

# **MEMOIRS OF A BUREAU CURMUDGEON**

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Unabridged Version-----Politically Incorrect

A book has been written and Hollywood has made a movie about a family's history where central to the story is the reverence a father and his sons have for fly fishing in a western river. It is titled, A River Runs Through It. I grew up during the fifties and my father and I held the same reverence for fly fishing on the Gunnison River in Western Colorado. Our personal paradise extended from the western edge of the Gunnison River Canyon near the mouth of Steuben Creek to the bridge that led to Iola, which I think was a remnant of a coaling station for the old narrow gauge railroad long since abandoned. The River was lined with tall willow and cottonwood trees as it meandered through a vast hay meadow. Riffles were full of rainbow trout and slow deep holes were full of lunker German browns just waiting for the perfect presentation of a white winged royal coachman or ginger quill dry fly. The rolling river and the willow brush and grasses on the bank created an aroma that was intoxicating, I could not imagine anything more wondrous or beautiful, there was no place else on earth I would rather be.

Then something terrible happened. This paradise began to fall to the woodman's axe in 1960 as a government agency cleared the area for a large reservoir. Reservoir? What kind of no account fishing would that be? Flat water—oh, puleeze! I was to learn that this diabolical agency's name was the Bureau of Reclamation. What did that mean? Reclamation of what? It was destroying paradise, not reclaiming it! It was an outrage! I vowed that some how, some way, some day, I would even the score.

As a business major at Colorado State University (CSU) a few years later, I was in need of another economics class. Without any conscious thought I found myself in "Water Resource Economics E-201". At the bookstore I recall thumbing through the book recommended for the course and there before my very eyes was that despicable name once again... "Bureau of

Reclamation". What have I done? Now I have to spend three months reading about the "Bureau of Wreck the Nation"! But wait just a minute, on second thought, this might be good. Better to know something about the despoiler than remain ignorant of it and it's evil ways. While I did gain some knowledge of the importance of this agency to the economic growth and well being of the Western United States, not to mention how to calculate a benefit cost ratio, I could not begin to forgive it nor think kind thoughts about it.

After college and a stint in the Army, I was back home in Colorado Springs working as an accountant for the City Utilities, but looking for a better job, one offering more challenge and excitement (okay one offering more pay and earlier retirement). I took the old Federal Service Entrance Exam one cold spring day and later found my scores were high enough to qualify me for employment at the GS-5 and GS-7 levels. I sat back waiting for the job offers to roll in. I waited and waited and waited, finally giving up, concluding a Federal job was not in my future (believe it or not, in those days a Federal job was a coveted prize and people respected Federal employees). Then one late summer day (a dog day of August as it were), three job offers arrived in the mail. How exciting! Ripping into the envelopes, the first offer was for a GS-5 in the Army Material Command, Texarkana, Texas (yeah right!-- Army--Texarkana???), the next was for a GS-5 with the National Park Service in the Grand Canyon (Hmm ...), the last was, oh no!...a thousand times no!... the enemy, despoiler of paradise, the disgusting Bureau of Reclamation. But wait, what is this?...a GS-7?...in Denver?...a few miles north...Hmm... My practical intuitions were kicking in. It was more money and since in those days the government did not pay for your first move, it would cost less to move to Denver than say the Grand Canyon (where do you live at anyway in Grand Canyon?...a lodge miles from anywhere?...a rickety cabin on the edge of the canyon?).

The interview took place in an office on the fourteenth floor of a brand new fourteen story gray concrete building west of Denver, the one that still sticks out like a sore thumb. Bill Schlichting and Dale Raitt, the two Branch Chiefs in the Program Coordination Division conducted the interview. Expecting heinous ogres I was on my best defenses, but hey, these were regular, normal guys! (Well, Raitt was an engineer...). Anyway, the job was for a budget analyst reporting to Schlichting. It seemed like something I could handle. Besides, I reasoned that once inside I could seek my revenge. I really, really wanted that job now!

The call from Schlichting came early in September. The job was mine and Bill's question to me was when could I report? I quickly thought--two weeks notice to the City Utilities and, most importantly, a week for my dad and I to make our annual fall trip to the mighty Gunnison. Yes, paradise was lost, but we had found another location up stream at a collection of rustic cabins called Sleepy Hollow. It wasn't the same, but it wasn't bad and the fishing was good. We could not bear nor force ourselves to even drive down to see paradise lost, now lying under a body of flat water called Blue Mesa Reservoir.

On October 2, 1967, I embarked on a career that I didn't comprehend for one minute would span over one third of Reclamation's first one hundred years of history. Throughout those many years (that moved far too quickly), I've been excited, bored, frustrated, angry, happy, satisfied, dissatisfied, but most of all, continually mesmerized by the day to day happenings of the United States Bureau of Reclamation. The following is an account of the names, places and events as I recollect and interpret them to be. Whether history agrees or not doesn't really matter to me, this is how I saw it and lived it. I use "Reclamation" and "The Bureau" interchangeably because I

always have and at my advanced age, I feel I'm entitled.

If I could have scripted my career, I could not have arranged for a greater start or first boss than Bill Schlichting. He was one of the most honorable and forthright people I have ever met and he had a genuine interest in getting me off on the right path in Reclamation. He remained a very good friend until his untimely death. I was the new kid on the block in an office of five budget analysts. In addition to Bill, there was Rudy Mezner, Bob Cope and Tom Bumgartner. The rest of the Program Coordination Division, located on the other side of Division Chief George Powell's office, were the program analysts; Dale Raitt, Bill Hilmes, J.R. Smith, Harry Menzel, John Childress, Jim Moomaw, Denby Peeples and Bill Wiley to name a few. As I mentioned, the offices were in the top floor of the new building, the floors were shiny tile, carpeting was only allowed on "Mahogany Row" (top management), the desks were gray steel and only the big cheeses had offices, the rest of us were in an open bullpen arrangement---probably accounting for my total lack of sympathy for those later in my career who bemoaned the onset of systems furniture and cubicles as opposed to walled offices. As an interesting aside, Congress authorized and appropriated \$6 million to The Bureau to construct this new building. After moving in, someone (no doubt a Harvard grad) decided Reclamation should turn it over to the General Services Administration (GSA) to manage. GSA promptly began to charge The Bureau \$2 million annual rent. This may explain why Harvard has more prestige than CSU because I haven't yet figured out why this was good for the taxpayers or the farmers and power customers who repay most of what Reclamation spends. Mezner, Cope, Bumgartner and particularly Wiley were the first bonafide curmudgeons I met in the Bureau (a curmudgeon is an irascible cantankerous old goat who has tremendous knowledge about the organization, who gets very irritated at those who only think they know every thing and who will be damned if they will

share this knowledge unless you pay proper homage and appreciate that knowledge). In all of my experience, I have never seen a more concentrated collection of curmudgeons and reprobates in one location. But they were just as critical to my early education as was the formal and “on the job” training Schlichting was providing.

I didn't, of course, recognize it then, but it was the last of the “glory years” of Reclamation. We were truly the shining knight on the white horse. We walked with a swagger that would make John Wayne proud (Stone Cold Steve Austin for those too young to remember John Wayne). Our constituency, the water and power users, loved us as we kept providing them with bigger and better facilities. We kept spreading the cost of these facilities over more and more years. Water and power were cheap and plentiful. All was right with the world. A new kid on the block could not be in a more central and advantageous place for an education than in the budget shop, wedged in “Mahogany Row” on the fourteenth floor of the most respected engineering organization in the world, bar none.

As I embarked on this government career, my only source of knowledge about government was the tidbit that stuck in my pea brain from Mr. Heidtsmith's 9th grade Civics class at good ol' North Junior High School in Colorado Springs. I remembered there were three branches of government, the executive, legislative and judicial. Further, there were two Senators from each State and a bunch of Congressmen and they made up the legislative branch who made up the laws. The President was the executive and he had a bunch of people helping him called the Cabinet and they carried out the laws and ran the government. Finally, there was a bunch of judges called the Supreme Court who interpreted the Constitution and laws. Pretty good, huh! Well, soon enough I learned that things aren't exactly as they are laid out by academia. There is

a dynamic called politics that tends to shape, warp and distort. This is something that has been and will continue to be a tremendous influential force on the policy and day to day activities of Reclamation. In those days The Bureau seemed to me to be more of an agency of the Legislative Branch than of the Executive Branch. I learned the names of the powerful water bloc in Congress---Senators Carl Hayden and Alan Bible and Congressmen Wayne Aspinall, "Bizz" Johnson, Berne Sisk, and John Moss, long before I knew who the Secretary of the Interior was. Commissioner Floyd Dominy seemed way more dialed into the powerful Congressional water bloc than he was of anyone in the Executive Branch, particularly Interior Secretary Stuart Udall. The first Secretary I actually met was Rogers Morton. One day, unannounced, he walked into our office and shook my hand. I was stunned. First of all that it happened to a lowly new kid on the block (my desk being nearest the door might have had something to do with it) and secondly by the size of his hand, it engulfed mine and made all two hundred and twenty pounds of me feel downright dainty, it was one huge hand! I have since met and shook hands with every Interior Secretary until Bruce Babbitt, who ironically has held the office longest. Our paths just never crossed.

Those were heady days, days of bigger than life people conceiving bigger than life projects---the world's largest double curved thin arch dam, the California undersea aqueduct (taking fresh water entering San Francisco Bay and piping it undersea to Los Angeles) controlling the very weather itself, Project Skywater---to name just a few. Floyd Dominy was the Commissioner and was, in fact, a legend in his own time. Enough has been written about his prowess and importance to The Bureau on the political front. Equally important and in some sense more important was the person overseeing the technical front, Chief Engineer Barney Bellport. One day very soon after I started my career, happenstance found me getting on the elevator after

lunch--followed by (gulp!) "Mahogany Row". I watched Bellport, his deputy Harold Arthur, Jack Hilf, overseer of design and construction, and Hank Halliday the business manager step in behind me. My instinct was to bolt out and catch another elevator...too late the door had closed. By the time we reached the fourteenth floor, there was absolutely no doubt in my mind as to who was in charge. Bellport was mightily displeased with those present and spent the entire ride climbing up one side and down the other of their collective frame. I wanted to disappear into thin air, turn into a bug and crawl out, become invisible, be anywhere but there. In reality, my presence was probably only noticed by me. Participative management and employee input were concepts who's time had not yet come.

In simplest of terms, the function, budget and organization of The Bureau followed a very logical process in those days. Projects were conceived, triggering a planning process that took the idea through a reconnaissance investigation, appraisal study and, in the early days, a basin survey. This early work was done by planning offices that were funded through the General Investigation appropriation. Generally, the next step would be to provide this information to the Congress and if they authorized the project, a Feasibility and Definite-plan Report were prepared and construction was started with the funding of the Construction and Rehabilitation appropriation. At completion of construction, the project was brought on line and an operation and maintenance office was set up. All future funding would then be through the Operation and Maintenance appropriation. It was interesting that funds for the General Investigation and Construction and Rehabilitation appropriations were much easier to come by than for the Operation and Maintenance appropriation. Why? Politics. The local Congressman could brag to his/her constituency about this new project he/she is delivering to them. There isn't much glamour or glitz in maintaining something that already exists. Ho hum.



Working in the budget shop in the Chief Engineer's office allowed me to see and learn about virtually every thing that was going on in The Bureau, something that paid off in later years as I left new kid status and gained rising star status moving up the food chain to bigger and better jobs. One issue that became more and more apparent to me was that the Chief Engineer's office was over staffed even considering the large workload. This was, of course, no secret to most, but it certainly wasn't discussed by the curmudgeons gathered at the coffee urn every morning as they whined about their condition in life and longed for the good old days. Being the out spoken and inquiring minded person I've always been (smart alec), I once asked my curmudgeon educators, "If you are so miserable, why don't you retire?". Ashen silent faces, the new kid had uttered the forbidden "R" word. That part of my education soon enough dried up. What was happening, however, was The Bureau was starting to feel a pinch brought on by a once incredibly large staff resulting from the post World War II repatriation program (provide jobs for the returning GI's) and a more scrutinized budget, ironically because of the ongoing Vietnam War. Thus, the stage was set for a defining moment in my career and the decade that changed Reclamation forever.

By the early 1970's things were becoming more and more clear to me. In spite of the tremendous knowledge about The Bureau working on the budget afforded me, it was becoming routine and boring. Every year same old thing just different numbers. The bread and butter part of my duties was to put out a monthly budget summary report to the Commissioner's office and to put together another quarter inch thick budget report for all the big and medium cheeses in the Denver office. Once, while on a detail to the Commissioner's office (getting all of \$8 a day per diem), I looked into what happened to the report I sent back there each and every month. What I

found didn't surprise me. The budget secretary received it and filed it, nobody used or even looked at it. I related this to Schlichting and asked if I could prepare it but not send it for a couple of months to see if anyone noticed. He agreed. We never heard a word, not even from the secretary. I quit preparing it. A unique survey method came to my mind for the other report. I would occasionally selectively slip an interesting article from the pages of Playboy into one or two of the reports sent to the medium cheeses whom I suspected might discretely enjoy reading. I never heard a single comment and, believe me, some of the articles were really interesting, not to mention really big. My conclusion was that this report got limited review. I never related this to Schlichting and continued to crank out the report. Now, I would not recommend this survey method today, but if someone is so inspired, I would strongly suggest articles from Field and Stream magazine. Many things were swirling in my head, the curmudgeons who were eligible to retire had no intention to do so, thus slowing any advancement possibilities, the most important aspect of my job was of little interest to anyone and intuition told me that those denizens I saw scuttling to and fro in the hallways carrying stacks and stacks of computer punch cards would soon enough figure out how to replace me, my one hundred key Marchant calculator (WWII surplus), and ten key adding machine (Korean War surplus). Where did Personnel keep the vacancy announcements?

Before moving on, it would be fitting to show the character of some of the aforementioned curmudgeons. I'll start with Rudy Mezner. Rudy was one of those people who was a lot older than they look. He had worked for the Bureau since long before WWII and his defining characteristic was his dapper look. Rudy was about 5' 5" and always dressed in various tailored pin striped suits with monogrammed shirts and a fedora, something on the order of a James Cagney gangster. In those days everyone wore coat and tie, but most came out of the Sears

catalog or the rack at J.C.Penney's--government pay being what it was (is?). Bob Cope and Tom Bumgartner were WWII vets with stories to tell. Bob was on a mine sweeper that sank outside San Francisco Bay and Tom was a bombardier on a B-17 stationed in England. Bill Wiley was a gruff old codger with a black patch over one eye, I pretty much steered clear of him. Denby Peebles was one of the more interesting of the bunch. He was probably at or near seventy years old and as one of the senior analysts, he had a coveted, new fangled, mechanical Friden calculator. Some how, Denby had figured out the right combination of numbers and the right formula that when he triggered the calculation, the Friden churned out a tune one could dance to. John Childress was a pipe smoker who started more than one fire in waste baskets with his discarded match. Bill Hilmes kept the fire extinguisher between their desks. Bizarre folks were all around the building. The curmudgeons used to talk about one of the engineers who dyed his hair with shoe polish or lamp black. I was later to bear witness to this fact when one rainy day I was on a crowded elevator standing directly behind this person, watching inky black rivulets flowing off the back of his head and down his erstwhile white collar. There was another gent who wore fuzzy earmuffs because he didn't like sound when he worked. I ought to write a book about the characters I've run across in The Bureau.

Ed Hawk, perhaps the most notorious and mysterious of all the curmudgeons deserves his own paragraph. Even though I never met Ed, it was obvious that he carried considerable weight, because I saw his name in several letters as head of various committees--the Ed Hawk Committee. I was later to learn that Ed was a figment created by that now piece of Americana called the Steno-Pool. In those days most of the correspondence was dictated on recording machines and sent to the pool for typing. Ed's real name was "ad hoc". In retrospect, it was amazing how many letters were surnamed and signed without being read. Another piece of

correspondence that was signed and sent out made reference to “the source of the scriptures”.

What the author intended to say was “thesaurus of descriptors”. The letter made for some interesting reading.

One more side track and I promise to move on. Earlier I alluded to the \$8 daily per diem, let me explain. In those days the bureaucracy was incredibly miserly. The per diem rates were on a sliding scale that reduced the amount allowed the longer you were in detail status. I don't remember exactly what the rates were when I started that particular detail in Washington, probably around \$20, but I do remember the \$8 I was paid during the last couple of weeks of this training detail in the Commissioner's Office. I stayed in the old Park Central Hotel, it was closest to the Interior building and for D.C. the rates were reasonable (something in the range of \$20). Old timers reading this may recall the Park Central. After the first couple weeks you were on first name basis with the mice and roaches that shared your room. There was no air conditioning, but the window did open. Mine had a nice view of a dirty brick wall about ten feet away. The risk you ran opening the window was letting the rats in with the cooler air. My mice and roach friends did not appreciate sharing the room with rats, so I left the window closed most of the time. Another point to be made on the miserly scale had to do with vehicles. In those days government vehicles were strictly no frills; no radio, no air conditioning. A motor, four wheels and a steering wheel was about it. It wasn't until the 70's that radios and air conditioning started to show up on vehicles.

In 1972, a GS-12 Administrative Officer position in the Durango Planning Office was advertised. Max Stodolski, a friend of mine, had just recently transferred there and a quick call to him convinced me to apply. When I went for the interview with Project Manager Ed

Wiscombe, I was armed with budget knowledge of the projects they were studying; San Miguel, Dolores, Paradox Valley and Animas-La Plata. It must have helped because Ed offered me the job. I reported to Durango, Colorado, in September. My star was on the rise. As a footnote, I should mention my Denver job was abolished after I left (keep track of this). While I was still back in Denver, I was vaguely aware of a law that had recently been passed called the National Environmental Policy Act which meant little to me at the time, but in Durango it was brought up in conversations in staff meeting on a regular basis. It didn't appear to me, or many others at the time, that it was that big a deal. A few more papers to prepare and file. Other events that didn't seem terribly significant at the time were also occurring. Ellis Armstrong became Commissioner, and according to the curmudgeons, there was bad blood between him and Bellport. Bellport retired, moved to California and hung out his consultant's shingle. The Chief Engineer's office became the Engineering and Research Center (ERC) and Harold Arthur assumed the helm. Soon after, Arthur named Donald Duck as his deputy. I kid you not. Donald was married to Dolores and, to my knowledge, they did not have nephews named Huey, Dewey or Louie. Shortly after my arrival in Durango, the ERC was in the middle of a reorganization that saw the first post war brain drain as its numbers were reduced. Many of the curmudgeons could no longer not think about nor not utter the "R" word. Many reluctantly embraced it. On another front, the members of the water bloc in Congress began to retire or lose elections and our legislative power base began to erode. In 1973 another law was passed that caused the planners to scratch their heads, it was called the Endangered Species Act. What did it mean? How does it relate to that other law? What does it mean consult with the Secretary? Sounds like more paperwork--job security for the planners.

At this point I have to digress to tell you about one man's hog heaven. The Animas River flows

right through Durango, it looks to be a clone of the Gunnison AND the then State record German brown trout had been caught under the Main Street bridge. With nostrils flared and fly rod in hand I began to fish and catch fish---all the while eyeing the prime stretch south of town. I was aware I was looking at the Southern Ute Indian Reservation lands and since I never saw anyone fishing there, I assumed it was not allowed. Imagine my elation when I found out that for five bucks you could get an annual reservation pass, imagine further my pure bliss that, for reasons I never figured out, nobody did. I was truly in hog heaven for the two years I lived in Durango. For all intents and purposes I had a private fishing preserve for a measly five bucks! The fishing was the best I have ever experienced and I never saw another living being, except my dad and a few deer, the whole time I fished there. Hog heaven was to last only two years, however. In the fall of 1974 a decision was reached to consolidate the Durango and Grand Junction offices. My position was to be abolished and I was to be transferred to Grand Junction as the Budget Officer---Enos Stone was the Administrative Officer there and he had about thirty years seniority on me. Where did we keep the vacancy announcements?

One more story, if it survives the editors cut. While in Durango, I was driving a senior Reclamation manager for a visit to Navajo Dam to investigate a pesky leak that had developed in the abutment. He was a rotund and stoic man of little humor and few words. As we started to leave for the drive back, he shouted "STOP!". Startled to hear his voice, I slammed on the brakes and watched him slide forward to become tightly wedged between the seat and the dash. As he dropped off the seat, he... ah...broke wind with a sonic resonance that would make an Arabian stallion proud. I ran around, opened his door and tugged on his shoulders until he popped out and landed on the berm of the road. With all the dignity he could muster, he stood up, picked up his sunglasses from the floor (the reason he wanted me to stop in the first place) and got back in

the car. I had my upper lip clenched tightly between my teeth to maintain composure on the long drive back.

Timing and, in the case of rising stars, contacts and mentors are everything. A GS-13 Administrative Officer position was open in Auburn, California at the construction office for what was to be the world's largest double curvature thin arch dam. I called two people I knew from Denver who were now in the Sacramento Mid-Pacific Regional Office, Paul Olbert and Hank Masterson. Paul was the Assistant Regional Director for Administration and Hank was a branch chief in Personnel; they both suggested I apply. The interview took place with Project Construction Engineer Don Alexander and, still armed with the knowledge about Auburn Dam I had gained in the budget office, I was able to convince him that I was the man for the job---I suspect with some help from Olbert and Masterson. I reported for duty the week between Christmas and New Years in 1974. What a contrast with the genteel and studious ways of a planning office. I was now in the world of clod kicking, hard hat wearing he-men smoking cigars the size of which would downright impress a Presidential Intern. Gaylord Hay was the soft spoken Office Engineer, Rod Somerday was the outspoken Field Engineer and Lou Frei was the ranting Project Geologist. One of the interesting things to observe was the jockeying for position between Lou and Rod to be the "daddy rabbit" for construction operations. Many Auburn employees went on to hold important jobs in The Bureau, mainly in Denver and on the Central Arizona Project.

Auburn Dam's Environmental Impact Statement was one of the first prepared and the first challenged for adequacy. After a rewrite, a judge declared it adequate and, in 1974, work on the massive foundation began. In August 1975 an earthquake occurred some forty or fifty miles

north of Auburn that brought into question the seismic safety of the dam being built. A massive seismic/geological investigation began. Then, less than one year later, the defining moment for The Bureau occurred in Idaho at about 7:45 A.M. June 5, 1976, when a survey party noticed a small leak near the right abutment of a newly constructed dam on the Teton River. By noon the crest had collapsed and the embankment was breached. Reclamation's swagger turned into a stagger and we started to second guess ourselves on everything, including Auburn Dam. Our confidence was rocked. To compound the Auburn situation, President Carter, soon after coming to office, listed Auburn on his "Hit List" of water projects he felt were unneeded. Further construction contracts were put on hold. Hit lists, seismic investigations, no new contracts—where are the vacancy announcements?

I should mention that the 1976 Carter/Ford presidential campaign was the first in my memory (and the first of many to come) where the candidates openly attacked the bureaucracy, in many instances placing blame of the woes of the world on the Federal employee's back and painting us as under worked and overpaid slow moving sloths. We unfairly lost prestige that we have never recovered. The Carter administration was the first in my experience to place a pure political appointee with no prior Reclamation experience in the role of Commissioner, the former State Engineer in Idaho, Keith Higginson. Although it only lasted the length of his Administration, Carter also gave us a new name, "Water and Power Resource Service" which to me made eminent sense then and now as being a more contemporary, descriptive name for Reclamation--- unless anyone wants to argue that we are reclaiming the environment from the family farm (is that a snicker I hear?). One other thing Carter did that has had a role in reshaping The Bureau was to form the Department of Energy (DOE) and transfer the power distribution and marketing function from Reclamation to the newly formed Western Area Power Administration. What



were regional divisions under Reclamation became virtual dynasties with fiefdoms spread far and wide under DOE. Many in Congress continue to question the wisdom of that action. Commissioner Higginson began the shift in Reclamation's public policy by placing more emphasis on environmental protection, economic justification and dam safety. Auburn survived the "Hit List", but Carter did not survive his bid for reelection. Some say his attempt to eliminate or curtail the Congressional pork barrel system (Hit list) undermined the effectiveness of his Presidency. At any rate, as the Carter Administration left office they declared that a safe dam could be built at Auburn, but no new construction contracts were to be let until new flow standards on the lower American River were addressed.

The Mid-Pacific Region GS-14 Program Coordination Division Chief's vacancy announcement hit the streets in the fall of 1978. The position reported to Paul Olbert and I was concerned that all the times I called him a blithering idiot when we argued over administrative matters would haunt me. He must have agreed that he was a blithering idiot or he appreciated someone who stood his ground in an argument because I began my new duties right after Christmas. My old job at Auburn was abolished (you're probably catching on to this). In this new job, I was once removed from a Bureau legend that had held the Program Coordination job for many years prior. Remember the story of meeting Rogers Morton when I was a new kid? At about the same time another individual walked into the old budget shop. He was wearing a fedora and a trench coat and my reaction was-- "Wow, the Godfather!". I nearly fell out of my chair when he shook my hand and said "Hi! I'm Mike Catino from Sacramento". Mike went on to be the Regional Director in Sacramento and a lot of us affectionately referred to him as the Godfather.

In those days the Program Coordination Chiefs had status in Reclamation and held one of the

most powerful positions in their Regions. We met formally as a group at least four times a year, twice with the Commissioner and all the Regional Directors. We also had a close camaraderie that served The Bureau well. Managing the budget was handled on the phone. If we had surplus funds, I would call Gordon Wendler in Denver or Que Quigley in Boise and move the money around. Conversely, if we had a short fall, a quick call to Dwayne Wynia in Amarillo or Darrel Hogg in Salt Lake City would usually bear fruit. When all else failed, a call to Chuck Lewis in Boulder City would always save the day, simply because he had the Central Arizona Project construction budget under his purview (big bucks). Of course once Mid-Pacific Region's own San Felipe Project got underway, Bill Klostermeyer, The Bureau's Program and Budget guru in the Commissioner's Office, referred to me as the "CEO of the First National Bank of San Felipe". We seemed to always have surplus money thanks to the local beneficiaries continually getting Congressional write-ins added to the budget, even when we didn't need it. This "green eyeshade" team received many kudos from the Department of the Interior and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for budget presentation and performance over the years.

Billy Martin was the Regional Director at the time I went to the Region and he was perhaps the most pragmatic Regional Director I have worked for. To illustrate, Billy assigned me to represent the Region before the California Water Commission whenever he was invited to one of their meetings. Those were the days of Governor Jerry "Moonbeam" Brown and to get a clue as to the makeup of the Commission, I refer you to pages 350 and 351 of the September, 1977, edition of the National Geographic. The lady living in the tree house on a redwood stump was a member of the Commission. I'm dead serious and if you cannot find the issue, I do have a copy. Needless to say, defending water projects to this group was a character builder. Many

who attended the public meetings of the Commission had an aura of burnt rope and rancid bacon grease about them. As this group railed against dams and canals and subsidized water to farmers, I wondered if it occurred to them where bacon came from or, for that matter, what they could personally do with a little water? I feel that, to a large degree, subsidized water for farms occurred because the early estimates on farmers ability to repay were overly optimistic and later it helped preserve the small family farmer suffering in the Great Depression on their 160 acres. But, it is important to remember that affordable water for family farmers was a public value of the time. In later years corporate (albeit sometimes disguised) farms were becoming the rule. The Reclamation Reform Act of 1982 was passed ostensibly to recognize their existence and to begin to address the subsidized water issue through higher prices for water on excess acreage (something the Act also increased was the acreage that could receive water from 160 acres to 960 acres). Existing long term (40 year) contracts were a shield around most of the subsidy. However, as these contracts reached their term, new contracts were written to address subsidies.

Throughout this era, The Bureau fought the good fight to keep Auburn Dam on track. The beneficiaries of the project were behind us all the way shouting words of encouragement. Those of us in The Bureau were encouraged when the Carter administration declared a safe dam could be built at Auburn and we had every confidence in the world when the Reagan administration took office that we would complete the project. Reagan gave Auburn a tentative green light, but insisted on up front cost sharing by the beneficiaries. Not a problem, we thought, until we turned around to find that our supporters knees had turned to jelly in the face of this new bully. Auburn Dam is still in a state of suspended animation and water supply contracts written in anticipation of the yield from Auburn have compounded Reclamation's inability to meet obligations for water throughout the CVP. There are more and more Reclamation projects

where enhanced cost sharing has been negotiated; parts of the Central Arizona Project, the Buffalo Bill Modification Project and the Shasta Temperature Control Device come to mind. Also, power users have begun to fund more power related maintenance items on Reclamation powerplants.

The Reagan Administration gave The Bureau its first pharmacist as Commissioner--Robert (Bob) Broadbent. In actuality he was a respected politician from Las Vegas who soon gave the Mid-Pacific Region its first politically oriented and youngest regional director, David Houston. Dave was unquestionably one of the brightest individuals I have ever met. I can remember more than once briefing him on an issue totally new to him while walking down the hall to a meeting and as the meeting took place he knew more about the topic than I did. In 1984, my friend and mentor, Paul Olbert retired, leaving open the Assistant Regional Director for Administration job.

I applied for the position and Dave picked me. You are probably way ahead of me on this by now, but a few years after I left the Program Coordination position, it was abolished.

The decade of the 80's saw two major realignments of The Bureau. Regions were consolidated from the original seven, which incidentally were referred to by number when I first started, to five. In 1985 the Lower Missouri Region (Region 7 to curmudgeons) was consolidated with the Upper Missouri Region (Region 6). Later, in 1988, most of the Southwest Region (Region 5) was folded into the aforementioned region to create the vast Great Plains Region. A small piece of the Southwest Region was added to the Upper Colorado Region (Region 4). Rumors persisted for some time that Mid-Pacific Region (Region 2) and the Pacific Northwest Region (Region 1) would be combined and that the Lower Colorado Region (Region 3) would join the Upper Colorado Region. Neither rumor has panned out--at least not yet. Now, having said all

of that, the change from numbers to names, I suppose, was because names were more lyrical and prettier sounding than numbers. Curiously, bureaucrats being bureaucrats, we're not satisfied until we've assigned everything an acronym, we now refer to the regions by letters; GP, MP, UC, LC, PN. Alas...

With notable exceptions like the massive Central Arizona Project, and a few smaller projects like Dolores, Paradox Valley and Dallas Creek in Colorado and San Felipe in California, Reclamation's construction program was starting to wane. One by one, The Bureau construction stiffs began to snuff out the cigars and hang up their hardhats. The exodus in the MP Region was accentuated with the retirement of Bill Hart who managed construction of the San Felipe Project. Bill, a genuine curmudgeon, used to show his disdain for things not specific to construction by wearing bright red Mickey Mouse socks to Regional Office management meetings. Even I picked up on the social comment. Looking back, I think the only over arching authorizing legislation we have had since the '60's involving construction was the "Reclamation Safety of Dams Act of 1978". We have had a few specific authorizations like the temperature control device at Shasta Dam, but the construction heartbeat has become a mere murmur of its former self. In addition to Auburn, other construction projects were stopped midway. Construction on the San Luis Drain in California was halted because of environmental concerns with having the outfall in the Delta. In the interim, drain water was spread in an area designated as the Kesterson Wildlife Refuge. An environmental alarm was sounded when three eyed, four legged birds were found in the refuge, a result of selenium build up from farm drainage. The decade could be defined as a paper decade as volumes of reports on the environment were written and, in the second half, a time of self examination for Reclamation.

The transition between the Reagan and Bush administrations, even though both were Republican, brought on a whole new cast of characters in the politically appointed positions (which seems to be ever expanding). Let me take a moment to illustrate what I have observed during these times.

As the loyal campaigners (or donors) are rewarded with appointments to high level government jobs, it seems like they all will have stopped at the nearest shopping mall bookstore and bought the latest management technique de jour book--Management by Objectives, Zero Based Budgeting, Total Quality Management, ad nauseam--as they charge in to show the careerist how they are going to improve our productivity. Swell... Fittingly, they have unwavering loyalty to the administration they helped elect, but they often assume (or demand) the careerist do likewise.

It is my experience that except for the chameleon careerist, most careerist first loyalty is with the United States and the agency they work for, otherwise why be a civil servant? Careerist have their own political preferences and occasionally have developed good working relationships with Congressional members and their staffs. I wonder if it occurs to the political appointee just where some of the occasional really dicey questions they are asked at congressional hearings come from? Loyalty is a personal thing.

Most political appointees are decent folks with our Nation's interest at heart and after a few months in office realize that the careerist do actually know a thing or two about what they are doing and a mutual respect begins to develop. However, with every Administration there are the political peacocks who never show respect for the civil servant because, in their minds, they alone hold all of the answers and the careerist are lower caste drones there simply to do their bidding. I have noticed with some level of alarm that in recent years more and more career managers are becoming more and more concerned with "politically correct" than they are with

following the letter of the law and accomplishing good public policy. I read once, and believe it to be true, that the career civil servant, the “bureaucracy” if you will, has served as the ballast in the “Ship of State” that keeps it from swinging too far to the right or to the left every time there is a change in the Administration. As more and more politically appointed positions are established further and further down in the hierarchy of an agency the more wildly the “Ship of State” will veer. I truly believe that the Congress should put firm limitations on the number of political appointees to one or two per agency and eliminate the “burrowing in” efforts of political appointees during changes in Administrations. One saving grace is that the strutting and crowing of any given political peacock usually lasts less than twenty four months and there is always the chance that they will be replaced by an appointee that can develop a mutual respect with the careerist.

Now that I’ve wound myself up real tight on politics, I’m going to digress to tell you about an interesting near miss I had with politics. During my tenure at the Auburn project, I was befriended by a gentleman by the name of Wendell Robie. Among other things, Wendell was the driving force behind the Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley, owned a bank with branches throughout Northern California, owned a lot of Northern California and was the most powerful man in the Republican party in Northern California. We became friends while I was a member of the Lions Club he chartered in the 1930’s when I was the Administrative Officer at Auburn Dam where I worked closely with Wendell on relocating the Western States Trail, another one of his interests. (Allow me an interesting sidebar in this digression)--Wendell once took me for a ride in his car to check out possible trail sites along the canyon of the Middle Fork of the American River. We wound our way down the canyon wall on a poor excuse of a single lane mining road at a place called Ruck-a-Chucky. We got to the bottom of the canyon and stopped

at the edge of the water. While I was nervously pondering how we were going to back all of the way out of this predicament, Wendell gunned the engine and we plunged into the river!

Somehow I stifled the scream of terror in my throat, drawing courage from Wendell's nonchalant demeanor as water began flowing through the floorboards of his family sedan. We bounced and drifted and finally bounded up on the remains of the mining road on the other side whereupon Wendell opened his door and suggested I do the same to drain out the part of the river that we had captured during the crossing. When the color returned to my face, I thought "That was weird." I was later to learn that we were just ahead of the pulse flow released daily for power production from the upstream dams. Apparently Wendell did this frequently and somehow I figured it was pointless to ask him why he didn't own a jeep.

To get me back on the real point of this digression, it was during one of my many encounters with Wendell that he asked if I wanted a career in politics. He stated that "they" would get me on the Placer County Board of Supervisors and then look to the State Assembly and, in time, national politics. This was not to be taken lightly, because Wendell controlled the GOP in that part of California. I asked him why Bizz Johnson, a Democrat, held the Fourth Congressional seat. Wendell smiled and responded that they had an "understanding" and that when the time was right, he would put his man in. His man was Gene Chappie, a colorful member of the State Assembly that I had met and became to know. The time was right very soon after that and Gene became the next Congressman to represent the Fourth District. I thought about Wendell's offer, but ultimately thanked him and said no.

In 1987, Commissioner Dale Duvall asked Reclamation to examine the direction of its programs. That examination, "Assessment '87", pointed out the need for water conservation, improved



management of projects and the need to address environmental values. The hiring of people with biological science degrees was almost reaching a par with hiring engineers launching yet another metamorphosis of The Bureau. The last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was kicked off with an initiative of Commissioner Dennis Underwood entitled, "The Strategic Plan". It used "Assessment 87" as a base and laid out a new long term "big picture" for Reclamation with specific goals and action plans. The Bureau was beginning to turn greener and greener as the world was presented with the "Strategic Plan" in 1992. That year also saw the passage of one of the most significant laws to affect and change the course of Reclamation, the "Reclamation Projects Authorization and Adjustment Act of 1992". It was a far reaching law with forty titles impacting almost all of Reclamation, but nowhere so dramatically as California's Central Valley Project with Title XXXIV, The Central Valley Improvement Act (CVPIA). The CVPIA assigned environmental protection and restoration a priority equal to that of water and power deliveries. Implementation of the law has been a difficult process because it so radically changed a paradigm that had existed for over a half a century.

In 1993, Regional Director Roger Patterson suggested that I take the vacant Project Superintendent's job at Folsom Dam. I at first resisted because it was yet another job at my same grade level (my mentors had long since left The Bureau and my rising star had long since stalled--I guess the other potential mentors I had called blithering idiots had taken the words personally), besides, the only thing I knew about electricity was that it could shock you (I was later to learn that a turbine runner was not an Olympian from India). I was aware of and Patterson pointed out that we had some real personnel and administrative issues at Folsom that needed attention. Additionally, he indicated he was going to assign more responsibility and consolidate field offices into Area Offices (ours became the Central California Area Office

[CCAO]). Silly me, I thought under those circumstances there would be a grade raise someday.

Alas... Twenty four years as a GS-14 must be a record. Am I starting to sound like the coffee urn curmudgeons of so long ago? Oh well, it was a much better commute; half the distance, no freeway, dodge deer and count road kill. You probably guessed but, Patterson abolished the Assistant Regional Director-Administration position. For those of you who have not kept score, every Bureau job I have held has been abolished after I've left it (I'm sure that is a record). A record that I might share with a handful of others is that I have worked under ten Commissioners, seven acting Commissioners and eight Presidents.

Another event occurred in 1993 that impacted all of Federal Government. It was a Vice Presidential initiative to change the way the government works called the National Performance Review (NPR). "More with less" became the battle cry to "cut red tape, put customers first, empower employees to get results, and get back to basics" (if you are tempted to say "yada, yada, yada" at this point, feel free). Commissioner Dan Beard outlined his plan for the Bureau that flattened management, implemented the Area Office concept and to "...focus on: operating our projects with greater environmental sensitivity...". Impacts on staff were felt through out the organization, but nowhere as severe as the Denver office, which I think by this time was being called the Reclamation Service Center--I admit I've lost track. It's direction was to de-emphasize design and construction and to provide support to all Reclamation offices at the lowest possible cost. The Denver workforce was reduced and realigned accordingly.

A challenge to Denver's new direction occurred a little after 8:00 A.M. Monday morning, July 17, 1995. I was at my office at Folsom Dam loading my briefcase for a trip to the Regional Office for a round of meetings when Dennis McComb, our O&M Chief, stuck his head in my

office and dead panned, "Gate 3 just failed". My reaction was--what the hell is he talking about? He repeated and still unbelieving, we jumped in a car and headed for the dam. The sight that unfolded as we came around the bend was incredible. Water was spewing a hundred feet in all directions from the center of the dam---I hope to shout the gate had failed! We quickly assembled a team consisting of experts from our Denver Office, the Corps of Engineers, McClellan Air Force Base and California Department of Transportation, among others to immediately go to work on figuring out how to plug the hole and design a long term fix. The bell had been tolled that Reclamation's aging infrastructure is in need of attention. Still, sufficient budgets to address these problems have been hard coming. You can see why Area Managers sometime feel like Quasimodo trying to get Esmeralda's attention ringing and ringing the bells of Notre Dame.

The '90's saw a renewed effort toward bringing about a more diverse workforce. In retrospect we have come a far way during my career, albeit not far enough in the eyes of many. If I could take you back to 1968 and the curmudgeons at the coffee urn and had I told them then that at that very moment there was a grammar school girl on Long Island, New York, named Maryanne Bach who will go on to get an advanced degree in ecology and will become a Regional Director, or that Felix Cook, the black engineer toiling in the catacombs of their building, will go on to head the technical side of Reclamation, they would have looked at me funny and thought to themselves "This poor kid must have suffered a head wound when he was in Vietnam....what the hell is ecology?". I take personal pride in the small level of career help I've been able to provide to some of the women I've had the privilege of working with over the years. Donna Darr was a supply clerk in the Auburn Office when we first met, she went on to become Mid-Pacific Region's most successful liaison officer in the Commissioner's Office. Dee Winn was my

secretary and Marcy Turner was a budget clerk when I became the Program Coordination Chief.

By the time I left the position, both were professional graded budget analysts and Marcy went on to be a Branch Chief. Susan Hoffman's career has proceeded from soil scientist to Mid-Pacific Region's Planning Officer. On the other hand, try as I might, I was not able to get the grade the CCAO Administrative Officer, Joni Ward, deserved. It is locked in at GS-12. It is particularly a concern because I was a GS-13 Administrative Officer at Auburn and my duties were no greater than Joni's were when she had the job. Does a glass ceiling exist? Do we have a way to go?

At the turn of the millennium those of us with a part of the CVP were wrapped up in renewing the long term contracts our users had held for forty years. The changes brought on by the CVPIA made the process a contentious one. First of all, the contracts could only be renewed for twenty five years. A situation that made it more difficult for farmers to get long term loans for farm operations. Additionally, less water was available to the users as more was committed to environmental restoration. And, of course, the water that would be available would have a much higher price. It was a blow felt most severely by smaller family farms and those with marginal lands. The values of the first part of the century, symbolized by the famous picture of the H. J. Mersdorf "Desert-Ranch" with the sign stating "HAVE FAITH IN GOD AND U.S. RECLAMATION", had been reversed by the end of the century. Because of delays in finalizing the environmental documentation, interim contracts were negotiated to bridge the expired contracts and the new long term contracts. The whole process took over a decade to complete. In the early part of the contract negotiations, I had the privilege of working with The Bureau's quintessential curmudgeon, Cliff Quinton. Cliff was a repayment specialist and the Central California Area Office's chief negotiator who had a scowl and demeanor that would make a

middle linebacker weak in the knees. He was extremely knowledgeable and was never tripped up in negotiations. For years after his retirement, I was able to keep contractors in line with the mere threat of bringing Cliff out of retirement.

By and large, John Q. Citizen takes water for granted and why shouldn't he? Isn't it always there when he turns on his tap? Isn't there abundant food in the grocery store? Doesn't the air conditioner kick on when the temperature gets above 78 degrees? Aren't all of his favorite golf courses a verdant green? Few people outside of the industry have a clue as to how complex the water world is. As the twentieth century rolled into the new millennium, those who read newspapers and watch the news should have been getting the message that they better start paying more attention to the many faceted water issue. For example, story after story has been in the news about the plight of the west coast salmon. The fisherman blame the farmers and the dams that supply them, the farmers say the fisherman are over harvesting the sea, the environmentalist blame the loggers, fishermen and farmers **and** they all blame the sea lions.

Who is right? Who is wrong? Is the answer to stop fishing? Put farms out of production? Stop logging? No, of course not, people still value plentiful food and good homes! When I first started my career, nearly one third of John Q's disposable income went for food, today it is more like one tenth. John Q. has grown up without being hungry or doing without. He is focused on "me" and "now". More and more of his dollars are spent on entertainment and "toys". He apparently isn't taking time to think about the long term as his parents and grandparents did. By his parents and grandparents standards, his decisions probably seem down right goofy. Thus, as Reclamation's second hundred years begin, the stage is set for water related decisions that would confound the decision makers of one hundred years ago. One would hope that John Q. will become aware of the water world and let the elected officials know what his values are. As it

stands now, John Q. is complacent to let the special interest or advocacy groups dictate his values for him while he remains in blissful ignorance. I wonder if John Q. understands that as we put more and more farms out of production for environmental values, we become less adaptable to droughts that occur across the nation and we become more dependent on foreign food. I wonder further if he understands that our growing dependency on foreign foods, in many cases, is leading to massive environmental destruction as more and more rainforests are leveled to make farmland. Whether it is triggered by drought, the west coast salmon, or the sand hill crane in Nebraska, or rolling brownouts throughout the Reclamation West, the issues with water are basically the same; there are more and more diverse demands for water and not everyone's demands can be met without impacting someone or something else.

Reclamation attempts to inform John Q, but it wasn't always so. Prior to the Teton collapse, The Bureau had a high and mighty self image and public relations was not much more than simply setting up tours for various facilities. The public image of Reclamation continued to erode throughout the late '70's and early '80's. The late '80's and '90's saw Reclamation make concerted efforts to at least respond to negative press and in more and more instances, get ahead of the media on issues through improved media relationships. Press releases are issued on all major issues and events and Reclamation managers are being trained in how to deal with the media. Jeff McCracken, Mid-Pacific Region's Public Information Officer came to Reclamation with an extensive background in the news industry. He fostered good relationships with the various editors, reporters and news directors by keeping them informed on issues and being forthcoming when they had questions. Because of this, he was able to successfully guide the Mid-Pacific Region through some potential public relation disasters. With the public outreach

throughout Reclamation now in place, John Q. has no one to blame but himself for not being informed on water issues.

As Reclamation steps boldly into it's second century we have a new President, a new Secretary of the Interior and a new Commissioner who is one of us, a person who came up through the ranks, John Keys, former Regional Director of Pacific Northwest Region and a pretty good college football referee. For all the curmudgeons, this is a welcome sign; for those who have not worked for a Commissioner with a Bureau background, they will appreciate the depth of understanding of their issues from the start.

A few months after this screed was submitted as part of the Reclamation History Symposium, our nation was attacked by terrorists. Here and elsewhere I have amended my original manuscript. Uncertainty has become the norm as Reclamation struggles to protect the very facilities that the western United States relies upon for water, food production, power and flood protection. Much has changed and more will change in our employee's daily lives and how business is conducted. Already armed guards patrol critical infrastructure and other security measures have been brought to bear. Security is a new factor to be budgeted for and executed. Secrecy has entered Reclamation's world. Yet politics are still part of the picture. Two events occurred in 1995 that prompted me to start the ball rolling to get a bridge authorized that would take the public traffic (over eighteen thousand cars a day) off the top of Folsom Dam. They were the Oklahoma City bombing and the failure of the spillway gate which made obvious the vulnerability of Sacramento to a man made flood. At least six separate security reviews before and after 9/11 indicated that public access to the top of the dam presents a serious security risk. Duh! At Congressman Doolittle's request for data, I had an appraisal level study completed so

that he might use the data to draft a bill to get a bridge authorized. With the events of 9/11, I thought getting the bridge authorized would be a slam dunk—it was such obvious good public policy. To my great surprise, however, the Department of the Interior came out in total opposition to the proposed legislation, stating that it was a local transportation issue. Never mind that Reclamation over the years allowed the road to become a major artery for two of the fastest growing counties in the United States. Never mind the many vulnerabilities and danger to the lives of hundreds of thousands of people immediately downstream the dam poses by having clear access to the top of all eight spillway gates. How the political people could keep a straight face and say it is a local transportation issue is really beyond me. I had arranged for non-Federal cost sharing, but the bill was written for full Federal funding, which apparently had stuck in somebody in the Department's craw. Congress controls the Federal purse strings and if they say fully Federal, then so be it. The important thing is the safety and security of the structure and the many people who live in immediate harms way; it is simply good public policy.

To summarize the last third of the Bureau's history, I would make reference once again to the shining knight on the white horse. He was still charging hard in the late '60's, but the noble steed was starting to get winded. The '70's turned out to be an unexpected low hanging branch that knocked him head over heels; squarely to the ground. The '80's found him staggering in search of his steed, but a storm of paper work and environmental problems buried him and allowed his now dented armor to tarnish and rust. As he laid there, he began to ponder his place in the world. In the '90's, he was propped up and told that the Water Kingdom has changed, the throne was being shared by many rival kings in an uneasy truce. The image of the damsel in distress and the fire breathing dragon was becoming blurred in his eye, "which was which?", he asked. Where does he go from here? The answer most likely is to become gatekeeper and



arbiter, like other aging knights of old, to resolve differences and attempt to equitably divide the waters of the Water Kingdom.

On a personal note, I don't know precisely when I became a curmudgeon, but it happened. I suppose it was inevitable. I didn't recognize it until more and more people started to ask me when I was going to retire and it was driven home when Betsy Rieke, a fellow Area Manager, made that particular reference to both herself and me during one of our manager's meetings. Have I extracted my revenge on The Bureau? Well, I don't know---some probably think so. I do know that I've made The Bureau pay though, something in the order of \$2 million to do something I've had some fun doing. And, I wrangled a GS-15 out of the powers to be. Although it wasn't my intention, I've made a couple of Regional Directors uncomfortable with actions I've taken in the interest of good public policy albeit politically incorrect at the time. I know there will be a sigh of relief in some quarters when I soon announce my retirement. Do I still fish? I can't say I do. The days on the Southern Ute Reservation spoiled me. That coupled with the large crowds and small trout in California lessened the enjoyment. Besides, I rediscovered another passion from my frivolous youth, building hot rods. I get great enjoyment buzzing around town in my 34 Ford with its chopped top and 327 engine, leaving every Harry Highschool, who thinks his Honda is hot stuff, in the dust when the light turns green. Like it or not, things change, people change, values change. As The Bureau proceeds through the next one hundred years, these things are certain; the values we hold today will change, public policy will continue to change and Reclamation's mission will continue to change. As the Beatles once sang, "O bla dee, O bla dah, life goes on."

Heraclitus was right, you know, you can't step into the same river twice.