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THE FLEETING BUILDERS OF WATERWORKS

by Gary Weatherford

Water project construction has played a critical part in California's water history. I wonder, without knowing the answer, whether we are adequately chronicling the people who build the waterworks?¹ They are the pioneers whose labors built dams, canals and pipelines during the first seventy years of this century. Their adventuresome spirit reflected a contemporary belief that California could conquer and harness nature and its resources. Regrettably many public works were undertaken with scant if any attention to environmental values and mitigation.

In his introduction to *The Great Thirst*, Norris Hundley, Jr. points out that California's water achievements were encouraged by voters who considered themselves "participants in a booming economy made possible by the building of the great hydraulic projects. These projects included the ambitious flood, reclamation, and irrigation programs of the late 1800's; the urban aqueducts to Owens Valley, Mono Basin, and Hetch Hetchy; the massive federal multipurpose ventures pioneered nationally in the Boulder Canyon Project and replicated in the Central Valley Project; and California's own State Water Project, the largest public enterprise ever undertaken by a state."²

Today, water managers seek alternatives to building physical works where and when they can. Other than treatment works, large projects have become a rare species. Strategic design and construction is still needed on a selective basis, however, for expanding, integrating, rehabilitating systems, public safety, and providing physical solutions for water quality, fish and wildlife, and supply reliability problems.

The people who do the construction are fleeting. They converge on a job, finish it, and go on to the next - leaving the result to be handled by water management personnel and agencies. Perhaps there are engineering firms, general contractors, unions, water agencies, and individuals among our readers that would like to place writings and photographs concerning water project construction in the Water Archives and then the stories and the histories of those fascinating times can be made more readily available to the people of California. The Archives would like to build a collection of these histories chronicling the contribution of the thousands of people who helped bring water to the West. Please contact, Linda Vida, Director of Library and Information Resources at the Archives (510-642-2666), with any response you may have to this solicitation.

Gary Weatherford is a principal with Weatherford and Taaffe, LLP and a member of the [Advisory Board to the Water Resources Center Archives](http://lib.berkeley.edu/WRCA/board.html)
<<http://lib.berkeley.edu/WRCA/board.html>>.

¹This article was prompted by the death earlier this year of my 92 year old father, Clarence "Bud" Weatherford, who operated a power shovel on dozens of aqueduct and pipeline projects in California, Nevada and Arizona for forty years.

²Hundley, Norris. *The Great Thirst: Californians and Water, 1770s - 1990s*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

BOOK REVIEW

by Beth Chalecki

Simon, Paul. 1998. *Tapped Out: The Coming World Crisis in Water and What We Can Do About It*. New York: Welcome Rain. 198p.

Former United States Senator Paul Simon has written an interesting and useful primer on world water shortage issues. In *Tapped Out*, Simon spells out, in easy-to-understand and sometimes dramatic terms, the types of ecological, economic and human crises that can be provoked by water supply and quality issues.

In the first half of the book, entitled "The Problem," Simon outlines the ways in which water use is outstripping water supply in almost every part of the world. He holds up California's problems of poor urban water use, underground water depletion, pollution, and saltwater intrusion as representative of those facing the entire world. Simon recommends the Pacific Institute's report, *California Water 2020: A Sustainable Vision* by Peter Gleick, for further reading on state water issues. He points out that in the Middle East water rights contribute to an already tense political situation. He asserts that Mexico, India and China all face severe water

shortages due to increasing populations and unsustainable usage; and that even relations between Canada and the United States, normally very amicable, have been strained over water issues.

In the second half of the book, entitled "The Answers," Simon outlines his suggestions for easing this looming worldwide water shortage. For the short-run, he points out that water conservation could be implemented in almost every sector of a modern economy, but that it will only buy us a limited amount of time. The ultimate answer to freshwater shortage, in his view, is desalination. Simon insists that, with further technological development, the cost of desalinated water will compete with that of freshwater. Simon concludes by asking readers to write their representatives and urge them to appropriate funds for conservation initiatives and desalination research.

Simon's discussion of water issues is based both on research and his own experiences as a former senator from Illinois. While his suggestions are sometimes impractical (for example, he suggests formation of an International Court for Water to adjudicate water disputes among nations), his passion for water is real. He conveys to readers the need for national and individual action on this important issue.

Beth Chalecki is a Research Associate with the [Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment and Security](#), Oakland, CA.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT - CHARLES WAGENSELLER

by Kathy Dieden

Charles "Chuck" Wagenseller, President of the Board of Directors of the Belmont County Water District and engineer with Pacific Gas and Electric, recently gave his reflections on the role the Archives should play in next century.

Q: Why did you become a member of the Archives Advisory Board?

A: I believe the Archives is a valuable repository of information and other professionals need to know about this great resource.

Q: What role should the Archives play in the 21st century?

A: Preservation of the historical record as well as the collection of current information about water should remain the primary focus of the library. The Archives can play an important leadership role in both the public and private sectors by providing guidance and technical assistance to those in public, quasi-public and private organizations responsible for

record management.

Q: How can the Archives best serve the people of California?

A: The Archives serves as the collective memory for water related information. It should preserve the papers, documents, artifacts and pictorial record of water in the Golden State. Researchers and the public should be able to find a wealth of sources at the Archives that will assist them in discovering the history of water in California.

Q: How did you become associated with the Belmont County Water District?

A: My interest in water goes back to my college days at San Jose State where I earned a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering. Eleven years ago, the former general manager of the district asked if I would consider filling a vacancy on the board. With my background in the utilities industry, he believed that I would bring additional resources and experience to the district.

Q: What do you see as the most important water issue facing the people of California?

A: There are many important water issues but perhaps the greatest is ensuring the delivery and supply of clean water to all the citizens of California.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

USGS AWARDS GRANT TO WRCA

The Water Resources Center Archives is pleased to announce the receipt of a \$10,000.00 grant from the **U.S. Geological Survey**. The grant allows WRCA to hire a part-time temporary Assistant Archivist to organize, arrange and describe several recently acquired collections. The Archives gratefully acknowledges the support of the Survey.

NEW LEADERSHIP APPOINTED TO UC CENTERS FOR WATER AND WILDLAND RESOURCES

Associate Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources Henry J. Vaux, Jr. announced the appointment of **Dr. John Letey, Jr.**, University of California Riverside distinguished professor of soil physics, as director of the Centers for Water and Wildland Resources, effective July 1, 1999. Dr. Letey will also serve as the director of the Water

Resources Center, and will continue to serve as director of the Salinity and Drainage Task Force and state coordinator for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Water Quality Initiative.

GROUND WATER CONFERENCE

The **22nd Biennial Ground Water Conference** "Interconnected Water Supply in California," will be held Sept. 20-21, 1999 at the Hyatt Islandia Hotel in San Diego, California. Linda Vida will present slides of historic photographs from the Archives' collection on the afternoon of the 20th.

CONCERT TO BENEFIT WRCA AND MLC

Violinist **David Abel** and pianist **Julie Steinberg** will perform a benefit concert on Sunday, November 7, 3 p.m. at St. John's Presbyterian Church, 2727 College Avenue, Berkeley. Proceeds from the event will be divided between WRCA and the Mono Lake Committee. The program includes works by Beethoven, Debussy and Dresher. For more information, please contact Kathy Dieden at (510) 642-2666 or kdieden@library.berkeley.edu.



David Abel & Julie Steinberg

BRIDGE CALENDAR



Engineers pose with a model of the Carquinez Bridge, October 3, 1926
(Charles Derleth Collection)

The Water Resources Center Archives and the [Harmer E. Davis Transportation Library](http://lib.berkeley.edu/WRCA) <<http://lib.berkeley.edu/WRCA>> are collaborating on the publication of a calendar for the year 2000 that features historic photographs of Bay Area bridges. The calendar which premieres next fall will be available from the Archives, the Transportation Library, local booksellers and at the ASUC Campus Bookstore. **Moffatt & Nichol, Engineers** will underwrite the cost of printing.

GIFTS & DONATIONS

GIFTS

Weatherford and his sister, **Claudine Weatherford**, for presenting the Archives with a copy of John Wesley Powell's, *Report on the Lands of the Arid Region of the United States with a More Detailed Account of the Lands of Utah, with Maps*, 2nd ed., 1879. Gary and Claudine made this gift in memory of their parents, Bud and Bert Weatherford.

Thank you to **Marc Del Piero**, former board member of the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), for his donation of materials collected during his tenure at SWRCB.

DONATIONS

The following individuals and corporations have recently become members of the Friends of the Archives:

Benefactors/ \$1000 +

- Balance Hydrologics, Inc.
- Tony Landolt and Verena Landolt
- Gary Weatherford and Claudine Weatherford

Patrons/ \$500 +

- East Bay Municipal Utility District
- Natural Resources Consulting Engineers
- Cadiz Land Company, Inc.

Associates/ \$250 +

- Panoche Water District

Donors/ \$100 +

- California Urban Water Agencies
 - Friant Water Users Authority
 - Kern County Water District
 - Nevada Irrigation District
 - San Diego County Water Authority
 - G. Mathias Kondolf
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