

ENVIRONMENTAL DATA & GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

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Transcript of an Interview

Conducted by

Christopher Sellers

(With Subsequent Corrections and Additions)

INTERVIEWEE: William Drayton

INTERVIEWER: Christopher Sellers

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ETM-SBU-031

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INTERVIEWER: I'll tell you more about me, but enough about me. So, I guess just to stick to the protocol here for at least the first part of the interview. Some background information is what their first questions are about: your age, your racio-ethnic identification, and your gender.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think? I mean...

INTERVIEWER: Well, I know, but on tape, it's kind of – they won't see – we don't have the visual. So.

INTERVIEWEE: I like to publically laugh at all this formality. I mean for heaven's sake. I was born in '43. I guess I'm Caucasian. Who knows? And male. In this day of uncertainty, I don't feel uncertain about that at all.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, well let's get on to the more interesting things. Can you give me a sketch of your formal education, including years of degrees? Main degrees?

INTERVIEWEE: Elementary school in Manhattan. High school in Massachusetts. Harvard College. Oxford MA, then law school. So that's formal education.

INTERVIEWER: What year was your law degree?

INTERVIEWEE: 1970.

INTERVIEWER: 1970, and then what jobs did you – so you were a lawyer, or is that what you went into afterwards? No. What did you do after law school?

INTERVIEWEE: I worked at McKenzie. At law school, I set up the legislative services that serve legislatures throughout New England, and further south. I was much more interested in those sorts of things. So I worked at McKenzie for about five years. My first bit with them, which was a wonderful apprenticeship. Part of it was learning business, which my background was all social. How do you – I'd not been to business school, so all the management sciences. How do you go into other people's large complex institutions and very quickly understand them, and be able to cause very significant change to happen? That's a set of skills – it's very useful if you're an entrepreneur. I'm – all the way through this environment is an important issue. So my dad was an explorer. That was sort of a hint. While at McKenzie, one of the things I did was the Connecticut Enforcement Project, which was – Dan Lufkin became the first commissioner with the Department of Environmental Protection in Connecticut. I had worked with him as a client earlier setting up the Opportunity Funding Corporation black capitalists. When he became commissioner, he, being a smart person, very quickly figured out the enforcement thing doesn't work.

So he asked me to come and figure out how to make it work. Out of that comes the Delayed Compliance Penalty which is in all the federal statutes

now and the roots of emissions trading, and a whole series of other innovations. That was just a wonderful training ground, and learning period. So I took a year leave from McKenzie to teach at Stanford Law School with overlap into the business school and then the Kennedy School at Harvard. Jimmy Carter, by very good timing, contacted me two weeks after my old mentor and friend, Hubert Humphrey, withdrew for ill health reasons.

Jimmy asked me to lead one of his citizen advisory groups. I said, "These things usually get people in trouble. You sure you really want this?" Two weeks later, one of them really got him in trouble. For whatever reason, I ended up being a part of a small group that he had, quite uniquely, trying to figure out how he would be a good president if elected, using campaign funds for that. So, I did all the regulatory agencies, and a series of major management areas. He managed to get elected. I worked in the White House really trying to get the transportation deregulation thing moving despite the opposition to the new secretary of transportation.

I had a choice of OSHA or EPA, different levels, EPA at the second level. Doug Costle, who had been Dan's Deputy, I think I helped him to get in and he was happy to have me. We formed a very nice team. We knew one another as the two first political appointees going into EPA. It was the most intense educational experience because I had dealt with the federal government from McKenzie, but it's different. It was – we had the Clean Air Act, and all sorts of other legislation, the moment we walked in the door.

There were just huge challenges at the agency, a great agency with very talented people, but my role there was assistant administrator for planning and management. You take all these pieces and you put them together into an agency. Planning and management was essentially the role that pulls the whole thing together. So it's the budget, the planning, the policy, all the management functions, the appropriations committees, the White House policy processes, basically anything where you needed to pull the whole thing together was in that office. I think it was one of the 20 best jobs in the country and maybe well beyond that.

Doug's temperament and mine are very complementary. He would tend to go glassy-eyed after a short period dealing with the budget. He was very skilled at dealing with external political forces, so it was a very nice complementation. Since I know we're heading towards the transition. It positioned me to understand all the dimensions that the Reagan administration attacked on: budget, management, and everything else because if you're – so the regulation development process, for example, was run out of my office – was one of the many things run out of my offices – so every regulation, no matter where from.

<T: 10 min>

So I was just in a really good position to, when the Reagan folks attacked, I wasn't a specialist in this or that. I could see the whole thing. Given my management background, I understood management and budgets really

well, really easily. The people on the hill, the environment groups, and the press are clueless, clueless about this. None of them have basically ever worked in a large organization. They can't read budgets. That's exactly why the Reagan people attacked where they did, Stockman being a very smart person. So they feinted towards the Clean Air Act, with no intent whatever of actually doing anything there, because they knew they would have their hands handed to them.

They also knew that it would totally upset the environmental community and get them focused there. It was classic Clausewitz. Feint towards the center, and attack where it's least expected where there are no defenses. Their strategy was to keep the attack at a low enough visibility level that it would never excite a lot of opposition.

So they planned five 15 to 20 percent budget cuts over 18 months. So each one of them didn't look so big, but by the time you do 5 times 15 to 20 percent, had they succeeded, by our calculus, you've only had a couple of hundred people out of the 500,400 at the EPA headquarters' staffs. There would not have been – would not have quit by attrition, which was up to 2.7 percent per month by the time they were in office six or seven months, fired, and/or bumped as a result of firing.

They would have succeeded in a mass lobotomy of the institution, which was the intent. That's very quickly the background.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, I have a bunch of questions. Because I want to concentrate on the Reagan transition, I'll just ask a few of these from the earlier things – your earlier experience, in terms of when you went into the EPA, you had your first experience there mainly in or near the White House, and you were overseeing the transportation deregulation and some other things. Then you moved into the EPA. Could you just give me a sense of how long you were in the White House versus when you made this switch into EPA and had to choose between OSHA and EPA? Also what was the – why did you make the choice you did?

INTERVIEWEE: Well –

INTERVIEWER: Just in terms of can you pinpoint that in terms of years? I'll ask you for your CV, I guess is maybe an easier way to do it.

INTERVIEWEE: It's pretty straightforward. Jack Watson, who became Cabinet Secretary under Carter, led this small group, a dozen people – maybe it was slightly more than that by the end. Our job was to figure out how Jimmy Carter could be a great president.

INTERVIEWER: That was starting in maybe 1975 or '76. He had already –

INTERVIEWEE: I'm not sure exactly when it got started because I was not one of the first two or three people, but it was pretty small when I arrived.

It was always small, because they were using campaign funds to do what? Most people don't do that, but he did. It's typical Jimmy Carter.

INTERVIEWER: Planning.

INTERVIEWEE: Hmm?

INTERVIEWER: Planning in advance.

INTERVIEWEE: He genuinely believed that the best politics was doing the right thing. I can give you lots of stories of that. It was really remarkable. So during this period, the Teamsters came to the campaign and said—Ford had started trucking deregulation. They said, "Just don't say anything and we'll support you." That was—sounded attractive to some people. Jimmy Carter got several options. Of course, he knew more about this than most people.

He added his own option which was much stronger than any of the options he was given. So he was not going to allow exceptions for agriculture or department stores. I think those were the two big exceptions.

INTERVIEWER: For deregulation? For what?

INTERVIEWEE: Trucking.

INTERVIEWER: Tracking?

INTERVIEWEE: Trucking. Trucks.

INTERVIEWER: Trucking deregulation. Right. I know a little bit.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, trucks. So he wrote, after he'd made that choice, "They won't like this, will they?" It was just typical of him. It's – so I was involved in that, and my responsibilities were all the regulatory agencies.

Things like civil service reform, and contracting reform, so it was a broad mandate because there were very few of us. I was in the White House for two reasons. A) I was in the transition, which was less attractive, but continuing the same sorts of things, just somewhat a dysfunctional period. I was trying to help with the – certain people becoming administrator of the EPA. I'm going through – once I had made my own personal decision. So, Hubert Humphrey had been supporting me for the OSHA thing. I just decided EPA was – being a number 2 at EPA was a much better role given my learning than the other.

It was a much better agency, and much more interesting, etcetera. That was just a personal decision, which I think was a wise one.

INTERVIEWER: So OSHA, you would have been the number 1 person or the assistant administrator?

INTERVIEWEE: That's what Hubert Humphrey was interested in. That's not telling what they would have – the administration would have decided.

INTERVIEWER: Carter, right? He would have had to decide this.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, he had to decide all these things. So having Doug become the administrator made the EPA path, I had support from both sides.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have anything to do – did you push the candidacy of Doug Costle?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, of course.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you knew him from Connecticut?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, yes, and I thought correctly that he would be a really good administrator. He's another deeply honest person, with a deep sense of judgement.

I'd seen him as deputy administrator under Doug, and they were very complementary. Yeah, I had no doubt that he would be excellent. Furthermore, coming from a state agency is really important if you're going to run something like EPA. You just – I can't imagine how anyone could function here if they didn't understand the reality of how things actually work at the state and municipal level. So much damage has been done over the years by very smart, well-meaning people at NRDC and other such places pushing things that are just not realistic. They make sense. They just aren't realistic.

So you have to understand that level. He and I, we brought in several other people from Connecticut. So Henry Beale, they put in charge of the regulatory process, and the regulatory reform process. David Tunderman, they put in charge of energy. Chris Beck came in and did water. All people from Connecticut with deep understanding. Connecticut had been one of those great, small agencies where because of Dan's leadership, and Connecticut is just a very healthy state. Except for Westchester, people really know one another. You make a deal, and people will honor it, because they're going to have to live together. You're not anonymous in that state. So we'd put through the Connecticut Enforcement Project.

<T: 20 min>

I'd had good support in doing that, and we were able to work with the Connecticut business and industry association, all these groups. When there was a change of administration, we were supported by the industry folks. They kept their word.

INTERVIEWER: How did that – we're interested in asking a couple of things about your time in the EPA. One of them has to do with politics and political influence on the agency, and your perception of how that played out, I guess, would be in the Carter years. You suggested a little bit about that. Framed in that way, how would you address that in terms of your time in the policy and budget office?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, it's planning and management.

INTERVIEWER: Planning and management. Okay, I call it—

INTERVIEWEE: It's a much bigger – planning and budget suggest two staff offices. That doesn't begin to explain what planning and management—

INTERVIEWER: Planning and management is far broader, yes.

INTERVIEWEE: To understand it, all these different pieces were brought together by Nixon. That wasn't that long before we arrived.

INTERVIEWER: Less than ten years.

INTERVIEWEE: Much less.

INTERVIEWER: Six or seven years really.

INTERVIEWEE: Well, it came together in '71. We arrived in—

INTERVIEWER: They were just leaving. That takes a lot of work to run together five different—

INTERVIEWEE: Planning and management was the place that's supposed to bring the whole thing together. To develop a regulation, there is an agency-wide process. That has to be run by somebody. That's us.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Were you with the administrator's office there, or was it a separate office?

INTERVIEWEE: No, this is a huge, huge department. I'd have to check the number, but I think there was 16 divisions, 19 divisions. There were four divisions in planning, and then we had contracts. The. what is it called? It's the audit function. So we were running the largest public works program at the time, the wastewater treatment plants. How do you deal with that? The inspector general, it's just—

INTERVIEWER: That was all under the planning and management.

INTERVIEWEE: That's the concept. It's the inspector general's independent. All the rest of this stuff, anything that cuts across, except for the general counsel's office was us. The general counsel, Jody Bernstein, and I were then and are now, really close friends, because our job was to make the thing come together and deal with all the vociferous tendencies.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I'll bet. So what about the political influence and shaping that process? Do you see any—how would you frame that in terms of the influences, external and political influences? Industry, labor, environmental groups, in terms of how they had impacts on just generally on what you did in your decision-making?

INTERVIEWEE: You can't even think about the role without that. There's a huge country-wide discussion going on and so one of my central goals, probably the single most important one throughout, was I was committed to getting the bubble or emissions trading in place.

This is a fundamental change in the regulatory process, not limited to the environment. It used to be command—the regulation, and control—enforcement. Now it's command, counterproposal, control. Emissions fees don't work. It's just a completely impractical idea politically and technically. Thousands of academic articles are written on it. It's a nutty idea, for most of the environment. Now, I designed them. The tar and nicotine tax in New York, etcetera, in some cases, they do work. I mean how do you measure what's coming out of a factory when you have a whole bunch of batch processes, for example?

You have such sophisticated devices as this thing. How dark is that cloud coming from – so just technically, not practical. You're going to impose an administrative burden. We have to deal with every single person versus a few exceptionals. Come on. This is not realistic.

INTERVIEWER: You mean every single point source within a facility or something. Is that what, or individual, go ahead? Continue to explain that.

INTERVIEWEE: If you put on an emissions tax, how are you going to do that? You have to be able to measure it. Everyone who puts that pollutant out, you have to go and collect the tax from. Whereas in enforcement—I'll give you the statistics for Connecticut where 14,000 registered sources of air pollution, and we had acute regulatory problems with 6, and pretty serious with 14.

We were totally overwhelmed dealing with those. All these academics just – it was nutty. You'll find some MIT book, I wrote a chapter on this, long before any of this got started. It's just not practical. Theoretically good, but just not practical either politically or technically. So the bubble solves that problem. You have the same somewhat crazy process, but you have a separate regulatory thing for each source: a paint spray booth.

Okay, well that's different from 100 other processes in a plant. Each one has its regulation, best available control, or whatever it is for that – or technology for that thing. Okay, well, the result, of course, is crazy because you literally have 100 to 1 different cost per pound of that pollutant removed. Process A versus Process Q. I'm not making up – 100 to 1 is quite normal. So counterproposal, we say, "Look, you guys – the engineers, you own this. If you figure out how to get more out of the 25 cent pounds, you can drop the \$100 dollar pounds."

So you have the same economic incentive to innovate in terms of control methods, changing in-process controls, whatever way, you go at it, dear engineers. "All of you, you have the same economic incentive as you do to improve your processes and then furthermore, because you own it, you know what to do and you have the incentive to operate and maintain your equipment." It's a completely different thing.

The alternative doesn't work. This does work, and the most important thing about it is that the sinks don't increase. There are no more air, land, water, or human capacity to absorb anything, but population and economic activity per capita keeps going up, which forces the cost of maintaining any level of pollution control or exposure up steeper and steeper, one of those basic laws, unless you have a lot of innovation going on in controls.

So my belief was and is that unless you get environmental regulation out of the structure that has major disincentives to innovation, and change it so that you have innovation is – that's the only way the environment doesn't lose. If you force the field up that curve, there's going to be more and more resistance, and it's only a matter of time. The only alternative is to increase the rate of innovation, and hence, emissions trading. Well, to say that emissions trading is controversial when we got started with it would be a mild understatement.

<T: 30 min>

The enforcement people had several flameouts, quite literally, but our strategy was we were going to walk – we could have just said Trump-like, we're going to have some order, but no. We said we're going to go through the full process, totally open. We're going to learn from the process, and it's

going to be legitimate. It took a while, but we did. David Hawkins, who is the air guy was fabulous. He's very smart. He spent his whole life at NRDC. He was not wildly excited about this, but his approach was to very thoughtfully point out this wouldn't work, eh. So we kept iteratively improving it.

INTERVIEWER: So there's a dialogue with NRDC and some of the other groups.

INTERVIEWEE: Well, he was at EPA.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, he was at EPA. So that dialogue was internal.

INTERVIEWEE: Well, it's also external. Nothing is a secret and you have to deal with the other agencies and the White House and everyone else. By making it completely open, no games—we don't do that. We gained legitimacy. By the time it went into place, the opposition hadn't entirely melted away, but there was a pretty good acceptance, and it was a much, much, better designed thing. So it's survived. It's moved to other fields. You have such places as EDF applying it to water allocation in California. The FAA using it for landing rights at airports. It's, so I think, we've had to continue fighting for it after I left EPA.

The Reagan people—idiots. They thought just because it was our idea, it must be bad. Literally, it was that sort of primitive level of thinking. We had to run around to deal with that problem, which we were able to do, because it was so stupid. Being so stupid doesn't necessarily mean they don't win unfortunately. That was another project over at the side, that say, the EPA, wasn't really dealing with. Its problems were different.

INTERVIEWER: Right. That was another set of issues, Congress.

INTERVIEWEE: That's an example of a change. It was the single most important change on my agenda. There was a whole series of others. We had some 45 changes in the regulatory process. This is the thing that Henry was leading, the regulatory reform group.

We helped Jimmy Carter—how do we deal with all these regulatory agencies that don't talk to one another? You have health effects research for example. Well, there were, I forget the exact number, but it was 240 and odd, I'm pretty sure that's right. I can look it up if you need—different federal agencies doing health effects research.

Some would say, and I forget what the number of regulation – it's a smaller number, but one regular is saying, "You've got to use brown ducks", and the other would say "frogs" for the same. It just drove industry crazy, and it was totally unnecessary costs. Carter set up the US Regulatory Council, which we suggested actually.

INTERVIEWER: To coordinate between the policies, or harmonize the government's approach to health effects.

INTERVIEWEE: Way beyond that. That's just one example of where there was craziness, because you have all these independent stove-piped bodies that are actually working in parallel ways.

INTERVIEWER: Did that have anything to do with the—what was it—the regulatory liaison group? I remember seeing something like that then in the—I've done some work on Carter.

INTERVIEWEE: It may be the same thing. I don't know, but I just think it was –

INTERVIEWER: Anyway, that—

INTERVIEWER: Wow. Okay, so let me just – one more thing on this, and then we'll move to the Reagan transition. It sounds like you've already answered a good deal of my second question about Carter years and the EPA, and that is the influence of science and the role of science and engineering and so forth. That a lot, it sounds like, of what your bubble idea consisted of was giving space for engineers to do their thing, to innovate, and created some goals for them, but at the same time opening things up to scientific and technical people to really, with incentives and so on, to really incorporate innovation into the way—private innovation into the way that regulations worked. Am I right about that?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh, yes. The purpose is to get managers and engineers, "You guys please figure out how to do this better." They would then counterproposal. "We're not going to do all these leaks in pipes. That's wildly expensive, but we're going to get the degreasing operation to go from 70 to 85 percent." One place that does that, best available technology for degreasing goes to 85 percent. It's very powerful. You've got to realize the old system was absolutely designed to prevent innovation, not consciously.

INTERVIEWER: Lock technologies in. Lock—

INTERVIEWEE: No one had—look. Who has an incentive to do better? Well, in theory the pollution control companies. But who are their clients? Yeah. They're going to really feel happy with you that comes up with some new technology that's going to cost them a lot of money. They're sure going to turn to you for their next order. That is not the way things work.

INTERVIEWER: Interesting.

INTERVIEWEE: There is an article in the National Journal, which I might be able to find, when Reagan came to office and said, "Look, these guys are all top down control, those folks at EPA."

INTERVIEWER: Command and control stuff, they were accusing those guys—

INTERVIEWEE: They came back in with command and control. We were the ones who were putting economic forces to work.

INTERVIEWER: Just one thing about the bubble policy in terms— that is the policy that was defended, upheld by the Supreme Court in 1984 in the Chevron versus NRDC case. Is that the one? I think it is.

INTERVIEWEE: I don't know the answer. I should. I can give you—here. Look. I can give you something that is, this is the Delayed Compliance memo. I think [inaudible]. So this also—

INTERVIEWER: Oh, that's about the Connecticut program.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, that's one of the innovations in Connecticut. You'll find it in all the environmental statutes. So the idea is—

INTERVIEWER: I didn't get to ask you a lot about that, but to have something written by you, that's helpful.

INTERVIEWEE: We brought a whole series of using economic tools to advance – we haven't even talked about this but there are more. So we're bringing a very different market-oriented approach and also shifting the internal management of the organization to not be a top down rules, control, fear. Now OMB hated that because they are—

INTERVIEWER: Carter's OMB.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, well he inherited them. They are the classic top down control. Jimmy Carter introduced EBB. We were one of his poster child for that, because we really believed in it. Civil service reform introducing performance pay, that's—there's a coherence to all these pieces. So in CPB, the people all across the agency are involved in decision-making, and it becomes a management process. Then OMB thinks they're going to mess with that? They're not messing with my budget. They're messing with the budget that everyone in the agency has worked out.

<T: 40 min>

By God, they're going to get an appeal. Jimmy Carter loves CPB. OMB didn't like this a whole lot.

INTERVIEWER: Huh, interesting. I think we need to get on to these events. First of all, this is based on what I've read from the write-ups of the Save EPA. This is what your person sent me, and then the other 2004 interview. I understand that you left EPA when Reagan administration came in in January of 1981. Now, can you – was that because – did you have a choice? You were a political appointee, right? You didn't have a choice. I just wanted to make sure I understood the dynamic there.

You left because Reagan had someone brought in to replace you with his political appointee.

INTERVIEWEE: Well, he didn't have anyone. It's the usual problem. Trump isn't the only one who has this trouble. The reason I wasn't at EPA right away was A) I had this transportation thing, but also security clearance. So Doug and I were the – because we started earlier than others, we were the only people from the administration at EPA for months and months.

INTERVIEWER: In the Carter administration.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: In '77, or was that—

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, '77.

INTERVIEWER: That took a while to fill out all those AA-ships, at that middle level. So where did you go after that? Where were you? What were you doing job-wise over this time when then in August? Where were you? I don't have that – where did you go after EPA?

INTERVIEWEE: I had a – my plan was a multi-dimension plan. I went back to McKenzie, New York office, and had a wonderful role there. So in my first incarnation

there, I helped create a new practice area in the design of regulatory intact systems. That's the Connecticut Enforcement Project and others.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay. You wrote it up here.

INTERVIEWEE: That's one product.

INTERVIEWER: That's one writing— that's one. This is actually probably out when you were still in the EPA.

INTERVIEWEE: This is, I think, before that. [...]. I had planned to work on Get America Working.

But then, here comes these people, and it became clear after a while that this was really bad. This was not a change in policy, that their strategy was to destroy the agency. I do not like doing negative things. I create things. That's what I do all my life. I just felt this was so bad, and I was in the somewhat unique position of being able to understand what they were doing because of my role and background.

INTERVIEWER: So let me just ask about – one thing I'm curious about is why it took so long for Gorsuch to, after she was nominated in February to be confirmed in really June, it was until. So do you have any insights into that process? That's something I can research.

INTERVIEWEE: I don't know. My guess is security. I don't know if this is true. I can tell you what I was told is that she knew she was coming to an agency with a destructive mission. She was afraid. She wanted to have enough people around her. I don't know if that's true. I have no insight, no access to her.

INTERVIEWER: We get to, according to this earlier interview, it was in August that you were first contacted by a senator, a Republican senator. This is what the interview says. Does that make sense? When did you first learn of what was afoot at EPA?

INTERVIEWEE: Pretty quickly.

INTERVIEWER: Through what means? How did you get the word? Do you remember? I mean—

INTERVIEWEE: I can give you some examples. I can't remember what week, but this was within a month or two of my leaving on January 20th at noon.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so it was earlier than this—

INTERVIEWEE: When Senator Stafford got in, that was very—thank God, he did, but we had been working for months. So I'll just give you a little sketch. In the administrator's office, they had a chart of the people in the agency, multi-colored. [...]

INTERVIEWER: Okay, give me a sense – okay, how did it start? Then, what was— who were your allies in making this movement really that Save EPA became? Who were your allies? Why was do you think at this time it was successful?

INTERVIEWEE: I'll – let me finish this story.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, sure.

INTERVIEWEE: They had this thing up on the wall, the senior civil servants. They had them graded as to who they wanted to get rid of. There were a lot of them that they wanted to get rid of. They had consulted with their friends in industry, and they had a very aggressive hit list. Well, guess what? This is hanging in the agency. Someone sees it. I know all these people. So, oh.

You look at the list and there is a pretty good correlation between excellent and being high on their hit list. Now I say that having represented the economics office and the regulatory development office. So we were the people who were actually saying, "You've got to take economics into account."

INTERVIEWER: Right. You were the guys doing it.

INTERVIEWEE: It was terrible. They started treating people terribly. So Eloise, who worked for me, started in the government as a young woman from very poor south. She had risen. She was so talented. They put her in a broom closet literally. They were terrible. You treat people that way. Guess what? Word gets out. Remember the contracts and personnel and budget people all reported to me, so I knew them.

INTERVIEWER: Career people. Now they have a new – yeah.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. They can't do a budget without going through budget. They can't fire people without going through personnel. They can't end contracts without going through contracts. It was really clear. It became clear within a few months that this was very serious, that they were planning this series of cuts. I just made the personal decision, which I did not want to do. I had a very full rich plate that I was very happy with, that I was going to have to step up because this required political leadership married to understanding budgets and management and that, how many people have that.

So we began organizing, and here's where you can get the – there's an exact date when Phil Shabecoff broke the story on the front story of the New York Times top left-hand column.

So two weeks before that, I brought the story to the Post and they wouldn't deal with it because they didn't want to be – the Reagan honeymoon, blah, blah, blah. They didn't want to be a "Here they go again." I tried multiple avenues, and I couldn't get them to move. We then went to Phil who is the environment reporter at the Times. I knew all these people from my –

INTERVIEWER: Your time in the agency.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, and had trust because our approach was we didn't play games. We were always direct and open with people.

<T: 50 min>

So it was very hard that spring because everyone was afraid of Reagan. The only person – the only person we could get in any committee or subcommittee to move was Al Gore. He proposed a tiny increase – or not increase – but restoration of cuts in enforcement, and lost. We knew he

would lose, but he at least had the courage to stick his head up above the parapets. Everyone else was afraid.

Our job was two-fold to always have the facts, and always be correct, and have them – if they were going to hold a press conference, we would be at the press conference with the true facts, and the full implications. Over time, people got to understand that we knew what we were talking about, and they could rely on us.

So what you're seeing now, EPN is modeled on that part of the work. The other part of the work was political. I can just give you a feel for that. We worked closely with Senator Stanford. He had the courage as a Republican to lead off and have hearings about this. That was very important for getting people to begin to say, "Oh, we better look. Maybe we shouldn't be so scared of this."

Then the second big target was middle January. The Congress comes back and all those staff people are wandering around. "What are we going to hold hearings on, blah, blah, blah?" In one work, we had Russ Train, who was being considered for Secretary of the Interior, close friend of the Vice President, sign off on an article, which you can look up: The Destruction of EPA by Russ Train.

So that came because I went to Russ with a number of the people he had appointed that he knew really well. We showed him all the data. He understood this was about the destruction of what he in office had helped build. He was courageous. He did something – we'll take a few moments. We had Art Buchwald. We had Doonesbury.

INTERVIEWER: Right, I saw [...].

INTERVIEWEE: We had a whole bunch of people. It was just a complete flood.

We got—I'm blocking the name of this woman. She's at ABC, office on DeSalle Street. She caught the—one of the EPA—Gorsuch was in Colorado, so they didn't catch her. But they got—when this thing started breaking, they invited someone from EPA over. I've forgotten who it was. It was one of the assistants. They lied. They lied on television and we'd been in her office for days with boxes of materials and civil servants coming in and talking to her. She knew the facts. That did not go over well. Basically, broke their credibility, and then there were a whole series of hearings a year later.

INTERVIEWER: Right, floodgates.

INTERVIEWEE: That ended up badly for them, very badly.

In the meantime, I was having some quiet talks with the Reagan political – White House political people. "This is going to cost you. You really don't want to do this." Eventually it was going to have to be a decision in the White house. Those people are not part of this fight. They're there for political reasons. At that point, the national polling showed 14 percent thought environment was the issue. It was all one way. So the Republicans had gotten away with years by hugging whales. Trump just gave his salary to the national parks.

INTERVIEWER: I know. [laughter]

INTERVIEWEE: That's what they always do, but they – so they get away with – the base politics here is that the environmental movement has a very broad diffuse base. It irritates all the organized sectors. This is a terrible problem. It's the fundamental structural problem the field has. We can only mobilize that diffuse space when we get it up to the point where people begin to see, "Oh, those people are really hurting our health." The combination of being totally reliable in facts, dealing with the politics with everybody, without exception, both parties. We also connected with the local environmental communities. Most of the environmental movement is local.

INTERVIEWER: [...]

INTERVIEWEE: We were able to give them a flow of information they didn't have access to. The political half of what we were doing was totally critical, but the factual based half was essential. That was based on at our peak, about 600 of the best environmental managers in the country. We organized this in a cell-like structure because they're vulnerable. I don't think anyone was hurt. If you come out, where do you work? You work for some environmental consultancy firm. Who are your clients? They're really going to be happy to hear that you're sticking it to Ronald Reagan and you're making it harder for him to deregulate them. Your clients are going to be really happy with you. It's very important to protect those people. So the only way you can do that is by keeping people separate.

It took a lot of time and effort, but I think – and a tremendous damage was done to the agency. The Reagan White House eventually got to the point, and this is exactly their phrase, "We must anesthetize this issue." I.e, we then had a truce. They brought Ruckelshaus and I'm in. It wasn't great, but the aggressive cutting and destruction came to an end, much short of what they had originally planned. So that's a very quick summary of what this was all about.

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[END OF INTERVIEW]