] holy grail, if we can get just to the holy grail.

Lage: We had the Redwood Summer earlier in the nineties. d

19-00:17:52

Wilson: Oh! All of that. All of that. Absolutely. So there it was. And so the negotiations started. And I wasn't engaged in sort of the deep negotiations between the administration—Clinton and Gore and Wheeler and Babbitt and Feinstein and Charlie [Hurwitz] and—

Lage: Hurwitz was very involved, it seems.

19-00:18:18

Wilson: Oh, up to his—He was sitting right there with Cokie Roberts' brother.

Lage: [Thomas Hale Boggs, Jr. ] Boggs.

19-00:18:25

Wilson: Boggs. Yeah, Boggs, he's in on it. And the lobbyist over in Sacramento; I'll think of him in a little bit. And Mike Thompson, a congressman [from the North Coast].

Lage: And [John] Garamendi?

19-00:17:35

Wilson: And Garamendi was in on it. And everybody. I was sort of on the edge, just down there, just minding the damn store.

Lage: Did they ever come to you for info?

19-00:18:46

Wilson: You know, it's really interesting that there was a meeting at Scotia, in Humboldt County, that Wheeler and Hurwitz and I don't know—They had this meeting, and I was not invited into the meeting. And I think they were all terribly afraid either I would ask questions or might hurt the deal. But there was something wrong there. They really just—[laughs] Anyway, there were a lot of meetings and a lot of talk. You had the Department of the Interior, the green fisheries, Fish and Wildlife Service, Fish and Game, CDF, the

environmental groups, well, of course, Babbitt. And we had Gore and we had—

Lage: Department of the Interior.

19-00:19:44

Wilson: —the whole bunch. They were all into it.

Lage: It's amazing that it attracted so much commitment on the part of all these agencies and political figures.

19-00:19:56

Wilson: I think the icon model. I think that the Headwaters became a symbol of—The sequoias are being saved—but it just somehow was the idea that it's the old growth and we've got—And I must say that I think there were some environmentalists that had some second thoughts about this. But nevertheless, it was what I always refer to as “the Deal.” It's the Deal. You've got to get the Deal. What it costs, or necessarily, what goes into laying the foundation for the deal, don't sweat it; it's the Deal. [The Deal was the ancient trees on 3700 acres of the 211,000 acres of Palco lands. The political people could only think about the Headwaters. They never got sustainable forestry and the relationship between the SYP/HCP (sustainable yield plan/habitat conservation plan) figured out. The Feds at Interior, Harris, Hogarth, National Marine Fisheries Service, Feinstein, Babbitt, Clinton, Gore and so on only saw the political legacy of the Headwaters Forest. They never understood a working sustainable redwood forest for one hundred years, made enforceable by the SYP/HCP contract.—added during narrator's review]

So we're trucking along, right?, trying to get this thing put together. This is '96, '97, '98. And of course, eventually to '99. Well, there were meetings in the Resources Agency. And they had a table three times the size of this table in this room, and there were chairs—I don't know how many—thirty, forty people sitting there, all involved in this. And I think there was a fellow named Mike Spear that worked for—I forget—a federal agency at the time. And something sticks in my mind about him saying about all of this data and all of this material in the sustained yield and the habitat conservation plan. Something to the effect that, “Well, has anybody sat down and really tried to collate all this together, to really figure out what this all means?” [chuckles] I don't know what the answer was, but I remember that remark. Because I think it was about this thick, when we finally got the SYP/HCP.

Lage: The data that it was based on.

19-00:21:49

Wilson: The Deal. The Deal. We've all got to have the Deal. It's the sort of the library of the Deal. Well, my job in this was the sustained yield plan. And again, the sustained yield plan really dealt with this whole idea of the 211,000 acres of the biggest redwood house in the United States sitting out there, excluding

Headwaters Forest. Headwaters Forest, we've said, was 3700 acres. It's got a buffer. And I hate to say it, it's kind of like a wart on the elephant's behind. It's about that big and the elephants huge, right?

Lage: And that wasn't going to be touched, but the rest—

19-00:22:33

Wilson: No, no, it's been protected. The access is very hard, no road, you can't get into it, there it is. So then the question was, well what happens to the rest of the ranch, or the redwood house, or whatever we want to call it, the 211,000 acres? And that was, of course, this issue of the habitat conservation plan. Now, the habitat conservation plan, if you read some of the lawyers and people working on this together, is that one was tied to the other. There's no way you can separate the two and say the habitat conservation plan is here and the sustained yield plan is here, and never the twain shall meet. You can't do it. Well, they say that right in many of the documents.

Lage: They say that they're separate, or that—

19-00:23:29

Wilson: No, that they're totally—No. You can't separate them.

Lage: I see.

19-00:23:35

Wilson: And I think there was confusion. I think Wheeler thought, well, if we just get the deal—Charlie can go log what he wants to, just as long as we get the deal. That's the way I kind of—

Lage: You mean more interest in the Deal than in the trees.

19-00:23:52

Wilson: Oh, absolutely! The deal and the money and all that. Let's just get the habitat conservation plan, and then we get the Headwaters Forest. And somehow it's all going to just work out just wonderful. Okay? That's kind of the background that I can see, because I wasn't in a lot of these meetings and all this kind of stuff. Well, so we're rolling along here in '97, and the appropriations bill and—And there was constant communications about what went into this thing and how you made it work. And there's just a myriad amount of things that had to be put into this mix of the habitat conservation plan and the sustained yield plan, to somehow put it together so it made some sense.

The problem I had as the director is that I probably had three people with qualifications, to try to deal with this issue of the sustainability and the trees and the harvest and the yield. Palco had an army. Charlie had consultants. And Vestra was hired as a consultant. Vestra was a consultant for Louisiana-

Pacific. Vestra had worked for us, State of California, part-time on the Jackson. They didn't model it, but they participated.

Lage: And what was their role?

19-00:25:29

Wilson: Vestra was a consultant, to try to pull together what this yield—In other words, they were there to try to show that the timber yield, a long-term sustainable yield had to be part of the deal. The deal, meaning there had to be enough age-class trees, at an age over—this is extremely important—for a hundred years. Again, nobody had really talked about a hundred years. As I say, we talk about quarters and annual reports.

Lage: Well, was a hundred years in the state forest practices regulations?

19-00:26:14

Wilson: This is the first one that we're looking down the road this far. No, it isn't. You see, that's—

Lage: Where did the hundred years come in?

19-00:26:23

Wilson: In this particular plan. In just this plan.

Lage: But in the deal that was—

19-00:26:28

Wilson: The Deal. The Deal was constructed around a hundred years.

Lage: Oh, okay.

19-00:26:31

Wilson: The sustained yield plan, from Nejedly-Z' Berg, right?, that's for three years. You can file a plan for three years. And then if you don't cut, you have to re-file it, right? And that's the long term. Now, you were always supposed to be sensitive to habitat and critters and all that, but the point is that's the way the plan worked.

Lage: So this was the first sustained yield plan that was a hundred years.

19-00:26:57

Wilson: And that was a big deal.

Lage: So actually, this way of figuring it hadn't been done before.

19-00:27:02

Wilson: You got it. No, this was the maiden voyage. We were out on the Titanic, sailing along.

Lage: And was Vestra a forestry consultant?

19-00:27:09

Wilson: They were a consultant firm working for forestry people, out of Redding, California.

Lage: I see, okay.

19-00:27:16

Wilson: And they, Charlie, as I say—and I think we'll pick this up again—the only one. Just remember, the State of California has a long-term sustained yield plan. It's known at Jackson Demonstration State Forest.

Lage: Oh, okay. So it may be a good model for—

19-00:27:36

Wilson: It is a perfect model. And it represents the issues, because it works. But we didn't have anything else, right? But we had this thing coming. We've got a lot of trains all just careening down the track, and they're all [laughs] going to kind of come together here in due course. Well, anyway, here we are, see? We've got this plan and we've got to get this thing together. And the idea is, here was some budgetary things, but March 1, 1999 was we just had to get the money. That's it.

Lage: The money from the legislature, right?

19-00:28:20

Wilson: The federal government appropriation.

Lage: But also there's the state—

19-00:28:24

Wilson: Well, we're going to get to that—

Lage: Oh, okay.

19-00:28:26

Wilson: —very important point. Because just at '98, right in there, there were a couple of groves that Byron Sher was very interested in maintaining as part of the deal. This is part of the Deal.

Lage: And he's in the legislature. Or was.

19-00:28:42

Wilson: And he is a state senator. And this is, again, part of the deal that was—Now, the deal hasn't happened, but Byron is bringing these groves in.

Lage: Because the deal had to be approved by the state legislature, as well as the feds.

19-00:29:01

Wilson: Absolutely. And these groves were in addition to the deal. They had to be melded—

Lage: Sher wanted to add these groves.

19-00:29:10

Wilson: Yes, they had to. They had to add to it. And it had to have all the protection—We're talking about Owl and Grizzly [creeks], if you want to give the groves a name. Owl and Grizzly. And owl and grizzly, to join the bear pack or the grizzly pack or [chuckles] whatever the big deal is—Anyway, we had to get that put into the deal. And I sat for several weeks prior to the deal, where they were trying to get this thing put together so the initial agreement—

Now, just remember, in '97, '98, I had taken their license away. I took Palco's license away twice, for violations along the streams, cutting trees too close to the streams, burning too close to the streams, putting trees in the creeks and not reporting it, and telling the foresters not to report it and then we found it. And they had to fire one of their resource managers and hire somebody new that was a so-called accountability chain. And Campbell, deceased now, as president, is desperate because what happened was, here Charlie's trying to get this money, I take their license away twice; this threatened the Deal. The Deal was threatened. Torpedoes coming from both sides, and afraid it was going to take on too much water and sink.

Lage: Now, let me ask you about taking their license away. Did you get any flak on that from Wheeler or Pete Wilson?

19-00:30:47

Wilson: Well, they had a problem. And they were in a box, because I had over a hundred violations on record that had been not corrected. And the only way I could try to correct it was to take the license away. And so Jim Branham, who had been my deputy director, was working under Wheeler.

Lage: Oh, he moved from you to Wheeler.

19-00:31:14

Wilson: Up to Wheeler. And I had to—

Lage: Had you appointed him as your deputy?

19-00:31:21

Wilson: I had him as my deputy director [at CDF], but he moved up. He moved up. So anyway, Branham—I had to go through the governor's office to do this, to take their license. And I told Jim Branham, because he was familiar with this whole business of what's going on in the field out there with Palco. And I might add, he went back to Palco to work after this thing.

Lage: I know, I wanted to ask you about that.

19-00:31:48

Wilson: Well, sure, of course.

Lage: Did he come from Palco to begin with?

19-00:31:50

Wilson: No, no, no! He came from the legislature where he was an aide to Jim Nielsen, a state senator. He's a political animal, one of these people that moves all over, see? [laughs] Anyway, he went to Wheeler and they went to the governor's office. They said, well, find out what you—This thing's going to hit the press. Here we are, we've got all these violations. And I need to do something. So in the elevator, when he rode up the elevator with me, he said, "Let her rip, Richard, let her rip." And I said, "Okay."

Lage: Jim said that. So he apparently got—

19-00:32:19

Wilson: He got the word from the governor, so the governor knew it was going to come—

Lage: Okay, great.

19-00:32:22

Wilson: —so we did it.

Lage: Did you give extra attention to Palco because you were suspicious—

19-00:32:31

Wilson: We had to give them extra attention because they were in so much trouble all the time. I had more people working on Palco than the whole rest of the timber industry.

Lage: Okay. So they were flagrant violators.

19-00:32:42

Wilson: They were always in trouble. Always. Flagrant. Always flagrant. So there they are. So we did, we took it. And of course, this caused a lot of wrestling around. And so then we had Campbell and we had Jared Carter and Frank Shaw Bacik, his crony in the law firm [Carter Behnke Oglesby & Bacik].

Lage: These are all Palco people.

19-00:33:02

Wilson: Oh, sure. They're all running around trying to get a stipulated agreement together which solved the violation. The idea of a stipulated agreement was to have an agreement, for which Norm Hill was my attorney, that they would put somebody in the chain of command to see that [chuckles] these violations didn't keep happening, and to clean up the act. And Campbell was desperate to do that. So obviously, they, on paper, put something together that

hopefully, would get this thing cleaned up, right? So here we go. We're getting through that awkward—And Byron Sher, he's trying to get these groves into this plan. And we sat with the attorney general and the lawyers from Palco, Dale Webb, and a lawyer from Los Angeles, Thornton; and they had a bond lawyer there. They had a bond lawyer. And the bond lawyer was really interested in this because he was concerned about his bond holders. Now remember, just before '98, Charlie—

Lage: Hurwitz.

19-00:34:15

Wilson: Charles Hurwitz.

Lage: [chuckles] You can call him Charlie, but I want to be sure the listeners—

19-00:34:20

Wilson: Well, Charlie; I have to call him Charlie. [laughs] He and I've been together for so long that—The formality should come back. Charles Hurwitz. He borrowed \$875 million just as we were moving to closure, from these bond holders. They were big banks in the East and in Texas. And the collateral that he used was these Scopac lands. Palco was the corporation that had the mill and so forth; and Scopac had the 211,000 acres of redwood. And that was the collateral he pledged to the bond holders.

Lage: Ah.

19-00:35:01

Wilson: And the bond holders were naturally nervous, because if this deal—They were worried about, where do we get our money?

Lage: Yeah, and the deal was crucial to all of that.

19-00:35:12

Wilson: Theoretically. To the bond holders, right? Didn't work out that way, but that's where we were going at that point in time. Okay. So they're working hard, trying to cover all the bases so that the bond holders would get a number. Now, you see what's critical here is the long-term sustained yield. For a hundred years, right? And there's going to be, whatever this number is, available every year, with some adjustments—minor, not 10 percent, more or less, of whatever the number's agreed. You can't change it without going right back and starting over. But the idea is, you will have this much timber available every year.

Lage: For a hundred years.

19-00:36:02

Wilson: Yes, so that there's going to be wood for the mill, there's going to be trees for the critters, there's going to be the shade and the things, all making this coordinated HCP and SYP. As we just pointed out, an HCP doesn't work if

you don't have any trees [laughs] twenty years old, because the habitat's not there.

Lage: Now, I don't know if we recorded what HCP is.

19-00:36:31

Wilson: Habitat conservation plan.

Lage: Right. So you can't really conserve habitat, if you don't have a plan for the trees.

19-00:36:37

Wilson: Have the trees. Absolutely. It is just as simple as that. But politically, for the deal, we separated them, get the—

Lage: The HCP was federal and the sustained yield plan was state.

19-00:36:49

Wilson: That's exactly right. The feds put up \$250 million, and the state put up \$130 million. And then Byron's deal threw in another \$100 million, so it was about \$480 million dollars when you fill the enchilada up with all the goodies, and that's what it's worth. So here we go. And we're sitting here. This thing's getting kind of close, and we've got these violations and we've got urgency. And remember now, '98's an election year, right?

Lage: [chuckles] Right.

19-00:37:25

Wilson: Something happens, right? [chuckles]

Lage: Pete Wilson.

19-00:37:29

Wilson: Pete Wilson leaves and Gray Davis comes in.

Lage: Which is Republican to Democrat.

19-00:37:35

Wilson: Absolutely.

Lage: If that was important, I don't know.

19-00:37:37

Wilson: Well, was it ever important. So the election comes along. And Wheeler, Brown, everybody's gone elsewhere. Except for Richard Wilson and Norm Hill. Norm Hill was the counsel and Richard Wilson was the director.

Lage: Now, why did they keep you on?

19-00:38:03

Wilson: Well, they had to, because we had to get the long-term sustained yield plan signed on March 1.

Lage: But couldn't a new director have signed it?

19-00:38:14

Wilson: That was a problem they had. They were worried. They were worried. They felt they needed me because a new director wouldn't know anything of this. And they needed at least—I was the only official left in the state, beside Norm Hill, who was my attorney, trying to work with me on this, as we were struggling toward this March 1 midnight nocturnal meeting in the escrow office in Humboldt County, right?

Lage: Now, did Gray Davis's new resource secretary or anyone else talk with you?

19-00:38:54

Wilson: Mary Nichols. Mary Nichols. Oh, yes, Mary Nichols was right there.

Lage: And what was their attitude towards the Deal?

19-00:39:02

Wilson: Well, Gray Davis and Susan Kennedy—Now, Susan Kennedy was Gray Davis's executive secretary in the office. She was really in for this full—the Deal. She was solidly for the Deal with Dianne, everything. The Deal's got to go, and they didn't want anything to go wrong. So Gray Davis had Steve Glazer, he had what I'd call his hit man, assigned to see no press, no nothing can happen to this deal. And 20/20 was out there trying to get me to do an interview.

Lage: 20/20?

19-00:39:39

Wilson: The television show in New York. 60 Minutes. It was 60 Minutes, it wasn't 20/20. 60 Minutes. There was a lot of rumbling around, and they wanted me on the show. And they just—everything was locked down.

Lage: The Gray Davis administrative didn't want you—

19-00:39:59

Wilson: Absolutely nothing. Total embargo; my press people, nobody could talk. This was embargoed. Just nothing.

Lage: And did Mary Nichols get very involved?

19-00:40:10

Wilson: Well, I'm sure that Mary Nichols was totally confused because she was trying to find my successor. and [chuckles] I think she was—She couldn't get used to Palco because it was just such a troublesome thing that she was just coming

into. And she'd never met—Finally, Campbell came over and met her for the first time. But as a new secretary coming in the midst of all this, it's got to have been a real life learning experience for a lady that's spent a lot of time on environmental issues and is currently in, I believe, the Air Resources Board in Sacramento.

Lage: Did she draw on you for counsel? Were you brought in?

19-00:40:56

Wilson:

Well, yeah, but not very much. And Norm Hill, my counsel at CDF. We were trying to keep this thing going. But the problem was, right at this juncture, that we were trying, my staff—Palco had submitted what they felt were the necessary numbers for a long-term sustained yield plan. One was 210-million board feet. One was about 176-or 178-million board feet. And our, the department's, assessment was something around 130-million. Now, bear in mind we never could get Palco to give us the Vestra black box, which was the plan. The plan was under the [direction of] Palco attorneys Jared Carter and Frank Shaw Bacik. Bacik was writing letters to the department and my staff saying, "This is what we know; this is what we have; this is the science; this is what's going on." And they had worked with the National Marine Fisheries [Service]; Department of the Interior; and [Department of] Fish and Game, to some degree. But they had come to the conclusion that 178—I'm a little bit ahead of myself. They had this material. And remember, we're only about two weeks out from signing. And there were meetings, which I wasn't a party to. There was all this activity going on, and scurrying to get a number.

And bear in mind, it was the money. The bond holders. In order for Charles to get his \$480 million now—\$250 million from the federal government, \$130 million from the State of California, and then \$100 million from Byron [Sher]—And the state had a little money in the bank, so they could afford to put the deal together.

It went from 380 to 480, so we're up to \$480 million.

Lage: Now, finish that sentence. In order for him to get that money—

19-00:43:20

Wilson:

In order for Charles Hurwitz to get the money, he had to have a signed-off sustained yield plan and a habitat conservation plan that could be filed in escrow, complete, accurate, scientifically justifiable, right?, in order for the check to be made and to clear. I was there at this period, very concerned about all of this information and these different numbers—210-million, 178-million, and 136-million—a long-term sustained yield that had to be part of the hundred-year plan.

Lage: So that was how many million board feet they could cut every year.

19-00:44:14

Wilson:

That's right, a year. Now, remember, if you could picture this, this is a hundred-year plan done in ten-year cycles, right? So we have the first ten years, okay. Then we have the second ten years and the third ten years, as you ramp up to a hundred years. The first ten years is critical, absolutely critical to start this. You're laying the foundation, right?

Lage:

If you cut too much at the beginning, you're—

19-00:44:47

Wilson:

Oh, you're getting around to some real sensitive issues. It's a good question. Right?

Lage:

Right.

19-00:44:53

Wilson:

Now, as we come down to the—if you want to call it the witching hour of March 1, I submitted a letter that said that on the basis of the department [figures], we acknowledge 136-million board feet is the amount of the yield that you can cut.

Lage:

Now, what was that data based on?

19-00:45:22

Wilson:

On ours. It was empirical. Our data was back to the Murphy family that owned Palco before Hurwitz in 1986, and he snookered them out of that with Boesky and Milken [Mike Milken and Ivan Boesky, a couple of junk-bond dealers—added during narrator review]. I think we went through that whole game.

Lage:

Yes.

19-00:45:42

Wilson:

We could never get information, good information. We suspected he was cutting more than he should. It's just like Georgia-Pacific and just like Louisiana-Pacific, right?

Lage:

But you had to somewhat rely on their information.

19-00:45:57

Wilson:

We had to rely on their information because we didn't have any other. So I was in a position of either, on the best science, whatever they're giving, assuming it was accurate—or if I didn't, I'd have to say no; but I'd have to be able to say because, and give the reason. And I didn't have the reason, because we never could get the black box, which had the information in it.

Lage:

So your 130 was based on—

19-00:46:26

Wilson:

On our departmental history. Okay. Well, then all hell broke loose right there. Hurwitz said no deal and everybody was calling everybody. And Norm Hill, who was with me—It was crazy coming up to this time because it so happened I had an abscessed tooth. And I had to go down to my dentist to get an appointment to get him to fix it. And so the Friday before it was—President’s Day, I think, was the Monday. Well, anyway. Anyway. That Friday, I had one of the staff from CDF that was going to drive me to the airport. Telephone calls from [Bill] Hogarth, National Marine Fisheries in Washington. “I’ve got to get you to sign these papers that 178-million is the right figure, not your figure.” Fish and Game, Department of the Interior, National Marine Fisheries.

Lage:

All of these people—

19-00:47:46

Wilson:

All of them were on this 178,000 [board feet figure] And so I said, “Well—

Lage:

And what’s Hogarth?

19-00:47:54

Wilson:

He was from National Marine Fisheries. He was the representative out here in California.

Lage:

I see.

19-00:48:01

Wilson:

Now, bear in mind, everybody’s gone. It’s just me and Norm Hill. Anyway, he sent this letter. I flew down to Southern California. I went to the dentist and he took this thing up and patched it up. And I had told Norm Hill, I said, “Now, Norm, keep in touch as I’m down there, by phone. I will be calling you. You just keep your line open.” So when I got down there, we were having all kind of telephones into his office and everything. But we got a new letter drafted with this number, 178-million in it.

Lage:

The Department of Forestry drafted a new letter.

19-00:48:54

Wilson:

Yes. Norm, yes. The question was how to get it to me to read it, because it was about the same as the—There are conditions, mind you, in it that they had to perform—meaning Palco. So they had to get it to me. And I didn’t have a fax, and so I had to go to the Ojai Valley Inn, where they had a fax. And I called from there. And Norm, through—They had a Fish and Game representative in Ventura, I believe, by the name of Roger Reese, who hand-carried the letter to me. And I read the letter and I called Norm and I said, “It reads about the way we wrote the other one. There were a few conditions, but I think it’s okay. On the basis of the information that I have, I think this is where we are, I don’t know what more we can do. We don’t have anything to

change, and we've got all these other folks in here saying, "This is the one that makes this thing viable."

Now, there was always this discussion, which troubled me, that people were saying, from Hurwitz, well, if we don't get this cut, the deal can't go, the company's not viable. Not viable. And I always felt, well, there's something wrong here because we're not signing this to keep the company viable, [chuckles] we're signing it because it's an SYP and HCP, and it's for a hundred years, and it's to lock in something that's really sustainable. That's the issue, not to keep the company viable. That wasn't the issue. But that was always—

Lage: And this is where the bond holders—

19-00:50:48

Wilson: And that was the bond holders, and that's the money.

Lage: They needed that amount of cutting to pay the bond holders.

19-00:50:53

Wilson: They felt they had to have that cut to be able to pay on the note, so Charlie could keep going. Charles Hurwitz, sorry.

Lage: No, you can call him Charlie, I just wanted to be sure our listeners understood.

19-00:51:05

Wilson: Yeah. Well, anyway, here we've got that. So I'm down there. And I had told Norm, I said, "Okay, I think that's probably as good as we can do." I said, "I will try to call you back." And the letter was transmitted and he signed—They had to sign for me to do it, but it was okay. And so that probably was my last communication with Norm, because the office—We were moving toward this escrow time they were going to close. And he said, "Well, call me." And I tried to call him, and I never could get into his office; the phones were—Well, I don't know. Whatever it was. The deal closed—

Lage: Was that important? You'd already given him permission to go ahead.

19-00:51:58

Wilson: Well, I was only interested to know because Hurwitz was on the phone and Feinstein was on the phone, Babbitt was on the phone, Gore—I don't know how many of them. And Norm, God bless him, in a way, he was the last man standing. And I did go down and have to take care of this item, but—

Lage: Well, if you hadn't had to go down for your tooth, how might it have been different?

19-00:52:23

Wilson: I don't know. There's nothing I could've changed because I was going on the data that I'd gotten. I couldn't get the hard data. And all these other agency

people were running in, saying, “This is the number that makes this viable from an HCP and a SYP,” and that—

Lage: A lot of pressure.

19-00:52:41

Wilson: Yeah, sure. Yeah. If I knew there was something really wrong with the number between 136 and 178, I would have said, “No, go back and do it; too bad.” Because I’d taken their license twice. And that’s what worried them, I think. But that’s history. And we’ll be talking about this a bit more as we go down the road on this story. But there we are. The deal gets signed. All right. And so at midnight, they close and the checks, presumably, were all passed. And Charlie got his money and Headwaters was, quote/unquote, “saved.” And so we’re in the first decade.

Lage: Is this a place here where we might stop for a minute?

19-00:53:43

Wilson: I think we ought to stop and have a drink of water.

Lage: Let’s stop. That’s what I was thinking. And I’ll change to a new tape.

[End Audio File 19]

[Begin Audiofile 20]

Lage: Okay, we are resuming the interview with Richard Wilson, still May 19. And this is tape twenty. We’ve more or less gotten the background. The Deal has been made.

20-00:00:16

Wilson: The Deal. Yeah.

Lage: [chuckles] Now, what happened next? You left office.

20-00:00:21

Wilson: Well, then I had said I would not, frankly, work in the Davis administration. Mary Nichols had said, “We can’t have Richard Wilson around here.”

Lage: Mutual agreement.

20-00:00:38

Wilson: [chuckles] Yes. And so I stayed on a little longer to help Andrea Tuttle, my successor, to go around and just understand the CDF a little better.

Lage: Did you have a good relationship with her?

20-00:00:54

Wilson:

Oh, sure. I'd known her quite a long time. She worked in forestry, as a consultant and everything. And her husband worked at Humboldt County as, I think, public works director; I'm not sure. Anyway, I, as we say, faded into the sunset, and I went back to the ranch. Well, as we had said before, I had kept that place in Ojai because of my daughter and getting her through Thacher [School]. And as you know, I fortunately had kept it, because in 2004, at midnight or thereabouts, my house burned to the ground.

Lage:

In—

20-00:01:50

Wilson:

At Covelo, at the ranch.

Lage:

At the ranch [the house at Buck Mountain].

20-00:01:53

Wilson:

And Sophie, my hound dog, she woke up and I got up. And when I realized the whole house was on fire, we got out. And I got my pick-up. Fortunately, I had my keys. I got away from the house, got the pick-up moved. And it was enough of a cold night, it was a little wind blowing. And the house and the adjoining garage, I would say in about an hour and fifteen minutes, was completely gone. Everything.

Lage:

You just watched it there?

20-00:02:32

Wilson:

I had to pull away because of the propane tanks and the gas, which eventually exploded. A huge 500-pound tank, like this table, blew out over the fence. Huge, huge blast. And so I pulled back on the lake there and just sat there and watched, and that was it. There was no fire department to call, there was nothing you could do. It was over.

Lage:

Were you concerned that it might spread to the adjacent—

20-00:03:02

Wilson:

It was too cold; it was winter. It wasn't going anywhere.

Lage:

You must've felt terrible.

20-00:03:08

Wilson:

Pretty bad. It was pretty depressing. And it was depressing because I had hired a man from Willits to change the flue and to rework this particular stove area where the problem existed, and he didn't show up. And in our country, [laughs] it's not unusual to have people not show up for work.

Lage:

So you'd been aware there was a problem.

20-00:03:33

Wilson: I didn't do it, and it got into Thanksgiving, into Christmastime, and then after that, well, history. That's it. The house was gone.

Lage: Well, it's good you got out. That's the positive—

20-00:03:47

Wilson: I did get out. But I think one of the things I learned is, I never picked up my wallet. All my things. I didn't realize that I had lost my identity. When I had to go back and try to get a driver license and to try to get a thing like a passport or anything, people would keep saying, "Well, where's your drivers license?" And I said, "I don't have one." "Well, we can't take care of you because who are you?" [they laugh] And they said, "Where's your Social Security card?" "I don't have one." And it took me quite a bit of time to get my credentials that proved that I wasn't an alien or somebody across the border trying to cause trouble, that I truly was a citizen of California. It was the darnedest experience.

Lage: Did you have to get someone to sign an affidavit for you?

20-00:04:46

Wilson: Well, not quite; almost. Yeah, it was almost that serious. Because then they could go back into the records and obviously find a Social Security number, which I knew, but I didn't have a card. But I had had a license, and a credit card, and so forth. But the bureaucracy just stopped cold. You'd go to the bureaucracy and say, "I'd like to get a new driver's license." And they'd say, "Well, where's your old driver's license?" Says, "I don't have one." "Well, what happened to it?" "Well, it got burned up in my house fire, and I don't have one." "Well, we can't help you." [Lage laughs] And then I'd say, "Well, what am I supposed to do?" And then they'd say, "Well—" Then they'd scratch their heads. And I forget where they—they had another agent or somewhere to go. [laughs] Go see somebody else with the problem. But I spent—

Lage: Birth certificate. You can get your birth certificate.

20-00:05:38

Wilson: Well, I had to get my birth certificate, of course. That's one of the things I did, eventually.

Lage: Anyway, this is another issue. So this threw you off for a while. 2004 to—

20-00:05:49

Wilson: Yeah. And then after that, I had to think about really what I was going to do with the house, whether I was going to rebuild, or whether I was going to get a trailer, or what my options were. So I fortunately had kept my house in Ojai, and I went down and reflected on it over several months. And finally, really went to this idea of an engineered house, which is what I will be finishing, hopefully, with a garage. But the house is up and there it is. So that part of the

saga is pretty much over. Now, what was I doing? Well, I was working with Concerned Resources and Environmental Workers [CREW], which is a youth group that was doing trails and fire safety issues and so forth, through my ties with CDF. I'd kept an interest in that and worked with them in Ojai.

I helped raise the seed money for them, and it's become very successful. And they work in Ventura and Santa Barbara County now. And usually it's teenagers or close to that age that are a little bit lost, and they work in these camps, where we have day work and some camps they've set up. They go out and they both work in the towns, to clean up, and they work on local trails and fire breaks. They work a lot on fire breaks around communities like Ojai. So I did that.

And in the course of this time, I had kept in touch with CDF because when I left, the new director, a Gray Davis appointee, was just, from my point of view, a disaster.

Lage: Is this Andrea Tuttle?

20-00:07:41

Wilson: I'm sorry. It's not Andrea. I meant to say the new deputy director. Andrea was appointed by Davis as director. The chief of staff was Woody Allshouse, CDF fireman and union representative. This is where the union, in essence, took control of the department. The union, I had a very good working relationship with the union.

Lage: This is the firefighters union?

20-00:08:05

Wilson: The firefighters, unit eight, yes. And we got along at arms length, but we did get along. But one of the things that Woody Allshouse—that was his name, not Outhouse, Allshouse—he wanted to get rid of the CDF uniform, which was unique to CDF as a wildlands fire department, and get a blue uniform, which was the uniform of the [urban] fire departments. And I always said he just wanted to make them look like a bunch of Kmart guards, so you couldn't tell the difference between a guy at Kmart and the CDF. But he did. And the union became very, very much stronger, and the resource side of the department was not strengthened, if nothing weakened, by this. But nevertheless, I maintained my interest. Andrea moved on, and we got another director. Let me think a minute. After Andrea, there were, well, there were two directors. And both of them were fire chiefs; they weren't resource people.

Lage: But it's an interesting combination there. It's really—

20-00:09:33

Wilson: Well, it's a troubling combination because on the one hand, you have the—  
The wildland fire is not urban fire. It's different trucks dealing with wildlands,

dealing with country, and trained differently. They have to be different because their mission is different. But the union wants to keep it all kind of the same and blend it. And I think it's weakened the department considerably, but that's neither here nor there.

Lage: But also the firefighters, how much interest do they have in the sustained yield plans and—

20-00:10:07

Wilson: Well, now, you see, you've got a very key question, in that the forestry issue is a resource issue. And the forests are very important to the State of California, meaning forests bring more than just jobs and cutting trees. The forest represents habitats, and the structure in holding the land, and the water courses, and the shade. The whole vibrancy of a good forest like the Jackson State Forest shows you what a real forest, a working forest can be, as opposed to a lot of this cutover land that's going to take years and years [to restore]. And furthermore, it gets cut up and subdivided because there's no merchantable crop, meaning wood there. So they cut it up and then they want to sell it. And that may be over, after this thing we've gone through economically. So a lot of land is just kind of chopped up. But it's very hard to manage a large piece of land that's been cut up and parceled out and so forth.

Well, I kept an interest in the forestry side and some of the people that were being brought along. In 2005, I had talked to somebody there. A lot of my old-time friends were leaving. But the person—and I don't remember the exact—it might've been Bill Stewart, who now is here at Cal, working in one of the departments; he had worked for the research arm of the department. I had hired him. He said that a sustained yield forester had been hired. And I said, "That's interesting. I never had a sustained yield forester and a position." "Well," he said, "There's one there." And that really piqued my interest. So I kind of got around and I found out his name was Chris Maranto. And so I ran Chris Maranto down and I said, "I'm very much interested in this job that you've taken, and I'd like to talk to you a little bit." And he said, "Happy to talk to you." And I said, "Well, principally, I'd like to talk to you about the Palco issue and what's happened up there." And he said, "Sure."

Lage: Had you some indication that it might not be going well; had you kind of kept tabs?

20-00:12:57

Wilson: Oh, yeah, sure. I knew there were—My feeling was there had been no follow-through, in terms of the monitoring. In three years, they're supposed to have gone out and monitored. And as far as I know, they didn't do it. I think the Davis administration pretty much gave them the run of the ranch. The Deal was done. Have a good time. Charlie was taking care of political contributions to his pals. Davis, money was coming in. Susan Kennedy didn't want

anymore trouble. Andrea, she, I don't know, wasn't interested in problems. And the fire chiefs, [laughs] they could've cared less about trees.

But anyway, so I said to Chris, I said, "I never liked this Deal. Tell me what's wrong." And I said, "Look, I would've loved to have just said no and told them all to go fly a kite." He said, "Well, it's real simple, Richard. The long-term sustainable yield is rigged through the plan. They are using tan oak as a filler for MSP." Maximum sustained productivity relates to redwood and fir. Both species are commodities that sell on the market. They both command money. The biggest redwood house in the world—211,000 acres, right?—is mostly redwood; 60:40 or thereabouts.

Lage: And 40 percent fir?

20-00:15:03

Wilson: Fir, yeah.

Lage: And they added the tan oak into the board feet or—

20-00:15:11

Wilson: Yeah, we're going to definitely get there.

Lage: Okay.

20-00:15:15

Wilson: Tan oak is a hardwood, and it's a non-commercial species, and could be classified as a weed, a nuisance. Now, if you go into the forest practice manual, you'll see that tan oak is mentioned, right? It's there. Well, it's not there because it's a merchantable item; it's there because on some slopes that are just falling apart, just because of whatever—water and landslide and whatever—sometimes tan oak will grow. And so yeah, they're let to grow there for stabilization. As an example, if you owned this little ten-acre spot you and I are sitting right here in, and it's all tan oak, you can go cut them all down. You don't even need a timber harvest plan because it's all tan oak and nobody cares. So that's the way tan oak kind of fits into this story.

He [Chris Maranto] said, "Well, I've got 8,000 acres that I've been working on out here. Pacific Lumber." We're now into 2006. And he said, "What I'm finding is this inventory, it's in the black box we've never seen. Because in those numbers in the black box, to get to 178-million [board feet], I don't see it over here on the ground."

Now, bear in mind, in 2005 and '6, I was interested in following Charlie, Charles Hurwitz, in what's known as the Q-10. The Q-10 is a document that the Securities and Exchange Commission makes companies fill out. And in a Q-10, it tells the financial strengths. It shows whether their volume—In this case, is the timber there, not there? Are they making their payments? All that kind of stuff. Well, it's right there in the Q-10. And what the Q-10 was telling

me was that Charlie, in the first decade, had gone up to 230-million, had gone even above 178. And then it began to tip over. And it started down. Two, five, six, it was going fast. And under 178-million. Which meant the long-term sustained yield wasn't there. You remember the thing about the woman that said, "Where's the beef?"

Lage: Yeah.

20-00:18:34

Wilson: I said, "Where's the trees?" So anyway, he files for bankruptcy in 2007. Now, in 2006, after Maranto and I talk about this, that these figures just don't work, I had talked to Joe Cotchett. Now, Joe Cotchett is a prominent lawyer, Cotchett, Pitre and McCarthy.

Lage: How did you get hooked up with Joe?

20-00:19:05

Wilson: Well, Lew Butler and he had a partner, [Pete] McCloskey. Clayton Janson and Joe Cotchett were partners, worked together on the Savings and Loan scandal involving Charles Keating. Joe made a big pile of money on that, and he has done that over the years. And Joe does some public issue things, too.

Lage: Well, in a way, that was a public issue, too, wasn't it, that—

20-00:19:43

Wilson: Well, yeah, but it was a fraud issue.

Lage: A fraud issue.

20-00:19:45

Wilson: You don't get the money back, but you've got Keating. So anyway, Butler and Janson, and then of course, Butler and McCloskey and—

Lage: They all knew Joe.

20-00:20:00

Wilson: They did. And I think that in law school, if I recall, McCloskey and [John] Ehrlichman were in some kind of a court deal together in law school, and Butler—Anyway, yeah. They all knew each other. And Bill Bertain, I haven't mentioned. Bill Bertain, in Eureka, was a prominent player in this, because Bill, as a single operator, had been fighting Pacific Lumber. He grew up down in Scotia, and his family; and boy, they just had a hell of a time with Hurwitz and lawsuits, and he represented property owners up on the watersheds.

Lage: So did he come in on it, also?

20-00:20:49

Wilson: He did, in that when I was trying to get organized—Bill knew Joe Cotchett, too. And Bill, over the years—not a lot, but—Being a land-use lawyer, there

were some things happening in Humboldt County that I was interested in. And he talked about Palco and all this stuff. So when we began to really think about this Cotchett issue, Nial McCarthy—Nial is N-I-A-L, Nial McCarthy is Leo McCarthy's son. He's a partner. And in 2006, Bill Bertain, Nial McCarthy, Richard Wilson, I think maybe Jesse Noel, who's a forester up there by Bill—Anyway, we met in Sacramento, at Nial McCarthy's request, to discuss whether this was a viable project that Joe Cotchett's firm would take. And I don't know, we met for an hour, and Nial assessed us to see whether we were crazy [laughs] or whatever.

Lage: Was Chris Maranto—

20-00:22:10

Wilson: Of course, he was there. Chris was there, yeah. And I think Nial said—he said something to the effect, “Well,” he said, “Richard, I know you're in for the long pull. Chris, are you in?” And Chris said, “Yeah, I'm in.” And the issue was fraught.

Lage: And it was a whistle blower case.

20-00:22:30

Wilson: Well, that's what it is, fraud, a whistle blower. See, in other words, he had stolen, allegedly stolen this money, right?

Lage: And Chris being employed, I assume he had some protection as a whistle blower, because here he is still employed by the CDF.

20-00:22:50

Wilson: I know, and it was really sticky. Because he had people in his department that were beholden to, frankly, Palco. They'd been very friendly with Palco. And Ginevra Chandler, the lawyer who was counsel to CDF, had come out of the Carter law firm that was mixed up in this alleged fraud.

Lage: And your former deputy was working for Palco, Branham.

20-00:23:19

Wilson: He's gone. Well, yeah. I'm sorry. We didn't cover that, but the day that Pete Wilson left, Branham went to work for Palco. John Campbell and he were friends. So yes, he was a public relations man before he moved back over to the—Well, Schwarzenegger now works in the Sierras in a protection, preservation type. But yes, he was working for Campbell.

Lage: So there's this back and forth.

20-00:23:47

Wilson: And I had Craig Anthony, a CDF employee who I fired, as my resources manager, because he was so busy trying to take my job and take care of Palco that—You don't fire people, but I sent him to Tierra del Fuego, inside the CDF. And he was a very unhappy camper until Palco needed somebody that

knew the CDF regulatory process. And Chris Rowney had been the executive officer for the Board of Forestry, and they asked him to take the job. And he wouldn't do it, and has since become the chief of my district in Willits, for CDF. He went that way. Craig Anthony went to work for Palco, and was one of the architects of the black box scam that basically Bacik and those guys put together. [It came out from a consultant named Don Reimer from the state of Washington, hired by Anthony to help Palco.—added during narrator review]. And remember now, Bacik and Carter, they were mixed up in this deal of these numbers. All right.

Anyway, Maranto, here he is. And I said, “Chris, I hope you know what you're getting into. It's easier for me; I'm out of there. But you're employed.” And he's a professional, and I think Pete McCloskey, who got Chris and his wife both over and had a long talk, he said, “These are real people and they deserve a heck of a lot of credit.” And I have nothing but admiration and credit for him, because he's not a politician. He is a resource forester that understands sustained yield. And furthermore, he's there because he thinks sustained yield, we ought to be taking care of it, and it's not being taken care of currently, under the plan.

We're going to get a little more into this, about what they're operating under is what we call the Nagedly-Z'berg timber harvest plan, with something called an option A, which is an excuse to go back to the 1973 timber harvest plan without the conditions of the HCP, meaning the watershed and the environmental. That's the whole problem. We're going to talk about that.

So I said, “This is something else, Chris.” Well, of course, Ginevra Chandler went to great lengths to shut him down and not turn documents over, and made life plenty miserable for Chris over at the department, but he stayed with it. I was really angry at Chris Ames, who I had known in the attorney general's office. And the State of California was really up to its ears in this thing, from my point of view. And Jerry Brown was now his boss. I thought Chris Ames ought to get Jerry Brown to come into this case with us, to support us.

Lage: Because this could've been not just you and Chris but could've been the State of California and the feds.

20-00:27:23

Wilson:

Yeah. And it could've been the federal government that helped us, right? So Chris Ames is running around—I think he was behaving like tan oak; he was a nuisance weed, from my point of view. [Lage laughs] Because they wanted to monitor all the depositions, monitor all the meetings, monitor mediation that I was present in, but never taking any responsibility. And the federal government, the magistrate for the federal government says, “Well, the federal government's \$250 million, they didn't lose anything. The HCP, that's fine. Everything's all in place. We didn't lose anything.” And they wouldn't enter

into it, either. Now, they didn't stop us. They could've. That was one of their options. They could've said no and the state could've said no, right?

Lage: Oh, I didn't realize that.

20-00:28:18

Wilson: They had that option. But they didn't. The feds stayed neutral and the state was in a state of flux. I wrote two letters drafted to Jerry Brown, because he appointed me to the Board of Forestry. And I thought, well—Joe said—I don't think Joe likes Jerry Brown anyway. I think they've had some political—But anyway, Joe's sort of attitude [was], we don't need Jerry Brown. Now, he probably was right.

Lage: But you did write Jerry Brown?

20-00:28:46

Wilson: I did not.

Lage: Oh, you didn't. You drafted—

20-00:28:47

Wilson: I drafted, but he didn't—Look, Joe Cotchett—And I want to say this about Joe. As I said, he said, "I've made enough money in other things that I can, and my partners, we can take on some of these cases." And he knew the complexity of it. And he was putting up the money. I think he put up maybe \$2 million, I don't know. Because bear in mind, when we filed in '06, it was embargoed—no press releases—and then it became public, Hurwitz was down in bankruptcy, right? And going through all of that. And we couldn't get mixed up in that. We had to get out of that in Texas and bring it back to California. Joe wanted it back in California. He was right. And Bill Bertain worked pretty hard on that side of it. But anyway, there was Scopac and Palco and all the people down there that had lost money.

But the interesting thing down there in that was that the judge, [Richard] Schmidt, [Texas bankruptcy judge] who was purported to be a friend of Charlie's, Mr. Hurwitz, and that one of his friends or he played in a band with Charlie's lawyer in Texas. That's talk. But Schmidt got pretty tired of all the manipulation going on. And when they got down there to what I call the cow eats the cabbage and they really got down to the brass tacks, Schmidt, he called in these experts. And he said, "Well, the long-term sustained yield's about 60- to 70-million [board feet]. That's the judge.

Lage: Really?

20-00:30:46

Wilson: That's 100-million under what the department determined. Right?

Lage: Right. And under even what you had come up with originally, 130,000.

20-00:30:53

Wilson: Under what we'd come up with.

Lage:

Now, was that in your case or in the case of the bankruptcy?

20-00:30:57

Wilson: That was the bankruptcy.

Lage:

The bankruptcy case.

20-00:30:59

Wilson: That was the bankruptcy. We still haven't gotten out of Texas, right? Well, eventually they sorted it out. Humboldt Redwood Company came in with the Gap family. They bought the company.

Lage:

They bought Palco.

20-00:31:19

Wilson: The 530-million. But before they got it bought, Charlie—Mr. Hurwitz—was down there. He wanted to make a big subdivision. And he went to the board and he wanted to divide the town of Scotia up. And he was going to put out these big, high-priced lots out here, and he was taking this to the board. Well, the board, they woke up. Finally, the light went on, after—They're a little day late and dollar short, you might say. Said, "No, we're not going along with you, Charlie. That ain't going to fly." Well, what can you say? Anyway, that was kind of the end of that, right? And so they, meaning the Humboldt Redwood Company, the Gap, bought Scotia. That was the 211,000 acres. And Marathon, who loaned money, took over the town and apparently, hired Frank Shaw Bacik, who was one of the lawyers who was caught in a scam of fraudulent reporting on the murrelets. Actually, he had told people to write a report that was fraudulent and had got caught, in a previous case. Anyway, he's now representing Marathon for the whole town of Scotia, and God knows what's going to happen to it. It's got housing and there you are. Charlie basically was gone, right? So anyway, we filed on this thing, on the fraud issue, against Maxxam and Hurwitz.

Lage:

That's who you filed against, because there was no Palco anymore.

20-00:33:16

Wilson: There's no Palco. And Scopac, too. The bond holders are still sitting around out there, but—And now in a way, you've got this new team of Scopac, meaning the bond holders, and the Humboldt Redwood Company, basically. They're kind of there, Hurwitz is gone. And I might add that Hurwitz being gone, Morrison & Foerster were basically dismissed, and we have a new arrangement, which we're going to be coming to shortly.

So anyway, here we are, and we're starting this long trek toward trying to get this thing to court. And Joe—I have nothing but high admiration for Nina Stellini, Clara Morain, Sean Ponist, Phil Gregory, and Joe Cotchett.

Lage: Are they all in Cotchett's office?

20-00:34:24

Wilson: They're all in there. And talk about digging it out piece by piece. Morrison & Foerster were out saying, "This should never come to trial. There are no issues." And they just had volumes of material explaining why, for every reason in the world, this wasn't even a case, there was no fraud. And Charlie, Mr. Hurwitz, was a laudable character [Lage chuckles] and had made it possible to have the Redwood Park, and on and on. And then they brought [James] Brosnahan in because they needed some fire power, because frankly, those line lawyers for Morrison & Foerster weren't up to Joe Cotchett and his crew.

Lage: Now, who's Brosnahan?

20-00:35:15

Wilson: Well, he's one of your most prominent lawyers in the Bay Area; he lives in Berkeley and represented, among others, that young man that was in—

Lage: In Afghanistan?

20-00:35:25

Wilson: That's him. And he's very good. And I'm sure he would've cross-examined me, if it was an opportunity. But nevertheless, we'll get to that, too. But the point was that he was there.

Lage: They brought in their big guns.

20-00:35:43

Wilson: Joe and he are the two biggest attorneys around this part of the country. And they really almost got into it, which we'll be getting there, too. So anyway, churning all this stuff. And discovery is a very important, but a very difficult, task of pulling together the real issues. I think the issues that really came out were, well, the statute of limitations clearly was an issue; the use of tan oaks was a fraud issue; the whole issue of liability and Hurwitz as being responsible himself.

Lage: Who to hold liable.

20-00:36:31

Wilson: You bet. Because we went after him on the Maxxam—Maxxam Hurwitz. We didn't mess with those other entities, because they're bankrupt. So it really had to be him. And the other issue was the separation of the habitat conservation plan and the SYP. The defense was, look, they took the federal magistrate view that the feds were not losing anything! Look, the federal government didn't lose anything. That's separate. The sustained yield plan doesn't have anything to do with this. So what are you talking about? This was the defense, right?

Well, I had a very different picture of what this document was and what Wheeler, I think, maybe told you, about what they think. And to this day, it ain't over, [chuckles] I'm going to tell you that, even where we are today. But the idea is, those are the issues, right?

Lage: So those were the four main issues of the trial.

20-00:37:38

Wilson: You bet. Those were the big ones that we'll be getting into. And I think as we were developing all this information, that it was clear that Hurwitz was at the table all the way. That was a big part of it; was he there? And there's a thing they call—I don't know the legal term, but there's a team, you've got to show that. Well, his fingers, he was all over that.

Lage: So do you think your attorneys were prepared to show that, or could've shown that?

20-00:38:16

Wilson: Well, you're asking a question appropriately, a little ahead of where I wanted to get to, but I'd be happy to—

Lage: No, no, go with—

20-00:38:23

Wilson: Don't let us forget that. That he was at meetings and Mike Thompson was escorting him around in Sacramento, to talk to the governor's office. This was all trying to get the money for the \$130 million from the state. All political money, it was all in play. And he was definitely there. One of the issues that—If you read the text, there's some of these folks—and I suppose Doug [Wheeler]'s one of them—that somehow, they got the idea that the HCP was over there, and this SYP was not connected with it. Byron Sher didn't share that view, not in the stuff that I see. But he was worried about it. And he would've been a witness for us, as George Miller was a witness for us. As opposed to a [Richard] Pombo or a [John] Doolittle, had it come up in those—You see what I mean? Charlie didn't have his horses anymore. They'd been all sent out to the political graveyard.

Lage: We didn't put this on the tape, that Pombo and [Tom] DeLay and Doolittle were—

20-00:39:51

Wilson: Well, I think it's important to note that in all the testimony, when he was negotiating this money, to get the money for the Headwaters, Pombo, DeLay and Doolittle were right there helping him, all the way. And as Charlie, Mr. Hurwitz, said, "Tom DeLay's a great American," [Lage chuckles] to McCloskey, who was sitting there telling him, "And I think I'm part of your problem because I was co-author to the Endangered Species Act in 1973." Well, there you go. A little difference.

Lage: But you sent me some material that shows the record of contributions from Hurwitz to DeLay, Pombo, Doolittle.

20-00:40:34

Wilson: Oh, yeah. All of them. They were all—

Lage: And others, too.

Lage: Who was Mike Thompson?

20-00:40:41

Wilson: Mike Thompson. Yeah. Well, he's a congressman now. He was from the first district, when Palco was located in Humboldt County. No, no, Charlie—Look, Charles, Mr. Hurwitz—[chuckles]

Lage: You can call him Charlie; now we know who you're talking about.

20-00:40:53

Wilson: Charlie. Charlie, first of all, he wasn't a lumber man. He wasn't anything but a shyster. He was in the business of making money. And if you had to pay congressmen and you had to pay lawyers, and to keep yourself out of jail because you were skating on pretty thin ice, he just used money and whatever it took to get there. That's the battle. There it is. He could've cared less about the community or anything. Just get the deal.

Lage: Right.

20-00:41:30

Wilson: Get the money. And I don't think Dianne Feinstein or Doug or others realized that was the bottom line. As far as this PR stuff to get there, that's part of the game. But just get the money. Well, anyway, we're kind of closing in here on getting to trial. And they, right to the bitter end, were trying to stop this. Brosnahan got into it, in the summary of judgment. And I think they made a mistake in this. Summary of judgment is a very big hurdle in a lawsuit. And I think Morrison & Foerster—and I believe I'm correct—in that they didn't pay attention to the issue of liability and fraud in a manner that had they done it, might have prevented us from putting on the case we did up to the time that settlement was called for. In other words, to put on the witness stand the people we did to show the scam and the tan oak and everything—Because the way Joe constructed the trial, the trial was to be—Chris Maranto went first and we put our witnesses on, and Richard goes, clean-up. That's the clean-up.

Lage: You're the clean-up.

20-00:43:12

Wilson: I'm the clean-up. Or I'll be the last one.

Lage: The last witness.

20-00:43:16

Wilson:

And I would talk. And we need to talk about what I would've said to the jurors, because it's very important. But nevertheless, that's the way the trial was constructed. And so as we're moving along here, just that issue, as I understand it, if they'd been a little careful, they might've stopped us from getting the witnesses up and doing what we needed to do to get as far as we did.

Lage:

And how would they have stopped you?

20-00:43:54

Wilson:

Well, I'm sorry, I haven't—Let me better try to articulate that. Under fraud, you've got to be able to prove fraud. And unless you can prove fraud, you can't just go on and on and on.

Lage:

About the hardwoods issue and—

20-00:44:15

Wilson:

Well, that's right. See, the idea is—and the reason I will say this now, we may come to it a little bit later on—But the point was that we got into trial and when we were at what I would say our high point day in our witnesses, the judge, she—Claudia Wilken is a good judge. But she made some decisions, I think, that were very harmful to us. However, she made some decisions on the way to getting us to trial, which were very good. There was one about Noerr Pennington, which is this legal term that Palco lawyers used to justify lying. Well, it's about you can lie if you need to, over a permit or a legislative thing. It's a part of the law that they've used up in the local courts. And she wasn't going to have any part of this. And she threw that one out. There were some other issues that she helped on and I think was very good about. But one was she didn't want testimony coming in on my taking their licenses, nor did she want the bankruptcy court finding that the long-term sustained yield was not 178 million board feet but 55 million board feet.

But had I been able to testify, I could've testified on that. Because they didn't ask about it in the depositions, so I think I was free to go on that. That was the big deal, talking to the jury, right?

Lage:

Yeah, yeah.

20-00:45:53

Wilson:

And I think the issue of money and how much went out—And Joe, I'm not sure that he articulated quite as much as he could've on the opening statement on that, how much the guy had lugged off, \$3.5 billion over twenty years, and virtually nothing being returned back to the community or the forest or much of anything. But the judge, she's the judge. And I think she was somewhat protective of certain aspects of a defense lawyer like Bacik, who was in real trouble. And Joe knew it. And that's what blew the cork. Brosnahan saw that coming and he—

Lage: Now, explain.

20-00:46:46

Wilson: Well, I'm going to try to articulate that. Bacik had been involved in a case where he had lied in front of a judge, where he had told consultants on the murrelets to go in the field and write a report that was the way he wanted it written, regardless of what was being done in the field.

Lage: And that had been proven?

20-00:47:13

Wilson: And that was in court, a record. Yes, it was. And it was him. And Joe—That's why I say the research and the things they dig up. This was another case. But he dug it up. And he knew it, and he was going to nail Bacik on that when he had him on the stand. Brosnahan went crazy. He just said, "You're not going to do that." And they really just about had a real blow-up, right there on the floor, about that issue. And the judge finally kind of came down. She said, "Look, I can't yell as loud as both of you. Now, you both go write to me tonight and bring it back tomorrow." And that was the end of that.

Lage: So it didn't get brought up.

20-00:48:03

Wilson: No. Now, we're getting a little out of synch here, but yes, it didn't get brought up that way. But Hurwitz and his wife were visibly shaken by what was going on in the court. He'd never been before a jury. And this was an experience I think he was very worried about. This, I'm going forward. The chance of getting nine people on a federal court—You have to get nine. And you can't win it with eight. So it was nine.

Lage: You had to get all nine.

20-00:48:45

Wilson: It had to be nine. And the other problem was the issue of liability. What I was trying to get to is that the judge had come down at the end of, really, the last day of what I would call that surge of good testimony we had, and said something to the effect of, look, you've got to prove fraud. That takes us back to that summary of judgment, that fraud issue. Because fraud, you've got to prove it. And we could prove Hurwitz was there on a day with Bacik that he reported to the board of directors about the information that needed to be in the long-term sustained yield plan, the cooked-up numbers. But did he actually participate in writing it and everything? And that is an issue that I understand is conspiracy, and conspiracy is awfully hard to prove.

Lage: So you had to prove sort of that he was in on using the tan oaks and—

20-00:49:45

Wilson: Not only in, but very much a part of it, that idea. He was in the same room with Bacik and everything. And Joe knew it. And he put this thing up on a

board that showed the case where Bacik had been caught lying, and Bacik's name. And I think it was psychological warfare that was getting at Brosnahan, because he knew it was coming and he was going to prevent it. And again, the judge kind of leaned that way at him and let it—If, if Joe had been able to get to Bacik with the full force of his ability in the court, I think Bacik would've crumbled and lied. He didn't know what to do. And how that would've come out, I don't know. I think the jurors, that would've really nailed Hurwitz down pretty well. But as I say, she kept that thing out of where it could've gone.

Lage: By her judgments in the courtroom.

20-00:50:53

Wilson: Yeah, her ruling. You may want to stop. It's twelve.

Lage: Oh. [audiofile stops and re-starts] We are back on, after a very short break.

20-00:51:04

Wilson: All right. So in any event, the trial—we started with opening statements on the 20th of April. The judge had decided we would have a two-week trial. So that's fifteen days. We would run from eight-thirty until one-thirty every day, Monday through Friday. And we, meaning the plaintiff, would have half and the defense would have half. So there you go. [microphone adjustment]

Well, the judge, as I say, I have high admiration for how well she ran that court. And she said, "Look, I have other items. I can give you fifteen days." Morrison & Foerster and said, "We can't put on a trial. This is too big a—" And da-da-da-da-da. And she said, "Well, this is the way the cow eats the cabbage. You either get in here and do it or tough luck." She didn't give them any time for that.

Lage: You mean they wanted to delay?

20-00:52:55

Wilson: Oh, they wanted to delay, and they couldn't do discovery, and they couldn't do this, and they couldn't do that. Well, that's what you do when you're on the defense. Obfuscate and delay, all of that good stuff, right. So anyway, on the opening statement, Joe—you'll have a record of that, I hope, or maybe get it, but—he basically said what, in this article—You've got the article, so you know.

Lage: Yeah.

20-00:53:27

Wilson: And of course, Charlie is an angel, and he's not guilty of anything; he's a good fellow. And so our job was to put on the witnesses, and we started with Chris Maranto. And I was a little surprised that—We had this fellow from the Contra Costa newspaper. I think he did a good job of covering the trial, and I sent you a copy of his article. So Chris did great. He just gave it to them pretty

straight. And they took it. And we moved along, through different witnesses. We had George Miller—Brosnahan really stuck his chin out, and Miller really nailed him. Because there had been an issue about the quality of appraisals done by, in this case, the BLM [Bureau of Land Management]. And the appraisals—See, again, looking at these numbers, right?, this was the Headwaters Forest. The appraisal from the—Take the federal number. \$250 million for 3700 acres for this so-so piece of old growth. Is that value? It's probably worth maybe \$20- or \$30 million, right? Well, Brosnahan was going on about this appraisal and the BLM and how good their appraisals were. And Miller said, "No." Miller said, "I have to go back and—" While he's on the education committee, he's been on the resources. He said, "I've had to take these appraisals back and redo them all the time, because they're so big and outrageously lavish that they just don't fly." And Brosnahan, "Well," blah-blah-blah. [they laugh] Pulled back. But Miller was very, very good. And he was aware of Pombo and all of this kind of stuff.

Lage: So was Chris cross-examined that day, also?

20-00:55:42

Wilson:

Yeah. Oh, yeah, they crossed. But he did great. He just laid it out. And then we got to a number of other people and witnesses, some from the department. Tim Robards. He was one of the two. I had Helge Eng, Tim Robards and John Munn on my CDF staff; they were really the only three people that were qualified on this kind of a case, this complication. And Tim was the best of them, and Helge was kind of the Palco boy, and he was taking care of their interests. And I think they were having a hard time dealing with this. But Chris Maranto was very straight and very clear. And it was clear to the jury, I think. And the reporting was good on that.

The firm from Eureka—B, B and something, G; I wish I could tell you, but anyway—they were consultants that worked a long time in that part of the world on redwood and private lands, public lands. And they had a long history, so they could recite. Things Chris Maranto had used in his testimony, they could back up very clearly what he was saying about the redwood and the fir. For instance, the way Palco was running this was they were encouraging Douglas Fir to grow instead of redwoods—which you can do and manipulate to try to get faster growth that way and cut back on the redwoods. Instead of a 60 percent/40 percent redwood forest, we're going the other way, 60 percent Douglas Fir and 40 percent redwood. That's how you manipulate your cut and your inventory and so forth.

Well, these are things Chris Maranto was laying out for them to show how they were trying to run this thing, and how they were not going to get the kind of results that they had said they would on this long-term sustained yield plan that they'd projected out, that wasn't going to make the grade. And they were very good about also pointing out that this kind of forestry that's being practiced by Palco is not sustainable. It's liquidation. And that was one of the

most important points of the whole effort, from my point of view, from Chris Maranto's point of view, and these kind of witnesses. It was pure and simple liquidation. Sustainability, again, it takes discipline, it takes science, it takes monitoring, and it takes the willingness to understand there's going to be a huge compromise to go from liquidation to sustainability. In other words, if you're not willing to do that, it's all over.

Lage: To defer your money, defer your profit.

20-00:59:08

Wilson: Yes. And you see, going back to—And that's why Jackson was so important. Because Jackson was purchased in 1945 by Earl Warren. State Senator Biggar, from Covelo, was the senator that helped write that legislation. And that's the bill that bought the Caspar Lumber Company's 48,000 acres, which is the Jackson Forest today. Okay. It was burned out, beat up, just everything in those years, and the Caspar Lumber Company couldn't find any way to [chuckles] really do it. So they said, "Yeah, why don't we sell it?" So they sold it for a million and a half dollars to the State of California. Which was probably the best buy they ever got. But remember, they waited twenty or twenty-five years, letting that forest come back.

Lage: Just by itself, without—

20-01:00:04

Wilson: Well, not completely. They did start that way; but then through some selective thinning as it matured, and encouraging the growth—because it's great growing ground—that eventually, the forest got up and running. But the people in the state of California underwrote that for twenty, twenty-five years to get that forest going, after it had been badly managed, as we're talking about the problems of the day. And so again, it's this whole idea of sustainability.

Lage: Right there, I have to stop.

20-01:00:36

Wilson: Well, that's a good place.

[End Audio File 20]

[Begin Audio File 21]

Lage: All right. This is tape twenty-one. It's going to be our last tape. And we're finishing the story—

21-00:00:10

Wilson: As they say, the last act. Here we are.

Lage: [laughs] Right. We'll finish the story of the case.

21-00:00:14

Wilson:

Well, I think it's important, as we recited here on Jackson, that this came up by these consultants and they said, "Yes, we've got a sustainable forest and a model." And it works. And it works because, as we've probably in previous tapes pointed out, the Jackson has come back like gangbusters. When I was director, we were getting \$15 million from timber sales, along with recreation and having a fishery and a great habitat surrounding that forest on 48,000 acres. And this thing we're talking about is 211,000 acres. So to show what the possibilities are, given time. But the message is very clear, that the State of California and the people of California paid for waiting to get Jackson up and running. And that, I guess, is the big story between liquidation and sustainability. And I think that today, if we try to listen to ourselves on the news and the radio—And in fact, [President Barack] Obama, he talks frequently about sustainability.

Lage:

In many arenas.

21-00:01:33

Wilson:

That's exactly right. And I think that the trees offer a great backdrop, if you will, to this, because we need the trees, because the trees provide life, they produce habitat. The CO<sub>2</sub> is becoming a big issue with trees. Carbon collection. And so they are vital to us, our forests are vital to us in California, because we have such an extraordinary landscape of weather, climate, and things that make our variety in the state so unique. And forests are huge in California, Sierra forests and the redwood forests.

But as we came down on this trial—And again, what was really coming out was—The numbers were wrong. This particular situation was that the people and the taxpayers—the people of California and the United States, not just the people of California—had paid Charlie \$480 million. And it's my feeling this was a contract. This was a contract that he said, well, if you, the State of California and the federal government, produce this money, then I in turn will give you the Headwaters Forest, plus the ranch—or the biggest redwood house or whatever, the 211,000 acres—as a combination, of which then I will run those according to the precepts. And what it was that this habitat conservation plan, i. e. sustained yield plan, fundamentally stated as the plan, the guideposts, and the regime that was going to be in place for a hundred years. A hundred years! As I say, we've never had to think about a hundred years. Now we're thinking about a hundred—And that's not a bad idea, to think about it. But it was done in the context of this ten-year incremental move. And then you've got to get to the next one. Well, if you go in and just bust open the first decade—Which is exactly what happened.

Lage:

So he didn't follow even the sustained yield plan that you signed off on.

21-00:04:27

Wilson:

He didn't follow—No. He cut everything in sight, to where—

Lage: And nobody monitored that in the department?

21-00:04:38

Wilson: Not there. They were supposed to go in after the first three years. [CDF was supposed to go in and check field compliance with the agreement in the first three years of the first decade.—added during narrator’s review]. Davis administration, anybody’d get to pushing too hard, they’d go to the governor’s office, I guess. Leave it alone. But he had pretty much free reign, as I say, until—See, it was the first three years. But during the first five years or the first ten years, I was picking up static. And that’s when I began to get the Q-10s and read this thing. And there was a display in the trial that absolutely lays this thing out. Chris Maranto and Dean Lucke—Dean Lucke was one of my old staff, a very good man, from the coast—they went to the Board of Equalization. And they got the figures to show what Hurwitz was cutting.

Lage: From the Board of Equalization records?

21-00:05:38

Wilson: Right from the time he signed on, 1999, yes, exactly. And he was up over 230-million [board feet]. But then he just came off of there like a snowball off the top of the mountain.

Lage: Because there was nothing ready to cut.

21-00:05:54

Wilson: He had run out of merchantable trees. And the pressure for money. On the \$875 million, he had \$64 million of interest. And so he had to produce money. And one of his statements was from Maxxam, that, well, we don’t ever loan people money. Like they’re going to give Palco money. No, they’re not going to give them any money. So it had to go bankrupt. And that was in my initial tapes and everything. Before I left the department, I’d taped this off and kept a record of that.

Lage: Of what?

21-00:06:31

Wilson: Of what was happening prior to 1991. I’ve never given you that, that binder? But I have a record of that, right? Okay. So with it going down—And obviously, what was happening is if it’s the Caspar Lumber Company and they’re walking away, the people in the State of California came along and picked it up.

And so in the case of GP, I don’t know; in the case of Louisiana-Pacific, the Gap family took it up; and in the case of Palco, the Gap, they’re in it. They are the biggest redwood company by far. Nobody except Simpson now. Just Simpson up north.

Lage: And are they handling those lands in a sustainable manner?

21-00:07:50

Wilson: I think there's some scrutiny coming on Simpson that hasn't heretofore happened.

Lage: No, but I mean on the Gap's Palco lands.

21-00:07:58

Wilson: Well, you see, you've raised a very, very key question, and it is this. In the EPIC case that Sharon Duggan has maybe had her hearing today, the State of California says, no, there is no sustained yield plan. Ten years is out, it's lapsed, there's none there. Nothing there. We're back to the old idea of the timber harvest plan and option A. And that just means you're going right back to Nejedly-Z'berg. And option A means you'll consider these things, but there's no formal format of an HCP and an SYP that locks in the boilerplate that makes the thing work.

Lage: Now, you're saying you don't get the water and the—

21-00:08:47

Wilson: Well, you don't get the science, the monitoring, and all of the oversight to coordinate the SYP and the HCP that you get in what the intent of this plan we're talking about provided.

Lage: I see, I see.

21-00:09:02

Wilson: —as opposed to the old Nejedly [Z'Berg-Nejedly Forest Practice Act of 1973] act, which is a big step.

Lage: Which is thirty-five years ago.

21-00:09:08

Wilson: Yeah. But the option A doesn't bring you into these, the sideboards that makes this thing theoretically work. Well, Judge Golden has got to rule whether it's going to tell the Department of Forestry to go back and do an SYP.

Lage: And just to make it clear here, this is another law case that's going on now over former Palco land.

21-00:09:37

Wilson: This is EPIC [Environmental Protection Information Center] versus CDF and Fish and Game. EPIC is the Environmental Center. Sharon Duggan is the lawyer. Paul Gallegos had filed a suit, if you'll remember.

Lage: I do. He was—

21-00:09:49

Wilson:

Somewhat the same, but the difference it makes—Again, the difference is the regulatory press says that Sharon fought this battle on—It's so hard to fight. Because it's a critical issue of values. Right? When you come over to my suit, the reason I and Joe took it, I think, was the fraud issue. Now, this is money. [chuckles] And this is where you can get right down to the facts. And this is where, in this kind of money, you get the chance to get the depositions and you get people to swear in, and you get a chance to look at them on the stand. It's very important, because that opens it up to see—And without it, you'll never get Hurwitz or a guy like him out in front where he got exposed, like he did in this trial.

Lage:

Let's go back to the trial. We keep getting—You had that initial day's testimony, which you felt went well.

21-00:10:53

Wilson:

We had what I would call the surge.

Lage:

The surge.

21-00:10:56

Wilson:

And our best testimony. And it was at that point, that day, then we went over to the next day. We were at the end of the clock, as far as our time on the trial. And I would've been the last to testify. We had Senator Byron Sher. Byron was going to testify, and that would've been—We had a number of witnesses. And it would've pushed us, but we would've completed our testimony. At the end of the day—

Lage:

Which day is this?

21-00:11:43

Wilson:

At the end of the day, which would've been the next to the last day of the seven. We were working toward our seventh day. We'd had Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Then we had to switch over to a Monday, right? And then Tuesday would've been our last day.

Lage:

And that would've been the day you testified?

21-00:12:08

Wilson:

Yes. The last was the last, with Byron and—But I would've done the last. It was that day—We left court, right? And it was my plan to go down to Cotchett's office, which is down by the airport, and talk about my testimony. I'm not sure McCloskey would've done it, but I think Phil Gregory probably would've done it. And then of course, we'd had Brosnahan doing cross and all that. But I got a call. Joe had said, "Get down to the office," and so I was going to get down there by three or four o'clock, and then I got a call. And they said, "You need not come down." And I thought, well—Well, that's when the settlement deal came up.

Lage: Ah.

21-00:12:59

Wilson: And what happened was that—Bear in mind now, opening statement, Brosnahan—The judge asked Brosnahan and Joe, “Are you fellows interested in settlement?” And Brosnahan said, “Absolutely not! We’re not interested in settlement.” And she looked at Joe and Joe said, “You heard him.” [laughs] So the trial began. To where we are right at this point, they, I think—and this is my opinion—Hurwitz, this thing was getting too hot.

Lage: He was there, you said, and his wife.

21-00:13:45

Wilson: He and his wife, and they were not happy campers.

Lage: You were watching them, I presume.

21-00:13:50

Wilson: I was watching them. And so I think he told his crew, he said, “Listen, let’s shut this puppy down.” And so as I say, there was an intermediary who I happened to run into at a law office social function, who I met with Steve Bundy, crazy, but I didn’t realize it—had been talking about these negotiations. Well, they had started at a million dollars.

Lage: When they first brought up the idea of settling?

21-00:14:25

Wilson: Yeah. That’s with Hurwitz. And Joe said no. It finally came down to \$4 million. And I think there might be some other costs, I’m not sure. But \$4 million. And it’s interesting; I don’t fully know yet how the numbers came out on this, but of the \$4 million, \$2.5 million went to the federal government, \$500,000 went to the State of California, and \$1 million went to the attorneys, meaning Joe, presumably. Well, look, I think Joe put in—

Lage: More than that.

21-00:15:13

Wilson: —more than that, quite a bit more. And how they got the money going to the federal government—Look, they wouldn’t come in with us. The State of California was a damn pest, but didn’t want to help us.

Lage: But is that the law in a case like this, where you’d assume they wouldn’t allocate money to entities that were not a party to the suit.

21-00:15:30

Wilson: Well, I don’t know, Ann. That’s what my question is. I don’t know whether the judge, how they made this allocation of funds out. But my question is, well, if they’re giving it to the federal government, why don’t they give it back to someone to get this habitat conservation plan, sustained yield plan

[laughs] back in gear and doing what it was supposed to do in the first place? A pittance, against \$250 million that Hurwitz got from the feds.

Lage: Right.

21-00:15:58

Wilson: And \$130 [million] or \$230 [million] from the State of California.

Lage: Now, of that, do you and Chris see some of this?

21-00:16:06

Wilson: I don't think so.

Lage: I thought that was part of the deal, that you got a percentage.

21-00:16:09

Wilson: Well, yeah, that's the theory, but—Well, Joe may want to just give us some money for time like that. I don't know for a fact, Ann. Because it's still being settled.

Lage: I see.

21-00:16:27

Wilson: But the numbers tell you what's there.

Lage: So were you happy with this settlement? Or why did your attorneys decide to settle?

21-00:16:35

Wilson: Well, I think Joe decided to settle. And I think he talked to his partners about this. And he said, on the liability, to get Hurwitz—we knew where he was—to prove that he'd put his hand to this with Bacik, this lawyer, was real tough. That's conspiracy. That, we'd have a hell of a time proving. Number two is to get nine jurors. We'd win the trial, if it was a majority. I was watching it very closely, and there were one or two jurors there. Now, it was my feeling—

Lage: That you weren't sure of? One or two—

21-00:17:17

Wilson: Yeah, you watch. I'm with Joe at the table and you're sitting there watching them. If I'd have testified, I would have said, look—and I think I could've got this in—I took their license twice for violations. They were a company that were eating up our staff time. Twice. Anything any other company in the state of California with a staff that—I was limited by budget. That as far as trying to get to the bottom of all this without the so-called black box, which was Vestra, which was controlled by Carter and Bacik, the lawyers for Hurwitz, which we would never get to see it. Even though that black box has still been out and talked about in 2006 and 2007.

Lage: And it still hasn't been opened up, so to speak?

21-00:18:17

Wilson: Not that we can see it. We've never seen it. Right?

Lage: You couldn't subpoena—

21-00:18:22

Wilson: Well, no. They said they can't find it.

Lage: Oh, I see. I see.

21-00:18:25

Wilson: Oh, no, it's Vestra. "Well, we don't keep it." It's like ether; it disappears. It's one of those vanishing acts, Houdini. So the point is that wasn't there. Anyway from Joe's point of view, if he'd proceeded, he would've had to fund this thing out. And if we went to a hung jury, that's an appeal. That's another trial.

Or if there's a judgment—now, the danger was the judge could've instructed the jury that, because you haven't proven fraud, you can't allocate funds for this case to be paid back and put back in the till, as it were, to come back over again. You can't do that. And that isn't to say she would have done that, but she could've told them that.

Lage: Right.

21-00:19:37

Wilson: If I'd testified, I would've gone through the issues of the black box, the license issue, and I would've told the jury. Now, bear in mind, Chris Maranto took this on because he, as a professional forester, he just sees that this thing of sustainability is not making it anymore, and we have to try to correct it. And from my point of view, having been the director appointed by the governor and paid well to be the director, any monies that you, the jury, would allocate back would go back to the taxpayers to put this thing back together and try to make a viable habitat conservation plan and an SYP.

Lage: You're saying any monies that you yourself might be awarded?

21-00:20:34

Wilson: Yeah. I'm saying we should be reimbursed for the costs and the time and so forth that we put in. That's fair. But we're not entitled to 30 percent of \$100 million. I'm just saying, no.

Lage: Yeah. Because there would've been an issue—I'm sure the attorneys would've—

21-00:20:51

Wilson:

They would've asked me. Well, I was prepared to deal with that. Bennett, oh, yeah, he's always—This was their attorney [started as lead counsel for Morrison and Foerster but replaced by Brosnahan]. And I was prepared to say, yeah. We're not in it for that, Mr. Bennett. We're both here for sustainability. I was in it when I wrote the governor, why I'd take the job, the fourteen points, the reason we're here. We're for a sustainable forestry for the state of California. We haven't got it. And so for our time and costs and that, fair enough. But no, we're not in it to make any money.

Lage:

Were you disappointed you didn't get to testify?

21-00:21:26

Wilson:

Yes. Yeah, sure. Of course, I was disappointed. But on the other hand, I firmly believed if I'd gotten to testify, we would've had all the jury at that point. But we had Brosnahan and that all for a whole week.

Lage:

Yeah, they had to present their case.

21-00:21:44

Wilson:

And they would've had Charlie up there with his wings flapping, as an angel, and all that. He had to testify, too. And I would've testified from my point of view, why I was there and let him testify why he's there. But I think it was real dangerous to get nine [jurors]. And I think Joe saw that. And I admired him for it, to do what he did.

Lage:

So you were accepting of their decision.

21-00:22:10

Wilson:

I accept it. I do. Because I think it was a reality—I think for him to put the time and effort, almost three years, and the staff he put on—Pete McCloskey said, "This is the best legal team I've seen anywhere." Nina and Clara and Sean and Phil and Joe. Listen, hey, they were way ahead of the rest of them. And we could've, if we'd had a pot full of money like Hurwitz, you understand, and could've just played the game and waited, yeah, I think we could've won, maybe. But—

Lage:

You didn't have that. Now, what happens to all the work that these attorneys did in the discovery phase?

21-00:22:58

Wilson:

That's all been turned over to Bill Bertain's office, by Joe. And all of the records for the transcripts, you can get, I think.

Lage:

Well, the transcripts; but what about the work that went in behind?

21-00:23:12

Wilson:

That material, Bertain will get a lot of it; and some of it I have, I'm going to turn over to Bancroft. But that's it.

Lage: Now, Bertain is the lawyer—

21-00:23:20

Wilson: In Eureka.

Lage: In case they need it to go on to another lawsuit?

21-00:23:24

Wilson: No. Joe, when he's through, he always does this. And Bill, he has continued in some lawsuits with Palco. No, with Hurwitz and Maxxam, on different issues up there. The material has been boxed and Nina, the secretaries, they've shipped it up there to Bill Bertain. And I don't know quite what to say about that.

Lage: It just seems valuable as historical information.

21-00:23:50

Wilson: Well, I think it is historical. And I may be able to try to get that. I can't answer that. But the important thing is to realize that—I think we've reached a crossroads. I think we've reach a very important point in this whole issue. We can not continue to practice liquidation. That's the essence. Whether it's the trees, water or anything.

Lage: Climate?

21-00:24:23

Wilson: Climate. It's all there. But the trees are kind of a symbol. And sustainability is a very hard thing to adjust to. We're all going to have to do it. We are doing it. Right? To some degree. Jackson, painful twenty, twenty-five years. The Gap folks, they've got a painful period if they're going to let those trees grow, to try to get along. But suffer that, if they're going to get that forest up and running. But that's the state. There's a change of mind, a change of heart; there's got to be a change of everything, and attitude. And you're just not going to be able to make the fast bucks and come to town, clean everybody out, like Charlie, and leave.

Lage: It really is kind of a symbol for what's going on in society today.

21-00:25:11

Wilson: It's a total symbol. And my feeling is, there it is. It's all laid out.

Lage: Charlie is Wall Street. [laughs]

21-00:25:17

Wilson: Charlie waltzed right out. And the thing is, Charlie thought he was gone in the first go-round, when he got his money. And I came along with Joe, and we stuck a \$30 million fee on his tail, that he has to pay now to leave once and for all. And good riddance, thank you very much, Charlie. But I must say, Ann,

that I wish we could've closed the loop and we would've picked up some bad behavior in here with some lawyers and that. But that's the way it works.

Lage: When we were talking the other day, not on the tape, you mentioned this idea you have of the two bricks. Do you want to attempt to wind this up telling me about that metaphor?

21-00:26:03

Wilson:

Well, I use a brick because you use bricks to build things. But there are two bricks. And one brick is what I would call the economy, or the commercial, or the economic. And the other brick is the ecological or the environmental brick. And heretofore, the way things work in the system we have today, the economic brick sits on top of the environmental brick, because it gets the first claim. It's the job producer, it's the money producer, it's all of that. We're getting closer to get an understanding of the relationship between the ecological brick and the economic brick, but we're not there. Because ecological brick is the foundation to the economic brick.

If you abuse the ecological brick, and the way you deal with it is, well, you mitigate—You have the economic, and the project has got to go because it's jobs, and it's all these good things. Yeah, okay, but we've got to mitigate. Mitigation, meaning we're going to kind of patch this up. Well, let me say about habitat conservation planning. Now, this is the ecological brick. And when you have these sort of little zones in there for the murrelets and everything, these are safety zones that you know that are set-asides. Well, you find the same thing going on in developments and things like that. You'll have somebody out here to build some big thing, and they say, "Well, we're going to have a little park." Right? "We're going to fix it up, so you have this for all the wildlife." But if you don't give some room to the ecologic, so it isn't just a—

Lage: Not a little pocket park.

21-00:28:22

Wilson:

It's not a pocket park. It's got to be big enough for the critters to really be able to move. They have to move seasonally. They have to have their trees. They have to have the variety. There's a mix. And the thing is, Jackson has shown we can do it. And it's taken some time, and the rewards have been perhaps not what you get right off the reel, when you have the economic sitting on top of the Palco lands, like Charlie. Because he didn't put a damn thing back into this thing, except he had to build a sawmill to cut the trees because they were getting smaller. He hasn't done anything. He just hauled it out of Dodge and took it to the racetrack in Houston and the resorts in the Cayman Islands, wherever he is. And they've suffered for it, Humboldt County.

Until those bricks get kind of a little more equal standing—And so you have to be able to put some money back on the ecological brick from what you

make. So what you're trying to do is keep them healthy. Well, Jackson, there's been dues paid there, and so it's coming up. Now it's a question of whether the Gap folks are going to pay the dues. And maybe they are, and we're going to see it work. But this is a problem we're having right now in this country. And Obama's out there, he talks about sustainability in the automobile industry and—It's all out there. But you've got that painful problem of adjusting, to get there. Because without it, we've got this going on.

Lage: And also finding the place where they [the ecological and the economic] balance. Because I know, for instance—you've mentioned Jackson so often, but I know that there're environmental groups that are critical of Jackson.

21-00:30:15

Wilson: I know.

Lage: They go too far, they cut too much.

21-00:30:18

Wilson: Absolutely true, because that's the compromise of a working forest or a working landscape. Now, if you want to have a park, and really a real park and something where you stop everything, preservation—we can do that. But when you have a working forest, right, you're going to have this controversy. But we all have to kind of get a little more balance to ourselves—If we want some jobs—

Lage: And some lumber, perhaps.

21-00:30:51

Wilson: Well, not only that, but I have this thing about the Lord's Prayer. "Give us this day our daily bread." I think this is the key thing. Because give us this day; well, that's today. That's right now. And our daily bread is, well, how do we get through the day? And our daily bread is we've got to feed—Our daily bread is today. [chuckles] Here they are together. And you've got to be able to understand that if you're going to have—In the case of a forest, yeah, you're going to give up some things that aren't quite the way you like them. But the balance comes at a price. And we're going to have to work our way through every one of these kinds of issues, whether it's one of automobiles, or—Do we have to produce cars in the United States that are such-and-such a brand? Or are they different? Well, we are going through the pain. The union, listen, they're really in the—There we are.

What sustainability means in the automobile industry or a whole lot of other things, we're going to learn. But the forest, you can see it with your own eyes. It recovers. And it's productive, and it produces jobs, and it produces homes for a whole bunch of critters. And I think a lot of people have misjudged the ability of the forest to be something for everybody, and both work, as well as having the big spots where they have been set aside. But this is a pretty good example of things that have gone awry. And hopefully, the lesson out of that

will be that as Sharon [Duggan, EPIC attorney] struggles around right now with this case, to see if somehow the SYP and the HCP get upheld. Because remember, she's up there—with Judge Golden, with the SYP. They haven't come up and faced up to, well, what's happened to the HCP? There's still this thing about, yes, there's an HCP on this redwood land that the Fishers bought. Well, but it's been cut out.

Lage: It's not valid anymore if they overcut.

21-00:34:14

Wilson: It's not valid. And so if it's not valid, the ten years have gone, right? And so from my point of view—which Doug or others, they will see it differently, and that's fine—that you're back to go. If you want to have a sustained yield plan and if you want to have an HCP, you'd better, since you're here, you'd better design it to meet where we are today, not live in the past, that somehow it's just going to be okay. It's not going to be okay. But it can be done. And we want to look forward to it and we want to look ahead.

Lage: And it's an interesting combination of science—

21-00:33:54

Wilson: It's science, it's discipline—

Lage: —public policy—

21-00:33:56

Wilson: —it's public policy, it's government.

Lage: —and litigation.

21-00:33:59

Wilson: And litigation. And the good-hearted people that want to make it work.

Lage: Yes. Okay, I think this is a good place to stop.

21-00:34:06

Wilson: I think so, too.

[End of Interview]

## ANN LAGE

Ann Lage is a research interviewer for the Regional Oral History Office in the fields of natural resources, land use, and the environment; California political and social history; and the University of California. She manages projects on the disability rights movement, the environmental movement, and the Department of History at Berkeley. She is a member of the editorial board of the *Chronicle of the University of California*, a journal of university history, and holds a B.A. and M.A. in history from Berkeley.