

WORKING FOR THE DWP

PATRICK D. DOHERTY

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.

Produced by

Special Projects Section  
Elizabeth Wimmer, Manager  
Public Affairs Division

Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

1991

CONTENTS

Biographical Notes . . . . . iv

TAPE NUMBER: 1, Side One (July 23, 1990) . . . . . 1

Doherty's Early Years ... Navy Service in World  
War II ... Joined DWP in 1946 ...Working in The Pipe  
Reclaiming Yard ... Dwight Patterson ... Fred Brooks  
... Adolph Shoeman ... Domingo Algorri ... Leroy  
Shannon ... Bill Zuelkie ... Fermin Lopez ... Water  
Pipe ... Dougherty's Father ... Physical Agility Tests  
at DWP ... Job Competition After World War II ... Max  
Socha ... Dick Hemborg ... Al Renner ... Promoted to  
Foreman - 1955 ... Ed Hoag ... Lawrence Lusher ... Ed  
Silva ...

TAPE NUMBER: 1, Side Two (July 23, 1990) . . . . . 17

Thoughts on Pipe Reclaiming ... Communications in the  
Field ... Gate Valves ... Organization of Water Service  
Crews ... Harry Flores ... "Tail-Gate" Meetings ...  
Early Safety Measures ...

TAPE NUMBER: 2, Side One (July 23, 1990) . . . . . 30

Communications Flow To and From the Field ... Section  
Rivalaries ... Earl Hill ... Working on Hydraulic  
Valves-Regulator Work ... Water Emergencies ... Public  
Contact Work ... Women at the DWP ... Freda Alpert ...  
Marie Mormon ... June Haver ... Fred McMurray ...  
Boundaries of the Water Districts ... Acquisition of  
Small Water Companies ... Reporting Structure of Water  
Districts ... Class I Fire Rating ...

TAPE NUMBER: 2, Side Two (July 23, 1990) . . . . . 47

District Office Functioning ... Terry Okamora ... Water  
Regulation Assigned to Individual Districts ... Field  
Superintendent Duties ... Baldwin Hills Reservoir Break,  
12/13/1963 ... Revere Wells ... Gerry Wyss ... William  
Parker ... Samuel Nelson ... Steve Powers ...

TAPE NUMBER: 3, Side One (July 23, 1990) . . . . . 62

Baldwin Hills Aftermath ... Cooperation ... Restoration  
After the Break ... Bel Air Fire ... Earl Leonard ...  
Brentwood Fire ... Clete Roberts ... System Operations  
in a Disaster ... Work Dedication Now and Then ... "By  
the Book" ... Doherty Becomes Harbor Water District  
Superintendent ... Gus Wilson ... Gail "Doc" Morrow ...  
Ward Proudfoot ... Bill Simmons ... Doherty Moves to  
Western Water District ... Charles Bascom ...

TAPE NUMBER: 3, Side Two (July 23, 1990 . . . . . 78  
Community Relations ... Interface With Management ...  
Districts Losing Autonomy ... Smaller Work Crews ...  
Paul Lane ... Bob Phillips ... Nathan Friedman ...  
Herbert Ward ... Sara Stivelman ... Changes As Seen By  
Doherty ... Unions ... Costs ... Man and Woman Power ...

## Biographical Notes

Patrick D. Doherty

Born April 18, 1925 in Los Angeles, California.

Parents: James Paul and Sophie Helen (Joerger) Doherty.

Five brothers and three sisters.

Married Marilyn N. (Smith) May 13, 1951.

Five children: Linda M. (Cottriel), Dennis James, Karen A. (Bullock), Kevin P., and Patrick D. II.

Grandchildren: five.

Navy amphibious forces, 1943 - 1946, Pacific and Europe.

Department of Water and Power:

- June 13, 1946, Laborer, Water Operating Division.

- Retired July 1, 1989, Western Water District Superintendent.

Affiliations:

- American Water Works Association.

- Westchester Chamber of Commerce.

This is to certify that I have reviewed this transcript and attest that it is true and accurate. Also, by my witnessed signature below, I grant the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, or its designee(s), sole right to use this material in any way, and for any purpose, it deems appropriate.

Patrick D. Doherty 3/12/91  
Patrick D. Doherty date

Marilyn Doherty 3/12/91  
witness date

7908 W. 81 ST. P.D.R 90293  
witness address

TAPE NUMBER: 1, SIDE ONE

PATRICK D. DOHERTY

GIVEN THURSDAY, JULY 23, 1990

IN

HIS HOME AT PLAYA DEL REY, CALIFORNIA

THE INTERVIEWER IS DICK NELSON

NELSON: Pat would you just relate briefly where you were born, your upbringing, growing up in the area?

DOHERTY: I was born here in Los Angeles on the east side of town around 39th and Central. Born in a family of ten, six boys and four girls. I lost one of my sisters who had

passed away prior to my birth. She died from infantile paralysis at the age of five.

I was raised in the Los Angeles area. I stayed there in the 39th and Central area, until the age of six. I attended the first grade there at St. Patrick's Elementary School and by 1931 the family had relocated to the area of 47th and Broadway. From then on I lived there at 47h and Broadway about 18 years and I received all my additional schooling there. I went to Holy Cross Grammar School which was a block from our home and attended for the completion of my elementary years.

From there I went on to Mt. Carmel High School, that was a new parochial high school out in the Florence and Hoover areas. I think the school had only been open maybe two or three years prior to that time. My older brothers had attended Cathedral High School before this school had opened. I attended for four years and after my senior year went into the Navy. I went through my boot training and machinist school down in the San Diego area. I had some background in machine shop work where I had worked to finance my way through school. I paid all my own tuition and bought my own books through my high school years. I had worked in various places -- Peerless Laundry at Slauson Avenue and Main Street, a local laundry that was there for many years, and Boey Pie Company at Main and 47th Streets. I worked there one year and then I worked in machine shops two years. At that time you had to finance your way. Everybody was on pretty tight budgets and no one had too much. In fact I didn't

realize I was poor until after I became an adult and looked back.

NELSON: That's usually the way it is.

DOHERTY: So I had a very happy childhood. All good memories. I just don't seem to ponder on the bad situations, mostly the good times. Same in the Navy. I served in the Pacific Theater in the various islands in the Pacific. I won an opportunity to get a commission in the Officer's Training School and was sent back to New Jersey and went to their V-12 school there. I had started, I was in there about two weeks and then I failed the color perception test and they said I had a color deficiency so that put me out of that and I went back into the amphibious forces. I was shipped then to European Theater and that was in 1944. I served there between England, France and Germany and saw some action there and some shelling. I recall some exciting moments. I was there 14 months in the European Theater and was out of the service on Christmas Eve in 1945.

NELSON: Nice Christmas present.

DOHERTY: It really was. We were really looking forward to Christmas at home and it was quite a present. I returned to the family home and I took two or three months to kind of make up for lost time and being away so long I just kind

of enjoyed myself. I saw some things I had wanted to see and put some time in at the beach. Two friends of mine and I saw where Water and Power was hiring laborers. I said, "Let's go down and get one of those jobs and go back to school in September."

As it ended up we went down and were hired after going through our different tests. At that time we had to take a physical agility test and a written test and ended up being selected. I might say, too, during the same period of time I took the fire department and the police department's tests and I passed both of them. By the time I received a call from the fire and the police department, I was already into the Water and Power. I found something that was like a second family in Water and Power. The people were all good to me. I didn't know a single person when I went through the door except the two people that joined with me and we were no longer together after we had once signed up.

From then on I was strictly on my own as they went back to school in September and I continued on with the Water Department continuously right through to my retirement.

**NELSON:** They didn't stay with the Department?

**DOHERTY:** No, they did not stay with the Department. I continued my education later going to eight years of night school while I was raising a family. The two, by the way, that

had left and went into other professions, later years they came back and they said, "I'd wish I'd of stuck it out with you." Not necessarily would they may have followed the same path that I followed, but I think I did considerably better than they did through our adult years.

My first assignment was to the pipe reclaiming yard down at Slauson and Compton in the southeast area. There we were reclaiming pipe, taking used pipe out of the water system, bringing it in, refurbishing it. In other words that would be sandblasting and coating the pipe. Steel pipe was cement lined as well as the cast iron pipe line. The pipe would have to be sandblasted, run through the cement liner and cured and given a coat of protection on the outside and came out just like new pipe. We did roughly seventy pieces a day of 4", 6" or 8" pipe.

**NELSON:** How many were there in your crew?

**DOHERTY:** There would be about six or seven of us.

**NELSON:** Do you remember any of the names of your co-workers at that point?

**DOHERTY:** Yes I do. This was in the 1946, 1947, 1948 period. Dwight Patterson would have been the foreman in charge. Fred Brooks was the Field Superintendent and this was primarily Fred

Brook's project. I think he originally instigated this pipe reclaiming yard as well as keeping it going. Dwight Patterson was the foreman who actually did the nuts and bolts activities and I worked for Dwight Patterson. Others were Adolph Shoenan, Domingo Algorri, Leroy Shannon, Bill Zuelkie and Fermin Lopez.

**NELSON:** Was this reclaiming process by the Department something relatively unique or did other utilities do it?

**DOHERTY:** I think it was relatively unique here in the Los Angeles system and I think it started in the pre-war years. Pipe was very difficult to get because all industry was geared towards military and they went to work laying out this pipe yard to take this pipe that has deteriorated out of the ground, take it in, recondition it, and it would come out looking just as good as new pipe. Pipe that wasn't completely deteriorated was removed, reconditioned and reinstalled, and got another 50 to 70 years of service.

**NELSON:** How would the determination be made that a section of pipe was ready to come out?

**DOHERTY:** We take readings on our soils throughout the city and you can tell how corrosive the soil is in certain regions and you know how the soil is reacting to steel pipe and cast iron

pipe. The soils are researched to determine which areas would be good for reclaiming. Some pipe is completely deteriorated and grafitized then that wouldn't be good for refurbishing. You'd have to replace that with completely new pipe. In areas where the pipe deterioration isn't that bad, it paid to remove it, not necessarily put exactly the same pipe in, but it would be recycled. You'd take that pipe out and replace it with pipe that had been refurbished at an earlier date. Again take this pipe and cycle it through your plant and do all the steps that are necessary and bring out a good finished product which would be considerably cheaper than going out to buy new pipe if it was available.

So I think it was very economical and the plant went on and operated as far as I can recall up to maybe, around 1960 when pipe was again on the market and costs getting very competitive. The prices were lower and I think it was more economically feasible to buy from the outside than to continue to reclaim.

**NELSON:** At that point the in-house operation was phased out?

**DOHERTY:** Exactly. I think it became a better operation to buy new pipe at that time, but in the years that you couldn't get it, it was a very valuable thing.

**NELSON:** Was the pipe that you were refurbishing then pipe that had been laid down very early in the Department's history?

**DOHERTY:** Probably around the turn of the century, yes. Some of it from water systems taken over by Los Angeles as we spread out. A lot of that pipe, I believe, is still in the ground and will be, because once pipe is cement lined and has a coating, and you put sand backfill around the outside of it, that pipe is good from 75 to possibly 100 years.

The reason that the early cast iron pipe didn't last was because in those days they didn't line the insides of pipe and they didn't sand backfill around the outside so we had corrosive action not only from the inside, but the outside too. The soil was attacking it and the minerals in the water attacked it from the inside so pipe didn't last too long.

**NELSON:** We need to go back and do a couple of our earlier things. What line of work was your dad in?

**DOHERTY:** He was an electrical engineer. When I went into the Department of Water of Power I thought well if I stayed I would go into the electrical because that would have been more in my line. My intentions where when I got out of the Navy I was going to go into the electrical business with my father, but my father passed away in May of 1945 and so that didn't happen.

Then I thought well I'll carry it on and work for the power system and never dreaming I'd be in a water system.

NELSON: He had his own business, I take it?

DOHERTY: He didn't have his own, but he was looking forward to me joining him at Industrial Electric at that time. They were over on Washington Boulevard and Santa Fe.

NELSON: Another thing with having older brothers and sisters-- was this a tough act to follow going through school?

DOHERTY: Yes it was. Especially in the grammar school where my sister was one year ahead of my brother and she was extremely bright. Following my brother by two years wasn't that bad, but they would compare both of us to my sister as she was good at everything and behaved so well and we were both kind of cut-ups.

NELSON: Were you in Europe in the military for D-Day?

DOHERTY: I was in there after D-Day. No I didn't make D-Day, but I was in there within a month of D-Day and we were still taking in supplies and troops too.

NELSON: You were ferrying supplies across the channel?

DOHERTY: Yes we were for approximately 14 months and did a few interesting things. I was on an LCT at the time with an eleven man crew which was about 125 feet long and about 40 feet wide.

NELSON: LCT is "landing craft tank?"

DOHERTY: Yes.

NELSON: The big bow doors?

DOHERTY: Yes, big doors that opened up in front. In fact it was a big ramp that dropped down and we hauled troops, materials and supplies. One interesting tour of duty I had there in France was, they were looking for a volunteer crew to haul two army cranes up the Seine River. The Germans had sunk the cranes that were taken up there by the Army Engineers a few days before. The sinking of those cranes blocked the passage of boats going up through there and they wanted two more larger cranes and asked for a volunteer crew and we volunteered for it.

It was interesting because we had to keep somebody on the bow at all times to shoot the mines out of the water. The Germans kept sending mines down the river and we'd take turns shooting the mines out of the water. We got there okay with no serious problems. One thing that I found interesting was the change of tide on the Seine River. The tide changed within the hour maybe 11 to 15 feet. So it was just very rapid, think they call it

a boor. When the tide changes this "boor," a big wave comes rolling down the river. We had to tie up and face into the direction of the tide coming in, and then it would raise as I recall 11 to 15 feet. Within an hour you'd be sitting 15 feet higher in the water.

Anyway we got it up to the town of Rouen. We were the first American sailors in Rouen. They treated us very nice. I had liberty there and stayed two or three days before returning. Totally successful in getting the cranes up there and getting those other ones out of the water. We were looked up to as some kind of heroes. That was exciting.

**NELSON:** You mentioned your agility test. What did that comprise of back in 1946?

**DOHERTY:** In the physical agility I recall they had three railroad tracks and one would be sitting on a bench and two would be setting on the ground.

**NELSON:** A piece of rail?

**DOHERTY:** Yes, a piece of railroad track. Maybe 24 inches to 30 inches long and they weighed 40 to 50 pounds. They would have one sitting up on an elevation of maybe four feet above the ground and would have two sitting on the ground and you would alternately bend down pick up a section, set it up on top, take

the one off the top, put it down on the ground, pick up the other one, move it up. So you were moving three in a cycle and they gave you two minutes or so and clock you as to how many moves you made during that period of time. That was one of them.

Another one I recall was they had a grip test that they'd put a meter in your hand and you had to grip it and then they would record what the strength of your grip is. They also had us identify different types of fittings and mechanical tools of various kinds. This gave some sense of mechanical aptitude for the contestants and whether you were qualified to work with tools.

I thought it was quite good. I don't believe any of that's done now until they become a maintenance and construction helper or a utility worker.

**NELSON:** Was there quite a bit of competition?

**DOHERTY:** Yes there was. At that time there were so many people getting out of the military. World War II was over and a lot of young men were out bartering for positions. There was a lot of competition wherever you were going. Of course we were in booming years at that time. Private industry and contractors were hiring and a lot of building was going on. It was competitive, but there was plenty out there for people who wanted to work.

NELSON: Did you happen to know how many, or recall how many people took the exam for this labor job that you competed in?

DOHERTY: I really can't tell you how many, but I can give you a rough idea. When I took the test there were about maybe 150 in our groups. I think maybe 50 of that group was hired. About 1/3.

NELSON: About how much money were you hired in at?

DOHERTY: \$175 a month.

NELSON: Did that compare pretty well on the outside at that time?

DOHERTY: Well, I think it did at the start if you include benefits. All through my years in the Department, I was being offered positions on the outside. I was moving up pretty rapidly and people that knew my background were offering me pretty good positions in private industry for more money.

I stuck it out with the Department because they were fairly competitive, but some of the contractors were offering some lucrative salaries. My concern was that if I went to the outside and got some of the big dollars that they were offering it might be short term. They get what they want out of you or utilize what they need from you and then you'd be out. I felt

the Department was part of my family. I had some very nice offers, but I stuck with it and I am glad now that I did.

NELSON: At the pipe reclaiming facility, what division was that?

DOHERTY: That was Water Operating Division.

NELSON: That was within Water Operating, but it was not attached to a particular district? It served the entire division?

DOHERTY: It served the entire division, but actually with staff from the central district, Los Angeles yard which was also called the Ducommun yard. Another interesting item at the Ducommun yard was the fact that the division head, the assistant division head, the operations engineer, were all assigned right in that yard. Whereas now they're all downtown in the main office building. All of the top officers in the Water Operating Division were there at the Ducommun district headquarters. At that time it would have been Max Socha as Division Head of Water Operating. Dick Hemborg was the Division Head Assistant. They were stationed right there at the facility at Ducommun as well as your field superintendents, the district superintendent and various levels of engineers. The senior engineer was Al Renner and he was over all the districts.

That was quite unique to have them all in one of the district headquarters.

**NELSON:** And you were right there at the seat of power?

**DOHERTY:** Right there. So then when 1964 came around, the new building opened and that's when they went to the general office building.

**NELSON:** Do you think it helps being at the seat of operations rather than being in an outlying facility from a standpoint of becoming known and your value becoming more readily known to the people?

**DOHERTY:** Yes, I do believe you became known more readily. The weak part of that is that things aren't handled at a low enough level. In other words, things that should be handled by the assistant superintendents, which, at that time they were called field superintendents. Assistant superintendents that actually run the field forces and the district superintendent should be handling most all of the field problems, disciplinary problems, things of that nature. Instead they were moving right on up to the top in many cases. I found that a lot of the higher officers in the division were handling a lot of the disciplinary cases that should have been handled at a lower superintendent level. Decisions that should have been made at lower levels

were not made because the chiefs were right there and readily available.

I was transferred from the Central District in 1955, and was assigned to the Western District as a foreman. There the highest level was the district superintendent and that was Ed Hoag.

NELSON: He made the decisions that four people made at Ducommun?

DOHERTY: Just had to be the nature of the beast because they were all there. I think people tended to go above just to get approval. In 1955 I went to Western District as a foreman and I mentioned earlier that Ed Hoag was the district superintendent and Lawrence Lusher was one field superintendent and Ed Silva was the other field superintendent.

TAPE NUMBER: 1, SIDE TWO

PATRICK D. DOHERTY

NELSON: Okay Pat, going back to the pipe reclaiming assignment that you initially had as a laborer, what was a typical work shift there for you, and how long did you stay in that particular job?

DOHERTY: Our shifts started at 7:30 a.m. and ended at 4:00 p.m. and was there about six or eight months. At that time we had quite a bit of clean up to do towards the end of the day, because of sandblasting equipment and cement lining equipment. I lived in the south part of town and during this period of time, I was starting and stopping there at the yard which was a benefit to the division. I would start my 7:30 a.m. shift at the plant where the rest of the crew would start downtown at Central yard and they would need time driving and returning. I could clean up after they left and get things ready for the next day. I think that was a help both to me and to the division. There was work that had to be done

on weekends, wetting down the pipe after we had cement lined it. You'd have to keep the pipe wet for a couple of days so it didn't cure too quickly. I'd go in on both Saturday and Sunday on the days after we cement lined and wet all of this pipe 60, 70 lengths of pipe maybe. I'd do that once on Saturday and once on Sunday.

Within, I think the first seven months, I was promoted to maintenance construction helper. I continued to work there for a while because I had kind of gotten a foothold in there and I did some minor repair on equipment as it would break down. My first months there I was just known as "hey kid," "you there." I didn't have an identifiable name for maybe two months because people at that time just believed in getting the work done and you did what was expected of you. But I do recall one day after I had worked there maybe two or three months and there was a Model A engine that ran the cement lining machine that had broken down and they had called the mechanics. It took quite a long time before anybody responded so I asked them if they'd mind if I give it a try. I got it running within about 20 minutes. From then on my name became Pat, everyone knew me as Pat. Then it wasn't within a week the cement lining machine broke down again. The hydraulic jack broke down so I went to work on that. Dwight Patterson was the foreman at the time and he was a very good mechanic, so he and I together worked as a team from then on on the maintenance projects. He kind of took a liking to me because I had a knack for mechanical work and

because I had worked on cars and motorcycles and I was a machinist mate in the Navy. I was used to working with tools and I instructed some machine shop training while I was in the Navy. I also did motor machinist work working on diesel engines when I was in the amphibious forces. So I had a good background in mechanics and from then on I had an identifiable name and people knew who I was.

NELSON: And a product.

DOHERTY: And a product, yes. There was no more just "kid." I thought that was nice and as I look back, I didn't even realize it until as I look back how informal people were. The way we treat incoming help now, you introduce them around, make them familiar with every little thing that is available to them and introduce them to co-workers, around the yard, and to the various people they are going to contact. In those days they just said, "get on that truck and go there" and that was it.

NELSON: You kind of had to "earn your spurs."

DOHERTY: That's it, and then after you did people took a very warm welcome to you, but they didn't go out of their way. You had to show your abilities and once they found out you were on their team, I think that things went very favorably for you.

NELSON: You mentioned you were promoted to M & C helper in about seven months or so, did that involve an examination too?

DOHERTY: Yes it did. That was another examination that was both a written and again you had to take a mechanical aptitude test.

NELSON: That brought some more money?

DOHERTY: That brought more money, yes I think that brought me into the \$245 or \$250 range which was kind of nice at that time. So I still stayed with the same work for a while longer. Later I was assigned to a gate truck which is gate valve operating and repairing truck for the water valves in the system. We have approximately 96,000 gate valves in the whole system. They all need maintenance and operating and I was assigned as helper with Ferman Lopez. Ferman Lopez also was assigned to the pipe reclaiming yard so he and I both were actually working together at the time. We did some system operating of gates as well as worked at the pipe reclaiming yard, so I was kind of doing two duties. If there was emergency work that came up, a broken main or something, we'd leave the pipe reclaiming yard, get in the truck and go out and do the duties required and then come back. That's when the pipe yard was going full speed.

When the pipe yard slowed down, we'd be doing more gate valve work.

**NELSON:** Did you use radio communication on the truck at that point?

**DOHERTY:** At that time, no. When we first started out it was all telephone and you had to call in so many times a day. The first radios we got were about a year or two later and they were just one-way radios. We'd get the call and then we'd still have to go to a phone to get the message. You couldn't respond. The call would come over the air and then there'd be no transmitter to talk back so that was very frustrating. Then it was within a year or so of that then we got the two-way radio and that really became a "God-send."

**NELSON:** You mentioned work on gates. For the lay person who's not knowledgeable what is a gate and what does it do and how does it function and why is it important to DWP?

**DOHERTY:** People say gates and not describe them and you think it's something that swings open and shut like something you drive through. It is something that is open and shut, but it's a disc that slides up and down inside of an opening and the closest thing that you could relate to that is maybe a valve in your house. When you open it in one direction the water goes through it, you shut it in the other direction and it stops the water. A gate valve is a disc that slides up and down

that allows the water to go through when it's opened 100%, you could look through the pipe and see a clear 100% open.

So there's two kinds of valves. The gate valve and a globe valve. The type of valves in your house would be a globe valve. The one that comes into the front of your house from the street by your hose reel would be a gate valve. And that's a disc that slides up and gets a complete 100% open. There is no restricting of the water that goes through, it allows you to get as much water into your home as you can possibly get. We have them from 3/4" all the way up to big enough to crawl into - we have 42" valves.

But all of them do primarily the same job which is to allow you to stop the water. So gate valves I refer to would be all relating to pipe valve work.

**NELSON:** Your primary job, then, was repairing and/or replacing?

**DOHERTY:** Repairing, replacing parts and operating those valves. At that time we tried to operate all of our gate valves in our district once every year or so. So that was a job that when we had any spare time at all, we'd go out and operate valves and as I recall we operated 100-120 valves a day just exercising them so that when you needed them in an emergency, the valves would be operable.

Also if you had a fire hydrant sheared off, you could get out open up your gate cap - it's a cap in the street that you can

raise, put a gate valve key down on the operating nut and close off the supply to that hydrant and stop that flow. Now if you didn't maintain a routine basis of checking and operating these gate valves and have a broken hydrant, for instance, or broken main, you go out looking for that valve and can't get on it and there's a delay and water flooding.

So a good gate valve repairman watches things that are going on in the district he is assigned to and makes sure gate valves don't get paved over, and that rock and debris aren't on the inside of these valves stand pipes.

**NELSON:** He knows where everything is.

**DOHERTY:** He knows where everything is and he knows how to get to it in a hurry. If you're a "sluff-off" and not doing your work then your called in an emergency to go out and make a shut off of some kind and can't get on the valve, then your supervisors are going to be on your tail wondering why it took you so long. So they held everyone relatively responsible for their section that they were assigned to. I think as I recall, there were six or seven gate crews in Central District. We were just one of those six or seven.

**NELSON:** You had a specific territory?

DOHERTY: Yes, the territory at that time was the southeast portion of the City. We could work at the pipe yard and when our presence was needed, take off and leave in a minutes notice for emergencies.

NELSON: What's at the pipe reclaiming yard now?

DOHERTY: The pipe reclaiming yard, since about 1960 became just a pipe storage facility.

NELSON: Still owned and operated by the Department?

DOHERTY: I believe it is, yes. The biggest portion of it is and there's quite a bit of problem now with breaking and entering. People that are looking for material to turn in for the weight of the metal for money. It is a pipe storage facility for large diameter pipe. I'm talking larger than 12" pipe . So 16", 20", 24", 30", 36", and 42" pipe, all our large valves that take so much room in the districts were stored there at one location which would have been the Compton pipe yard.

When you needed pipe or valves, you could have it hauled out of there to the district headquarters or job site.

NELSON: Okay you had been promoted, you now have two jobs. You're still working at the pipe reclaiming yard and you're also on a gate crew, what happens next?

DOHERTY: The next thing is I become a water utility worker as is referred to nowadays, in those days we called it calker and repairman. I made that within about six months. So within a year I'd promoted two levels. I just barely had completed my six months as an maintenance and construction helper when I became a water utility worker as it is known today. That's the journeyman level of a water works worker. You had your entry level which, at that time would have been the maintenance laborer, then you moved up to your maintenance and construction helper. Then you moved up to your water utility worker and that's the journeyman level of the craft.

NELSON: What's the top level of responsibility there? What must you be able to do?

DOHERTY: There's levels of water utility worker also. The entry level would be assigned to crew, generally you'd be second man. You wouldn't be the top man on the crew as water utility worker. There was a lead man and the next man up was the senior water utility worker. Those are a couple of levels above of which your responsibility got greater as you moved up.

Now at that time when I made the water utility worker, I was reassigned to a large service crew. At that time as I recall, the foreman was a fellow by the name of Harry Flores. On the large service crew we installed water meters, four inches and

larger. Anything four, six, eight, ten and twelve inch. In those days all of our work was done by hand and you had to do all the excavating of your vaults and the digging across the street was all done with pavement breakers, picks, bars and shovels.

**NELSON:** How many men were..?

**DOHERTY:** There were five and six men on the large service crew at that time. You had large diameter pipe to install in the ground, you had the large vaults which run five to six feet in width to seven and eight feet in length and then maybe about five feet deep. So that's quite a large volume of earth to move and haul out. As I mentioned, all of that was done by hand which nowadays we have backhoes. The sixth man was usually in the dump truck hauling the material away as you dug your load of earth and maybe three loads of earth had to be moved to a dump during the day and needed material had to be hauled out on that dump truck. So one of the fellows was engaged in, more or less, truck driving work, but we didn't have a truck driver assigned. That would be part of your M & C helper duties. So we had two laborers, two M & C helpers and two water utility workers. I was the second in that.

We had what we call a head caulker or head utility worker. He was the one that was a strawboss. He ran the crew under the foreman. Again I mention all the pipe had to be lowered with

ropes, all your digging was done by hand and some years down the road we started getting hoists to do the lifting of the material and the pipe and also we were getting backhoes to do a lot of the excavating.

**NELSON:** How many crews typically did a foreman supervise?

**DOHERTY:** Typically, in those days you had a foreman assigned to each crew. Each crew had a foreman and there were generally five men on the service crews except the large service crew which were six men.

**NELSON:** When you were assigned to the large service crew, was your assignment then moved to Ducommun yard?

**DOHERTY:** Yes. I had to report each and every morning to the Ducommun headquarters and be ready to leave by 7:30 a.m. You just don't walk in and get on the truck. You had to be there early and get your tools and materials. We did all of that prior to the start of the work day which is different than today. You did that because it was expected of you. The work day started at 7:30 a.m. and at 7:30 a.m. that truck had to be rolling out of the yard. Now we're so unionized that not everybody wants to move earlier than the start of their shift. See that's quite different.

**NELSON:** In later years there were many mornings that you'd have these so-called tailgate sessions. Either administrative things or safety meetings, etc., etc., Did you have that sort of thing in those days?

**DOHERTY:** No. In those days we weren't too strong into safety yet. As I recall it was 1955 when we really formally started a strong safety program. That was under Al Renner, Senior Engineer, and from then on everyone started wearing hard hats and the proper way of lifting and the proper way of doing things and taking time to try and do it safely. Prior to 1955 no hard hats were used and we were kind of lax on shoring, protecting the excavating as we were doing it. The thing was to get the pipe in, get it done and get out of there.

So there were a number of close calls and we had our share of accidents, but thinking back we turned out a great deal of work with a minimum number of loss time injuries. I think going into a formal safety program that initiated your tailgate meetings which you referred to was a big step. From 1955 on there's been a continual strong effort in safety. Tailgate meetings, you mentioned were held continuously from that period on every week. Once a week without fail. Those same safety meetings are going on today. They've been modified somewhat because when we originally started them, we did them in the field and actually that's where the title "tailgate" came from, but we found that

some foreman always had time for tailgate meetings. Others never had time. They were always in a rush, let it go this week, we'll get it next week or well catch up next week or the next week. As we kept records, we find that certain ones just couldn't find time.

So as we went along, we started pulling the safety "tailgate" meetings into the district taking one morning a week where everybody in the service section would stay in one morning holding formal tailgate meetings. The next morning everyone attached to the main installation section would stay, etc. until every crew is covered. From then on we were picking up those stragglers that weren't having safety meetings. It was just a strange quirk that some people find time to do what's needed and others just couldn't find time to do it on a regular basis.

I find that was the best way and every morning for five days a week we had a certain section in. That way not only was your foreman there, but your assistant superintendent would be there, your district superintendent could come in and observe and give a comment now and then to kind of keep them in tune on what's going on in the district. We found that our safety program got stronger and stronger as we enforced attendance.

TAPE NUMBER: 2, SIDE ONE

PATRICK D. DOHERTY

NELSON: We were talking about being a member of a large service crew working out of Ducommun headquarters and we were talking later about the tailgate parties and communications of various sorts, what was the communications chain in those earlier days?

DOHERTY: Wasn't all that good as far as the communications. I think we knew what had to be done for that job and that day, but the ultimate person that you ever got to speak to was your foreman and your foreman ruled. If he decided he wanted to tell you something, he told you. If he didn't feel like he wanted to tell you something, he'd only tell you just what's needed for that particular job or if he wanted you to do something. At that time there was a of feeling that if I tell you too much, you're going to have my job. You're going to know too much and there was a lot of that at the time, although I found that most everyone was pretty good to me. There was always a little bit of that going on at all levels. On the service crew and they made it difficult for me as I

recall, coming there as a new water utility worker because I had worked for Fred Brooks in the operating and maintenance section of the organization.

At that time when you crossed over the line there was three sections. The section where I worked at the Slauson yard and worked on gate valve crews was the operating and maintenance section. When I became the water utility worker or the caulker and repairman I moved over to the service section which was new to me in a separate section under a different superintendent. The third section which I hadn't mentioned is the mains installation section. So we have three separate entities working under the same district superintendent and when you go from one section to another, again you have to prove yourself. When you come from another superintendent I wasn't welcomed with open arms. People didn't take to me very easily. At least the foreman didn't. He told me right from the start that he didn't like me and he was going to make it tough on me.

NELSON: He didn't like you for what reason?

DOHERTY: Because I came from Fred Brooks' section. He made it very clear and I was his driver. I had to drive his truck and he sat next to me and we hardly spoke a word because the first day he told me he didn't like me so I decided well I don't think I like you either, but I'll do my work. He said, "I doubt if you'll make your probation." So I decided that there would

be nothing that he could every get me on. I would do my work and no matter what he told me to do, I would do it and I knew I had the ability to do the work. If somebody just tells me what they want done, I'll see that it is done that way.

So we didn't start off too well. He wasn't looking forward to having me on the crew and then after he said that, I wasn't too happy to be there. Well he did deal me a lot of misery and caused me a lot of hard times on the crew there for the first couple of weeks and any of the dirty work that had to be done it would be Pat Doherty that would get it.

The first month was very low probation. I didn't think it was a fair probation, but I didn't complain about it, I signed it but I asked him if there was something that I wasn't doing and he said, "no you're doing the work okay." The next month I got a little better probation and then he started to change his opinion now that he had become to know me. The crew was also starting to think I wasn't as bad as what they had thought.

At any rate I think I was on that crew then about six months. We did assorted types of jobs and some very heavy work. We had a hoist on the back of the truck but rather than pull the truck around to give me a hand lowering something, he'd tell me to get a rope and lower it down with my back. Putting the heavy rope around your back and lowering 200 to 300 pounds such as a large clamp. I remember one job by the Union Station, he had me lower that down all by myself and as I look back, that was an extremely heavy load to handle.

I agreed to do the work and I was there to do it and I passed my probation in spite of him. In later years he, kind of relented and came to me and told me that he was kind of hard on me, but he had bad feelings for Fred Brooks and he took it out on anybody that came from Fred Brooks' section. So it was really about the only hard feelings through any of my years in the Department.

In my early years, I worked with many types of crews and different foremen, but he's the one that told me right up front the first day before he even spoke to me that he didn't like me.

**NELSON:** So it wasn't anything that you had done? You didn't even know the man.

**DOHERTY:** No. I hadn't even met the man. So anyway, that was a couple of strikes against me to start with, but fortunately I worked through that and went on and I was later assigned to small service crew under a fellow by the name of Earl Hill. That again would have been a crew of about five men and a foreman, two helpers and two utility workers and then the foreman. That's still at Ducommun yard.

I worked on small services then for a number of months and then I received a call back into the maintenance and operating section again. Fred Brooks wanted me back there to be on a regulator crew. So that took me out of the service section. I went back into the section that handled the pipe yard, but doing

a different type of work than I was handling before. This work entailed the water regulation of the system hydraulic valves. They control the pressure and flow of the water throughout the system. This became a more complicated and a skilled job which I liked very well. Very mechanical and also took a lot of studying. It was interesting to me to have that opportunity. A senior utility worker ran the truck and I was the utility worker and we also had a maintenance construction helper.

The types of valve's now I'd be working on are hydraulically operated valves. Prior to that I was talking about mechanically operated valves that we turned by hand on the gate valve crew. The regulator crew is the hydraulically operated valves that control the water system automatically. The system's made up of approximately a hundred pressure zones of supply throughout the 460 square mile area of the city. Those pressure zones are controlled by a water source which is usually a tank or reservoir and/or regulator station's that handles the system.

It became a type of job that was very challenging and something that not everyone was adept to. It was something right down my alley and I enjoyed it. I moved up then from second man to Senior Water Utility Worker with my own truck. I think I got my own truck by 1950 or 1951 which then I took home with me. I handled all the responses at night on the west end

of the city for any emergencies that came about after hours. In those years we had plenty of them. There wasn't a week that went by that you didn't get two or three calls in the middle of the night.

**NELSON:** Why is that?

**DOHERTY:** In those days the water system wasn't as good as we have it today and well, things would go wrong. Maybe a tank overflowing or a relief valve would be discharging. The relief valves discharge out through an opening in the curb and if something malfunctions in the system, the relief valve takes over and you can see it discharge water out at the curb. It will discharge a stream of water and that way the police or homeowners see it and call in to the Water Department. In turn, the water trouble board would call the regulator man in the district at night.

At that time I handled everything west of Western Avenue and I lived in the west end of town. If anything would happen in that area, I would respond to it and repair it, put it back into service for the night. Major alarm fires, brush fires or anything of that nature, of course, you rolled on. Hot nights when the system wasn't so strong in those days as we have today and you'd get a heat wave the pressures would sag throughout the city and we'd have to go out and manipulate the system in order to keep supply in a certain area.

As the years went on the system improved and we got larger pipes and relieved a lot of those problem areas. The city grew so fast after the war and it took a lot of upsizing of the pipes and improving of the system to keep up with it all. In those days, Friday night was your connection night. All the large mains were being installed and we would make our connections on major trunk lines on Friday night after consumers started cutting down their water use. We'd come in after 8:00 p.m. and shut the system down in order to make these connections. It would give us Saturday mornings as people tend to sleep in and it would give us a few extra hours. If it didn't come on Saturday morning, it wasn't a complete tragedy, we'd have it on by noon. People wouldn't be hurt too bad. But Friday nights were a very common connection night. Everyone would be involved in making major system connections. Nowadays that's kind of rare. We don't have many of those Friday night connections because all the big connections are pretty well done and we have a strong system.

**NELSON:** Up to this time had you had much public contact? In the field crews you really weren't dealing with customers on a one to one basis.

**DOHERTY:** Not too much. In my particular type of work at that time I didn't deal one to one with the customer.

**NELSON:** You dealt very rarely with the public?

**DOHERTY:** Very rarely. In fact, most of my work was in vaults and it was under the street. There would be big rooms that we'd have where all the apparatus is and you'd be under the street or at a reservoir or tank or something of that sort. The customer contact, we didn't have that much.

**NELSON:** Back to employees. Were there many women working in the Department at that time?

**DOHERTY:** No, the first lady, I recall her name was Freda Alpert. When we saw her walking in through the yard, people couldn't believe their eyes seeing a lady coming through. That was in the early 40's. Marie Mormon was another one. She was in the personnel office when I was first hired in. In fact, she did most of the personnel paper work. There were a few ladies working in the office, but it was clerical, secretarial. But not that many in the handling the district activities. I think Freda Alpert came in to handle our accounting for the district and the time keeping had been done by males up to that time and she was kind of a unique person to be working with the field forces. When the crews came in at night and then again in the morning, she was checking up on your time and what you ordered and what type of equipment and things. From then on it gradually increased little by little, but it was very rare, in

fact, she was the very first as I recall that was involved with the field.

NELSON: Did she stay with the Department? Was she a career person?

DOHERTY: Yes she did. She stayed with the Department and transferred out to Western District and I had her there for many years in the later years. In fact, I handled her retirement when she left. Good friend.

NELSON: Okay Pat, you've got your regulator truck and are you still a water utility worker?

DOHERTY: Yes, a senior water utility worker. In fact, the regulator position is the highest paid position of all of the water utility. Now today they've leveled that out to all seniors getting the same, but in those days up until maybe ten years ago they were always paid a little more than any of the others because it took quite a bit more studying and more responsibility. They thought it would only be fair to equalize it so all seniors got the same amount. So that was equalized.

NELSON: How long did you work.

DOHERTY: About five years in charge of the regulator truck, I had that until 1955. I was promoted to Water Utility Supervisor in 1955. Again I took that Civil Service examination.

NELSON: You were still at Ducommun Street. (Central District)?

DOHERTY: Yes. It was May 23rd as I recall and I was reassigned to the Western District, and never had anything to do with Western up to this point as far as the District is concerned. I handled the Western District regulators and reservoirs at night, but I was assigned to the Central District and reported there. When I was assigned to the Western District, again you have to kind of prove yourself and Fred Brooks wasn't too well liked because he had what some people called all the supposedly "Prima Donna's." In those days he handled the regulation in Western District as well, and the superintendents there didn't like that. They weren't too fond of that and here I come again and, whoops, a guy that's been assigned to Fred Brooks. So they made it somewhat tough on me again. They put a mix-matched crew together and gave me a main line crew and sent me off. Their intent, again, was to make me prove myself. They told me that and I didn't get a whole lot of cooperation at first.

I remember the very first job I had was up on Barrington, north of Sunset and it was on a street where June Haver and Fred McMurray's home was right on this section of main that I had to put in. They'd come out and talk to me on occasion, but that job wasn't all "peaches and cream" either.

The digger I had would only dig a minimum of five feet from the curb. The main line installation plan called for four feet from the curb, so there was no way I could dig it with the digger at four feet so I went ahead and laid it at five feet. There was no other utility at this location. In all the manuals that I'd read up to that time we had the liberty of moving within a foot in one direction altogether and I took that foot on my own as foreman and went ahead and started digging. Well I dug maybe 300 feet of ditch, I hadn't laid all the pipe, when the field superintendent came up there, got his tape measure out and found out I was out at five feet and he just raised all kinds of hell with me. He said, "You're at five feet. It calls for four feet." At any rate, I told him it was as close as I could get. The wheel digger wouldn't allow me to get any closer. He was a pretty excitable guy and he called the District Superintendent on it and Ed Hoag came out and I thought boy, I guess I'm in real trouble, you know, this is bad news for me on my first job.

Ed Hoag gets out, he didn't say anything, he just gets out has a fast gait and he walked up the street and he walked back

and still hadn't spoke and scratched his head a little bit and turned around and came over and talked to me and said, "What made you decide to go to five feet?" I said, "It was as close as I could get. Either put the pipe in with the digger or dig it by hand, so I thought this was the best way to go," and he said, "good decision." So he got in his car and left.

But what bothered me was that the assistant superintendent made such a commotion over it. Anyway, he was a little uncomfortable with his job, he didn't have it that long prior to me becoming a foreman. He was on probation too. So anyway, I got over that hump and got a few jobs others didn't want for the first month or two and as time went on they kind of felt that I wasn't that bad a guy and different ones started breaking down and talking to me. But I was treated pretty cold. When you come from another section in those days, people just didn't take to you very kindly.

**NELSON:** Maybe we ought to take a minute here, Pat, if you would and kind of describe these districts and the philosophy behind them.

**DOHERTY:** I spoke a lot of the Central District when I started there, the dividing line would be Western Avenue to the west and then south to 120th Street, on the east over to the Los Angeles River or the city limits and then to the north to the Eagle Rock area.

Then the Western District would start at Western Avenue and go west to the ocean, and again go south to about 120th Street and then go north to Mulholland Drive would be about the dividing line on the north and that would be about a 130 square mile area. The Central District at that time was 86 square miles. Then to the north Mulholland as the dividing line and there's two more districts, East Valley and West Valley, north of Mulholland. Starting at Sepulveda and going west would be West Valley yard. The East Valley, east of Sepulveda Boulevard is about 108 square miles, I believe and the West Valley is about 112 square miles.

Then there is a fifth district which is the Harbor District. That's a shoestring strip that goes down between Figureoa and Vermont from 120th Street south. That goes down into the San Pedro area which takes care of Wilmington, the Terminal Island, over to the Long Beach line. At that time was about 27 square miles. All five of the districts should add up to about 460 square miles.

**NELSON:** Well you've described different square mileage for each of the districts, was there some other equalling equation or why were they geographically set that way?

**DOHERTY:** It wasn't for having equal distribution because that's kind of hard to do. It depends upon geography..it was easier to handle. I think Western Avenue was a good line between

Central and Western. At one time, in the early stages, La Brea was the line. So for one reason or another that line was moved over to Western Avenue. That was in the early 50's.

The Central and Western were the two largest districts at that time. The most complicated of all the districts would have been the Western District. It has more pressure zones and more square miles and it has the hills, it has the seashore, it has every limit from one extreme to the other and it is very challenging.

Your valleys are east and west valleys. The East Valley has a hilly section and some old pipe, but isn't quite so large or complicated. A lot of it was relatively new, there wasn't that much activity. West Valley was a booming district which was just growing at those early years. All new piping was installed. There was very little maintenance being done because the valley was relatively new where Central and Western had a whole lot of main replacement work. We had a lot of old pipe that had to be replaced. We also had a lot of new building going on. All districts were active.

**NELSON:** I guess you also were integrating with other water systems that had been acquired which may create a lot of work.

**DOHERTY:** Yes, we took over the Hollywood Water Company, the Southern California Water Company in the Mar Vista area, Cal American Water, Conservative Water, and other smaller community

water companies. When you take them over they usually were just about ready to fail. When you finally get them, you'd have to replace about everything.

NELSON: A lot of deferred maintenance?

DOHERTY: A lot of deferred maintenance, that's correct. I think a water utility is a poor investment. If you were going to invest in some utility, the water business would be at the bottom of the list, dollar for dollar. In most utilities, little water companies, once they get their water system in, they can't afford to do much maintenance because the water revenue that they receive isn't that much and just receive enough to make salaries and keep the system going.

Power has a good dollar return per dollar invested. Telephone is pretty good. Gas is pretty good. But water is at the bottom of the heap.

NELSON: The City of Los Angeles ultimately has five water districts within the City, why have five separate chains of command than reporting to a central?

DOHERTY: At that time we had five districts that were autonomous that could operate individually without help. We had all our own equipment. We had our welders, we had our manpower, had our supervision. Regardless of what would occur

in that district, ninety something percent of the time we would be able to function without any help from anyone else, and that was kind of unique. We were looked up to by the fire insurance underwriters. At that time we were being studied by the Underwriter's Association and we were rated as to our fire protection for the Class I city. To be a Class I fire department you had to have a good water department. We were rated on how quick, how independent we were and how we could respond to emergencies. We were also rated as a water utility along with the fire department.

The fire department could not have a Class I rating which they hold today if we didn't have a very good and strong water system. I know at the time the underwriters thought Los Angeles was unique in being such a complex city having five separate districts that could function independent of the other. So it made for good response times in getting emergencies handled without delay and responding to the fire needs of the fire department.

Having five individual districts, the five district suerintendints met on a regular basis at the general office building a minimum of once a month. They would sit down around a table together and discuss mutual problems and hear from the top what was expected and what was needed. This way the five of us weren't going in different directions. We kept in close unity. Being five different people, there will always be some differences in the way we do things, but basically we're all

doing things somewhat the same way. We were all under the same leadership and under the same policies. The division head, the assistant division head, the operation's engineer, the field operations engineer and the office engineer all sit down around a table once a month and resolve the pros and cons, the way things are going and if some improvement had to be made in one district or the other. We'd face up to that, make our changes and try to follow a good path for all of us to go in the same direction rather than all five in different directions. Many years ago that was happening being five separate entities. When I mentioned earlier when all the chiefs were at Central District, I know the Western District, Harbor District and the Valley Districts were doing it their own way, because they were independent and didn't have all the bosses directly over them and they did things without even informing the top command in some cases.

TAPE NUMBER: 2, SIDE TWO

PATRICK D. DOHERTY

NELSON: What kind of problems could result from the fact that some of these districts were operating kind of on their own to a certain extent?

DOHERTY: It became an efficient way to operate for the district superintendent, but the problem came in record keeping. Many things were done on the "spur of the moment", a decision would be made by the man in the district who may have installed a valve or remove a valve or put in a section of pipe. Not always would that be recorded in a proper way where it would be documented well with good measurements and history taken so we'd have a good over-all picture down the road always.

We found as we went along a lot of decisions were made right at the district which is a very good functional way to operate and I think that got them through emergencies at the time, but not always did we have the best of records, whereas in the later years when we started meeting regularly together getting better engineering documents and following one policy and not installing a valve unless it was approved by our division or by

a representative of the division head. That way we'd each have a District engineer working out of the general office building that was responsible for Western Central District, West Valley, East Valley and Harbor District only. There were five district water works engineers that had direct ties to the districts. If I wanted to install that valve, for instance, I would call my district engineer at GOB who was Terry Okamora at the time and tell him what my plans were. Being an engineer, he'd look it over and if it looked good to him, he'd approve it. If it was something that he couldn't approve, he'd go higher and tell his boss what we planned to do. If they went along with it or might have a better suggestion then we'd get together on a decision and come up with a pretty quick solution, even in an emergency.

That way you're involving your leaders when needed and in those cases where some decisions should be taken up to the higher levels they are, I think, all responsibilities should be held down to the lowest level. So that got "fine-tuned" as we went along.

**NELSON:** So going back, in 1955 you went over to Western District as a Water Utility Supervisor. What happened next, Pat?

**DOHERTY:** Well then I worked in various crews as a supervisor of Water Mains Installation, Service Installation and Leak Crews. Then in 1959 when Fred Brooks retired, they broke up the Water

Regulation Section. Up to that time all the people working on water regulation crews for the Central, Western and Harbor areas were all handled out of the Central District. That was because Fred Brooks was the superintendent and the father of water regulation. After he retired, they decided they should be divided now and me with the background in water regulation, they thought I'd be the right one to be the foreman over regulation in the Western District. That was the first move they made by assigning three crews to the Western District and I was made the supervisor over water regulation. That was a senior foreman position and was the highest level foreman position because it had many responsibilities. I also had all the reservoirs, tanks and pumping plants in the Western District. Anything that happened in Water Regulation and Reservoir Operations was handled within the district so that was kind of unique and different.

Prior to that time, reservoirs, tanks, regulators were all handled from the Central District and that caused a little friction amongst the superintendents, especially western because it's such a large district and they were orphans when it came to water regulation. So that was my job to start it in western. I was the foreman of that section until 1962. I became a field superintendent in November, 1962 and I was still responsible for water regulation equipment and then additional duties.

NELSON: What did those duties include?

DOHERTY: Well my duties got broader and at that time, I had 200 people as a Water Utility Assistant Superintendent. But as an assistant superintendent in those days the manpower was quite a bit larger than what we have now. Industry and housing was booming. We had a lot of work going on. We had two assistant superintendents in Western District. One was Ed Silva and at that time Lawrence Lusher. Mr. Lusher retired in 1963 and I took his position. The Mains Installation Superintendent had about 75-80 men. The Operating Superintendent had all the service installations and maintenance and operations which gave me about 200, but I liked it. It was a busy job. You certainly didn't have time to worry about what time of the day it was. Time flew and I had so many things going I was wondering whether I was doing the right thing at the right time.

NELSON: So when you were field superintendent were you basically in the field throughout the day checking progress of various jobs?

DOHERTY: As a field superintendent you have office duties until possibly 10:00 a.m and then the rest of your time is supervising the activities of your field crew. At that time we had in the

District 17 supervisors. Those 17 supervisors would be divided between the two field superintendents. I think six were under the main line superintendent. The rest were mine so I had around 11 foremen. I had the leak section, the gate valve section, the hydraulic valve section, the service installation crews, the ditch inspectors, and the cement crews. The welders came under the mains installation superintendent.

So that was a little lopsided as far as responsibility, but again as time went on we divided the district into three. So now we have three superintendents. When you put that many men under one superintendent, it's a little bit too heavy. As it is now, it is more in line, having an additional superintendent in Western District.

**NELSON:** You were a relatively new field superintendent when Baldwin Hills occurred?

**DOHERTY:** Yes I was. That happened in 1963 in December of '63 and I became a superintendent November the year before.

**NELSON:** About a year's experience.

**DOHERTY:** Yes, I really got my feet wet in a hurry there.

**NELSON:** Can you relate the events as you saw them?

**DOHERTY:** That was December 13, 1963 as I recall I was putting the Christmas lights up on our house in Westchester. I lived not far from Baldwin Hills, at 93rd and Loyola. I remember exactly the position I was in. I was over the doorway putting lights up on the roof when I got a telephone call from Revere Wells and he said that he had some increased water seepage in the weir tunnel. I told him I'd be right up and that was about 11:25. I just left everything laying and jumped into (at that time you took your equipment home) a Department car. I was up to Baldwin within twenty minutes. I remember Revere Wells and I went down in the inspection gallery. It's a tunnel that takes you down under the reservoir. There was silt in the water and we could see it coming into the weir chamber. I knew we had something going wrong, but at that time I didn't have any idea of what it would be. We always ran a little bit of water there, but I started to see some silt in the water and that meant that some activity was taking place but we didn't know just what.

We came on out, walked on around the reservoir and over on the northeast side there's a big storm drain opening that we could hear water running and that's where he first heard the change in the water sound. Instead of hearing a trickle of water when he'd walk by there each morning, he was hearing an increased amount of water.

This was all within about 20-25 minutes. I called Gerry Wyss. Gerry Wyss was the assistant division head at the time and he lived in the Baldwin area near Slauson and Overhill

Drive. I told him that we were having some silt coming into the inspection gallery and I was going to shut the inlet off into the reservoir. The 36" inlet valve came in off La Brea to control water coming in. I think 60 something cubic feet per second was coming into the reservoir. I thought well the first thing I'll do is stop the water coming in and start getting water out. Gerry Wyss was there by 12:30 or so. He and I, then, went back up into the inspection gallery and what I'd seen a half hour or so before was increasing so the decision was made to go ahead and increase dropping the water level in the reservoir. I had already shut the inlet off. I then called out personnel that take trucks home. I think I called out three regulator crews and four gate valve crews. I had them go to different locations throughout the southwest end of town and start relieving the system by forcing water to come out of the reservoir. You can do that by juggling or stopping flows of water coming from other areas and forcing them to use water out of Baldwin. That caused the reservoir to drop as fast as possible. A lot of changes were made that goes into a lot of detail and a lot of fanagaling was going on in order to get water out of there. Also I was starting to drain down on La Brea at Rodeo Road. We have a large 36" drain valve that goes directly into the storm drain it's called a bunger valve. We were getting that opened at the time. I had the 16" relief valve open in Centinella Park and many other valves and fire hydrants in Westchester and different areas in the southwest

part of the city. Just to give you an idea of the graphics, Overland Avenue and Venice Boulevard we had a large regulator station there that supplied water from the stone canyon reservoir system into the Baldwin system. We shut that off to force water out of the Baldwin system. Anyway a lot of activity was being done in a few hours to relieve the water through the system.

Of course activities were increasing around Baldwin and there was no sign of dampness on the face of the dam until maybe 1:30 p.m. I'd climbed up there several times and not a sign of anything earlier. Then maybe around 1:30 or so we started seeing just a damp spot, but by then we were starting to get the reservoir pretty well lowered as far as the water was concerned. By then Gerry Wyss had called to Dick Hemborg and Mr. Hemborg called Sam Nelson and various levels in between. Mr. Wyss had called out an expert in geology at the time. One of the first people on the scene called out was a geologist to give us their expert opinion on it, being experts in their field.

So anyway, everyone had concurred that the right thing was being done, to get as much water out of the reservoir until it was determined just what was going on. By that time the water had increased coming out of the inspection galleries and was coming out through the tunnel, which was an eight foot tunnel that you can walk through. Now we were getting water several feet high coming out of the tunnel.

**NELSON:** You could no longer walk through it?

**DOHERTY:** No longer could we walk through. I had to be held by my feet at one point and hung down from the top of the 72" pipe to retrieve a valve operator. Water came so fast. You do a lot of things hoping it will work. When we first noticed the hole in the inside face of the dam, we had sand and sandbags and were hanging down on ropes trying to plug the hole. As it all unfolds later, finally the breach in the dam occurred. At the time you just do what you think is right. You think well it looks like a little hole there. You can just see a hole with water running out and here we're putting sand bags in and their just sucking up the sand bags in a hurry and fortunately we were hanging on ropes before the dam opened.

But all of that came later and the water going out the tunnel going out to La Brea didn't have anything to do with the dam at the time. We just thought all the water that was leaking was going to come out the tunnel and then to La Brea and then down to the storm drain. We had the police notified early. I had called them early in the day to traffic control because of the amount of water coming out. Then the dam started to show seepage and then by 3:30 the dam had breached. But then again by 3:30 we had evacuated over half of the water level that was in the reservoir prior to the time the dam breached. Half of that water had been used up either going out the drain or forced to be used by the consumers.

So again a lot of fanagaling had to be done with system manipulation directing all these crews that had valves changed and get them reversed so you didn't start pulling mud, sand and debris into your water system and into the homes. I was busy on the radio directing these activities of the water system to get it reversed back on other sources of supply and getting it stopped from going out of Baldwin.

NELSON: Who was the District Superintendent at that time?

DOHERTY: That was Ed Hoag, but he was out of town at the time but saw it on television and arrived later in the afternoon.

NELSON: You were the acting boss?

DOHERTY: I was the boss at that point.

NELSON: When did you come to the realization that the dam was going to go?

DOHERTY: That was after 1:30 or 2:00 I believe. A damp spot started showing up on the dam and I had been up there twice before and it was dry. Across the face of the dam we had trails that you could walk on and observe and you could also climb up the face of the dam.

Then around 2:00, after there was a damp spot and after the geologists had come out and said that this drain is coming from the north toe under the dam and they felt there was a good probability that it would go.

The word had gone out to get the people out below the dam and that happened about 2:00 and the police didn't want to act until they had the word from the general manager and William Parker who was the Chief of Police. They didn't want to start a panic unless it was from the highest of the command. So I think Mr. Nelson talked directly to Parker and Parker then gave the word out to evacuate the people. I recall that Culver City police came in to help because they had bull horn speakers in the grill of their cars. They drove around telling people to get out of their homes through the speakers in the front end which L.A., I don't recall them having that at that time and that was quite a help.

Some people I do recall didn't want to leave their homes because they couldn't be convinced there was a problem. They had lived there all these years and didn't know anything about a reservoir.

**NELSON:** They were not aware?

**DOHERTY:** They weren't aware and they just had a difficult time getting people to put down their hoses. Some were out watering. So when that's your home and a Saturday morning, people get so

complacent they think well I'm okay but you can tell my neighbors if you want.

**NELSON:** How did Fedco Department Store fare? Is it still there or not?

**DOHERTY:** It's still there. It took a lot of mud and a lot of debris and a lot of cars were flooded with mud and water in their parking lot. A lot of homes were lost, but very few lives and I think a lot of that was attributed to Rever Wells getting the word out early and getting people moving. I often think had he been just sitting in his office there reading the paper and not taking his walk like he should in the morning, he'd never heard the sound of additional water running and immediately called me. He jumped over his boss to call me because he knew I was close there and in turn, I jumped over my boss several levels to go to the assistant division head because I knew he lived near there also.

That was a little hard to explain to Al Rener later on why I didn't call him. Al Rener lived out in the valley and he was a very good boss and I thought the world of him, but at that time it didn't even cross my mind. I just thought who do I call that is close as possible and Gerry Wyss got there just like that. So what happened was Al Rener didn't get notified until he saw it on the TV and then Pat Doherty was in kind of hot water there for a while but he understood. He said, "Doherty,

you didn't call me." But again that's in the heat of an emergency you do what has to be done. It wasn't intentional.

**NELSON:** You had a few things on your mind.

**DOHERTY:** Yes I did and later that evening I reported all the day's activities in detail. That was prior to the general office building opening and I remember that night we all went down to be debriefed of all the activities that happened and we went to the old Broadway building and Steve Powers, the Assistant City Attorney who tried to put it all together. Anyway he took all our depositions of things that occurred through the day so that he could kind of get a handle on it. Later I know after the suit had gone to court, several of the oil companies attorneys had me on the hot seat for two days as they had thought that I had rehearsed this and we knew the reservoir was going to fail. Things clicked so well they wanted to know how I knew so much that I could do all this with little reference. They took all the tapes of the radio conversations of all the things that occurred, they couldn't figure out how I was doing this without looking things up. I kind of grew up with it and enjoyed that type work and in my early years of married life I had papered an empty bedroom with maps of the water system and I just about memorized the water system. They tried to get me to say that I knew and rehearsed this, and I was going through these activities and knew where to

send people and what to do. I never dreamed that reservoir would go out. I was involved in the filling of it originally in 1952 and I was with Baldwin Reservoir all the way from the very start. I thought it was one of the safest reservoirs in the world, which it was. It wasn't the reservoir that failed, it was the ground below it. It was settled in hearings that we were having and was settled out of court. The oil companies agreed to settle. They didn't admit liability, but it never went to trial because they agreed to settle out of court.

**NELSON:** Gives an indication...

**DOHERTY:** Gives a pretty good indication. After the reservoir had breached, geologists came from all over the world looking. We dug exploration holes for them in the reservoir and around it and they tended to agree that it raised rather than lowered. It was the hydraulic lift on the west side that raised to pop it rather than anything settling. The oil companies were pumping saltwater into the ground at 2,000 psi to push the oil up and it pushed a lot of pressure up. I testified that about six months before the Reservoir problem on La Brea between Stocker and Slauson, we were getting surface water and cracking in the street. We have a large 57" outlet main from Baldwin Reservoir on La Brea Boulevard.

We were concerned of the water coming up and thought it may be our problem but we couldn't detect any leaks. We shut the

main down and the water still continued to come. We checked with the L.A. Investment Water Company that served the county in the streets above La Brea there. Had them shut off their main up above and still the water came. Not until I reached down and tasted that water and found it was salt water did we realize it to be the oil company's.

I then went down in to the oil company property just west of La Brea, drove around there and saw a fellow in a pick-up truck at one of the wells and looking around and I saw a gauge with 2,000 pounds on it. I told him I'm with the Water Department and interested in hydraulics, what does that gauge indicate? "We're pumping salt water in and that's 2,000 per square inch. "We're pumping salt water into the ground to get the oil up." I said, "Well I'd like to inform you that salt water is coming up over in the roadway at La Brea and Stocker, would you notify somebody?" Boy, it wasn't any time at all we had the oil companies all over La Brea. Just tasting that water, not often would you even think of that. But we first tried our system, tried the system above and I didn't know of any other water around there so, "by golly, I reached down, put my finger in it and it tasted very salty." So that was a good indicator that it had disturbed La Brea. It had cut that street right from one end to the other. Big gaps were showing up and water coming the good probability to cause the trouble. I'm definitely convinced that they caused the trouble both at this location.

TAPE NUMBER: 3, SIDE ONE

PATRICK D. DOHERTY

NELSON: After the disaster at Baldwin Hills, I imagine this was quite a test of how the water system would respond and work together between the different districts and helping out Western in a lot of ways. Is that true?

DOHERTY: Yes, it is true and this definitely did prove how people do respond to emergencies. I'd have to say that the greater part of the response came in after it once hit TV. Many things were going on prior to the time the television cameras rolled and a lot of things were being accomplished. Once it hit television we got calls from every district and also other agencies were calling offering manpower, material, equipment. Many of our people were calling in and reporting to the district even without calling. A lot of personnel just reported which is an excellent move. I have to say that Central District, East Valley, West Valley, Harbor Districts, all responding with phone calls and offered their manpower. But as it happened, we had enough there in the district to handle the emergency. I have to say the engineers in the high command

were all reporting also to the main office. It wasn't the general office building, it was the Broadway and Hill Street building and they were starting to log things and keep track of what was happening and getting documentation as to what's happening on the system. They were trying to keep things in order there too also. I know different engineers that lived in the area, one was Gale Holman. He lived down on Coliseum at the time and he showed up there early in the day and offered his help and assistance. Others that lived nearby would just show up right on the property.

So it really is a wonderful feeling to have people back you and respond to an emergency other than in their own district. People are just that united here in the water system. We do have posted in all of the district headquarters large signs that say in a serious emergency, call in or report to the district headquarters. So people all have that on their mind and many, many reported right in to western district without even calling so we had a pretty good group of people there. We had people in the office responding also they kept track of who reported. We had trucks coming out bringing sand and materials and other things that we needed. As it turned out we didn't need a whole lot of material at the time. It was mostly an operational procedure that we had to go through and those people were already engaged in work. We did need help restoring some of the water system after all the flooding had died down. Replacing water mains and services that we needed for continuity and to

keep some of the places in service that were not washed out due to the course of the water, but these were handled by the western district personnel. We had enough personnel there, response was great, it was wonderful.

**NELSON:** How long were you the guy in charge during that period?

**DOHERTY:** I was in total charge of the District from approximately 10:25 a.m. until approximately 4:00 p.m. when the District Superintendent, Ed Hoag, arrived. I didn't get home until 10:00 or 11:00 that night because that evening we went downtown to relate the days activities. Much of that was in our heads and we weren't writing details down. The engineers downtown were trying to follow me on maps and had a difficult time keeping up with it because they weren't as familiar as I was. I was calling many of these things right off the top of my head, but actually it was something I liked and grew up in, it was rather easy for me.

**NELSON:** The district superintendent came back?

**DOHERTY:** He came in in the afternoon. He saw it on the news in Port Hueneme. He was preparing to retire within the foreseeable future and he had bought a home in Port Hueneme in Ventura County. He was up there, when he saw it on the TV, he

was there by about 3:30 or 4:00 p.m. or so.

NELSON: You got to take off one of your hats anyway?

DOHERTY: That's right, yes. Then he took care of the press and things of that nature. There are so many people that start showing up when you have an emergency like that and they are all following you and trying to get more statements. I was relieved when Ed Hoag did come. He did definitely take over the role of the leader then and I just took care of the operating of the system.

NELSON: Well the next few weeks and months must have been tough though on Western District because not only did you have your normal work to do, you had this additional job of getting services back permanently. I imagine there was a lot of temporary service that was installed that had to be in and then ultimately taken out as time permitted.

DOHERTY: That's right and we lost a lot of the streets there, and when the breach did occur as you saw probably on TV it just started taking out the streets and homes in its way and also cars in its way. There was a lot of restoration to be made. We had a lot of services to put back in and we had a lot of them to disconnect that were running and no homes there. Those had to be disconnected that night and something done with them. There

was a lot of follow-up work for weeks and months later and, of course, it made a lot of commotion in the district because so many people were coming from many agencies and even people were coming from other countries wanting to go up and see the reservoir. That was all being handled through the district and made a lot of activity in addition to our regular work.

**NELSON:** I guess you had a parade of visiting firemen that weren't all firemen who wanted to analyze that problem so..

**DOHERTY:** That's right. Everyone was coming out to see what had happened and wanted someone to show them around so we were involved. But then again that was when you're in your prime. I was trying to figure out how old I was maybe 39 or 40 and all that activity, I thrived on it. I work better under pressure especially in those days. I've kind of proven that through my lifetime. I'm pretty easy going and things go so so for me, but when action is there, things come back to me and I respond. It's just strange. When many emergencies I've gone through, I can't figure out where the decisions came from and how I thought of some of the things, but when you're under pressure, I think the adrenalin flows and you do come to pass when you have to.

I'm just very thankful that things went as well as they did not only on Balwin, but the Bel Air fire. I was the operation superintendent on that also. After the fire started I was up there for two days and all night working directly with the fire

department, riding in the chief's car. We had radios that worked together with the hydrant bureau and the Department. Earl Leonard was the man in charge and we worked a lot of those fire emergencies together.

**NELSON:** Okay can you go into a little more detail on the Bel Air fire? How did you get involved? Exactly what was DWP's role in fighting that?

**DOHERTY:** In the Bel Air fire that was I think 1959. That started up at Beverly Glen and Mulholland. A tractor was doing some earth moving there just below Beverly Glen tank. I guess a backfire from his tractor started the fire from what they determined. It happened as I recall somewhere around 1:00 p.m. in the hills that served by tanks, pump system. Serving some of the most expensive property. You are talking about Bel Air and Brentwood and Pacific Palisades it's the most expensive property in the district. Not knowing that that fire was going to mushroom into such a tragedy at the time, but fortunately we were at that time organized well with the Fire Hydrant Bureau. We worked very closely with them. I was the regulator supervisor at the time and Earl Leonard was in charge of the Hydrant Bureau and he was in a Fire Chief's car which he took home with him and I had a car I took home with me.

When we'd get to a major alarm fire or greater alarm fire or a major brush fire, he would respond and I would respond also.

I handled the water system activities and he'd handle the fire department problems. He was the liaison with his chiefs while the activities were going. All of the information would feed into him then he could tell me where the problems were and I could shift the water around to improve systems and increase pumping in certain areas as needed. So that was kind of my specialty and we became pretty closely united through a lot of smaller fires but this happened to be one of the big ones we worked.

We were in one car most of the time. I'd be in his car and I'd have his Water Department radio and then I'd take the gate book with me. We could get through the fire lines and all with his car better than with mine. Generally if we weren't checking out where the fire was going and how it was spreading, the word would be coming in through the command post up on Mulholland. They'd be keeping a map of all the activities where the fires were springing up--a pin map would be out on the board just outside of the big van there, their command post. The fires were popping up in so many spots and so fast that it was just hard to keep up with. The winds came up and then everyone was getting their hoses out, getting on their roofs and wetting down shingles and so it really taxed the water system. You might say that every hydrant and every hose bib was turned on in the whole west end of town and systems aren't designed for that. That became a problem for the fire fighters because so many people were using water. It's hard to get people to stop using their

hoses so the fire department could have professional water to put on certain areas that they think important.

I have to feel for the people in Glendale recently that were saying that the fire department didn't show up for two hours. Well that may be the case because in many cases in the Brentwood fire, the fire department didn't respond because the fires were popping up so quickly, they couldn't get into the area and then so many places are burning. They can't go get an isolated fire when a whole string of houses are going and maybe eight or ten or twelve more houses will be lost.

**NELSON:** Yes, there's some strategy involved.

**DOHERTY:** I'd feel sorry if it were my home and no fire department showed up, I'm sure I'd be bitter too, but I've seen this in action. In fact, Clete Roberts, who was one of the newsmen at the time, was out there trying to stop the fire engine to put out a fire where he had his camera set in a house. The fireman said, "No, no, no, we've got to go, we've got to get up to where we're assigned." He raised all kinds of hell and got them to shoot water on it anyway so he could get it on the camera. But it was contrary to what they were ordered to do. They were supposed to continue on and I moved around him, I happened to be right there at the time and he had it on news and he wanted to see fire engines shooting water on there.

So there is a lot of strategy in play and again that's what I have to say when that Bel Air started. We thought, well it's a fire in the area, brush fire, lot of brush to burn, but those embers blew and they blew hard and they blew all over the Bel Air area and I think we lost 450 houses over the entire west side. That fire blew all the way out into Palisades and right on down and almost joined up with one at Malibu. I know I was very busy all that afternoon, that night and the next day before I ever got home again. We do a lot of juggling with the water system that people won't see up front. You try to keep up the supply and if the people are using a lot of water in an area, we try to divide it off by changing gate valves and regulators to put more water into an area that we feel is more important. If the fire department thinks that they need more water in a particular area, we will work more with the professionals than the people that are saying they are out of water. We'll have to let something go. We'll let the amateurs go during this time and go with the professionals.

NELSON: I was going to ask what can the Department do to help and I assume that's regulator reroute water supplies throughout the city to get more water into the area and maybe reduce it in other areas temporarily....

DOHERTY: Yes, regulators and increase pumping in the hills, anything that is high, has to be pumped up so you increase

pumping or you'll cut in pumps from another location and utilize that water to supplement the water you were looking for. So its a lot of juggling around to get the product where you need it most and as in the Bel Air fire. So many fires were burning in so many directions that you just couldn't keep up with them, moving faster than the fire department could keep up with. In most cases we had the water, because water isn't used that much in that type of fire it's mostly helicopters and borate bombers. They do the most good there. Hoses spraying on the brush out there doesn't do that much, but if you can keep it around the homes, that might help.

**NELSON:** Well then in the four or five years prior to you taking over as district superintendent, you had quite a bit of disaster training?

**DOHERTY:** Yes, I did. I had the Bel Air fire and then we also had Laurel Canyon fire which was another big fire, I think two years later. I think the Bel Air would have been 1959 and then the one over in Laurel Canyon which wa also a large fire in 1961. Not a whole lot of homes burnt, but there was a lot of hillside burned there and a number of homes. It helps to know the water system and I think we're losing that touch now, everything is becoming more technical. If you're out of water, its going to be off for a while and you just don't have the manpower to respond in the way we did in those days. People

aren't carrying as much around in their heads, they refer to manuals and take the time to look it up and precious time goes by.

NELSON: Think there are less guys like yourself running around the Department now who tacked the distribution system maps up in his bedroom?

DOHERTY: I don't think we have much of that any more. We have a lot of good people out there and I don't deny that at all, but people look at today as a job, an eight hour job, and they're going to do their work the best they know how during that eight hours. I think in those days when we were growing up, your job was a 24-hour job. You didn't look at it then as eight hours. Anything you could do to make your job better and be more efficient, you just felt that was good for you and the Department. I think, not only me, but I think people of that generation put a whole lot more into it. I think it's just a change in times and probably the people from the generation ahead of me did things a lot more thoroughly and put more into it than we did.

I think each generation is getting more automated and more detached and I see that in the water system now. I saw the 12" water main break on Church Lane and Sepulveda north of Sunset in the paper today with the street falling in. It happened yesterday and I don't know when they got the water on. I saw

them breaking pavement there this morning. In my opinion, it should have been done yesterday, but people don't move that fast today. They had approximately 400 homes out of water all afternoon before water was bypassed which brought water down from the upper system. But it takes them time to research this all and look it over, study it and talk to people, figure out what they're going to do next.

NELSON: It was probably more of a, to you and to your co-workers, peers, it was more of a point of pride. But when something happened, it got fixed. It was not their problem it was your problem.

DOHERTY: Absolutely. Once it was laid onto you, you took it and ran with it and took care of it. Now people tend to get everyone involved and into the decision making, get somebody to make a decision up the line and not take the ball and run with it as in the old Department. I think people put a whole lot more into their jobs then. It's changing fast and I don't know where we're going to end up, we could be a maintenance and operating organization before too long. A great deal of work is going to contract and we are losing a great deal of know-how, practical know-how out there in the districts. Good people are there, but they are moving up so rapidly that they are not picking up any particular skills, they know a little about a lot of things instead of any depth in any one area.

**NELSON:** You said when decision times comes then, rather than being able to make a rapid decision, you have to go back and look at the manual, read up on it?

**DOHERTY:** That's right. You would need manuals for every step of every operation. The power system, is more manual oriented and takes different steps, through manuals. The water system was reluctant to do that. The difference between the water and power systems is everything that power does, they have in documented manuals and they go to researching their manuals. In the water system they didn't go as deeply into documenting because the practicality is that people are researching manuals trying to find the optimum way to do things instead of getting out there and putting it together and making it work. When you start getting into manuals for each task, then you follow it to the letter and I think that's difficult to do especially in the water system operations tasks.

**NELSON:** And it is hard to make it fit.

**DOHERTY:** And it's hard to make it fit. We had an operating manual we worked on for years. Every time you'd pick it up you'd see corrections that should be made, we have a correction sheet to put in for changes, but it just never gets to be exactly right. Then when a new man comes in, he says, "Yeah, but I did exactly.." I say yes, but you should have seen this

or that or the other thing. It gives you an out in other words if you've got the manual, I think.

NELSON: What were the circumstances in your taking over the district?

DOHERTY: That was in 1964. There were two openings coming up in July and August 1964. One was Ed Hoag retiring out of western in July and Gus Wilson was retiring out of the San Pedro District in August. I recall Gail "Doc" Morrow and I were both interviewed the same day by Dick Hemborg, Division Engineer downtown at Ducommun Street headquarters along with many others. He and I were selected as being the two replacements and he was given the job at Western District and I was given the job at Harbor District.

I was in the Harbor District as District Superintendent for three years before returning to Western District in 1967. Then when I took over Western, I still had the Harbor District tanks, reservoirs and regulators. We handled the water regulation and major water mains at Western. They felt that I had something to offer in the Harbor District and "Doc" Morrow, had also worked in Western all the years that I had and he had a good background for Western. So that was the ideal solution.

I was there three years in the Harbor District, it was a real growing experience for me because it's a unique district. It's all in an isolated area where people kind of stick together.

It's an old fishing town and I found that I eventually knew most management people in the gas company, the power system, the commercial office, the Chamber of Commerce, the Harbor Department and the City Hall. I got to know most of the people that run the town which is impossible in a larger district. You take Western District you have the Palisades area, the Brentwood area, the Hollywood area, the Westwood area, the West L.A. area, the Westchester area, Crenshaw area and others.

You've probably got seven or eight satellite communities in Western where down in the Harbor, when they'd have a town hall meeting and call the utilities together, you'd all be involved because you're all serving that one location. It really made it an interesting part of my career. It was an easier job because it was a smaller district. The district headquarters was right in the center of the entire network that you served and you got to know all your utilities that you worked with and we all become kind of a unit. You knew exactly who to call. If you wanted somebody in the gas company, you'd pick up the phone and call the Superintendent, Ward Proudfoot, or in the power system you would call Superintendent Bill Simmons.

So it made a unique experience and I'm very glad I went down. I was there three years and received a call by Gerry Wyss, the division head at the time, stating, "I want you to go back to Western District." "Are you asking or telling me?" He said, "Well I guess I'm telling you, why?" I said, "If you're asking me I was going to say I'd like to kind of stay here."

I've found that this is a very interesting business. Within a week I was back in Western District.

Then Doc Morrow was reassigned to West Valley when Charles Bascom retired and I came back to Western and was there from 1967 on through to my retirement in 1989.

TAPE NUMBER: 3, SIDE TWO

PATRICK D. DOHERTY

NELSON: Pat, you mentioned the different elements within the community here, were you, as a District Superintendent, encouraged to meet with the community, encouraged to get involved in joining organizations and become really the "Mr. Water" if you will, to the people of the district?

DOHERTY: Yes, that was starting to come about I would say more in the early 70's. We were getting more active in the community's activities and getting a better representation at the Chambers of Commerce. We were trying to meet with the other utilities more often and trying to keep in closer touch. It is so difficult when you get into a large district because there is so many Chambers of Commerce. I think there is eight in the Western District and I belonged to the Westchester Chamber at the time. We were encouraged to be more active in trying to meet with your police departments and fire departments. I kept in close touch with all the fire department people because I was used to that from my early years in the Department. I felt that

the two of us kind of go together. You can't put out a fire without a good water supply so we kept closely reunited and also with the police department. We have so much property and so many reservoirs and do have problems. We try to have the police and fire departments come into the districts at different times maybe the lieutenant or the captain come in and talk to the group telling them the things that are going on in the area that might be beneficial to us. Then also we'd go into the various police divisions from time to time and talk to the watch commander where we might be having problems such as theft and vandalism.

Materials are stolen from our jobs at times - new fittings and supplies that you have for installing water mains and sometimes our equipment. We get vandalism, get rock damage, get sand in the gas tanks, just anything to tear up equipment. So we've worked with the police and they'd give us extra help out in the district during the night where we'd have this equipment stored because it's become so bad out there. Now everything comes in at night and has to be locked up in the district headquarters or some other fenced-in area. Then generally you have somebody watching it even after it's fenced it. I think back years ago, we left it out on the streets without problems, put barricades around it and it would be just fine. So we were getting more and more active in community activities and all of us were encouraged to be in at least one chamber of commerce. Many of us also belonged to the American Water Works

Association. We kept closely united with all the other water agencies throughout the country really, especially throughout the state. Then with the new general manager coming in there in the mid-70's caused many people to resign from the American Water Works Association because he didn't approve many attending conventions as we had in the past.

NELSON: What were the feelings in the ranks at that point?

DOHERTY: Well they just felt too many people were going on these trips and actually with a large city such as Los Angeles, we were the largest in the country, possibly in the world of municipal organizations. Other agencies looked up to us and expected us to be there. Being a larger agency you needed quite a few people attending. He felt a few would be sufficient whereas maybe 30 or 40 had represented the water system in the past. It hurt people that had belonged for 20 or 30 years to the American Water Works Association and then all of a sudden you can't go or won't give you the time or permission to leave. In later years management was trying to recruit people back into the AWWA (American Water Works Association) and time was again allowed to attend.

NELSON: Do you find in your career here that your interface with management has changed over the years? Is it a

continuing change or does it really reflect the personality of the manager himself?

**DOHERTY:** I think it is continuing change and the changes are very evident now. I think the individual districts are now losing their autonomy, things which we were proud of and looked to as individual districts supporting itself. We're losing that because now decisions are starting to be made back in the general office building. Decisions that should be made by the district superintendent in the district in cooperation with the general office building. I'm not saying the districts should go out and "shoot from the hip" without getting approvals, but decisions that should have been made in the district are no longer being made, they're being made by people at the general office building and many of them with no experience whatsoever operating a district.

I think we are losing a lot there. We're losing a lot of continuity, a lot of experience and superintendents are losing the knack for being responsible for decisions that should be made. It's just a change in times. I think they're tightening the reins where the crews are reduced in sizes and increased production is mandatory to keep pace with our changing economy.

**NELSON:** Is economics behind this?

**DOHERTY:** I think so. I think it's all economics because of the high inflation rates. Costs are going up so rapidly and it's hard to get rate increases, it's hard to get salary increases and they're just trying everything possible to get more production with fewer people. If they can do that, that's fine and it's saving money maybe, but I think we're losing a whole lot of personal knowhow for emergencies or disasters, things that are coming about. People are just not going to have the know-how or the ability to make quick decisions. A large earthquake would come, for instance, that's when we were proud, we could get crews, equipment and materials together in no time and know what to do and take care of our own districts with little help from others. But I don't think you're going to find that now. People are now looking for somebody else to know what to do.

**NELSON:** Very difficult with rent-a-worker?

**DOHERTY:** That's right and that's just exactly where we're heading. If you go down to that labor hall and start renting people which is the direction we're heading, they will not have any experience in our system. I look back when the personnel count used to be around 900-1,100 and now we're down around 650 or something like that divided among the districts. The Western District is now about 130-140 and going back 15-20 years, I had right around 250-275 in the district at one time.

Of course we were doing more work and we were doing more of it by hand in those days too. At one time we ran the water trouble boards 24 hours a day in the districts, felt that was expensive, and now we just run them during the day in the various districts and then it all transfers downtown for the nights which is working out okay, but again you're losing good continuity. Things are happening that aren't getting passed on and things are just not as good. We're getting by, but not as well, of course. Maybe we can't afford to get along that good anymore and I think the costs have a lot to do with it.

**NELSON:** Who was the best general manager you worked for in your estimation?

**DOHERTY:** I think it was two. Sam Nelson and Paul Lane would probably have been the best as I recall. They had a knack for getting along with City Hall and also a knack for getting along with their people. When they were general managers, they would drive into your yard at any time and just come on in, go into the office and talk to the people and walk through the yard. Very rare. You just don't find people like that. Paul is a personal friend of mine and I liked him because I like his knack of doing things.

I think he and Nelson are a great deal the same. I was closer to Paul Lane than I was to Nelson, but I admired Sam Nelson because I always thought he did a good job as a leader.

I thought he did real good over at the City Hall and kept us out of trouble, but then again as I look back, he wasn't general manager during the turbulent times either with high inflation. Since inflation set in, they were over there every year asking for money. Paul Lane did an excellent job keeping us out of trouble as I look back because I think he was in the roughest times at City Hall almost every year we were over there asking for increases. He had a way of "massaging" them over there to make things go in our direction. He was always encouraging us to cooperate with City Hall and not be hard to get along with. If politicians asked us for somebody to respond to a complaint, don't respond in a negative way. When they call the office and report something, do it immediately. He's the one that encouraged us to work with City Hall and the politicians. He says, "It doesn't do us any good to respond in a negative way because as soon as you don't accomplish what they're looking for, then it makes the Department look bad." When we're over there asking for their approval such as a rate increase or whatever and they say, "You know I remember calling over there last week and it took me five hours to get through to the superintendent," or instead of saying, "Yes I called over there, and was taken care of that afternoon." You get the feeling cooperation is a whole lot better than not cooperating and I think that he's the one that taught me to work with the politicians and I think he's right.

NELSON: That was when he was head of water system when you dealt in that area more so than as a GM for your direct dealings with him?

DOHERTY: Yes, more so as chief engineer, but also as the general manager. He had a good philosophy and it never looked like he was doing much, but he got a lot accomplished and that was the style that Sam Nelson had. It seemed that he always had time for people, but things seemed to get done and it was some of the better years in the Department. Bob Phillips was a good man too. As a system head I liked Phillips. I didn't know him too much as a general manager, I wasn't that close to him.

NELSON: What about commissioners and boards? Does a particular board stand out or a particular commissioner stand out as one who you admired a great deal?

DOHERTY? Yes we've had some through the years there that were very much into the district field activities and being close to the people. There were Commissioners Friedman and Ward. They kept in close touch with the people in the field. They wanted to be at all the activities and it seemed at every retirement, they would make a point to be there which was kind of nice. I'm not involved with the political end too much. I didn't attend many of the board meetings to speak of so I can't say much on the subject.

Sara Stivelman. I had prior dealings with her through the Westwood Homeowners Group and she was pretty strong-willed and managed to accomplish her goals.

DOHERTY: We had a lot of good board people, they just don't come to me right now. I can't remember their names.

NELSON: You ran the Harbor and Western District then for about 25 years or maybe more?

DOHERTY: Yes, I did, 25 years as a district superintendent.

NELSON: What are your reflections on the changes that you saw take place in your district that were either good or bad or things that just come to your mind at the beginning versus the end, of change in the employees, more productivity, less productivity, unions cause you any problems?

DOHERTY: Some of the changes that come to mind are continuing to study all job activities to reduce costs where possible. Continuing to reduce Department personnel and contract out more work. Putting more emphasis on training. I also see people moving through the ranks before getting necessary experience in many cases. For most of my years the Department had special requirements for pipe, valves and fittings. That has changed to

buying what is presently on the market. Quality has dropped, but costs have improved.

Our relationship with the Unions have improved. In most cases we are working well together. In the past we didn't get along too well. I might have mentioned earlier, manpower was greater, but at that time we weren't as accountable for costs and in the old days as I look back, when we say "the old days" I guess they were the good old days because we didn't worry about money. The cost of a 3/4 inch service as I recall was \$17.50 and a one inch regular meter was \$6.00 extra. Well I think that service now is worth about \$300 and our meter is worth about \$60 something dollars so times have changed and as I recall through the years, we didn't change the cost of those services for maybe 20 years or something like that. We weren't going over to City Hall asking for rate increases and approvals so we were able to be a little more independent, a little more gold-plated and what we did was the best and there's no doubt that our work was good. Some people said it was "gold plated." Well it probably was. A little overkill. I think we did some things a little better than needed in fact and I think we used maybe a little better material than what we would have to. The forefathers in the department had the idea of, "once you put it in the ground, do it right and forget about it." Just don't throw something in there that you're going to be ashamed of or just because the boss is coming get in the ground and cover it up.

We did do things a little better than others and quite a bit better than most. We had more people than were needed in some areas. I know the main line crews in those days, had twelve people. I recall we cut them down to nine and then we cut to seven, now we're down to five. Study after study trying to figure out just the fewest number of men that we possibly could have on that crew, that's a basic crew not counting truck drivers and equipment operators or welders. That's the basic labor, helper and utility workers. So there were places to cut, but now that's the bare minimum we could get by with on our main line crew. Now they are trying to get by with four men and three men and we're just losing ground. We're just getting so few on a crew that when one person is sick and doesn't show up you don't have enough men to even send a crew out. There is nobody to borrow from because all the crews now are getting very, very thin. It doesn't mean that you can't put a service in with two men, but if one of those two men don't show up, now you have no crew at all to put out in the field. Now you've got the one man to put on another crew and now you've got three men and so it's a little hard to jockey. In the past, sometimes you might be carrying an extra man, but if somebody's short, there may be somebody to draw from in order to make another crew and make it profitable and put it out in the field.

Some of the problems they're having today is that the manpower is getting so thin that they just can't field a crew. Can't get enough to get that crew out and so what you're doing

in some cases is putting manpower in an area which wouldn't need that many. There is definitely more emphasis put on cost and production. Studies are being made on a regular basis. More seminars, more training, a whole lot more is being put into efficiency, getting more out of whatever a person's doing, they should be doing a little bit more and I'm sure there's ways of doing it. We are being more compared to the outside industry and other public utilities.

That's been changing through the years and you don't see those large crews that you used to hear about. There's just no extra men, but there will be a time, when maybe two or three of those will be waiting for a section of work to finish to do their portion. You might drive by and see two or three people standing, but you won't see them standing doing nothing for very long because there's an activity that will be coming up and they'll all be needed.

So it's a little hard to just drive by and see a group of people and say, "Oh yes, another group not doing anything." You have to be involved and know what steps are being taken and maybe judge that a little better, I do have to say the emphasis now is on economy, getting the very most done with the absolute minimum number of people and that's going to continue and I don't think it's going to change. Things are going to get tougher and that's the reason we're going to the outside with contracts. Contractors go out and do the work for about half

the price of us because our overhead is 120% on every man we have out there.

So I can readily see that having an outsider putting it in, you're not paying that extra 120%, but then again, God forbid, we have a major activity take place. Would we have people to restore the system that have the know-how and the ability to do things there? I dread to think of a major earthquake at the way things are going. We've gone through some big ordeals where people got together and stuck together and you had the ability and the know-how to do it. Now we may not have the know-how to do things and the necessary manpower's going to be something else.

**NELSON:** Did you notice in your later years of your career where employees coming into the district? Were they better trained employees?

**DOHERTY:** Coming into the district now? No, not coming into the district. They're not better trained. But we're putting more into training them once they get here. I think that the ones coming into the district, in fact, are less in tune with mechanical activities than they were in the old days, because we're all getting used to doing things a little more mechanized and the kids nowadays just aren't used to laborious tasks, you know. They come in out of high school...good young boys, but they really haven't had to do much work. They're trainable and

we are doing more in the training once they get to the department, but I'd have to say that their abilities are probably not as good as what we were getting years back. We had a good source for the starting position at the labor level years ago, but now the labor isn't a good entry level because over 1,000 people apply. There just isn't much of a test. All it is is just try to get people in some type of order and thousands of them take it. The quality of manpower that you get isn't that good so now our entry level is the maintenance and construction helper. There you're getting some experience because maybe you're getting them from some other water agency.

I would rather get helpers who haven't worked for another city department because the water system is pretty tough work and they won't like it if they work in sign painting, street light department, recreation and parks or libraries. All of that is a much easier type of work. The water system is very laborious. All of our work is under the ground. You've got to open it up and excavate so it isn't the cleanest type of work and young people take more to other departments because it's cleaner and easier. It's like the Air Force and the Army. We're the Army and they're the Air Force. So the water system is very interesting as you get into it, but if you've worked in some other area and come into the water system, they grumble about the heavy work that is asked of them.

And then we never have been too plush on manpower. We're always a little bit short, even in the old days. The water

system never did get too lose with the hiring wherein the power system had more people for the jobs and I know all through the years that I've been here, we were always scraping for manpower even when it had a lot more, but again we were doing a lot more.

The water system is a tough business. You have to come in wanting to work here, then you'll make a good employee and you grow into it.

**NELSON:** Well in summing up Pat, how would you sum up your career here and your experience working for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power?

**DOHERTY:** Well I'd have to sum it up if I was to look back over my career, I can't say I'd change a thing. I came into the department and I joined a family. People were all good to me with the exception of the one I mentioned earlier. People, after you're there a while, put their arm around you and help you in any way they can. I have to say I made the right decision. I raised five nice children and my wife hasn't had to work from the day we had children. She worked prior to having our first child for Bank of America, Westwood, but since our first baby she was at home when they came home from school and all through my career she's been there. It's been good to me and brought me enough to live very comfortably, educate our children in parochial schools, own our home and have a good retirement income.