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Biographical Note

Kenneth Holum (1915-1998) was the Undersecretary of Interior, Water and Power Development. This interview focuses on the inner workings of the Water and Power Development Department and legislation concerning resource development during the John F. Kennedy administration, among other topics.

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Oral History Interview

Of

Kenneth Holum

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Kenneth Holum– JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

Kenneth Holum

May 5, 1970
Washington, D.C.

By William W. Moss

For the John F. Kennedy Library

Moss: Let me begin, Mr. Holum, by asking you when your first came in contact with John Kennedy as a politician on the national scene?

Holum: My first contact with President Kennedy was in 1956 when I was a candidate for the Senate in South Dakota.

Moss: Right.

Holum: I was in Washington, and among the people that I visited with were Senator [George A.] Smathers. Senator Kennedy walked into the room and I met him at that time. It was very informal and a very brief contact but it's the first time that I'd met him personally.

Moss: Did he provide any help, any speeches or anything in your campaign?

Holum: No.

Moss: No. He did not.

Holum: No. He was not involved in it in any way.

Moss: Did you go the 1956 convention – the [Democratic] National Convention?

Holum: Yes, I did.

MOSS: Right. And do you recall the race for the vice presidency?

HOLUM: Yes, I do.

MOSS: And did you have any part in that from the point of view of the South Dakota delegation?

HOLUM: No, I didn't have any part in the convention. I was a candidate for the Senate in South Dakota. We had a Democratic senatorial primary. I had what I thought was going to be a tough primary on my hands and I didn't feel secure enough to file for delegate to the national convention. I was not a member of the delegation, but I was there and intensely interested in what happened.

MOSS: What do you recall as having happened in the [Estes C.] Kefauver-Kennedy collision there on the floor in the voting?

HOLUM: Well, of course, I wasn't on the floor

MOSS: Right.

HOLUM: . . . and didn't have the privileges of the floor so I know nothing about what happened on the floor other than what was available on television, where I was watching it very carefully.

MOSS: Well, what was the thinking in the South Dakota delegation on this, do you know?

HOLUM: The thinking of the South Dakota delegation, and at least with this candidate for the United States Senate, was that a senator from Massachusetts was not well enough acquainted with the farm problems, with the problems of the Middle West to be helpful to the ticket, helpful to the party in South Dakota. But the party was divided, of course, it wasn't a unanimous thing.

MOSS: And do you recall the reaction to his speech at the end, where he called for nomination of Kefauver by acclamation?

HOLUM: Again, I was not with the South Dakota delegation at the time because they were on the floor and I was off in the lobby, I guess it was at convention headquarters watching the I thought it was a very gracious and beautiful gesture; very, very happy with it.

MOSS: Okay. Did you have any contacts with him between 1956 and 1960?

HOLUM: No. No, I did not.

MOSS: Okay. And was the next time you encountered him at Billings [Montana] at the speech that he made there?

HOLUM: Yes, it was.

MOSS: How did you come to introduce him at that meeting?

HOLUM: The Western States Water and Power Consumers Conference was organized, in 1954. Now, we're a rather broad-based, very informal organization of organizations on the consumer-owned side of the electric power industry: some water-users organizations, but not as many as we would like to have. National Farmers Union, and some of the state granges. But we were essentially a loose federation of organizations interested in promoting water resource development. I don't know why the leaders of NRECA [National Rural Electric Cooperative Association], ARPA [American Public Power Association], the National Farmers Union and the state granges picked a farm boy from South Dakota to be their president, but I was, from the time that a president was first chosen. But you know essentially, the responsibility for organizing the conference at Billings was mine. I guess one thing that I asked for myself, perhaps--but it was naturally mine--was the privilege of introducing our most famous guest speaker.

MOSS: How did he come to speak there at that time? Had you had any trouble getting him to come to the meeting?

HOLUM: Well, we had invited both candidates for the presidency and urged them both to attend. The Democratic candidate was the only one that accepted. We would have been delighted to have had them both.

MOSS: Did he clear the speech with you beforehand? For instance, did you know that he was going to speak on natural resources and generally what he was going to talk about?

HOLUM: I knew he was going to speak on natural resources, I did not know what he was going to say.

MOSS: Okay. Later, you were on--at least your name has been connected with--the Frank Smith [Frank E. Smith] task force on conservation. You were on this, were you not? They came up with the ideas of what the Kennedy administration might do in the way of new frontiers in conservation.

HOLUM: No. No, I wasn't involved with that.

MOSS: I have your name on the list of . . .

HOLUM: You do?

MOSS: . . . many, many people. Maybe it was simply as an honorary participant.

HOLUM: Yeah, I guess. . . . I think I remember something about that, too, about my name being on the list, but I don't remember any participation during this interim period.

MOSS: Okay.

HOLUM: During the [Dwight D.] Eisenhower administration, I was involved in the national policy--that is, the Democratic party--on agriculture and natural resources, but. . . .

MOSS: Did you make any other kind of input into the Kennedy campaign?

HOLUM: In 1960?

MOSS: In 1960.

HOLUM: Only as a South Dakota and--I guess, in a way--a regional leader, in the informal ways that you do.

MOSS: Do you recall at the Billings meeting an incident that Clyde Ellis [Clyde T. Ellis] boasts about in his book with the hat that he had President Kennedy put on?

HOLUM: Yes, I remember vaguely--well, you take me back ten years now--Clyde Ellis having a hat, and didn't he give it to the president? After the president had spoken, Clyde Ellis and [James G.] Jim Patton and Alex Radin and I rode back to the airport with him. We had a little visit with him in the auditorium before he left. We had planned to have a longer visit but he arrived two hours late and he had to go to Cheyenne that evening. I do remember the hat but I don't remember the details. [Laughter]

MOSS: Okay. I just wondered. . . .

HOLUM: I do remember that we asked for an opportunity to visit with Senator Kennedy after the election when we hoped that he would be the president-elect.

MOSS: Okay. Do you recall the South Dakota role? Now, [Hubert H.] Humphrey had filed for the South Dakota primary. But then, following West Virginia and his saying that he was going to go for Kennedy after West Virginia--now, what was South Dakota's response, do you recall?--after Humphrey. . . .

HOLUM: To Humphrey's withdrawal?

MOSS: Yeah. Where did South Dakota stand there vis-a-vis the candidates?

HOLUM: Let's see. The West Virginia primary. . . . Just to refresh my memory, can you give me the date of it?

MOSS: All right. If I recall, it was early May.

HOLUM: Early May.

MOSS: Right.

HOLUM: It was about a month before the South Dakota primary. Well, South Dakota was Humphrey country--not unanimously, of course, but I think that most South Dakota Democrats were for Humphrey as long as the possibility of his getting the nomination existed. He grew up in our state. In fact, he grew up forty miles from where I grew up in South Dakota; went to a smaller high school than I did. Oh, we're a Humphrey state--maybe more in 1960 I guess, than we were in 1968. The situation changed completely, of course, after West Virginia. I think we were disappointed with Humphrey at what happened in West Virginia, but we soon became very happy with Kennedy after his nomination.

MOSS: How soon did this sentiment shift from Humphrey to Kennedy, and was there any difficulty in it?

HOLUM: Oh, yeah, and it didn't shift completely, on the whole. President Kennedy was very generous, but I think probably quite accurate, in telling Senator [George S.] McGovern that he cost him his defeat. It was a hard adjustment for states like South Dakota to make.

MOSS: In what ways?

HOLUM: On the religious issue. I think one of the great things of 1960 was that we faced it and beat it. And it's no longer a part of American politics, but it was very definitely a factor in 1960. And I know that President Kennedy knew it. As far as states like ours are concerned, I think there are few states like that. But it was a factor out there--that and the fact that, at least before Billings and before Senator Kennedy had had an opportunity to speak out as forthrightly as he did in the campaign, a little difficult for South Dakota people to believe that a lawyer from Boston understood the problems of agriculture and resources in the West. We were all struggling with that, and those who were not politicians were struggling with it much more than I was.

MOSS: Did you go to the convention in Los Angeles?

HOLUM: No, I did not.

MOSS: You didn't. Okay. Do you recall the South Dakota reaction to the nomination of Kennedy and the subsequent nomination of [Lyndon B.] Johnson?

HOLUM: Well, I was involved in some of the reactions in the state of South Dakota. We had some very strong Johnson supporters in South Dakota. We cast one vote, if my memory is correct, for Chester Bowles--the only vote that was cast for that distinguished citizen at the convention. So, we were a divided delegation. And I guess we were a divided party and a divided state, as far as the Los Angeles convention was concerned.

MOSS: What attempts were made to bring the party back together again in the interim between the convention and the election in November?

HOLUM: Well, I don't think the way it turned out. . . . I don't remember that it was any particular problem because Johnson was on the ticket; it was a Kennedy-Johnson ticket. And we're a minority party in South Dakota but we're always a divided party. We never get back together. [Laughter]

MOSS: I was going to ask, is there anything that distinguishes South Dakota politics from that of other states, comparisons that you could draw?

HOLUM: Well, I suspect that for a minority party we spend more time quarreling with each other than minority parties do in most states.

MOSS: Oh, I think we develop strong feelings. . . . I've seen that in Virginia. [Laughter]

HOLUM: I'm sure you have.

MOSS: Yes.

HOLUM: . . . and walk out of conventions--national conventions and state conventions.

MOSS: What did you think of the Billings speech at the time? Did you think it had sufficient substance from which to build a program once the election occurred, or did you think it needed much more than what was said there?

HOLUM: No. Frankly, we were ecstatic. We thought it was very forthright. It showed more understanding of and more dedication to the problems of the West than any of us had dared to expect. We were highly pleased with it.

MOSS: You don't know who wrote the speech for him, do you?

HOLUM: Oh, I have some idea as to who some of the participants were, but I'm not certain.

MOSS: You're not certain.

HOLUM: I know I was not one of the participants in this particular thing.

MOSS: Okay. I was just wondering . . .

HOLUM: No, I was not.

MOSS: . . . since such a favorable reaction that there might have been some pull.

HOLUM: I'm sure that people who talked to Senator Kennedy knew how I felt, but they didn't have anything in writing from me.

MOSS: Okay. How did you come to be appointed, then, after the election? What were the circumstances of your appointment as Assistant secretary for Water and Power [Development] in [the Department of]Interior?

HOLUM: Well, I guess there's nothing in my political life that puzzles me more. I don't have the answer to that question. Maybe I'm the only man who's ever been appointed to a high political office who doesn't have any idea how he got appointed, but I am one. As I inferred without saying so specifically, in the primary in South Dakota up until West Virginia I'd supported Senator Humphrey. I supported Kennedy enthusiastically after that, but I had been a Humphrey man up until he withdrew. My state doesn't have any political clout. I had a rather broad background in resource development. I really didn't seek a political job. But when it got to the point where I did get interested, I said to myself and a few friends who talked to me about it, there was only one position that I would be interested in, and that was being assistant secretary for Water and Power. It's beyond my understanding as to how I got the one job that would have interested me.

MOSS: When were you first approached on the job and what were the circumstances?

HOLUM: Oh, I don't remember that. Friends in the water resources of the consumer power field had begun talking to me about it and gradually got me interested in it as something that I would enjoy doing. It became a rather interesting situation in South Dakota, because South Dakota people just don't get appointed to high appointive jobs in the national administration. The Republicans don't need to appoint them and the Democrats apparently don't find many people in South Dakota. Aren't many of us. Well, all of a sudden people were talking about George McGovern as one of the front runners for secretary of [Department of] Agriculture and they were talking about me as a potential appointee in the Department of Interior. I never thought it was possible that the president would pick both of us. McGovern was the natural man--ought to be selected--of the two of us although we had both worked hard for the party and worked together for a long time.

MOSS: Who contacted you to notify you of the appointment?

HOLUM: I guess Stewart L. Udall.

MOSS: Do you know if there was any opposition to your appointment?

HOLUM: Oh, I assume that there was.

MOSS: Uh-huh. I was wondering if any of it surfaced in any way that you found awkward or troublesome?

HOLUM: I'm not aware of that.

MOSS: I think of a man like Clyde Ellis, for instance, who figures he has a corner on the whole electric power segment. [Laughter]

HOLUM: Well, there was a Clyde Ellis episode that I know a little about. . . . And Clyde's a very good friend of mine. Actually, until a month ago he sat in this little office here. Did you know that?

MOSS: No, I didn't.

HOLUM: That's not any official connection between the two of us, but we'd known each other for years. I first met him right after I'd been elected to the state legislature in 1949. He did have an interest in an appointment to Interior. I don't think he ever opposed me as a candidate. On the other hand, I'm sure, because of the way they conducted themselves for eight years, that the private companies were very disturbed with my appointment. Whether they made any effort or considered it hopeless to approach the president-elect on the question of my appointment, I don't know.

MOSS: Because you came essentially with a public power reputation or at least an REA [Rural Electrification Administration] approach, orientation.

HOLUM: Right. Yes, and legitimately so. I'd been a director of four different rural electric cooperatives in South Dakota and was one of the sponsors of the consumer power district law of the South Dakota legislature. Well, President Kennedy and the people around him had to know what my background was. Then they selected me they had to make the appointment approving the philosophy that I held. . . .

MOSS: Right. Did you have any reservations about accepting the job?

HOLUM: No, not this. . . .

MOSS: Well, let me turn that around and ask you what you thought you were going to do with the job? What were your expectations?

HOLUM: Well, from a purely local point of view, there were two things that concerned me very much. I'll have to give you a little background at this point. President [Harry S.] Truman appointed me to the Missouri Basin Survey Commission in 1949. We finished our work--actually filed our report--the day before Eisenhower took the oath of office. Through that experience, I'd had an opportunity to deepen my interest in the way resource development was going in the Missouri Basin, and particularly in the upper basin states: the Dakotas, Montana and Wyoming.

So one of the things that I looked forward to doing as assistant secretary was trying to redirect--and more accelerate than redirect--what was happening in the resources field in the Upper Missouri Basin, where development was so urgently needed. The thing that had happened was that I had been a cooperative director since 1949 and helped organize the East River Electric Power Cooperative. And from our point of view--and my point of view hasn't changed--the Bureau of Reclamation and the Department of Interior had run out on their responsibilities in the Eisenhower administration. They were not helping us meet our future power supply requirements as I thought they should. So I looked forward to the opportunity to shift gears as far as the federal power program was concerned in the Missouri basin.

Essentially, although I knew that the applications would be different, this was the kind of thing, on a west-wide and a countrywide basis, that interested me in coming to the department. Maybe it was selfish to want to do some things for my home state but I think they were things that needed doing. They were in the public interest, and the whole country will be better for having done them.

MOSS: Right. How did you feel, working with a man like Floyd Dominy on this, then?

HOLUM: Well, it was an interesting relationship. Floyd is one of the really skillful public administrators. He knows the business and

he knew how to get things done. I tried to work with him, establish some teamwork with him to change some of the approaches of the Bureau of Reclamation. We changed some and some kept on going the old way. It varies. . . .

MOSS: Were there any specific instances that would illustrate this?

HOLUM: I beg your pardon?

MOSS: Can you think of specific instances that would illustrate this--things that you found you could change and things that you couldn't, and kind of ways that Dominy would operate to frustrate you or you to get over his objections?

HOLUM: Oh, I didn't say he frustrated me. I'd just say he kept me on my toes. [Laughter]

MOSS: I didn't mean frustrate in the broad sense; I meant frustrate a particular plan, this kind of thing.

HOLUM: It was never so much a matter of a particular plan as a broad philosophy and just a search for new approaches I think was more needed, than any conviction that there's any one way to do it. Now, let me give you one instance that was one of the more interesting problems that I confronted in the Department of Interior during the Kennedy administration. One of the reasons that water resource development had been stalled in the Missouri Basin, because Chairman [Wayne N.] Aspinall and the House Interior Committee had become convinced that the Missouri Basin project wasn't meeting its payout responsibilities; at least at a minimum, they were convinced that they didn't know that it was meeting its payout responsibilities. And they had dug in their heels late in the Eisenhower administration said they were not going to authorize any more projects in the Missouri Basin. Later, they expanded that to include the construction of transmission lines, until they had assurances that the project was going to meet its payout responsibilities.

It wasn't long after I got into the Department of Interior and found out which buttons to push when you wanted secretarial help, when I was confronted with a proposal to raise the power rates in the Missouri Basin 25 percent. And I was personally convinced that the power wasn't sellable at that price, and that it just wasn't the right thing to do to this area that was already far behind the mainstream of American economic life, and, well, I couldn't buy it. We went through a two-year period, including many studies within the department and the Bureau of Reclamation, lots of conferences with Lee White [Lee C. White] and Elmer Staats [Elmer B. Staats] over at the White House, and several conferences with Wayne Aspinall and other members of the committee. We came up with a payout approach that everybody thought was right and proper, that the House committee--and to the extent they were interested, the Senate committee--could buy, and I could live with in good conscience. But it

took two years to do it.

I found a great deal of personal satisfaction in it although I also lost a lot of hide off my back out in South Dakota and North Dakota from my REA friends who carried headlines in their papers saying, "Holum raises power rates". But it represented, in my judgment at the time--and it still does--the kind of answer to a difficult problem which you'll find if you spend enough time at it and work it out, and get everybody involved to understand what the problem is.

MOSS: Well, let me jump on something that you said in passing a moment ago. You were talking about discovering which buttons to push when you wanted secretarial action or help. What sort of buttons was Stewart Udall responsive to in this regard?

HOLUM: Well, when I said secretarial help, I meant the help of my own office, not Secretary Udall. [Laughter]

MOSS: I'm sorry, I misunderstood. I thought that. . . .

HOLUM: [Laughter] This should probably go off the record, but your reaction to what I said reminds me of a funny little incident in our own family. I brought my secretary from South Dakota to Washington with me. I had a six-year-old son who let us understand his great confusion at the dinner table one night by saying, "Now, Daddy is an assistant secretary and Lois is a secretary." [Laughter] He'd obviously been troubled for a long time by the relationship, but it was that secretary that I was talking about. [Laughter] Now we can go back to the question if you want to.

MOSS: Yes. Let's go back to it and put it in another way, and ask what kinds of things Secretary Udall was responsive to and what you found was the way he wanted to operate things?

HOLUM: I suppose that all of us probably developed different methods of operating and communicating with Stewart Udall, those of us that were with him for any period time. And I was with him the longest, of course, of anybody. I found it was generally most satisfactory, both from his point of view and mine, to give him a piece of paper ahead of time so that he could know what the problem was and what my views were on it. And if his views coincided with mine, that was probably the end of it. But if they didn't coincide, then he would take the initiative and see to it that we talked. Or if I was completely unsure of my ground, then I'd go and talk to him. But I found that was the best way to keep an extremely busy man informed and involved in what you were doing. And I always thought that it was my responsibility to be Udall's assistant secretary, and tried to be.

MOSS: Who in the department did you find most useful in getting your programs to the attention of the secretary and getting departmental backing for what you wanted to do?

HOLUM: I'm sure you get the same answer from everybody you ask, and that's Orren Beatty--no question about that. [Laughter]

MOSS: All right, tell me why.

HOLUM: Have you found any disagreement with that?

MOSS: Tell me why. What sort of things did Orren Beatty do?

HOLUM: Well, Orren was just a little more accessible than anybody in his position could possibly be. If it was physically possible at all for him to do it, he'd see you and he'd talk to you. He always found enough time to listen to your problem and sympathize with it. And he either had the answer or he could get it. But more than anything else it was just the kind of a person that he is, that was easy to talk to.

MOSS: All right. Let me ask my other question in a little different way. How would you characterize Udall's operating style? What kinds of things would he do to get his ideas across to people, and get them moving to act upon them?

HOLUM: Well, that's a very good question to ask me, because probably I changed my views more in the eight years I was with the department than anybody else that was in it. To what extent that was a reaction to Udall and his own views and the way he impressed them on me, I don't know. Never stopped to evaluate that myself. But I went into the department a builder, convinced that any place you could find a site for a dam you ought to build one. And I came out of the department convinced that there are a lot of times when you'd better look pretty hard before you build a dam, including the Potomac, where I had major responsibilities for the last three years. It certainly was never a situation where Udall was telling you what you ought to think. Somewhere or other he did challenge you to think and to see the other side of it, and he was willing to, too.

MOSS: What sort of vehicles did he use for transmitting ideas: meetings, memoranda, telephone calls? What seemed to be the most useful, and where did he seem to be the most effective and comfortable in operating?

HOLUM: Well, we talked from time to time, and we talked on the telephone once in a while. But more often a two- or three-word note attached to a piece of paper that he'd picked up someplace

was apt to be the flag that, "You ought to think about this. Give me your views on this. React for me," like that.

MOSS: Okay. Did you have any input to his early policy statement-- I believe it's 14 February [1961], after the. . . .

HOLUM: Oh, yes. The power policy statement?

MOSS: Right, and the president's two. . . .

HOLUM: Sure.

MOSS: . . . statements, economic recovery and natural resources? Do you recall how this came about, what the process was by which the input was made? Did people get together and say, "What are we going to say?"

HOLUM: On the power thing?

MOSS: Yeah.

HOLUM: No, I don't remember if I was going to. . . . And I guess I'd rather not speculate, because if I was going to do any speculating I would be inclined to say the initiative in this case was mine, but it might now have been. I had just better say, I don't remember. The early drafting was done in my office, but whether somebody else said to prepare the draft or not, I just don't remember.

MOSS: Okay. We have two or three things happening fairly early in the administration. On 30 January 1961, you had the Senate Select Committee coming with its water resources report. Do you recall what the reaction to this in Interior was? One of the things, for instance, that it proposed was an independent council of advisors on water resources. I was wondering how an operating department regards such an independent council.

HOLUM: Well, as I remember the situation, all of us in the department were inclined to support the idea of an independent Water Resources Council. The president had proposed the idea at Billings and I, for one, greeted the proposal enthusiastically there, and others of the department had been committed to it beforehand. So all of our inclinations were in favor of the independent council of resources advisors. We came, however--and I was one of them--to support the Water Resources Planning Act, which was essentially the substitute for it, with enthusiasm, as far as the legislative proposal was concerned.

MOSS: Now, it took a while to get from this select committee report to the Water Resources Planning Act. There was a lot of squabbling about just what should be done, particularly in

the Congress, and the question of how far you were going to go with basin commissions, and whether you were going to have little TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority] all over the place and this kind of thing. Do you recall who was strong for and against on this?

HOLUM: No, I really don't.

MOSS: Uh-huh. And what did you see as the chief issues in the thing? I think, for instance, of one thing: state water rights, that you know, were jeopardized by regional planning and this kind of thing. This always seemed to be a touchy subject.

HOLUM: Yeah. I know that. The subject for which I had. . . . At that time, at least very little. . . . I don't think the states had anything to worry about as far as the federal government was concerned. Maybe they had a little more concern, more intimate concern than I thought they had in '61, but I wasn't sympathetic to the states' concern about that.

MOSS: Well, how did you combat that concern, then in what ways? In the Congress or in. . . .

HOLUM: No, I'm not sure that I have, except as--and I have seen some indication, that there are those who say you should use the water where it'll do the most economic good--where you get the most dollar return. It may be just because I'm from South Dakota; I can't buy that answer. I realize that if you can get a hundred dollars worth of benefit out of water in New Orleans and only twenty-five dollars worth of benefit out of it in South Dakota, you ought to look at the alternatives. But I think there are other things involved besides just dollar returns on public investments.

MOSS: Well, how do you, a man with a public power orientation, encounter and convince a man like Senator [Barry M.] Goldwater, in the committee?

HOLUM: I don't think I ever convinced Senator Goldwater of anything.

MOSS: All right. How do you deal with that kind of opposition? Do you think it's significant, strong enough? How did it effect what you were trying to do during those years? Was it one of your major concerns, or did you discount it as probably not having the votes to oppose you, or what?

HOLUM: Well, I can't remember, to be honest with you, any time except my own confirmation when Senator Goldwater's vote became crucial to anything that I was supporting.

MOSS: He gave you a rough time in that.

HOLUM: For which I became very grateful to him. [Laughter] At the time of the hearings I wasn't smart enough to be grateful. By the time 1964 rolled around, I felt kind of singularly honored to have been the individual Senator Goldwater chose to oppose.

MOSS: All right. Another area which came up fairly early was the consideration of revising budget circular A-47, the water projects criteria. As I recall it, in about April, Clinton Anderson and twenty-odd other western Democratic senators sent a letter to Udall in which they really opened up and said, "Look, we're serious. We want some changes made from these standards. What can you do about it?" If I recall, this was in April. And some time around October following, the president came out with a memorandum appointing an interdepartmental committee staff to work out new criteria. Do you recall the thinking in between the senators' letter, or did Udall inform you of this immediately? And what happened in the interim between the letter and the president's memorandum?

HOLUM: No, for some strange reason I don't.

MOSS: Uh-huh. I was wondering . . .

HOLUM: I remember being involved more from the point of view that my views were solicited and being kept informed as to how the group's work was progressing. I recall the fortuitous circumstances that put me in front of the APPA convention, so that I was probably the first official of the administration to speak of it outside of the White House announcement. This occurred because I happened to be at the right place at the right time. But I don't recall. . . . Maybe I wasn't even involved in this, whatever went on in that period.

MOSS: Well, I know that it was put under . . .

HOLUM: [Henry P., Jr.] Caulfield?

MOSS: . . . [Charles H. Stoddard] Chuck Stoddard and Henry Caulfield . . .

HOLUM: I'm sure it was.

MOSS: . . . on--what was it--the projects planning staff.

HOLUM: Right, Project Review Staff.

MOSS: And perhaps you can tell me--I haven't been able to find anybody else, and whoever reads these for water and power will know what these terms mean, but I don't--in the cost benefit ratio

computations, what is the difference between incremental and the costs-remaining benefits methods? This seemed one of the crucial things in the revision, that they wanted to shift to the incremental from the costs-remaining benefits method or vice-versa. I also run into the term "residual method."

HOLUM: Yeah, the terms are all familiar, but I think I better refer you to an economist to answer those questions. I always had one around who explained them to me.

MOSS: Okay. I understood the taxes foregone business that they were fighting about there; that's simple enough. Well, how did you greet the idea of changing these standards? I presume this was all quite in line with the kinds of things you wanted to do to make it apparently, at least, more beneficial to build more dams or more water projects.

HOLUM: Well, I think by that time I was more impressed by the fact that the revised standards recognized that recreation was an important part of water resource development. And I don't mean by that just that we assigned costs to it, but that we really planned for recreation and got ourselves involved in what eventually became the water projects Recreation Act, which placed more emphasis on what happened in the Water Resource and Planning Act; but all of it indicating that the country from that time on, was going to consider recreation was one of the prime purposes of resource development. I got to the point where I think we should be planing water resource development projects--or maybe nondevelopment--just for recreation purposes. I think of other situations where maybe you build reservoirs just for water recreation purposes. Water Project Recreation Acts got 50 percent reimbursement anyway. But that's what really became significant to me as we fought our way through this and saw what happened to this application of it.

MOSS: Uh-huh.

HOLUM: With our population growing so rapidly.

MOSS: Did you get into the interbureau squabbles between [Edward C.] Ed Crafts and Floyd Dominy and [Conrad L.] Connie Worth on just who was getting what slice of the recreation pie?

HOLUM: Not too much. And there were other squabbles, too, as far as recreation is concerned, that I do oblige them once in a while and have a little opportunity to participate. I had really strong views about those matters. But it was Auburn [California], of course, that forced all of us to focus, really focus, on the recreation question and how much cost you could allocate to recreation. Auburn Dam ended up by producing the Water Project Recreation Act.

MOSS: What about the shift of water pollution control? You had the Water Pollution Control Act amendments in 1961, and then you had some efforts--interdepartmental, I guess--to shift the focus of water pollution control first from the Public Health Service to HEW [Health, Education and Welfare Department] and then eventually, in the Johnson administration, out of HEW and into Interior. Did you have a part in this?

HOLUM: During the Kennedy administration?

MOSS: Yes.

HOLUM: No.

MOSS: And finally in the Johnson administration--came over into Interior.

HOLUM: Well, I had some involvement then, but . . .

MOSS: Yeah.

HOLUM: . . . I don't remember anything in the Kennedy administration.

MOSS: Let me ask you a general question about the White House: Do you feel that they were responsive to Interior and its problems? Do you think they fully understood your needs and backed you up sufficiently? Or do you think there were areas in which they could have done more for you?

HOLUM: You said Interior.

MOSS: Yes.

HOLUM: You didn't say. . . . No, I think that it was really quite a wonderful relationship between the department and the White House, as I had enough chance to observe it during the Kennedy years. It was a relationship, as I saw it, based principally on the president's conferences with the secretary--"you know this field, and we'll give you support."

MOSS: You didn't feel at any time that the White House was essentially eastern-oriented and the department western-oriented and that there was a cleavage here in understanding?

HOLUM: No. No, I didn't.

MOSS: Okay. Let me ask you about the salt water conversion program. It's my understanding that this started off with great hopes and expectations, and after a while you began to run into

technological difficulties and cost difficulties that caused you to lower your sights somewhat. Is this accurate?

HOLUM: Yeah, I think you're getting into an area now where my essential conservatism will begin to show itself, because. . . . I had a nagging worry all the time that we were setting our sights too high--that we were pushing the technology too fast. And being essentially a conservative guy (at least in some ways,--none of us fit into slots) but I always tended to feel more comfortable having the technology at hand before we said we could do it. Of course, I recognize, and did recognize all the time, the other side of it: If you don't hold out a promise that is there, you're never going to get there either.

To cite another example right now which concerns me very much--and concerned me in the department although I wasn't directly involved with it--magneto-hydrodynamics, which I feel very strongly should have been an available technology by this time in this country. But in this case the people who are working with it somehow or other haven't got to the public, and they haven't stretched the public's imagination so that the dollars have been available for research. You've got a problem of balance here--helping the decision-makers know what you can achieve if you do do the research and development effort, but not promising too much.

MOSS: Did you have an opportunity to discuss this kind of thing with the secretary or with Dr. [Roger] Revelle or any of the others who were interested in that?

HOLUM: Oh yeah, we talked about it. Not in those specific terms-- I don't think I recall the secretary at any time being too optimistic about what the program would do--but it was kind of an attitude that developed in the whole country. We were always faced with the responsibility of performing. Of course, on the other hand there was the Senate extremely optimistic about the program, and the House leadership extremely bearish about the program. We were kind of caught in between, trying to produce what the Senate leadership expected, and at the same time being held back by what the House leadership thought the program could do.

But the program should be focused more than it's had at any time on what small desalting plants could do, and what it can mean in areas of the country like my own area--the whole midcontinent area, where most of the land is underlaid with brackish water. The lack of high quality water inhibits development of all kinds. I think one of the big contributions that desalting can make is that if it can be developed--and I think it can--economic methods of desalting this brackish water so that this midcontinent area can begin economically.

It's a little difficult for people to look at a hundred thousand gallon per day plant in a small town in Kansas compared to a hundred million gallon per day plant in Los Angeles. It's hard to even see the two in the same picture. They just don't quite fit together.

MOSS: How did what you were trying to do generally in [Bureau of] Reclamation, Water and Power and so on mesh with, one, what the [Army] Corps of Engineers was up to, and secondly, the kind of personal regional interest that [Robert S.] Bob Kerr had for the Oklahoma-Arkansas area? Did you find any difficulty in meshing the programs, or were you in opposition at any point, or competition for resources?

HOLUM: Sure. Yes, there is no question about the fact that you can't be an assistant secretary or the commissioner of Reclamation without having points of conflict with the Corps of Engineers and the Department of Agriculture and areas where the programs overlap and intude upon each other, conflicts that have to be resolved. I think that's one of the reasons we have assistant secretaries in our government, to deal with those kinds of things. We generally worked them out.

MOSS: Did you ever get into any consideration of whether or not the Corps should be brought into the Interior Department and made a part of the department? This is almost a perennial thing since the Hoover Commission Report.

HOLUM: Oh, it was one of the things that we talked about. Sure. I came to Washington having fooled around with resource development all my life, more as a hobby than anything else, you know, thinking I knew something about it; just chock-full of ideas--you know, if somebody would give me a free hand how I'd reorganize the federal government's water resource responsibilities and make everything click in a hurry. They came around, I think it was from the Brookings Institute, maybe in about six months and asked me if I had any ideas for reorganizing the federal government's water resource responsibilities. And I just threw up my hands and said no. [Laughter] I think you can see why.

Perhaps the logical way to handle this particular problem is essentially the way we divided it up in Alaska--let the Department of Interior be the planning and operating agency, and the Corps of Army Engineers, if there is any reason for them to have civil functions, be the construction agency. I'm saying that, from my point of view, planning--from the broad base, that I think Interior represented--is the essential thing. It never concerned me very much whose plaque was on the dam or the canal, just so the results were right.

MOSS: Other than the Missouri Basin development, what did you see as some of the areas you could step into in dam-building and water projects? Where were you setting your priorities?

HOLUM: You mean before I came to the department?

MOSS: No, as you came into the department.

HOLUM: As I came into the department. Well, obviously, at least for me, the big unresolved water resource problems in the Department of Interior when we came into office in 1961 were the problems in the Missouri Basin where everything was stopped because of the disagreement with the Congress on payout for the project, and the problems in Arizona, where everything was stopped because of the long legal disputes between Arizona and its neighboring states in the courts. So I think it was quite logical in the department that the other thing that came along that we were interested in was ongoing programs. For instance, what happens in the Central Valley [California] or the Columbia Basin project was a continuing development. But what was a real challenge to us as far, as the Bureau of Reclamation's program was concerned, was water functions, was getting something going again in the Missouri Basin and solving the water supply problems of Arizona. It took us eight years to do it, but we did it. We took eight years in both cases.

MOSS: Yeah. You mentioned the Columbia River. The Columbia River Treaty, of course, had just been ratified by the United States, but there was a holdup in the Canadian end of things. Did this really cause any problems as far as Interior planning for the Columbia River was concerned?

HOLUM: You mean as far as the Bureau of Reclamation's Columbia Basin project is concerned? No, it didn't, I don't think it had any particular adverse effect on the Columbia Basin project of the Bureau of Reclamation. But, of course, it left the power marketing program of the Bonneville Power Administration uncertain until they did get agreement with Canada and their upstream storage projects were placed under construction.

MOSS: And you had the southern Idaho power dispute at that time too-- the shift of the upper Snake[River] into the Bonneville [Oregon] area. Do you recall the circumstances of this and who was for and against?

HOLUM: No, I don't. . . . You mean, when we expanded the Bonneville marketing area to include. . . .

MOSS: Right.

HOLUM: No, I was not in direct contact with any opponents of that action.

MOSS: Okay. In the power area, you had several situations in which you had a private-public squabble: the Hanford reactor situation, for instance. The public power people--the public power lobbyists,

if you will--were screaming that this was a sellout. Do you think it was really a sellout to the private power people in Hanford [California]?

HOLUM: In Hanford?

MOSS: Yes.

HOLUM: Well, I don't think there was any complaint on the part of the public power people that the department sold them out at Hanford. . . .

MOSS: Yeah, and later in the. . . .

HOLUM: . . . because we fought with them all the way and went down screaming just like they did. There were other cases, but not Hanford.

MOSS: Okay. Why was private power able to win that--Hanford?

HOLUM: The votes.

MOSS: The votes?

HOLUM: Yeah.

MOSS: And why could they command the votes in that?

HOLUM: Well, because the Congress was just divided that way ideologically as far as the power issue is concerned.

MOSS: All right. In what ways did the private power people bring pressure to bear both on Congress and on the department in an issue like this? Do they actually come walking into your office and say, "Look, we can't have this kind of thing and we're going to fight you tooth and nail in Congress, and you'd better go our way." Is this the kind of thing that happens or what?

HOLUM: Well, that's what I was referring to earlier when you asked about who the opponents of Ken Holum's nomination were and I said I didn't know anything about it. But it was a strange thing, that I could spend eight years as assistant secretary and see as few representatives, of private power companies as I did. I think it was very short-sighted and unwise on their part, but for some reason or other they just didn't come to see the assistant secretary during that period, with very few exceptions. And it wasn't quite that hopeless, I'm not quite that unreasonable. But I apparently had that image, and they. . . .

MOSS: You felt they stayed away simply because they didn't think they could crack your shell.

HOLUM: They seemed to feel quite comfortable with me. However, they didn't always get what they wanted from me.

MOSS: No. That rings a bell.

HOLUM: I took a lot of hard words from some public power people.

MOSS: Well, let's take an example--the Colorado transmission line situation, where you settled for a seven out of ten wheeling arrangement situation. They weren't very pleased with this, were they? They wanted the . . .

HOLUM: They were not very pleased with it.

MOSS: . . . whole thing, all ten lines, to go public.

HOLUM: Right.

MOSS: Now, what caused you to settle for the seven out of ten?

HOLUM: Because the Congress expected us to make every effort to get wheeling arrangements if we could get reasonable ones, and we got very good ones. Now, public power people are insisting, and I agree with them, that the department get those same provisions that we got in these Colorado transmission lines, in wheeling contracts that they negotiate from now on. The stipulation that the wheeling agent will deliver whatever power is scheduled by the United States, whether it's generated at a federal dam or generated in a generating plant owned by an REA cooperative or the city of Los Angeles, was very significant. Believe me, it took some doing to get Utah Power and Light Company to accept these terms.

MOSS: It actually works better that way--does it?--than if the government owns the. . . .

HOLUM: No, I didn't say that.

MOSS: It doesn't? No, okay.

HOLUM: But I think it's nearly as good. It accomplishes the same results. And as far as the public agencies are concerned, Congress just isn't. . . .

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

MOSS: Now, let me just see if I can recap some of that that we lost on the other side. I think we missed the whole business on the Colorado transmission lines. And we were talking about why

you felt compelled to go for the seven out of ten wheeling arrangements. And you, in effect, said this was probably the best you could do, and that in fact it turned out to be pretty good and almost as good as having full public control over all of the lines.

This business of talking about the transmission lines brings us into the area of the national grid concept. The same kind of thing happened here, too, didn't it, that there was a public versus private power lobby fight going on the idea of a national grid concept?

HOLUM: Yeah, except we never quite were so bold as to advance it as a national grid concept.

MOSS: This is the way it was interpreted by the press and so on.

HOLUM: We sympathized with the national grid and the common carrier transmission concept, for major transmission lines. We certainly supported the idea in principle, that the electric systems of the country had to be interconnected by high-voltage transmission lines. But we approached it internally, more from the point of view of interconnecting the federal systems, which led us first to support a line from Hoover Dam to the Dalles in Oregon. The line was actually built from the Dalles to Los Angeles. Later we produced study 190, which spoke in more general terms of the high-voltage interconnections required in the whole West.

But we never at any point in time put a map on the table and said this is the national grid, that it ought to be built by the United States or by a combination of the United States and other entities. It was more a gradual approach and more directly related to the department's power marketing responsibilities than that concept.

MOSS: All right. You had some squabbles with the Federal Power Commission, didn't you, on this, over the control of right of ways and this kind of thing, and jurisdiction on cooperatives? Do you recall the issues here?

HOLUM: Oh, yes, I remember several instances when the assistant secretary for water and power and the chairman of the Federal Power Commission thought that their jurisdictions overlapped, and we ended up in Lee White's office talking things out.

MOSS: How did you talk things out, and what kind of mediation or arbitration role did Lee White play? How was he at this kind of game?

HOLUM: Well, he was so good that you didn't even realize that he was serving as the mediator. It was an amazing thing. Because

there were several controversies where it eventually came down to the three of us having to get together and work it out. And [Joseph C.] Swidler, chairman of the Federal Power Commission, is a worthy adversary. He's a very skillful guy. But we remained the best of friends all through it and I don't think I have any colleagues that I served with in the Kennedy administration that I had a higher regard for and considered more personal friends of mine than those two.

But the squabbles involved everything from the Defense Electric Power Administration--which was a little office attached to my office, and they all thought that they ought to have had more to do with it, and I guess maybe they should have--to our feeling at the beginning that we'd ought to be doing the big power survey, and they did it. Of course, we would never have been able to approach it from the national point of view, particularly with the Federal Power Commission objecting. I don't have any idea where Secretary [Walter J.] Hickel expects to find the authority, if he meant what he said to the Senate Appropriations Committee, because he just doesn't have national authority over the power field. He's got some authority in the west and southwest and southeast and he's got some leadership opportunities as secretary of Interior. But to plan a national power grid, he's going to have to. . . .

MOSS: Yes, I was curious the way he came out with that almost as though it were a brand-new idea, too, and I wondered what the reaction of some of the people who'd been thinking about it for years before was.

HOLUM: Well, the reaction of this guy, who'd been thinking about it for years before, was one of great good cheer, and I pat him on the back. Really kind of amazing to have been the radical public power assistant secretary of Interior for eight years and have your aces trumped so decisively by your successor.

MOSS: By a conservative successor. [Laughter]

HOLUM: By a conservative successor. There's just no question about, in this post he trumped everything that we proposed. The only thing is, we waited for a little performance.

MOSS: Yes, yes. You said that you had had only limited contact with the Frying Pan-Arkansas project. What do you remember of it?

HOLUM: Well, my contact with those two early reclamation projects, the Frying Pan-Arkansas and the San Juan-Chana, [Colorado-New Mexico] were almost exclusively on the advisory role. As Mr. Udall had been in the House for the eight years, he'd been personally exposed to them. At that stage, he knew much more about

Frying-Pan Arkansas and San Juan-Chama than I could learn before authorization. And, of course, because of his personal interest in it, he could carry the ball. From then on, though, the reclamation projects, with the exception of the Central Arizona project, were my responsibility.

MOSS: Did you get involved in the Delaware River Compact at all?

HOLUM: Yes.

MOSS: I was wondering if there were any particular problems because of the four-to-one state-federal ratio on the commission. There's wonder about this in Congress initially as to whether there would be a state-federal problem or a standoff on this, or whether they'd. . . .

HOLUM: Well, no, I didn't get involved in that particular controversy. I got much more involved with compacts on the Potomac [River] than on the Delaware. Neither one of them, of course, are in the reclamation West. But there was again a startling change in my thinking. If it had been politically possible at the time, I suppose I would have said, "Let's ditch the Delaware Compact."

MOSS: Why?

HOLUM: Well, if for no other reason, because the states adopted it and brought it to the federal government on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, but more because I come from the Middle West. In spite of the fact that my thinking has changed, the last thing I want on the Missouri River is a federal-state compact. My thinking could have changed a lot more than it has. But on these eastern rivers, particularly when I got involved in the Potomac, I could see a real need. Where you don't have a Bureau of Reclamation program, you'd have a real need for a machinery that really brings into focus, on a specific problem, all the authority of the federal government, all the authority of the state governments, and all the authority of the local governments. The Federal government can't do that. State governments can't do it by themselves.

So until somebody comes up with something better, I will think that the right kind of a federal-state compact for a river like the Potomac, negotiated in good faith between the states and the federal government, is a pretty good procedure. I think it's unfortunate, however, that the states have pre-empted so much of the responsibility for developing the compacts, and then come to the federal government--like on the Delaware--with eight influential senators, saying, "All right. This is what we want, period." It would work out better if it were negotiated from the beginning. We tried to do that on the Potomac, had limited success with it because the states on the Potomac are states' rights states.

MOSS: Do you remember how actively the Interior Department, or specifically Secretary Udall and the state governors, participated in the Delaware Compact Commission--or the Delaware Commission--after it came into being?

HOLUM: Well, yes, I do. In the drought in the Johnson administration, of course, the secretary, with the president's support, did a pretty skillful job of using the Delaware Compact to get the states to agree to remedial measures.

MOSS: To release water and this kind of thing.

HOLUM: To release water and. . . . They just got through the drought because they used that machinery. Now, I suspect with a president of the United States saying to a secretary of Interior, "Get with the governors and work it out," that they might have worked it out without the compact. But the fact that the compact was there and there were people to do staff work--there was machinery in operation--made it easier. There's no question about it though.

MOSS: What about the Northeastern [Water] Compact? Did that work the same way in the northeastern rivers in the New England states?

HOLUM: That wasn't a federal-state compact in the northeastern . . .

MOSS: No, it wasn't federal-state, but it was an interstate compact that I would have presumed you had some interest in.

HOLUM: No. I had no contact with it at all.

MOSS: Okay. All right, now I've got another . . .

HOLUM: I had contact with both of the New England regional commissions, the one under the Resources Planning Act and the one under the department of Commerce, but . . .

MOSS: Okay. Another northeastern thing, the New England thing, the Passamaquoddy tidal power project. What prompted Interior to take another look at it after it had been rejected by the Eisenhower people?

HOLUM: The president told us to.

MOSS: He did.

HOLUM: Sure.

MOSS: This is interesting, because one story that I get has it that the idea was Udall's, and that. . . . Let me correct that and say that the story that I got was that perhaps the president knew about it, but certainly the White House staff didn't know anything about it until it was upon them, that the secretary had worked out all the preliminaries before either the Bureau of the Budget or the White House staff--Lee White and so on-- were really clued in on what was

going on. Do you recall it this way?

HOLUM: Now, please, I'm completely incompetent to tell you what happened when President Kennedy and Stewart Udall got off by themselves. But what I know, what my memory tells me, is that conferences between Senator [Edmund S.] Muskie and President Kennedy--and I suppose Stewart Udall was involved--led to the decision to reappraise the Passamaquoddy project. And we did it. If the interest rates hadn't have changed, it was a feasible project.

MOSS: You say if the interest rates hadn't changed.

HOLUM: Yeah. That's the thing that was the straw that broke the back for us.

MOSS: Oh. You don't think that there was a technological problem with it?

HOLUM: No. No, I think our two-pooled peaking power scheme would have worked. I personally visited the La Range project in France twice. I'm not sure that we would have used the type of turbines--probably wouldn't have used the hub turbines--that the French had developed. But I think we would have had no difficulty at all in securing turbines. If you're talking about technological problems with building the embankment, the Department of Interior expected the Corps of Army Engineers to do that. [Laughter] No, I always thought the civil works could be built.

MOSS: Yeah. Okay. Did you get involved in the Colorado River salinity dispute with Mexico on the dumping of brackish water and the rest?

HOLUM: Yes, pretty much.

MOSS: Okay. What do you recall of that? Did the Interior and State Department work well together on that or were there problems? Well, let me ask how it first came to your attention.

HOLUM: Well, it kind of got to be a matter of my concern--not because Udall's bona fides weren't a hundred percent. But he was an Arizonan, and with a commissioner of reclamation who was a commissioner of reclamation, dedicated to using water in the United States, the natural thing was for this responsibility to fall on me. No, it's a very difficult problem, and I imagine it's continuing to be a difficult problem today. We have made a commitment to Mexico that the salinity in the water at the border will do down, and when I left office it was continuing to go down, very slowly, but it was going down.

MOSS: Did you have any direct contact with Mexican authorities on it at all or did you work through the State Department only?

HOLUM: The only time that we had direct contact with Mexican people on it was when I happened to be in Mexico City on other business--that was only once--and I think on two occasions when they were in Washington on other business. The State Department likes to have the direct contact between the two countries. The time of the Water for Peace Conference, the secretary--I can't recall the name of the secretary of Interior from Mexico--was here in Washington. We discussed it then. He discussed it briefly with Secretary Udall on that occasion. Then, when I was in Mexico City on our nuclear de-salting program, Ambassador Freeman [Fulton Freeman] arranged for me to see the Mexican people. Apparently--and I get this only from State Department people and Ambassador Freeman--the Mexicans felt quite comfortable doing business with me, and thought I was treating them fairly. For a tough situation, I think we were getting along about as well as we could.

MOSS: Was State Department-Interior coordination effective on this? Were there any problems between the two of you? Who was handling it in State.

HOLUM: Well, the Mexican desk and, of course, the [International] Boundary [and Water] Commission, and you know, more the day-to-day contacts than the Mexican desk. I can't even say that I remember the chairman of the joint commission. In El Pasa I've seen him many times. I don't know if he's still there or not. I think there was one occasion when I visited with the assistant secretary for Latin American Affairs about it. But we were generally able to work it out at a lower level.

MOSS: Did Dominy give you full support on this?

HOLUM: I think he was probably a little less sympathetic with the problems of the Mexicans than I was. However, when a decision was made, the Bureau of Reclamation followed that decision. But it was a fact that the Mexicans distrusted the Bureau of Reclamation, and this made it difficult for the Bureau of Reclamation to establish the bona fides in the United States. The Mexicans look upon the Bureau of Reclamation as the agency of the Arizona farmers and, of course, in a way, the Bureau of Reclamation is supposed to be just that. The Bureau of Reclamation does have responsibilities to the United States water-users. And, of course, the whole federal government does too, but we've also got obligations to our international neighbors. It's a very interesting and difficult situation. I haven't heard anything about it since the change of administration, and I hope they're successful in keeping it that way. Water conditions, I guess, are better on the Colorado. Maybe we solved the problem.

MOSS: Uh-huh.

HOLUM: It's an unfortunate thing to quarrel about.

MOSS: Now, there was an agreement between Interior and the Corps of Engineers on the division of effort. You mentioned this in Alaska, I believe. Was there any more to this than you've already mentioned? How did the two bureaucracies get together in the first place? What caused it? Do you remember the steps that led to the agreement?

HOLUM: I don't know. I suppose this one was initiated by Senator [Ernest] Gruening, but I don't quite trust my memory on that either. I can remember the first time that Under Secretary [James K.] Carr and I sat in Lee White's office and discussed the division of responsibilities between the corps and the bureau in Alaska, in California and in the Missouri Basin. There was another session, at least, where Udall was involved. I'm not sure there were any joint sessions. But we had a try at it, and I'm sure it's not the first time there'd been a try at it.

MOSS: Let me ask something. You mentioned Jim Carr just then. How was it to work for an under secretary who had his own interests, his own strengths and so on in the water and power area? Was it a competitive situation in any way? Or this kind of thing sometimes, and very normally and naturally, happens.

HOLUM: Yeah. Well, it was an interesting relationship, there's no question about that. Because you put it quite well: Jim Carr interests and concerns and philosophy were almost identical to mine. As I've confessed to you, I came to Washington obviously knowing a lot more about the Missouri Basin and its problems and opportunities, and Jim Carr knew more about the Central Valley Project and its opportunities and their frustrations. Jim was, I guess, a more aggressive guy than I am. Maybe that's why the Central Valley projects got authorized first. I don't know. The South Dakota projects got authorized too. [Laughter] Well, when it came down to it, we were good friends, and we're good friends now. We had sessions where in spite of the fact that we were so much alike philosophically and much alike in background, we disagreed. But we always ended up liking and respecting each other. I liked to get to San Francisco to see Jim, and read about his cable cars with interest, particularly these latest occurrences.

It became a completely different situation, and I suppose if anybody had looked at the department as it was chosen, they would've said, "John Carver, with his experience here in Washington, is really going to have fun with that farmboy from South Dakota that doesn't know anything about how the United States operates." But John and I had a good relationship. And, of course, it became a completely different situation when he was under secretary, because by that time John had apparently decided that Ken Holum knew how to run the water and power side of the department, and found his interests other places. That was a completely different relationship than from Carr, but that was a pleasant relationship, too. I liked both situations. I don't know which I liked the best.

MOSS: How did you work with some of the other assistant secretaries? For instance, how did your budget business go with Otis Beasley [D. Otis Beasley]? Did you use his people very much, or did you go directly to Bureau of the Budget in the White House?

HOLUM: I had a very strong feeling after I had been in the government a couple of years that the most important thing that an assistant secretary does is manage the budgets of his bureaus. If you can't do that, you're just not going to make any contribution in your department. So I insisted, and generally speaking have had the cooperation of the administrative assistant secretary's office, that the assistant secretary's office was going to be involved in, and when the chips came down, make the decisions, as far as the budget is concerned. We were going to hear from the bureau; I was going to work with them, but we were going to make the decisions. So everybody knew that except for the decisions that were made above me and my hand was in it. I think they actually welcomed that kind of interest on the part of the assistant secretary's office. They goofed a couple time under pressure, and they found out about it from me in a hurry. There was one thing I wouldn't stand for, and that was decisions being made with respect to budget in my area of the department without my knowledge.

MOSS: Who was your primary contact in the Bureau of the Budget over at the executive office?

HOLUM: Oh, on a routine basis, Carl Schwartz.

MOSS: Carl Schwartz?

HOLUM: [Philip S.] Sam Hughes. Well, of course, in the Kennedy years-- I keep forgetting--that was Elmer Staats, Carl Schwartz. On some matters where they had particular interest, it sometimes seemed to work better to go to people like Wes Sasak and feed the point of view in a little further down the chain rather than at the top.

MOSS: How about your paths crossing with John Kelly, say, in mining and minerals? Any areas where your interests and responsibilities overlapped?

HOLUM: No, not any areas that caused us severe problems.

The people in the Water Resources Division and Geologic Survey became quite a resource to me, and I enjoyed seeing them and enjoyed having their points of view. They were on my task forces on the Potomac and other things where, you know, after I became the senior assistant secretary I did get involved in things that we were happy to find falling under assistant secretary for Water and Power. I had direct access to these folks and I don't think there was ever any resentment either in GS [Geologic Survey] or the assistant secretary's office, at least I never knew about it.

MOSS: What about fish and wildlife in Frank Briggs' area?

HOLUM: Well, I suppose the most delightful colleague I had at any time that I was with the government was Frank Briggs. You couldn't have a disagreement or a quarrel with Frank Briggs. There just wasn't any way to do it. He was too nice a guy. I don't think Frank Briggs ever took advantage of me. He was, you know, just a wonderful, wonderful person and a real pleasure to. . . .

MOSS: What involvement did you have, if any, in the political field in the election business, say, in the congressional elections of '62 or in gearing up for 1964? Did you get involved in this at all--advice to the secretary or to the president or . . .

HOLUM: Did you ask about both '62 and '64?

MOSS: And '64.

HOLUM: Well, I enjoy political campaigns. I wouldn't have run for the United States Senate twice on the Democratic ticket in South Dakota if I didn't think campaigning was fun. It's a very expensive hobby out there, but I enjoy it very much. I participated in the political campaigns while I was assistant secretary in any way that I could find an opportunity. The only disappointment--and I came to understand it very quickly--was that if you're having a big political function out in Des Moines, Iowa, you're not looking for an assistant secretary as a clincher speaker. So I found out that we had less opportunities to participate in the campaigns than I expected. 1962 was the year that George McGovern was elected to the Senate. He contracted hepatitis and spent time in the hospital. I spent a week taking over his schedule in South Dakota and enjoyed it.

In '64 I got to do quite a little campaigning in South Dakota and California. I took one trip to Iowa that's a little hard to rationalize, because I had no business there. One trip to Maryland, but I. . . .

MOSS: How about preparations for '64 in 1963? Were you gearing up for 1964 prior to President Kennedy's assassination? Were wheels beginning to move for '64?

HOLUM: I guess I don't know what you'd mean by that.

MOSS: Well, I mean things like conferences as to what you were going to push in the way of the record, trying to get the record of the administration together as the things you were going to brag about, who you expected the opposition to be, things of this sort.

HOLUM: Nothing like that that I participated in. I suppose that we went along, we made mental notes of our accomplishments; probably didn't recall them until we got on a platform someplace. But, no, I don't recall participating in any overt effort in '63 that would be about '64; doing speculation, like anybody who was interested in political activity was anyplace in the country was, who the opponent was going to be, and I guess kind of wondering if it really could be Goldwater, with all the indications out that it was going to be, and it was.

MOSS: Back to the projects and so on, you mentioned that you were involved in both the Garrison [North Dakota] project and the Oake [South Dakota] project. What particular things did you feel were significant about these, and how difficult was it? You said Jim Carr got his Central Valley before you got your Missouri area things, but how difficult was it to push these through?

HOLUM: I'm not sure that I was completely accurate when I said that-- when I said that, I was thinking about the Oake [South Dakota] project in my home state. I think Garrison was authorized before the Auburn project was authorized. Actually Jim Carter had left the government before the Auburn project was authorized. It was my project just as much as any of the rest of them were. I testified for it on several occasions in both the House and Senate committee.

But the Garrison project came up for very early consideration in the executive branch. If my memory is correct, both Navaho, San Juan-Chama and Fryingpan-Arkansas had Bureau of the Budget clearance before the change of administration. I don't think there was any discussion--I don't remember, at least, any discussions within the executive branch on what was our position on those. The executive branch had taken a position, and just a case of not changing the already established position.

But very early--you can probably fix a time; I can't--in the administration the question of the executive branch's position on the Garrison project came up for consideration, despite the fact that we knew that the project wasn't going to get authorized until we had done something about repayment. The Senate had scheduled a hearing on it. Late in the afternoon the day before the hearing, Secretary Udall and Under Secretary Carr and I were called over to the White House for a conference with President Kennedy on what the executive branch position should be. The president said, "We'll support it." You can help me fix the time for this, because it was just shortly after the president had come back from Canada with his back injury and he was not in his offices. We saw him in the living quarters in the White House.

MOSS: No, I can't help you on that, I'm afraid. '62 . . .

HOLUM: If somebody reads it they can fix the record.

MOSS: Yeah, if somebody reads it they can fix it. Right. And the Water Resources Planning Act also--you mentioned that you were involved in. You talked a little bit about it. Is there anything more you want to add on it?

HOLUM: No, probably not. What I recall saying earlier about it is that I, at that time, came to look upon the Water Resources Planning Act as a good, maybe a better, solution to the need for some coordinated thinking in the water resources field. in the council of resource advisors. And although the principal responsibility for drafting the legislation, conducting inter-department negotiations in Interior was with Henry Caulfield and the resources program staff, I guess Henry probably talked to me more--as much, at least--about my views on the legislation as he was going through these negotiations as anybody. And I testified for the legislation, and later on became the secretary's alternate on the Water Resources Council. It's like everything else that's done in the water field, I guess--Water Resources Council finding out that the problem's awfully big. [Laughter]. I don't see any evidence like I hoped I would see that the solutions are all sight. I don't think they're finding real solutions either.

MOSS: Yeah. Let me ask a general question that we often ask in these interviews, and that is, what do you think was the general impact of the Kennedy administration on the water resources field? Was it the Kennedy administration as such that had an impact or were things going in these directions anyway? What was it about the Kennedy administration that made things possible that would not have been possible under, say, a Nixon administration?

HOLUM: Well, I think there was a lively commitment on the part of the president himself to--talking particularly about the last--because he recognized his potential. I, and all of us who worked for the president looked on the Billings speech and that early resources speech in 1961 as a Magna carta. It was really kind of a satisfying feeling, although my hand in it was very small. And on innumerable occasions people were referring back to Billings when questioned. Well, "What should we do? Where does the president stand?" And somebody else--not me--would haul out the Billings speech, and "This is what we're committed to and this is what we're going to do."

MOSS: You didn't see any change over time in the president's position on this? He just sort of left it at the Billings speech.

HOLUM: Well, no, it was perfected and refined in the official message. But they were both a part of the record and I think we considered them of equal stature. They were the president's own expression.

And, of course, there's no question but what we came into office at a time when very little had been done for eight years, so there were a lot of things to get our hands on and get going. I guess the thing that puzzles me the most about water resources and particularly the West is that Democrats always authorize projects and build things and Republican get the votes. [Laughter]

MOSS: Well, I seem to be running out of questions. Do you have anything else that you would like to add as a final note?

HOLUM: No, I don't think so.

MOSS: Okay.

HOLUM: I probably will have, half an hour after you've walked out of here.

MOSS: Well, certainly there will be opportunities, I hope, after looking over this transcript, to perhaps get back together again and pick up bits and pieces that either of us feel have been left out. This is usually the way that it works. So, thank you very much.