

OWENS VALLEY ELECTRIC SYSTEM

THOMAS EUGENE BARROWS

Interviewed by Dick Nelson

One of a series of oral histories covering the growth and development of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power as seen by the participants - its employees.

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Biographical Notes

THOMAS EUGENE "GENE" BARROWS

Born near Hansen, Nebraska, January 25, 1899.

Parents: Willard Eugene and Rozella Viola (Thomas) Barrows.

Gene was the oldest of six children.

Served in the U.S. Student Army Training Corps during 1918 while a student at Montana State Agricultural College.

Completed the Agricultural and Mechanical Arts Short Course Program at the University of Montana in 1919.

Veterans of World War I. California Legioneer.

Moved to California in 1927.

Began working for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power in 1933.

Retired from the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power as an Electrical Plant Superintendent, January 31, 1964 at Independence, California.

Married 1) Priscilla Alderson; 2) Nina Merle Jackson; and 3) Frances Rosaland Wilson.

Gene had three children, (one with Priscilla, two with Nina) Peggy, Milton and Rozella, 13 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren and two great-great grandchildren.

Gene has spent a portion of his retirement years researching and writing articles on local and early farming history and serving as a volunteer and board member of the Eastern California Museum and also on the Board of Eastern California Historical Society.

Selected published articles:

Book - "Homestead Days" - Published in 1981.

"July 4, 1910." Montana Historical Magazine.

"Early Day Thrashing." Montana Historical Magazine.

Many articles for the Eastern California Museum which were published and distributed widely.

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Thomas Eugene Barrows 9-29-89
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Rozella J. Mack 9-29-89
witness date

P.O. Box 454 Independence, CA.
witness address

TAPE NUMBER: 1, SIDE ONE

THOMAS EUGENE BARROWS

GIVEN THURSDAY, JULY 20, 1989 AT HIS HOME IN INDEPENDENCE,
CALIFORNIA

THE INTERVIEWER IS DICK NELSON

NELSON: Gene can you tell us how you got into the electric utility business?

BARROWS: Well it goes back a good many years. Even as a kid I was interested in electricity. I even tried to make Crow foot wet batteries, things like that and wanted to find out what electricity would do. But really it was not until about 1921 when I was married then and I went into mining. I became the

surface foreman for the St. Louis Mining and Milling Company [at Marysville, Montana]* and part of my work was taking care of the electrical work and there I really began to find out a lot of things I wanted to know. I started to take the L. L. Cooke Electrical Engineering Course by correspondence to help out.

The patrolman of that area was very good about explaining as much as he could about different [electrical] things. Well, making it short, I learned a lot about electricity there, but it was all connected with mining. My father-in-law, who was a mining engineer, while he was really dying at this time, advised me and said mining was very interesting, but for a family man it wasn't the kind of work that a person should do. He inquired about my work and the correspondence course I was taking and [advised me] to get into electrical work.

So when the time came [after] he passed away and the mine was closing down, I went over to Everett, Washington. I got on over there in a power plant and became an operator and we had the DC for the electric cars between Everett and Seattle as well as all the AC power for the community and transmission, etc.

I got a little [extra experience because] they had a dry season and early freeze up and one of their hydro plants was lacking for water and they started up an old steam plant there in Everett. I was shifted over to there for a while to work in the steam plant and I got a little information on steam boilers and things. But the main work was back at the substation.

*[Added during Mr. Barrow's review of the transcript.]

I worked there for [the Puget Sound Power and Light Company] and was temporary about six months at that time and it was just before Christmas. The superintendent came in and saw me there and he wanted to know what I was doing and I said well I was working, we were building a new addition to the substation. He jumped my boss [saying] that he had given orders to lay off all extra people and here I was. Well the boss said he needed me. But that didn't make any difference, I was fired a day before Christmas. [Later,] I got a job at a hydro plant [near Cooke City] in Montana.

It was the plant for a mining outfit. I worked out there during the summer and in the fall [the mine] closed down again. Of course when the mine closed down it meant shutting down the power plant. I had read some magazines and they were advertising for somebody to take charge of a power plant out in Grass Valley, [California] out on the Middle Yuba River [for a mine company] I wrote and the superintendent said yes it was open. I climbed in the car and went right down there. I got down there before he expected me and he hadn't given the other guy two weeks notice yet so I worked in the mine while he fired the other guy. Then I took charge of that place. I don't remember what the name of the mining company was. It was over [near Nevada] City, California.

NELSON: What year was it in [Nevada City]?

BARROWS: 1926. I went [to Everett, Washington] so that was the [fall] of 1926. Then that [mine] closed down [in the Spring of 1927], so what to do? I came south and got on with the Southern California Edison Company and I worked at the San Bernardino Sub Station and later on there was an opening at their switching [and dispatching] station in Colton, [California]. So I operated and dispatched there.

In the meantime I had been divorced, I married again and we wanted to get by ourselves, so I wrote back up to the Puget Sound Power and Light at Everett and they were glad to have me come back and we went back up there. I worked, not only in the substation, but I did quite a little work with the outside crew and also worked with some of their engineers in surveying and laying out feeder lines. Because I was very familiar with [line construction]. We didn't have any power diggers, etc. in those days it was shovel and spud bar, etc. and I could tell pretty well what kind of ground we'd be working in and how long it would take [to dig a hole] some places.

We'd have to even blast down in the creek bed to get a hole deep enough to hold a pole, so I was familiar with the different back guys. Well you know about everything that goes along with the power line [construction] and building these feeder lines up mountain roads to [new customers]. There were a lot of chicken ranches up in there with thousands of chickens and of course they needed power for their hatcheries and [brooders]

besides the general farms and other customers. It was a very good experience.

NELSON: A lot of your experience early was in operation and then you also did distribution and construction?

BARROWS: Right. I got both sides of it. Then my wife wanted to get back to Southern California so eventually I wrote back to the Edison Company and asked if I could get back on and [the superintendent] said he couldn't hold any job open for me, but he'd give me the first one that came open. But that was when they laid off their shop in Alhambra and placed all their help that they could out in operating or wherever and so there wasn't any job open for me when I came back [and that was the beginning of the great depression].

I worked on a farm for a while, working for \$.25 an hour and during cutting the corn for ensilage or putting up hay, I got as much as \$.50 an hour and was taking care of my team, which was the farmer's team, on my own time.

Then after the fall work was done - well in the meantime, I had taken the examination for a job with the Department of Water and Power, Bureau of Light and Power as they called it in those days, and I was told that there were 1,500 of us that took that examination. I know that it was not just farm guys there and I worked on [my writing] and when I was ready to turn in my paper, I looked around and there wasn't very many left and I thought I

must be awful doggone dumb. They gave me an interview right then, following turning in my papers because I did not live in Los Angeles. I was living out at Chino at that time. I worked out on the farm and when [fall work was done], he wanted to pay me \$.15 an hour for winter work, I decided I'd rather go to Los Angeles and starve to death than to do that and I went in and signed up with an insurance company and I sold life and accident insurance on commission only, no salary.

My mother-in-law moved in with us. We had other relatives in our home too and we managed to get by. Then I got a call to come to work for the City of Los Angeles in June of 1933 at \$125 a month and five days a week and only eight hours a day. Boy I was in heaven!

NELSON: What was the Civil Service classification? Do you remember the title of that job?

BARROWS: Well it was the power [operating] and dispatching because I had had dispatching in the Edison at Colton and I do not remember too much about what it was all about, but I do remember on the interview I gave some of the things that we did in the Edison Company which were a little different than what the City was doing and the fella that was doing my interviewing knew that I was telling what was actual with the Edison Company and so he explained. He says, "Now I know that's the way they do it at the Edison Company, but we do it this way." Which was very

thoughtful of him instead of just saying, well that's not the way we do it.

NELSON: There was a certain amount of hostility in those days between Edison and the DWP. Did you experience any of that?

BARROWS: Oh yes. When I put in my application for the examination for the City, the fellows at the Edison Company laughed at me and said you may be able to get a job, but when they change Mayors, why you'll be hunting another job again. That type of thing, but I managed to survive it and I got my call and I went down to San Pedro.

I was stationed down at San Pedro at the distribution station, Station 3 and while there, it was right next to the ship yards and we had the first underground cable, and I learned a little about those things, which I probably wouldn't have out at any other place, and then I got a chance to bid in at Receiving Station C in Wilmington, operating and dispatching, of courses, I went in as a ["B", or second] Operator and worked my way up and I took examinations.

One thing that helped me very much, was what we call "C Operator," or "Top Operator." He was quite a fisherman, hunter and things, like that. When we'd get new fellows come into the station, why he wasn't very good about breaking them in, but Ferguson, the Chief, got so that he'd turn them all over to me because I'd show them the yard and we'd actually go through

things. Now that was a very big help when it come to taking my examinations for Chief Operator.

Then I took the examination for Chief Operator and I was 45 on the list and that was too far down the list to be too hopeful about, but close enough to have some hopes. And at that time, Boulder was just getting started, and at that time all of the [calls off the list] for a Junior Chief would be out at Boulder because the Junior Chiefs there says if there is any opening in town, they wanted to get back out of Boulder back into Los Angeles so when they called the list, it would be for there at Boulder. I figured that if I was lucky enough to get on, my chances would be out at Boulder. So I figured that I would rather go out as a "C" Operator and learn the plant and the operations as "C" Operator than I would to go out cold as a Junior Chief.

So I bid out to Boulder as a "C" Operator. It was [operating the] board and dispatching. Some of the fellas [at Boulder] didn't appreciate that because they wanted a chance to bid up on those jobs themselves, but outside a couple of them that were kind of nasty, I got along fine with them and I guess I was doing okay there as a "C" Operator and when the opening came for a Junior Chief, it happened to be at Power Plant No. 1. So I got my call first as a Junior Chief out at Power Plant No. 1. When I went out there and George Doty was the Chief and I learned a lot more. I found the experiences there working on those big units and so forth was a lot different than what I had

had before. Of course, out at Boulder [I did operating and dispatching] and all like that, [and no maintenance and outside heavy work] there and at Power Plant No.1 we had to do a lot of the work ourselves, with crews [only coming in occasionally]. So you had a chance of getting your fingers dirty.

Soon I was getting used to the high pressure water there in the penstock and surge chambers and checking the penstocks for leaks. This was new to me and I learned about the joints and the difference in hot weather or cold weather, how they'd [expand or contract] when we'd get a cold or hot spell and get a little leak someplace.

NELSON: What was the time frame for going back to Power Plant No. 1?

BARROWS: 1948 I went to Boulder and then 1949 I went to Power Plant No. 1. I was there until 1953. While I was there I was taking examinations and I was on the list for Chief Operator and there was an opening up here, Bill Lowe had been on sick leave for a number of months, then they decided to retire him on disability and open the job. So I got a chance to come up and checked in with John Mc Cullough. I looked at the situation up here, put in my bid and Frank Walker said, "have you been up there to Owens Valley?" I said yes and he said, "did you meet McCullough?" I said yes and he said, "did you look around?" I said yes, and he said, "do you want the job?" I said yes and he said, "you had

probably better be getting packed." Of course, I had to go through the regular routine and I got the job and came up here as the Chief Operator working under the Superintendent, John McCullough.

NELSON: Chief Operator where?

BARROWS: Of the Owens Valley [Power Section].

NELSON: Stationed where?

BARROWS: In Independence. This was shortly after the [Owens] Gorge [transmission] lines had been put in [service]. After I got up here they got the upper plant put into service. This section of the power system, as you know, Division Creek was the granddaddy of it all. It was built to furnish the power to [operate a dredge] to dig the aqueduct and then later the power was used for the towns and the other plants were added and so forth. But for many years, there was no connection with the Department Power System in Los Angeles. We had a tie with the Southern Sierra Company over in Nevada. And if we had excess power we'd feed into their system and if we had plants down, why they'd feed back into us and it was an individual little system up here all by itself.

Before I came up here, I'd had experience, both in the distribution stations and in dispatching and the various hydro out in Boulder plus other hydros. McCullough hadn't had the experiences of downtown methods at all and it was up to me to

train these operators up here, break them into what they wanted downtown and especially in the different reports and records and how often I heard the [operators or patrolmen] say, "Well what's the difference, we've done it this way all this many years, why should we have to change?" But, of course, you know downtown, it all had to coincide with their reports.

It took quite a lot of work, we held our operators meetings and the chiefs of the different plants here and we'd talk over these things and we revised a lot of the old orders and it was quite a rejuvenation of records and orders. I got along, I think, very well with the fellows up here. Of course, coming up there was some animosity, from some of the old timers here about anybody coming up into the valley, but in general I got along very well with them and I don't think that any of the operators who worked under me thought I was too bad any way.

GENE BARROWS

TAPE NUMBER: 2, SIDE ONE

BARROWS: The Chief Operators up here couldn't really understand why we'd have to change so many of the ways of doing things. There is also another thing besides the 34,000 kv lines that we had to contend with. Now we had this high voltage line going down to Los Angeles from the gorge and that was entirely new to them. We had to break in the dispatchers up there at the Gorge for the dispatching of the Valley work, however, the high voltage transmission line was dispatched by the dispatchers in Los Angeles.

There were many things that we had to get them to change and we'd have these meetings and I'd tell them why we had to [change]. They had to correspond with reports down there. We got along very well on those things.

NELSON: You did the training primarily up here?

BARROWS: Well, yes. Changing the method of doing things from one to the other. The fellow that had been up here as Chief Operator, just prior, that is when Bill Lowe went off sick. This fellow came up and was temporarily up here and he didn't do very much with the changing things and just more or less left things as they were. I had to do quite a lot of changing and it didn't take so good with some of the operators and patrolmen.

NELSON: Where did the Gorge operators come from? Were those operators who had trained up here or did some of them come from Los Angeles?

BARROWS: Most of them came from Boulder and some [of them] I had known over at Boulder and so it was easier that way. Being Chief Operator and getting new operators started up there, at first. [I would] get a lot of calls at night, you know, something didn't sound just right. First thing they'd do was call me and tell me what it was, then usually by getting them to talk, telling me what it sounded like and what was taking place, they could come up with the answers mostly themselves. We had very little actual trouble, but those were green operators at the plant and when you hear a little something that doesn't sound just right, [it] can kind of get you upset. There was a few times I had to go out and in some cases we had to get crews out when something was wrong.

But things went along very well in the plants. We had more trouble with water and snow. The ground around the plant, especially the control plant, was not firmly settled yet and we had an awful lot of rain and snow back up on the hillside. We had about 14 - 16 inches of snow up [on the hillside] and then a warm rain and it would seem like the whole hillside of snow just slid down the hill and filled everything. We had pumps going and water [flowing away]. We had to get graders out and dig

some ditches for the water [to drain] away from the yard and things like that was over and beyond the normal operating.

NELSON: And that was in Pleasant Valley?

BARROWS: No that was up at Control Gorge [Power Plant]. That was before Pleasant Valley was put in.

Another thing we had trouble with was fishermen. They would want to fish the tailrace. It was fenced off just below the plant over the tailrace, there was some beams across there and we would catch fishermen that would get inside of that fence and hang on to the fence and work along [inside the fence] until they could get out on these beams and sit out over the tailrace and fish out there in that turbulent water. One fellow stuck his pole through the grating of the fence and caught a nice great big trout and then he couldn't get it through the hole in the fence.

NELSON: I've heard the term "McCullough Electric System." What does that mean?

BARROWS: McCullough. That refers to John McCullough, who was superintendent. He'd been up here most of the time that the [Owens Valley Electric System] was being built and he ran things his way. Which they got along fine, there wasn't any trouble,

but then there wasn't very many reports and as far as the office downtown in Los Angeles was concerned, during that time, they were mainly concerned with how many kilowatts were generated and how much was transported out or how many we had to draw from the other company to keep our system, the McCullough system going. All they wanted was just how many kilowatts and so forth and as far as doing work, issuing clearances and things like that, it was entirely different, than what they did downtown.

NELSON: There was an interconnection from the very beginning with the surrounding utilities?

BARROWS: Yes.

NELSON: And which utility was that?

BARROWS: Southern Sierra Power Company.

NELSON: That was eventually taken by Edison?

BARROWS: Partly so I think. Of course there was the Edison, but we didn't have any connection with the Edison at all. That is physically. But when we come to the line boundary of Bishop and we had feeders inside of the boundary and there were a few houses just outside of the Bishop City limits, we had a feeder line that would go out to feed these houses, but at the line there would be a meter at the City Boundary.

The Edison Company would maintain the lines from there on out, but they were buying from us and we furnished them [the power] to customers. Same way down at Haiwee [Power Plant]. Gil's service station and gas station and all down there where the rest area is now. We fed a line that was Edison at the edge of the [Haiwee yard] there it was metered and [the power was] fed down to this Gil's station. By the same token there was some places where Edison fed into the City of Bishop that were metered and just exchanged that way.

NELSON: Are you saying or am I understanding it correctly that Edison would then charge the Department of Water and Power, give them a bill and visa versa?

BARROWS: Yes. That's my understanding of it. There would be just so many kilowatts and what they did with them and how much they charged out there made no difference to us. That was the [standard policy].

NELSON: What was the DWP system when you came up here? What did it serve?

BARROWS: The lines went clear on up to Lee Vining. We had power lines clear up to there and there was not much, well we did have some at [Crowley Lake]. Well I don't think that there was [many customers] after we left the [Owens] Gorge going up

over the hill till we got up there. Then going south [a line] went to Gil's Station down below Haiwee. We did have a metered feeder line from the Gorge that went over into Nevada. When that line was put in, it was put in during the summer, and then in the fall of the year we began having a lot of trouble with it. At first we thought that [the mill] had [trouble with] motors with overloading [in starting in the morning] and tripping the line off. They were careful about it and they would do their pickup with care. It was for the mining company over there and they would pick up there different units slowly and [generally the line relayed when everthing was running smoothly]. It was generally right in the morning when we were picking up load and it was kicking out the line. A highline Patrolman would patrol and he could not find where the trouble was until one morning a patrolman [saw where the lines were going] through a canyon and down through this canyon, [the line was] strung on poles vertically one phase above the other [on long spans between poles] and this is the way I understand it any way. This fella had been looking at all the insulators with his glasses and he looked down and he spotted on the [middle phase what] looked like pit marks out in the middle of the span. I don't think that day that he found the pit marks that everything was normal. But he went out there early the next morning, it was a cold morning and as the sun come over [the canyon rim] and hit the top phase, it warmed it up enough so it sagged down enough to touch the other phase and [at that time

the line relayed. By the time the patrolman reached the spot the line had] warmed up and all three phases would be normal. That solved the problem. They changed the way the lines were strung. It gave us no more trouble.

When I first came up here, we had quite a lot of trouble with trees blowing into the lines, breaking limbs off and of course it meant cutting down trees and, also to begin with, the power lines had been along the aqueduct. They built them that way because they had to feed this electrically operated dredge as they dug the aqueduct. So the power line was along there. Of course that was through the trees and some of that old construction was rather unique in some ways. In fact, up here at the museum we've got at least one crossarm where they had taken a piece of eight-pound mine rail and bent it to form the crossarm braces. They made use of different things like that, well as we improved the lines these things came out and instead of following along the ditch, we had right-of-ways where we could make the new line and that improved it. Then we didn't have to get up so many times in the night.

We had a situation up here at Division Creek, especially in the fall of the year. At the dam we had what they called a Grizzly. Which is a grate over the penstocks. It was to prevent anything from falling into it. But in the fall of the year deer, hunters and wind and whatsoever, there was a ditch that brought water from one of the other canyons around through

all these trees and turned into Division Creek ahead of our dam so as to put water in there.

Well this [dam] would collect a lot of leaves and get down there and these leaves would form a mat on the grate and eventually shut the water off till the plant would relay off and then we'd have to go out and go up there and scrape all the leaves off [the grate] and put the plant on again. Then the Department decided to put in a rig that was operated by a little paddle wheel so that it would scrape off the leaves, or whatever got on the grate and wash them on down the creek which was a very big help. The leaf rake saved loss of power any trips up there in the middle of the [day or] night to clean that [grizzly].

These problems were operating problems and I, or whoever was down here, would be the one that would get called to go up to take care of Division Creek, which had no operator, if it relayed off or [had trouble].

Our patrolmen were very good about getting out if we had any trouble with the trees or anything like that and we had very good cooperation with both the operators and the patrolmen. We did have a little trouble with our dispatching to begin with as it had been between Haiwee and Cottonwood [power plants]. One day I had [a meeting between all station chiefs to change dispatching to the Control Gorge plant operators]. The operators had a little friction on that, but when we got the Gorge plants [to take] over the dispatching that eliminated the trouble down here between [Haiwee and Cottonwood].

But all in all I think we had very good cooperation between all of the operators, especially the old operators that had been here for years with the "McCullough Electric System" and the new guys up there at the Gorge taking over the dispatching up there.

The operating of the Gorge plants was, of course, somewhat different than Boulder and even the ones who had been experienced over there in Boulder had to do some breaking in too. I think my experience up here has been just wonderful.

NELSON: What about the innerface between the Water System and the Power System? Good cooperation over the years?

BARROWS: When I first came up here, of course the main thing was the water. That was the first consideration and there was far more crews up here in the Water Department than there was power. The office force was much bigger in the water section than it was in the power. We just had two offices there. [McCullough's] office was there, my office was here and he gave me to understand this is my office and that was his office. Come to find out the reason for that, the fellow that had been up here before, Mac's phone would ring and he would go and stand [out of sight] by the door between the two [offices] and try to hear what was going one and one thing or another and would go look over Mac's shoulder and see what he was writing on reports and things. So I couldn't blame him for that.

NELSON: How did you keep in contact with Los Angeles? Did you get back to town occasionally or did the "Brass" come up to see you folks, or was there much communications?

BARROWS: The biggest thing was our summer picnics. Then we got all the Brass out. But there wasn't too many occasions of anybody coming up and I had to go down on a number of times down there. I also took some of the fellows down for interviews and things like that when they wanted to get promoted and so forth.

NELSON: Was it harder for a person up here to get promoted out just being kind of on the tail of the donkey here or was it hard for a person here to keep abreast of what was going on?

BARROWS: Yes. Because up here they didn't know what was expected down there. Sub-stations here had very few voltage regulators and you know in the distribution stations you got a whole string of them. So these fellas up here knew very little about the voltage regulators and neither did the patrolmen. So if we would have any trouble we would have to call a crew from down in Los Angeles. I had to go down on a number of occasions and I was invited down to [Supervisor meetings]. They had a meeting of the chief and supervisors and I would go down to those meetings. I don't think Mac ever went to one of those meetings. I knew a lot of the fellows already. One interesting

thing I found out was I'd been in connection with different fellows for several years on the telephone. I'd go down to some of their meetings and I'd hear somebody in this group of fellows talking and recognize his voice. I'd say, "Are you so and so?" Sure enough it would be.

There was another thing of my duties, having had my experience over at Boulder, although it was just a "C" Operator. It wasn't even a Junior Chief. After I got over here I was included with the fellows that would be on call on certain weekends. If I was on call for Boulder and they needed to call out some crew for some trouble or something I had the authority to call it out. Well, you know I'd be on call which kept me in touch somewhat with Boulder for a while. Eventually that was changed, but I think that the history of this McCullough system and how it got started and how it ties in with the main system of the Department of Water and Power is a very interesting subject.

NELSON: I imagine it is long gone now.

BARROWS: Yes. He passed away in 1981.

GENE BARROWS

TAPE NUMBER: 2, SIDE TWO

BARROWS: When I first came up here, John McCullough, was the Superintendent, he was very emphatic that my office was here and his office was in the other room. We got along but there wasn't any buddy-ship and we had differences, but we ironed them out. One of the things was that I was having to change many of the methods of doing things from what was known as the "McCullough Electric System" over to the way the Department of Water and Power wanted it done regarding reports and getting clearances and so on. It was part of my job.

This went on for quite some time and one time Mac had been on his days off and been up to Tahoe, he came down after dark at night and stopped by Lake Crowley to a place. He was going to stop for a cup of coffee or something. As he was getting out of his car out in the parking lot and slipped and fell and broke his leg. It was some time before he could get any attention, when they found him and got him in the cafe they called Jack Blair, who was in charge of the Gorge plants, and Jack called me and told me what had happened and so he went up and he got Mac and brought him down. I met Jack there at his place and I took Mac on down. He didn't want to be put in the hospital at Bishop he wanted to get down to the one at Lone Pine. So I got him down and got him entered and taken care of. The next morning I called Frank Walker, who was the Superintendent of

Generation and told him what had happened and Frank asked me if I thought I could get along for a few days until he could get things sized up and I told him we would do the best we could. In a couple of days, I don't know just how long, he called me and he told me I was doing very well and they had been satisfied with the way that I was doing things and if I could carry on while Mac was off with his broken leg to do so. He said, "Now I can't cross the Civil Service Classification and pay you a Superintendent's wages while Mac is disabled." But he said [that] on my days off I could go up to the office and if I wanted to read a book or something or write a letter, but be on call, be on the radio, be available and I could just take it easy. Of course, I'd have to work [every day including Saturdays and Sundays] and by giving me that overtime would compensate for the difference in the job.

Well that was fine with me and in the mornings, after we got Mac back from the hospital and at home, I got my morning reports in and I'd go down and get the mail and I'd bring Mac's mail over to him and I'd tell him what was going on. I didn't try to take anything away from him and asked his advice on some things if I thought there would be a question. First he was quite dominant then he began to loosen up and then after a while he said, "You're doing okay, do it whatever way you want." He was off for eight months before he got back on the job. But when he got back this barrier between us had been done away with. We were just good friends and he would compliment me on my work and

he would even ask me questions about different things and we got along just fine. And that's the way it was up until he retired and then I was on the list and I was selected to take his place. Now I don't know if I had been doing a good job or what, but anyway they did away with my job as Chief Operator. I just kept on doing the work as Superintendent and I didn't have anybody to fall back on.

NELSON: When was that? When did you take over as Superintendent?

BARROWS: Well, let's see. The last four years. That would be 1959. Of course, I didn't get to the top step of the Superintendent's wage rate as I'd like to have before retiring, but when I was 65 why they gave me a piece of paper and said it's been nice knowing you. We were all very good friends.

NELSON: We've read over the years from Los Angeles about the rape of Owens Valley and all these bad things that DWP was supposed to have done and in your experience up here 10 or 15 years, what has been your specific experience with people who had lived in the Owens Valley a long time. What were their feelings and their reactions to the Department both pro and con?

BARROWS: Most of the people that I had contact with after I came up here that had been living here during the time that the

Department was buying up the water rights and so forth, a number of them told me that for the good of the country it was a good thing because these farmers that were living here were depending on these mines that were operating on both sides of us to buy their garden produce, their meat and most of the hauling to the mines was done by teams, horses or mules which would require hay and grain for feed and these farmers had good local markets for what they were producing. And they were doing very well. Just about the time the Department came in and was buying up water rights these mines were closing down. So if they'd have to depend on farming and marketing their produce, they'd have to ship it out, haul it, drive their cattle out to market or some place or to Mojave or we had the narrow gauge railroad up here and ship it out. Their profits wouldn't have been so big. Others just took it as it come. It was just one of those things.

Then we heard stories about different ones who would take the money that the Department gave them for their property and squander it one way or another, lose it and then they were mad because they didn't have anything. But the people that took their money and went out and reinvested some place else, you don't hear about them.

But I was coming up as an employee of the Department of Water and Power, I felt I was very well accepted in the Valley.

NELSON: It was not a great deal of resentment toward you or your family?

BARROWS: No. Partly because I entered right in with the community according to my work schedule I couldn't do much, I rejoined the church and I did what I could but of course every other weekend I was working. Then the weekends that I was off we had family over at Boulder so I'd go over there and one thing or another so lots of times on my weekend wouldn't be here. I belong to and joined the Lodge and worked there also Eastern Star and different things and the Civic Club. We became part of the community and I was accepted. I didn't feel any resentment.

NELSON: You mentioned McCullough. Are there any other Department people, both Water or Power, that stick out in your mind—those type of persons that you remember?

BARROWS: One of the things, of course, John McCullough was quite a character in his own rights, but John who was up at the Gorge, I said his name a little bit ago. Blair, yes Jack Blair. Jack was quite a character in his self. He was a good Operator and a good Chief and had many comical ways in his speech and all like that. Guess it just caught me anyways. The way he would express himself was very good and he had to wear suspenders in those days, golashes he'd call them, and when he would be

talking, he would stick his thumbs underneath his suspenders and pull them out and let them snap against his chest and that was one of his ways of expressing himself. But he was a very good guy and he had been up in the Adams Main and Adams Auxillary plants before the Gorge plants were built there and of course he had to do a lot of learning himself how to operate these new machines and he was very good about it. He also was very good about telling me about the operation of the old machines when they were running the Adams and the auxillary plants up there. There was for a while that we operated those two plants in conjunction with the [Owens Gorge] plants, but they were soon retired.

NELSON: How many Power System people did you have under you, roughly?

BARROWS: Well, down at Haiwee we had four operators and they had families and it was the same at Cottonwood, one for each shift and a relief man. Same way up at Big Pine Power Plant. And up at the Gorge we had two operators on each shift plus relief men and a chief. [In Independence, one line foreman; five lineman; five helpers; two electrical mechanics and two clerks. Then there were extra crews sent up sometimes]. Did I leave anybody out? It wasn't a big crew, but we all had our duties to perform.

NELSON: There's not much more than that today.

BARROWS: It's about the same. It's less than that because I haven't been to any of the plants for some time and of course Pleasant Valley is remote control and I don't know how many are at Big Pine any more. I just haven't been around. I found out they could get along without me.

NELSON: We were talking about the early days in Los Angeles in 1933 the famous earthquake there along the Newport/Inglewood fault. You were in Los Angeles at that time?

BARROWS: Yes.

NELSON: You weren't with the Department?

BARROWS: 1933? It was just..I'm not sure, but I do know I knew some of the operators anyway after that because we had one patrolman, I don't remember what his name was now, but that was his wedding anniversary and he bought his wife a nice bouquet of roses or something and as I understand it, he rang the bell at his home so she would come to the door and meet him with these flowers. Just as she opened the door and let him in he handed the roses to her, it was just when the earthquake took off.

At my home, there in Los Angeles, the one thing that startled me, we had a gas cook stove and the connection was just a flexible tube from the petcock at the wall and there was several feet of slack in this tube. [When the earth started shaking, I saw this kitchen range starting coming across the

floor at me. My wife had gone to visit the operators [families] out at the Edison substation near Chino and took our son Milt along with her. My daughter, Rozella, was just a baby then and she had left little Rozella with friends there in Los Angeles that had a little boy about the same age as Rozella and this girl was going to take care of Rozella for the couple of days that my wife and Milt were going to be there at Chino. After the earthquake settled down, I beat it right over to this neighbor's house and make sure that everything was alright there and she was all shook up because her husband beat it off downtown. He wanted to go and see what damage had been done downtown and left her there with the two babies. Well, I picked the babies up and [the mother] and took them on over to my place and kept them there and of course tried to get in touch with my wife out at Chino. But, of course, I couldn't for a while [as the phones were out]. Where we were there was very little actual damage. There was a lot of it down in Long Beach and down in that area.

NELSON: Where did you live in Los Angeles?

BARROWS: Well when I first moved in there it was down on 23rd Street and I was selling insurance and from there I moved down to San Pedro. Then back up into Los Angeles on 50 something. I don't remember just what it was. And then I bought property out

on 115th Street. They went through another earthquake out there later on [after we had gone].

NELSON: How did you move up here?

BARROWS: Well I moved out to Boulder - just took my things out in the car, but when they moved me back they moved me back with a truck and these other moves, I'd just move myself with a car and trailer that way. We had quite a lot of difficulty as my wife had been in the hospital a lot and my son also and so we had some pretty trying times getting started, but it all works out.