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CLAYTON BROOKS

Member of the Coalition of Watershed Towns
(1991-2002)

CLAYTON BROOKS	Executive Member, Coalition of Watershed Towns (1991–2002) Supervisor, Town of Denning (1991–2000)
Interviewed by:	Virginia Scheer and Nancy Burnett
Location:	Mr. Brooks's home office in Sundown, New York
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Track 1

A Little Background

VS: This is Ginny Scheer and Nancy Burnett interviewing Clayton Brooks on January 26, 1996. This is the fifth tape in this project. And if we're not getting noise and feedback, we'll go ahead.

NB: Go ahead, Ginny.

VS: Well, Clayton, I didn't come with a lot of specific questions for you. I'd enjoy it if you'd just reflect on the whole process of the Coalition as a response to the watershed regulations—how you felt about them and the whole process. If you want to do it in chronological order, that's fine.

CB: All right. Thank you for giving me this chance to give you some insight on how it all started, and why. I guess I'll go way back to the proposed draft regulations of September 1990. At that point, the regulations were onerous—something that would destroy us as a town, and the culture that we have known, and our historical background. So at that point, we—I'm talking about the town board, the planning board, and the citizens of Denning , a little town of 524 people—wondered how can we make an impression? How can we be heard on our problem? And we realized we needed a bigger entity. So before the Coalition was formed there was the Farmer's Preservation Alliance, which was up in Delaware County. We even joined the Farmer's Preservation Alliance to get some insight. And from there the Coalition evolved through the efforts of Ken Markert, from Delaware County.

Track 2

Formation of the Watershed Coalition

CB: Ken Markert called a meeting at Margaretville with the different supervisors in the watershed and the elected officials. And at that point, we decided that as a coalition we could have a much stronger influence on things that happened. So at that

meeting, the Coalition came about. That's when everything started. The date was March of 1991—I'm pretty sure that was it—in the Margaretville Central School.

From there it was something that had never happened before—local municipalities had never joined together in one effort. Our voice was heard, and I think the people of the watershed supported us to the extent that we brought legal action that also made the other party sit up and take notice that we had a legitimate gripe and we want to be heard. And throughout this litigation there were ups and downs. We won a number of litigation issues.

But as the process went on, by meeting with the technical experts the Coalition hired and also technical help such as the County Extension Service, Soil & Water, Water Resources Institute (and I'm sure I'm forgetting some), we became aware that the type of knowledge we were getting from them gave us direction on how we could protect ourselves as a watershed community, how we could keep the water quality as it is.

And here, again, I want to back up just a little bit. I think the hardest part for the people of the watershed to swallow is the thought that we would degrade the water. And that we would make it better by measures that were above and beyond state and federal regulations. They thought we were degrading the water, but we know it's just the opposite. Through zoning—which took, in my town, twelve years to get implemented—we were protecting our water quality, looking out for our future, before these proposed regulations were even issued.

Track 3

Whole Community Planning

CB: During the process we also saw another avenue we could explore, which was determining our own destiny. That was probably where the Whole Community Planning pilot project started. The towns of Denning, Neversink and Middletown formed CACs (Citizen Advisory Committee) to get together, explore avenues of water quality and how we could meet—or help DEP, really—meet the Clean Drinking Water Act of 1986.

We met—I'm speaking of the towns of Denning and Neversink—time after time, meeting after meeting, with all kinds of technical support: Water Resources Institute, Cooperative Extension, Ulster County Health Department. And there, again, I'm sure I'm leaving some out. We decided there were five programs we could implement that would meet and alleviate all problems, all possible degradation in the Neversink Basin. We picked the Neversink Basin because it's the crown jewel of the water supply system; and we, through simple measures, could protect it forever and not be under this proposed regulation. That was our goal at that time: The regulations would

be lifted if we put these programs in place. And this was in Commissioner Appleton's term of office.

We went through all three stages—the structuring of the program, the scope of work, the administrative budget—for each of four programs. There was septic system maintenance, stream bank erosion, hazardous household waste, and fuel tank storage. Each one was budgeted, prioritized, and we had an administrative budget also. We were even going to form a not-for-profit corporation, with a 501(c)3, so that we could receive funding from the DEP or New York City or whomever. We were waiting for what at that time was called an IMA, an Inter-Municipal Agreement, and it was just at the period of time of the change in the administration: Dinkins and Giuliani and Commissioner Gelber. So that went on the shelf, and it never progressed any further because of no monies and no agreement.

Track 4

Land Acquisition

CB: But hidden in Commissioner Appleton's agenda was land acquisition. We had always talked about certain parcels being purchased to protect water quality at the inlet and so on and so forth. But they came out with the acreages and they targeted the areas (here again, my town being 68,000 acres and 44,000 are already Catskill State Forest Park), and they targeted my whole remaining town as acquisition, wherever they could. It's an encroachment on what little we have left.

VS: The entire 68,000 acres?

CB: The 68,000 is the total.

VS: And 44,000 is already state land. So 22,000 was remaining.

CB: The remaining was the red zone.

VS: Which was all going to be acquired.

CB: Well, that was their target for acquisition. When their maps came out, everything that wasn't green was red. In other words, green was state land, and red was the acquisition.

VS: I'm amazed that a whole town could be targeted for acquisition.
CB: Well, that's the way it was. They said, "We don't really mean it that way, but we can't break it down any smaller," and so forth.

But anything that was targeted for acquisition, especially under condemnation, was a no-no. That really bothered the people—the condemnation. So the program stopped

at that point. As far as the planning, it was shelved. The Coalition supported our position: New York City shouldn't just target any number of acreage without scientific facts as to why they need it. So Whole Community Planning was more or less shelved.

Track 5

Pataki Becomes Governor

CB: And then it went on to Governor Pataki being elected as governor of the state, and this seemed to change the whole picture. I must say, Governor Cuomo never got involved. As Pataki's administration came in, he was determined to find the middle road. And that's what we were trying to find, I think, as a Coalition and as a town. We want to find that middle road that we can all live with, with no harshness to the town. Or to the watershed, I should say.

Then, of course, there came a tremendous number of meetings. The governor set up a timetable, and we had endless meetings. This conceptual agreement was agreed upon by the state, and almost all the agencies involved: DEC, DEP, Coalition, and so forth.

Now from here, the work really begins. The Coalition approved through resolutions the start-up of pilot projects to really have something for everyone to hang their hat on. Everyone—the watershed, the Coalition, the DEP, the state, the EPA. It's in its infancy right now, but it will go on as things evolve.

That really brings us up to date. I'm sure I've skipped over something that came to your mind, so if there's anything you'd like to ask, please do.

Track 6

Construction of the Reservoirs

VS: I marked a couple of things as we went along. I'm interested that you said early on that when the Coalition formed, at that meeting in Margaretville in March of '91, it was the first time that municipalities had joined together in a single effort. The watershed regulations certainly aren't the first time some big, outside event or influence has come to the Catskills. I'm thinking especially of the reservoir constructions. And yet we didn't have that kind of coming together of municipalities to deal with the impact of those projects on the area. I wonder if you can think about why that might be?

CB: Well, the construction of the reservoirs was—how can I put it? This area was done, and that area was done, and not in the same year. It was over a long period of years. So that probably had a great effect on it. But the hostility that came of the lands that

were taken and how they were taken—I think that all came back when they wanted to regulate the whole watershed. And they said, "Wow! Let's all get together now." I think that had a big role in what happened.

VS: Do you think those people had personal losses during the construction of the reservoirs who felt this way, or was it more of a regional feeling?

CB: Personal. A lot of which was "if you affect John Doe here, it affects everyone else in the community." Whatever little economic value, or whatever this or that person had, it affects everyone in the valley, and as it dwindles, it affects the community, as I see it. And I think it was a lot of personal distrust, because they just finished financial settlements maybe two years ago for land that was taken by eminent domain fifty years ago.

VS: And when was the reservoir constructed?

CB: I think they finished the Neversink up here in the 1950's—this was in Alan Rosa's town, Middletown—and I know it was probably two years ago they had their final settlement with the heirs. It's been a sense of someone coming in with a strong-handed, "You're going to do this." As I said before, we know we have the clean, pristine water. And we have our problems, yes, and we're willing to address them. But don't make us do something that the rest of the state doesn't have to do. If you want us to do it, fine, we'll do it, but you'll have to provide the funding. And that's been the Coalition's statement: Anything over and above state and federal criteria that has to be done, the City has to pay for, or someone has to pay for it.

VS: And that wasn't assumed at the beginning. The early regulations didn't include paying for the incredible amounts of changes that they asked for.

CB: No, no.

VS: Back when you talked about personal experience with the reservoir construction—did I understand you to say that you lived in a town that was relocated?

Track 7

Clayton Brooks Returns to the Kensico

CB: My parents leased a house in Eureka, a town that is now under the reservoir. I was so small, I don't remember this; but the experience that I can remember, which just added fuel to the fire during our talks, happened before I went to school. We had moved to Westchester County, to Valhalla. My father was a herdsman for a children's school there. And the school was right next to the Kensico Dam. I can remember the war ending when we were there, so it had to have been 1945, in that neighborhood. We never had a lot of money or anything, and on Sundays we'd do something,

whether it would be a picnic or something else. I remember going to the Kensico Dam and having a picnic. You can envision the big green dam, with the three stone buildings, the aerators coming up out of a fenced-in area like a walkway or a parkway, where you could sit on benches and just watch this, on a Sunday afternoon.

And boy, it had to be two years ago, in a meeting we had with Commissioner Appleton in Valhalla, when I remembered the Kensico complex. So I said to the person I went with, "We'll go down to the complex and I'll just ask where this building is that they lease." So we did. I can remember to this day coming down the hill into Valhalla, and looking to the left, and it looked like the Bronx: The driveway was full of potholes, and you're doing the right and left number to get around the potholes. The aerators were nothing but holes in the ground. The fences were falling down. The stone buildings were in disrepair. There were bars on the windows, and some of the windows broken out.

And I said to myself, "Here we're in the 1990s and I can remember 40 or 45 years ago, and it was beautiful. And do I want them to do the same in my town, through budget attrition or whatever? Don't do it to us! It's nice now, we enjoy it, we take care of it. Don't take it over and let it deteriorate till we get to a point like it was down there, because it was terrible."

I went back to the meeting with Commissioner Appleton and I said, "I've got to tell you guys, if you want to do this to us up there, I don't want anything to do with it. You've got to keep up what you have, maintain what you have." And that just blew my day.

Track 8

Construction of the Rondout

CB: I guess the biggest thing I remember of the building of the Rondout is that my grandfather had a farm on this hill, and we'd come up from Kensico and get here maybe 10:30, 11 o'clock at night. And this whole valley was lit up, because of the caissons—which is the dam core. How can I describe it? The structure of lights, the pouring of cement, and dozens of big ukes, trucks. It was going twenty-four hours a day. This is such a quiet valley, and then you come up and all of a sudden you come into this lighted area with trucks and ukes going left and right, and the dust in the middle of the night. It made an impression. And that's about all I can really remember of the dam when they were building it.

My father worked on it for a short period of time, as most people did around here. It was an economic boon for the local people for a while. I must say, it was a help.

VS: You said your family was living in Eureka, in a house that was eventually covered by the Neversink?

CB: That's the Rondout Reservoir.

VS: Were they there when the removals took place, or had they already moved on?

CB: Yes. My family—and there were some uncles and so on—were there. I don't have any details of the experience. I'm sure they were upset, because that's all I've ever heard. It was just a takeover, and that was it: "We're doing it, and get out." And that remained in a lot of people's memory.

VS: The memories remained strongly enough that when these regulations were proposed, those feelings came back?

CB: Yeah. I think Dick Coombe—he's on the Watershed Ag Council now—puts it as: "They moved us from the valleys to the hills, and now they want the hills." That was a good statement.

VS: Do you think that was the main reason there was such incredible support for the Coalition from the beginning? Or were there some other factors? It just seemed that we landed at that Margaretville meeting with consensus already formed.

CB: We, as a town board and I'm sure the rest of the people at the meetings—realized that it wouldn't . . . [Telephone rings.]

[Tape is stopped while Clayton answers the phone.]

VS: Okay, you were telling about how your town board responded to the establishment of the Coalition.

CB: We, as a town board, felt that as a little town we would have no input whatsoever. And I think it was the same feeling in a lot of small communities. And also the counties, themselves, felt that by getting together, we'd have much more impact on what's happening. Our voice would be heard. And that's the way it was.

Track 9

Respect for All

VS: What about relationships between town representatives—supervisors such as yourself who were going to these meetings—and the large number of technical support you listed that you were able to call on: lawyers who were involved, all the professional people who came into play in the Coalition? And also, on the other side, the environmental organizations, as well as the DEP—how did that all work out?

CB: I can't express the respect I have for the members of the Coalition and the Executive Committee. Some have passed away, and some have changed, but I have respect for all of them. We all had the same agenda. We all know what we'd like to see for the watershed communities. We might have a different opinion of how it is to be done, but we always come together and find the direction that we need. As I said, we have different opinions at times, and we express them. But as far as banding together, we're very—I don't know how to express it— it's a closeness, or a respect, that I didn't think was possible.

VS: And that seemed to be reflected in the larger community, too.

CB: Yes. There was a lot of skepticism maybe about certain technical groups, but overall the end result was what we were looking for, and we grew to respect each other. Respect grew out of all the time we spent together. Even DEP: We respected their opinions; we knew what they were trying do. But it's such a big organization that we had to be careful of—let's face it—the people who hired the people we were talking to.

The people we were talking to were doing their job, but the people who hired them didn't necessarily accept their recommendations. As we talked, we came upon common ground, and then sometimes that agreement wasn't transferred back to DEP or even to the EPA on the state or federal level. But if you talk long enough, you get over that problem. You can argue, but you can still go away (I won't say all the time) as friendly people, who respect each other.

Track 10

The Negotiation Process

VS: You spoke of the development of your respect for DEP. Did they return the favor and develop respect for the Coalition?

CB: Oh yes, oh yes.

VS: Did they have that at the beginning, then?

CB: It was pretty tenuous for a couple of years, really. Yeah, it was pretty tenuous. Not that we couldn't speak, because there were very few times that we—either one of us—walked away from the table. There were a few times. But it's just the little nucleus of the DEP in the watershed that we deal with, and the department is so much bigger. You understand that they have limited guidelines, I guess, limited expressions that they can give.

VS: When I met you at Frost Valley and we were talking outside, when Georgie Lepke was there, she said, "Why, they just treated it like it was vacant land," when they came up

here, and wrote the regulations as if there weren't people here to be dealt with. Did you run into that feeling?

CB: Yeah. It was an onerous set of regulations. I don't know what words to express it in. And the agricultural part of it—putting a berm around the entire farm is so ridiculous, it's pathetic. It couldn't be done.

But that gets me on another point. The Watershed Ag Council and what they've done: They've kind of opened the road for everyone else. They have a success, as far as I'm concerned. I'm watching pretty close, and what they've done shows through a voluntary effort with incentives toward protecting water quality and incentives toward bettering the farmer's way of life, it'll work, and it's going to work. They kind of opened up that avenue. And there's a forest watershed ad hoc group that's following the farmers' route.

The Watershed Ag Council is saying, "Through voluntary best management practices, we can protect open space" (which the DEP wants) "and also provide incentive for the land owner to keep land in open space and not subdivide. Keep the land, and improve the water quality, or at least maintain the water quality." So that's a group that's coming forward quickly also.

Track 11

Preserving Water Quality

VS: Weren't the principles that the Ag Council and this forest group have in common also the principles of Whole Community Planning?

CB: Through best management practices, yes, that's the basic idea.

VS: But Whole Community Planning wasn't adopted.

CB: It wasn't adopted because of land acquisition. Land acquisition was Commissioner Appleton's hidden agenda. Why do the programs and still have land acquisition? The idea is, we can maintain this water quality without the acquisition, without the condemnation. That was the biggie. Condemnation.

You don't have to come in here and condemn anything. We'll keep the water as is through these measures. And we're taking it as a basin approach. It's your crown jewel; let's keep it that way. We can do it with a minimal amount of money, and there have to be incentives—as I said before—for water quality, and there have to be incentives for the land owner.

We realize if the City had to spend the six to eight billion dollars for a filtration plant, there would be nothing left for this region west of the Hudson River. I mean, as I spoke of Kensico, I could just realize what the Rondout and the Neversink and

Pepacton would look like in ten years, because they'd funnel the money for maintenance to New York City. And the problem isn't here; the problem is in the City. Let's face it: The old water lines are continually breaking. But we've been assured that they're working on that end.

Track 12

Watershed Jobs for Local People

VS: When you said the problem's in the City, you meant in terms of water quality.

CB: Water quality. Water quality is lost on its way, because the water is mixed, for one thing. The already polluted Croton is mixed with water from the Catskills, so they can get by with it. And the pipes—the lead pipes; the old, outdated sewer lines next to water lines. That type of thing. And water consumption is another thing we're concerned about. And I think that DEP has become more aware of it and is trying to curtail it. New York City is a large consumer of water, and they could cut back.

We all have our own water systems up here. We understand where the water comes from and what we have to do to maintain water quality. We need some education—how much good it'll do, I don't know—to understand where this water comes from. And that's where maybe through this EDNA, it'll be addressed, and hopefully it'll swell out, and children will understand. Where we have to go is to the young people.

My generation took water for granted. It was there: You drilled a well, and it was there. It was good, pure water. And there're so many things you learn about through a process such as this, where you can help sustain this renewable resource. And if we don't maintain water quality, it's simple: You're going to get sick or you're going to die—one or the other. Very simple. Here again, the children grasp this at a young age and can understand it.

I hope this education group expands. I don't know how we can accomplish it, but I want to see a whole program for the schools in the watershed, to have a curriculum from the young kids right on up. And for someone who is interested in hydrology, to have funds available so they can go on to the local community college or to a college of their preference that has the training, so that they can come back in the watershed and be engineers and be lab technicians. They'll have much more respect because they've lived here, and they'll do what's right.

I see so many hiring practices because of the EPA's filtration avoidance declaration. DEP just hired some 90 people just to say, "We're doing something for this filtration avoidance, U. S. EPA. This is what we've done. We've hired all these engineers and lab technicians to ensure the water quality. We'll check everything."

But wouldn't it be great to have our kids stay here and have a good job? If they have an interest, to just follow that interest. I'd love to see something in our local school right on up through college or wherever they want. We could even have a BOCES [Board of Cooperative Educational Services] program. If they wanted to be a maintainer, fine, that would be terrific.

VS: What's a maintainer?

CB: A watershed maintainer goes around and maybe mows the sides of the roads, puts culverts in. Just maintains the grounds and makes sure nothing is there that shouldn't be there. That type of thing.

VS: In Roxbury, our inspector for the Board of Water Supply is a local fellow who grew up there, which has made a big difference here.

CB: We have quite a few here also, and they have quite a job, if you stop to think about it. They're looked on as a City person or City personnel. Inspectors that are local people—that makes a big difference. Even our person who maintains the septic systems and oversees them is a local person, and they still respect him. He has his problems, but that's his job. But it makes it much easier. If someone came in from outside, it'd be difficult for a local person to talk to them, and they'd just get that negative feeling right off the bat.

VS: Is there specific knowledge a local person would have that would make a difference, other than just actually living here? You could hire somebody and they could move in. But if they grew up here, they'd have certain understandings.

CB: It's more of a bond—more of a true bond, I think. Now, I might be totally wrong. I might be a little prejudiced there, but I do think that someone who grew up here, was born here, would have a real bond for the area. And I'm sure that people coming in learn to love the country, or love the area, and have a great respect, too. But it's just a little bit different to say, "Oh yes, I know Mr. Smith and he bought that place when I was going to school. And I remember him putting a little septic tank in there. I'll have to go talk to him, see what he says about that." Mr. Smith will talk to that local person, where he wouldn't talk to somebody from outside.

Track 13

Hunting Stories

VS: I have something else. Janis Benincasa sends her greetings, by the way.

CB: Oh, she's a very nice person, very nice.

VS: She said she really enjoyed talking with you, and she said I should be sure to ask you about something called a "Mine Hole."

CB: The Mine Hole. I don't really know what they mined; they did mine something. The first time I hunted there was probably 30, 40 years ago. Under a ledge, in the crest of the hill was a hole in the ground. It wasn't deep. It was probably, at that time, 12 to 15 foot deep, with a pile of stone and a beech tree growing out of this pile of stone or pile of dirt, whatever. People had carved their initials in it over the years. Over the 20 or so years I've hunted back there, it's grown over and the hole is filled in, and it'd be hard to find.

But I think maybe what she was referring to was, if I can describe it: a level plateau, and that hole is here, and then a ledge, and then it levels off. And I'm sitting up on top of this ledge, which was probably 200 feet up, and you could look down in the hole. I'm by myself and sitting there one morning, with the bright blue sky and the frost crystals floating through the air, looking straight out over this valley, and I hear a wind noise, and all of a sudden here was a jet right level with my eyesight, and I'm looking right at the pilot. He was practicing strafing coming through that valley. And then I heard the heck of a roar after that. But that scared me to death for a minute, because I heard all kinds of noise—like a wind—and looked up and there was a pilot. And then I heard the noise after he went through.

It's just amazing that somebody would go back there and work that [Mine Hole]. It's probably a mile and a half or two miles back in the woods. And there's only one way to get to it, so there's not a shorter route. For somebody to go back there and just dig and for the life of me I don't know why. I've asked around what they mined. Nobody seems to really know.

VS: But lots of people know about the Mine Hole.

CB: Oh yeah, the locals.

VS: And if it's that far off the beaten track, is it mostly hunters who know about it?

CB: The local hunters. When we hunted we usually had a reference point: "Well, I'll be up by the Mine Hole," or, "I'll be by the split rock," or, "I'll be by the Horseshoe." We always had a spot, and that group of hunters knew the spot you referred to and this was one of them.

VS: What's the Horseshoe?

CB: It's really nothing. It's just the horseshoe in the mountain. It's like a valley in the mountain. "We'll meet you back there; we'll be on this side or that side," that type of thing. They have all kinds of names for places: the Sheep Bars, the Bear Pen. It's really interesting. Some of them I've seen, some of them I haven't.

VS: I'm interested in names like that for features that someone coming through—a regulator, an inspector, someone with certain things in mind that way—would never consider.

CB: Um-hum.

VS: Wouldn't even think about. They'd look and say it was a bunch of trees. Or it's just a hillside, or a mountainside. And, in fact, it has a shape and a name for the shape—like the Horseshoe. I thought that was interesting.

Track 14

Why did people move away?

CB: That brings up a thought. It wasn't this hunting season; it was the hunting season before. I don't go out much anymore—once or twice, maybe, a day or afternoon. My son—it was toward the end of the season—said, "It's a nice day, let's get out for a while." So it's toward the end of the day, and we went up the hill, and he said (now I've never been out there),"You walk out this road, this old road, and there's an old foundation, and I'll meet you. I'll come down through the pines and meet you there." So I'm walking, and we were right in the middle of these watershed negotiations. Of course that comes to mind, a nice afternoon, quiet, and I'm walking out slowly around the road, and there's brooks coming down through, and laid-up head walls with big stones. And you wonder how they ever moved those stones—and they're still there. You know, this farm's been gone since the early 1900s, probably, but the great big rocks that they put over this so that the water could go through are still there.

I'm walking, and I'm thinking watershed, and I'm thinking, "Why all the stone walls? Why did people move away from here?" You know, it was a culture change. This was all farm land of some sort. Little farm, big farm. And I don't have *one* farm in my town now. Why did they all leave? And then I get up to the foundations . . .

[Telephone rings. Tape is off while Clayton answers the phone.]

CB: I reached the foundation, and you could picture the little house and the barn. They were quite close together. What was interesting was between these two there was a built-up spring, probably two foot by two foot, and the water was literally boiling out of the top, just crystal clear water, headed for New York City.
I'm still saying to myself, "Why did people move out of the valley and give up their farm to the state?" (Because this one went to the state, as most of them did.) "What pressured them?" Of course, it was probably the cost. But it's interesting what happened to our history and culture. What happened? Why did it change?

I have pictures of this, and you can look straight up to the top, no forest. There were three farms on the hill in back of me. And now there's nothing. It's just forest. And

this was a totally agricultural community. Everyone had a cow, chickens—probably a horse, most of them; that's the way you got around. So you had to have a horse. And you didn't go to the store every Friday night. You went once a month, to get the staples. Of course, I'm an old die-hard, I guess. I kind of look back and relish how it was back then. But there was a lot of hard work too.

VS: On our way in here, we were looking at what had been farmland, and noticing that because the mountains are so steep, you wouldn't even think it was farmland. Nowadays, when you think of a farm, you think of open, rolling fields. You wouldn't think of farming in an area so steep. But the evidence is there, with the grown-over pastures and the meadows.

CB: All the cows had two short legs and two long legs. [laughs]

VS: That's what they always said to my husband about his farm.

When you spoke about the farm with the two-inch stream of water, I hadn't thought about the acquisition of state land for Catskill Park being an intrusion the way the watershed regulations have been, or like the reservoirs. That must have been something that dislocated people.

CB: Absolutely, yeah. And I don't know whether it's an agenda that's beyond us. In other words, the state and DEP are going toward the same goal: "Get this open space, hopefully preserve it, and then we won't have to worry about any pollution." Maybe someone thought about that way back then. I don't know. Could be.

VS: That there's a similar goal, then, between setting aside state land and . . .

CB: Well, I'm wondering if it isn't in a plan. As you said, the state and DEP are striving toward the same thing. Sooner or later it will be encroaching on my town. I won't have a town left. I'll show you the maps later, but you can see the encroachment. And, you know, when they have forest management plans, they always say "contiguous" acreage: "We want to have a piece that's contiguous." Well, sure, but the more you buy, the more contiguous land you have. And when you own two-thirds, there's not much that isn't contiguous.

So there're always pitfalls. I hate to say this, but I will. I don't see a problem of this town being dissolved now; I don't see the problem in my children's lifetime, but probably in my grandchildren's. I don't know how you can maintain a town when you're just being shrunk to such a small entity. As I said, I'll show you the maps and you can see.

Track 15

Land Condemnation: Stewart Field

VS: Do your children live here in Denning?

CB: My children live in the watershed. My youngest boy lives here in Denning. And my two girls live in Neversink. The other boy, he's back home here every weekend, but he works in Poughkeepsie.

VS: That's three out of four. I think it's impressive that they could find work to remain this close.

CB: Yeah, in a small town like this, you find your own way. It's hard to express, but you find your own way of making a living. And people have been tremendous to me. And that's why I moved back here in '72 or '71. (Anyway, those were the years I moved back.) And I had to move. And I don't know whether I told you this or not, but I was in Stewart Field when Rockefeller was governor—the 9,000 acres they acquired through condemnation. So I was in that; I've been through the condemnation process.

VS: Oh, your land was taken for Stewart Field. Oh, my.

CB: Stewart Field. So that really raised the hair on my back when they said there's a possibility of condemnation here. Because I know the process; it wasn't a nice one. Believe me, when they took those 9,000 acres, it was more remote than this. It's hard to visualize that in the town of New Windsor, but it was. It was all farmland. And what makes it more disturbing now is it was for a buffer zone—for noise—and that's all.

Now the commission is thinking about making an industrial park with a race track and the whole nine yards. That really disturbs me. If the land was bought for a purpose, we accept that purpose. But now all of a sudden, they see they can utilize this as an industrial park or as a race track or whatever. And where we lived is now going to be commercialized.

VS: That is disturbing.

Track 16

Living in Denning

CB: I've got to get back on what I was saying before. We moved here from that. In '72, I believe. We moved here, and I started my own business, and the people have supported me. I'm in the middle of nowhere, really, but the people have supported me in my business. My kids were here from grade school to teenagers, and finished

school here and went on to college or whatever they had, and I've been in town affairs for the last 20 years. And being active in town affairs is just a way to return something. The people here gave me a life. You don't feel free, but you feel comfortable. You have to work, but still it's helping someone else, and then let's return something, and try to make things better. And through this work I'm doing, I hope we can achieve the comfort level of, "You don't have to move out of the valley because your septic system doesn't work, or you're too close to a stream, or something like that." So let's hope it works.

VS: Were there people here in Sundown or in Denning who were fearing for their homes—that their homes would be demolished or that they would be forced to move?

CB: As you were driving up, you must have seen that homes were right next to the stream, so the prime fear in Denning was, "I am close to the stream; my septic system can't meet any of the criteria." They said, "It's grandfathered in. Yes, we'll go on, case by case." But until you have the assurance that condemnation is out of the picture, and you have a conceptual agreement that New York City will fix the septic system to the best they can do—whatever it has to be—at no cost to the owner, only then will you feel comfortable: "OK, I don't have to move because my house is so close to the stream," or, "I'm polluting a steam," or that type of thing.

So that's our biggest fear. Because we have no gas stations that could pollute the water. We have no hotels or anything like that. And if we can get that level of comfort, I think we'll be pleased. And we will!

VS: That's that middle road you were talking about: finding ways that the town can go toward the City's requirements, but without giving up your ability to live here—and I think "comfortably" is a great word—but at the same time, having them make some compromises, too.

CB: Isn't it cheaper for the City to come in and put a person's septic system up to standard, whatever it might cost, and then from there have a shared management program? What that will be yet, I'm not sure.

In the conceptual agreement, it says a failed system will have one pump-out and remediation or upgrade or replacement. Well, you don't run your car till it quits, and then change the oil. So I'm saying, "Let's fix these older systems and get them up to par, have a management program that goes on forever, a shared management program." Maybe it could be as simple as the City's sewage treatment plant has a drop station for septage from a tank truck. Maybe if they'd provide that service, the owner would make sure the tank is opened at three-year intervals.

So they pump it. The City knows that that septic system is operating properly and is clean. The owner doesn't have any trouble with it. It's incentive for both ends. So something along that line—a management program after this system is repaired properly.

VS: It sounds like this is the conceptual agreement as it has been.

CB: This is more or less the program that my people are going for now.

VS: The Whole Community Planning?

Track 17

Septic System Management

CB: Not Whole Community Planning. It's just a pilot program to—how am I going to say it?—follow the septic guidelines that the conceptual agreement had in it. But we want to expand on that because we don't think it's fulfilled totally. It doesn't serve the purpose all the way around.

VS: And the conceptual agreement is what came out of the meetings with the governor?

CB: It's a one-time pump out, remediation, repair or replace. And that's what came out. We say, "That's fine, let's do that. But let's have the management program forever." And it's much cheaper than the City coming in and buying that piece of land and paying taxes forever, and you don't lose the town's economic base, so it's a win-win situation.

VS: It also sounds like what you've designed is a very people-oriented process, rather than one bureaucrat writing out one order to solve the problem. Instead, there's involvement with individuals and their special circumstances.

CB: That's the key: It's from the bottom up. It's the people who are saying, "Hey, this would work and we'd support it." The other way around, from the top down, when you have someone say, "You're going to do it this way," is just like when you're living at home with your parents, and Mom and Dad said, "Be in at eleven o'clock," and you wanted to dance till 11:30, and they weren't going to budge and you weren't going to budge.

VS: But then if you came up with a rational way to deal with their fears about your staying out till 11:30, sometimes you could work something out for that individual circumstance.

CB: True, true. And I guess that's it. That's the middle road we take.

VS: I think that's a very good description of it.

ANTHONY C. BUCCA

Member of the Coalition of Watershed Towns
(1991-1996)

ANTHONY BUCCA	Executive Member, Coalition of Watershed Towns (1991–1996) Supervisor, Town of Hunter (1994–1998) Councilman, Town of Hunter (1988–1994) Town Attorney, Town of Hunter (1974–1988)
Interviewed by:	Virginia Scheer Nancy Burnett
Location:	Mr. Bucca's office in Tannersville, New York
Date:	February 15, 1996
Total time:	2 hours

Track 1

How Tony Bucca Became Involved in the Watershed Negotiations

AB: My name is Tony Bucca. I'm the Supervisor of the Town of Hunter in Greene County. At the time of the formation of the Coalition, I was on the Town Board as a Councilman. Prior to that, I've been the Town Attorney for a good number of years.

Being on the Town Board, we're forever being bombarded with notices about some regulatory action the state is taking. In this case, the notice came through about the proposed new watershed regulations. As I recall, it was a morning in February in 1991 when there was a meeting called for Margaretville, and I thought I might attend it.

As things happened, that weekend I was kind of busy. I had something planned, and I was leaning towards not attending the meeting. There was a fellow in town who's always up on all of these things, and he called me and said, "You know, we really need somebody of your caliber at the meeting," and he persuaded me through appeals to my ego or whatever. So we showed up, and I was really surprised at the number of people who were there, and the enthusiasm.

And to be honest with you, here in Greene County, we really haven't suffered as much as some of the people in Delaware County and some of the western counties. And so, the tremendous antipathy that was evident at this meeting was kind of a surprise to some of us from Greene County.

Our involvement with the City here seemed to be kind of indirect. We didn't have lands that had been appropriated. We didn't have communities that were inundated with reservoirs and homes being taken away. So we really didn't have that tradition or that history, as did Ulster County and Delaware County, and, of course, parts of Sullivan County.

And I have to tell you another thing. By background and training, I'm an attorney. I'm not a scientist, although I've had an environmental bent myself. When I was younger, at least, and more idealistic, I was involved with the Sierra Club and some of those organizations. But there's one thing that I really enjoy, and that's a good fight.

And to be absolutely honest with you, it seemed to me this was a wonderful opportunity to get involved in a fight with the City that had nothing but great promise of having a lot of fun doing it. And at the time that we started this, I didn't really understand all of the issues. I didn't understand the complexity of the issues, or the long-range significance of what was happening. The meaning of the regulations and what it would mean to the watershed to be forced to adhere to these water quality standards. And so I was just delighted at the first meeting.

Track 2

The Watershed Coalition Is Organized

AB: The meeting was called by the Delaware County Board of Supervisors. Our attorneys were present and were at the front of the room, kind of running the meeting. There was a question of how we were going to organize. There was some suggestion that we go back to the towns and come up with some elaborate plan, and that we take months to plan it.

I was in favor of immediate action and I suggested that all the counties were represented, that notices had been sent out. As if it were something that I had been planning for months—instead of totally spur of the moment—I said, "Why don't we just caucus in each corner? There're five counties. . . ." And so it just turned out that the different counties caucused in the different corners of the cafeteria of the Margaretville Central School. We selected the representatives, and I became one from Greene County. Ron Wagner, who has the Tannersville Supply Lumber Yard, was the other representative from Greene County. So that's how it got started.

Track 3

Coalition Strategy

AB: We had a lot of fun. I can remember going with Ken Markert to New York to testify. Congressman Green had hearings in Manhattan about the watershed, and Ken and I had a great time. It was like being on a mission—slipping into the City like a commando mission and testifying and creating havoc. And I think some of the people who were present at the hearing were surprised at what we had to say. I always thought we gave this impression of the mouse that roared.

There were parts of what's been going on for the last five years that were, to be sure, pure drudgery. You know, going out to Margaretville twice a month, sometimes more, for meetings. Naturally, there were periods where there were lulls in the proceedings. But the fact that we had an adversary that was a great city of tremendous population and, to us, seemed to have unlimited resources compared to what we had, just heightened the challenge.

For us, it became a battle of words. There were key phrases and words that had special meaning for us, and we had great fun coining phrases and describing the City's action: the "draconian tactics," and how it was "unseemly of the City to tell us how we should bury our dead here in the watershed"—things like that.

And the environmentalists, especially somebody like Bobby Kennedy, became an object of great concern to us as to what the role of the environmental community was going to be. So we found ourselves saying things about Bobby: you know, that he was a "Fifth Avenue environmentalist" and things like that, which I regretted, actually, after I got to meet him and became convinced that there's no question of his sincerity in protecting the environment.

We thought he was willing to permit himself to go beyond what was necessary, and *that* really was a legitimate objection we might have had to the things that he, or—it's not fair to single him out—any of the other environmentalists were saying. We thought that perhaps what we really could react to was the overkill—you know, unnecessarily strict measures.

Track 4

Finding Common Ground with the Environmental Community

AB: At the very beginning, of course, we had to define somehow what our goals were. I always thought we needed some sort of intellectual arm—a body of professors or intellects, environmentalists, to help us find some kind of common ground with the environmental community.

The question was, what were we going to stand for? Were we going to stand for unclean water? Pollution in the environment? Is that what we were about? Well, it didn't take us long to figure out it was impossible to adopt such a posture. I always believed that we had to reconcile our views somehow with the environmental community.

In the last number of years, the Coalition members have resisted that somewhat. There are organizations like the Catskill Center, for example, who had been operating up here in the Catskills, who'd had a history of involvement with some of the communities that was not—in the eyes of some of the town officials—a positive one. There was a resentment of an organization like the Catskill Center—which was

actually quite moderate, I thought, from the environmental perspective compared to the National Resources Defense Council, or Riverkeeper, or any of these other organizations.

VS: You thought the Catskill Center was moderate.

AB: I did, yeah.

VS: These others—would you call them more extreme?

AB: It's all relative to the use of the word "extreme." I would say that they were organizations that were less sensitive to the whole community. You know, organizations that weren't located in the Catskills and had strictly environmental concerns. I kind of see the Catskill Center as having broader concerns than strictly the environment. They do talk about the general welfare of the watershed, the economic health of the watershed, the cultural attributes of the watershed. So they're not just a purely environmental organization, as I see it. But there was quite a bit of resistance in the Coalition to any of these outside groups.

And actually—though it sounds like hindsight—if you had asked in the first eight interviews with the people who were in the Coalition, you would have found out that I used to urge them to somehow try to make peace with the environmental organizations. Because I always felt that we had to be able to justify our position with the public. And not only the public here in the watershed—*that* was pretty easy to do because of the resentment toward the City—but in the City itself and in the state government.

But that's true. That's obviously what Governor Pataki recently recognized in bringing in John Cronin, and Riverkeeper, and Kennedy, and some of the other environmentalists in support of the Watershed Agreement. I think it was something he had to do. It would have been hard to do it four years ago. But I think it was something that was necessary.

Track 5

Changing Attitudes

VS: Who do you think changed the most: the environmentalists who came to those negotiations, or the Coalition members who originally resented them?

AB: That's a good question because, for sure, we have changed. And it's always been a problem with the change of the Coalition members, because we were constantly being educated about things that up to the beginning of this initiative we were unaware of. And we received an education not only about some issues of water quality and why it's important—why water turbidity is a problem, and how phosphorus

acts with respect to water, and what creates it—but about how some of these problems can be avoided.

We also received an education from our lawyers about the complexity and certainly about the expense; the great expense of dealing with lawyers and courts and judges and litigation and the uncertainty of the results. What had seemed, to many of us at the beginning, to be a black-and-white issue all of a sudden became an issue where a tremendous number of grays began appearing—and nothing was that easy anymore.

The complexity of the issues—the scientific, the engineering issues—and the difficulty and expense of litigating these issues had a very sobering effect on us. Laymen like to believe that there's always a legal remedy if there's some great wrong out there. Well, it's not always the way it is in our legal system.

And also, what we might have perceived as a wrong, the courts might not have perceived as a wrong. I've been assigned to cases where I've represented prisoners who have felt that the guards have not treated them properly, not dried their towels correctly; and it's in the papers, you know, about the prisoner who wants to sue the state because he couldn't have his sesame seeds.

The point here is that there was no easy solution to appeal to the courts. The biggest legal challenge that we could have had, that would have gone to the heart of the City's authority, would have been to challenge the legislation in 1905 that gave the City the authority in this area. We had to know that we could have litigated that for 70 years, could have gone to the Supreme Court of the United States, and a million and a half or two million dollars later, even if we *had* won, the federal government and the state were not going to let the City go down the tubes; water quality was going to be an extremely important issue, and the state would enact legislation the next day after our victory.

So it really was a no-brainer. We had to try to make the best of it. We had to have the City realize that we would continue to fight regulations that were unnecessarily strict, to have reasonable regulations, and then to agree to help pay, through some sort of economic mitigation program, to compensate for the harsh impacts on the economy.

Track 6

Public Reaction in the Watershed

VS: You said that, for Coalition members, being educated all the time sort of went from black-and-white to gray areas. Did you feel, or do you feel now, that the public in the watershed still sees it as black and white and might not understand why the Coalition recognizes the gray areas?

AB: That has been a danger, and throughout this whole process I continually expressed the concern that we were way ahead of where the people were. There was a danger that we'd be way ahead of them and that they wouldn't understand why we felt the way we did about certain things or why we were agreeing to certain things.

I was always confident that we could explain it, that any reasonable people would understand. But in any situation where there are strong feelings on either side, misinformation abounds. Actually, I'm kind of delighted with the result, with the reaction of people in the watershed to this announcement. When we felt that we had gotten the best deal that we could get—and even in the remaining hours before the governor made his announcement (which was November 2, 1995) there were still negotiations going on—we still had concerns as to how the people were going to accept it. I believe that the acceptance has been good.

VS: I'm puzzled as to how the process worked. I was also a citizen of the watershed at the time this was happening, and I remember saying to myself when I heard the earlier pronouncement of the Coalition, "This is exactly what I've been saying down at the coffee shop," and it felt very good to know that people from the area were standing up and saying those very things. Some of them were the resentful things. But to me, I had felt well represented by the Coalition. And perhaps I've gotten a little educated, too, as we've gone along. Do you feel that the other side was educated?

AB: The other side being the environmentalists or the City?

VS: Both.

AB: Well, the City, to be sure. And the first thing, of course, which some of the people you've interviewed must have discussed, were those T-shirts with the cows and the diapers. Of course, upstaters love talking about how misinformed the downstaters are, so we got a lot of that—about how the agricultural program was devised by some engineers in the City who didn't have the faintest idea about critters, and cows, and streams, and like that; and that they soon realized the error of their ways. And, from what I can tell, that's true. That's exactly what happened. So they came up and they completely revamped the agricultural program. I think the City engineers got a lot of information about the rest of the community.

Track 7

Hardball: Part 1

AB: I think the biggest surprise that the City had was how tough we could be. And very frankly, we really felt that we had a mission here—I'm not exaggerating. And we felt we had to resort to the tactics that powerless people everywhere have to resort to in their political struggles. I don't mean breaking the law. To be sure, there were comments about that— about people who would do things to dams and would

sabotage systems—and, of course, the Coalition always, publicly and privately, condemned any of that sort of thing.
The strategy was very simple, and it went like this: We recognized that what the City needed most was its waiver. And the extent to which we could put that waiver in jeopardy, and keep it in jeopardy, gave us whatever power we ever had. The only power we ever had was managing the fear about losing the waiver.

VS: Could you say what the waiver is?

AB: The 1986 Safe Drinking Act required that all surface water drinking systems filter their drinking water unless they could obtain a waiver from that requirement. The waiver was to be issued either by the EPA or by the Health Departments of the various states. And whoever had the authority to issue that waiver, that ability was called primacy.

You remember this wasn't just happening here in Delaware County or Greene County. This was happening all around the country. Fifty states had to deal with the same problem at the conclusion of the five-year period, which began in 1986. So for us, we had to first make a determination as to whether we would have fared better, for example, with the EPA making decisions, or the State Health Department, and whether it would be possible to predict who would be fairer, which agency we'd have a better opportunity with. And our initial feelings were that unfortunately, politics gets involved in all of this, and we wouldn't have been realistic unless we thought about these things and tried to discover their meaning.

At that time we had a Democratic governor, and the Health Department is an agency of the state, and New York City had a Democratic mayor, so our concerns were that somehow there would be some direct linkage between the City administration and the state administration and that we might not have fared so well.

So we actually preferred that the EPA retain primacy. With the information that was available at the time, I think that was the correct decision, although in retrospect it turns out that it really would have been better if it had been transferred to the Health Department. I'm not exactly sure why.

Whether the concerns about the governor's office influencing the decision of the Health Department were justified, whether things work like that, we don't know. None of us knew how much influence the governor would have—he certainly has a lot of influence. But I have to tell you, the people in the Health Department that we dealt with were there under Cuomo, and knowing them now as well as we do, I'm so impressed by their professionalism that it's hard to believe what we had believed before.

What we had done, though, was we actually brought the EPA and the Health Department to court. And we challenged the transfer of primacy from the EPA to the Health Department. And we were successful! So the primacy then went back to the

EPA, and we found out that the EPA was a pretty tough bunch of people to deal with, for better or worse.

Track 8

Hardball: Part 2

AB: So, the point we made—and we weren't so squeamish about this—was that under the EPA guidelines, public support for these programs and for the water quality program (the filtration avoidance program) was very important. And the EPA was going to take into consideration, in determining the waiver, as to whether the hearts and minds of the people of the watershed were behind the program. The truth is, we thought that that was a more potent weapon—you know, controlling that issue—than all the lawyers that we could possibly afford or not afford. Because we could win in court on different issues, different battles as we went along, and then end up losing the whole war.

The City didn't like the idea that somehow we would tinker with or jeopardize their filtration waiver in exchange for them backing off on some of the unreasonable parts of the regulations and also honestly acknowledging the economic impacts and taking steps to mitigate them.

The other interesting thing now, of course, is that we have a Republican governor, a governor who himself was in the watershed—when he was a senator, the district he was in was in the watershed. A governor who supported Senator Cook's bill to completely terminate the City's authority in this area. As a senator, Pataki voted for it twice. The previous governor seemed to be indifferent to the whole issue. We never heard anything from him, and we tried. We tried to contact his office.

But here we have a Republican governor who comes from the watershed, who's previously supported the watershed. And yet he knows that the construction of a filtration system for the City of New York is going to have a tremendous negative impact on the City's economic stability and in turn on the State's. There can be no question about it. His frank acknowledgment of that and his willingness to incur some political damage or loss by getting involved in these negotiations—he has to be applauded for it, you know?

But, anyway, that's what I meant by the willingness to challenge the filtration waiver in exchange for fairer treatment here in the watershed.

VS: Even though you knew that if filtration was forced on the City, the watershed would still be under strict regulations.

AB: But that also has been the argument that we've used with people in the watershed who, we think, have an overly simplistic view of what some of these issues are, and

have advocated that we force filtration because somehow filtration will make the City go away in some respect. Of course, we have the experience East-of-Hudson, where they're under a filtration order and yet they still have strict regulations there. The City told us that we'd still have strict regulations whether there was filtration or not, and we didn't know whether we should believe them. But our lawyers told us the same thing, our state representatives told us the same thing, and we believe that it's true, and we observed that it's so.

Track 9

Making the City Go Away

VS: This idea of making the City go away: I imagine you ran into that attitude a great deal at the beginning, even among Coalition members yourselves. I'm interested in that point of view. It's obviously not one you've held yourself, but what do you think of it? Where's that come from? What kind of effect did it have in this issue?

AB: Well, I think where it came from was the idea that there's almost a foreign presence on our soil dictating things and affecting property values, imposing outrageous rules and regulations on us, and the natural reaction is, "Where do they get the authority? That's outrageous." And, "For sure, if there's justice anywhere, some court—even if it's the Supreme Court of the United States—is going to rule that they don't belong here, and we can get them out of here." That would have been a happy solution for all of us, but obviously there's no way. Anybody who's been to New York and walked around and looked at those buildings and the size and the number of people knows there's no way that ever could have been a political reality.

If there was any legislative tactic that would have displaced the City's authority in this area we would have pursued it, but as I mentioned earlier, although the state Senate voted twice to rescind the City's authority in the area—which must have come as a tremendous surprise to the City—even as that was happening, everyone knew it wouldn't pass the Assembly, which was controlled by downstaters and people from Westchester County or other areas who are also served by the New York City water system.

It was pretty much a symbolic victory in the Senate to have that sort of vote, but it had to be very shocking to the people of New York City that these redneck upstaters could somehow do this—you know, "They don't want us there. How could they not realize that they're being benefited by our presence?" Well, very few people up here feel that the City has brought a benefit to the watershed.

VS: Very few people think the City has brought a benefit to the watershed. How did the City picture that they had?

AB: The City? Well, some of the arguments that were made were absolutely incredible. But Commissioner Appleton used to argue to us that the presence of the reservoirs and the reservoir views increased the value of the homes. "Wow! I'm underwhelmed by the argument." And that there was employment. That there were people—watershed inspectors (who everyone felt were just like being garrisoned here)—who received City paychecks and lived and spent money in the watershed. That that was some sort of benefit.

In the eyes and the hearts of the people of the watershed, the most important issue always has been home rule. And the people who live in these mountains—this may sound kind of trite, but they really are an independent lot and barely tolerate for the most part their own local governments, people that they elect. [laughs] So when you say that they're going to be governed by people from downstate, "You gotta be kidding!" is the reaction.

VS: Do you consider yourself part of that independent lot?

AB: Well, I do. But the truth is, I enjoy going to the City, its bookstores. And the truth is, I used to love, in describing our situation here, trying to make the City feel a little shame at the way it was treating us. I'd have a recital of things that they were doing, and then I'd say, "And these are unbecoming to a great city," which is really part of the fun. I mean, I had a lot of fun doing that. But some of my best friends are New Yorkers. [laughs] What can I say?

But there was another thought I had about the watershed. Some of us would talk about what would happen in the next three years. And I like to think about what's going to happen in the next 200 years, or the next 250 years. Do you remember the movie with Harrison Ford, *Blade Runner*? It was a futuristic movie that takes place in a city, and the environment is completely destroyed, and everything is gray and black, and there are steam pipes or some kind of pipes dripping all kinds of chemicals—you know, water that's contaminated. And you say, "My God! What ever happened to the world?!"

And there's another image I had. One of the *National Geographic*s had an aerial photograph of the Dominican Republic, and the boundary line between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. And on the Haitian side, everything was dark and denuded and had no trees, and on the Dominican Republic side, it was green and lush. And in the photograph, you could see the boundary line. You know, it was just shocking.

One of the images I've had through this whole business is, first of all, the City is very vulnerable. Its water system is 150 miles away. How do you control what's going into the water system? And I'm not talking about ordinary garden variety contamination, but, you know, sabotage, that sort of thing. And the exposure that the City had for that, and how its very existence would be imperiled by dying of thirst or that water being poisoned somehow. That's kind of a scary thought, but that was the image I

had out of this *Blade Runner* movie of a future society where everything is contaminated, polluted. My word, it would bring the City to her knees.

The other image I had was that adherence to these water quality standards here in the watershed was going to have the inevitable result of ruralizing the watershed. And I've talked about this before: the ruralization of the watershed. And some people say, "Well, that doesn't sound so bad." But there are definitely going to be limitations on development, and it means we're going to continue to have a relatively rural type environment here. And if it were to continue for 300 years or so, who knows, you might just see around the perimeter of the watershed, in areas outside of the watershed, places like Haiti—kind of denuded and brown and whatever. This was the benign view of environmental regulations, which does not at all take into account what happens economically in the watershed.

That's why this program that we were advocating has been acknowledging the genuine environmental concerns, but also the economic concerns. Just imagine the boundaries of the watershed, and how many hundreds of years it would take, or how many decades it would take before the impacts are visible from an airplane or something like that. I don't know the answer to that.

VS: Powerful image.

AB: It really was, you know.

Track 10

Depopulation

VS: It's been my experience sometimes when we describe an oasis like that, or even talk about protecting a natural area, that there's hardly any natural area in the Untied States that doesn't have some human population of some sort. That we often either ignore that population, the way Georgie Lepke says, "They treated it like it's vacant land up here," or picture a change in population. We might preserve the land, but not pay attention to the people who can't live there anymore.

AB: Sure, exactly.

VS: When I first met you at the upstate-downstate things, we were sitting next to each other, and I think the NRDC [Natural Resources Defense Council] was talking, and it was when land acquisition was revealed as part of the regulations that we thought of the word at the same time, and you uttered it and gave me the courage to say it, too, and that was "depopulation."

AB: Oh, yeah.

VS: And I remember we got flagged down by the moderator. He said, "Please don't talk about it."

AB: Yeah. I wonder . . . Who was the moderator?

VS: Allen.

AB: Yeah, sure. Allen Zerkin. You know, Allen wouldn't normally steer away from it, unless maybe we were at a particularly sensitive point. But you see, there was a better expression that I like to use about that whole thing. According to some of the extremist environmentalists that we're having the problem with (or that we had had the problem with) the watershed is "too good for the people who live there."

I thought that expression really conveyed the attitude—and not too many people in the watershed objected when I said that—of a lot of these people downstate: that the watershed was too good for the people who live here.

And that kind of underscored the criticism that many of the people in the watershed had of some environmental extremists—the suspicion that there was a hidden agenda, that efforts at having a Catskill Park had failed in the past for political reasons. The way the reasoning went was that Al Appleton was from the environmental community, he had been chair of the Audubon Society, that the environmentalists really would have liked to have one last chance at preserving the Catskills as a natural area, that for political reasons all efforts at the Catskill Park type situation had failed, and that using the issue of water purity and water quality would be the pretext for achieving that.

I know when Ken Markert and Perry had written a letter that was published in the *New York Post* in response to some statements by Bobby Kennedy, that was the main part of their argument: that there was some hidden agenda, that there was a secret desire to use the watershed regulations as a means of creating a Catskill Park. And that subject has come up in discussions with the two different DEP commissioners—most recently, Marilyn Gelber. And, you know, we would suggest that even if depopulation wasn't the direct intention of the City, adherence to these standards would nonetheless have that effect—it would be inevitable. But truthfully it's really hard to predict—even if there were people who did have that as an agenda—whether the implementation of these regulations would necessarily have had that effect, anyway. Right?

VS: Right.

Track 11

Scientific Principles

VS: You were referring to attitudes that the City had early on in its relationship with the Coalition, and that they were surprised at the toughness of the response they got from the watershed—that they had to come to recognize that toughness.

AB: That truculence?

VS: [laughs] Yes. Or just that there were people here who could stand up and fight. Were they also surprised at the extent of local knowledge about the watershed, or the intelligence of the people they were going to have to deal with in this? Did the Coalition have resources that they hadn't anticipated?

AB: From my view, the answer is definitely yes. Whether they ever acknowledged that, at this point, I can't tell you. But, for example, early on, when we started getting into the regulations and we needed to know real fast about pathogen movement through soils, there was a fellow we met in Delaware County, Rick Weidenbach. I don't know if you know him, but I have to tell you he's a great guy, and I thought he was absolutely brilliant—and Ken Markert was and is absolutely brilliant. Tough guys, honest guys, articulate. And when it came to evaluating these regulations and needing the knowledge, there was nothing that I as a lawyer could have ever done, because I just didn't know about that stuff.

But Rick was right there. He had all the information. He was in a position to persuade the City's technical people. I mean, that was the view of things that I developed and was greatly impressed by. You know, Ken is a big unsung hero of what happened in the watershed, and I also think a guy like Rick Weidenbach is, as well, because he had the information.

We also had another meeting, for example, up at Belleayre. Appleton was the commissioner. It was a major meeting, one of the first big meetings that we had. As I recall, *National Geographic* was there and they wrote about it. We had hired engineers who came in and did a presentation about watershed management. And, you know, I had the feeling that the City was surprised. Now, admittedly, these were outsiders, but we paid 'em. We must have paid these engineers $10,000.

And all of a sudden it was like a revelation that the management of the watershed was no mystery, that it was a science. They talked about computer modeling and they talked about how you could distinguish between inert contaminants and pathogens, for example. And how separation distances mattered with the pathogens.

And I'm still not in a position to talk about this scientifically, and I never will be, but they had a very impressive demonstration and lecture, and we all left there feeling that the City had been taught a lesson. That maybe they really weren't up on

watershed management the way they should have been, and that a lot of the things they were proposing for regulations were not really based or structured on watershed management principles—you know, the scientific principles.

VS: And they were surprised.

AB: They were surprised, yes.

VS: Surprised at the source of this information, where it was coming from—as you say, you hired them.

AB: Right.

GS But it came from the Coalition, from the watershed, from those upstaters.

AB: I think they were surprised, and I believe there was a great deal of consternation in the City about things like that—about being upstaged on the scientific front. This is just my impression, and admittedly I was very actively and ardently partisan in this whole thing.

But also on the public relations part of it, I was surprised at how sensitive the City was to things that were being said about them in public. They didn't like criticism at all. So that was the other thing that surprised me. I didn't predict that they would be that sensitive. To us, it seemed like they were an occupying force, and that they had all the power, and so what did public opinion matter, because everybody in the watershed felt the same way about them, anyway, so what difference did it make?

And we were always trying to write letters to the *New York Times* or the *Post* and occasionally other newspapers. *Newsday* carried one of my letters one time, I think. It was always a big event when anybody could kind of beat up on the City on their home ground.

I don't know if I'm really answering your question.

VS: Very much. Actually, I'm looking back to see if I have some others.

Track 12

Fond Memories

NB: I was thinking of asking for anecdotes from the long period of negotiations. Things that stand out that you remember.

AB: Well, I'm sure that this is going to be something that, when I go home tonight, will make me think, "Gee, I should have remembered this," or "I should have remembered that," you know.

NB: OK. We'll come back.

AB: I can remember one thing. You know, I talked to you about the suspicions that some of the Coalition had of the environmental groups. But the environmental group that they had the closest association with was the Catskill Center. I began one night, kind of tongue in cheek, kidding them about it—you know, about their fears, and that there was nothing to be afraid of, and that we were smarter than they were.

So I got onto this McCarthy analogy, you know? "And I'll bet there could even be card-carrying members of the Catskill Center right here at this table!" And I didn't realize—Ron Wagner's face had turned white. We rode home that evening, and he said, "Gee, you know, I've got a card in my wallet." I said, "Oh, no! I'm sorry." That was funny. [laughs]

One of the other things is the lawyer jokes. I'm the only lawyer who's on the Executive Committee, and I think it's fair to say that dealing with lawyers sometimes can be frustrating, and of course they're very expensive. But in the Coalition, we really have a lot of confidence in our lawyers, and I played a kind of unique role because I felt that I understood things about the lawyers that, for better or worse, maybe the other members didn't immediately understand. But there was always this banter about lawyers and there were always lawyer jokes going on. Perry, for example, who's our chairman, always loved to tell the latest lawyer joke and, you know, it was just part of going to those meetings.

There are so many delightful things that have happened. That's one of the other things I should really discuss a little bit. Before this whole issue began, I can't remember ever having gone to Delaware County, or if I did, why I went there. Maybe I went and got some apples, I don't know. But all of a sudden, as soon as the Coalition was formed and we realized the significance of the regulations, then we started looking: "Well, what is the watershed? Where are its boundaries? How far does it go? Who's caught in the net?" And all of a sudden, we had a sudden identity thrust upon us. It was, "Oh, you guys are in with us."

I can tell you, I became fast friends with a lot of them there. And you know, I deal with people from cities. And this may be a very parochial attitude, but these country people are nice people. They really are. And they are not phonies. They tell you the truth. They seem to be incapable of guile. And I like them a lot.

Going to those meetings was always exhausting. I mean, it was driving on a winter night an hour each way and coming home at 11 pm, dodging deer on Route 28. But the truth of the matter is they're all wonderful people. Some of them are non-talkers, and they admit it. But they're good thinkers. They have [laughs] an innate sense of

right and wrong, I believe. They can spot phonies a mile away. And they're not awed by royalty. I mean, I just thought it was wonderful. So that's been a great experience.

I was particularly close to Ken, and I will say this: I don't think Ken was always given the appreciation that he deserved in Delaware County. I think the world of him. He's a brilliant guy. He's loyal and he's dedicated. And he was the only guy on our team that, I thought, combined the science and the law. Our lawyers are great, and they know a lot about science and things—but I mean on the Executive Committee or working directly with the Executive Committee.

He really learned things fast, and he understood things, and he always had his eye on the radar screen, and he could always predict what was coming up. You know, we went to New York together and we traveled and he stayed at my house one night, and we've been out to dinner a number of times. So, you know, I'll always remember that.

One anecdote I could tell you that occurred pretty recently was when we had one of the negotiating sessions with the governor's staff down in Poughkeepsie. And John Hamilton, who's an attorney with Senator Cook, and Ken was there, and Eric Greenfield, and Al Rosa. So we stopped for dinner in Phoenicia and we're at a circular table, and we're talking about the events of the day.

There was an older couple at the table next to us, and the guy was just listening and stroking his chin, and we knew he could sort of hear what we were saying and that he was interested, but we didn't know who he was or what his interest was. So at the conclusion of his dinner, he and his wife were just leaving, and he comes up to the table and he points to us like this with his finger out, and he says, "You boys keep your powder dry." [laughs] I thought that was beautiful.

Track 13

Natives and Newcomers

VS: I noticed when you were saying things that I share very much about people who live in these mountains, and that you used the third person. Do you consider yourself a newcomer?

AB: I've been here 25 years, and my wife is a native. In fact, she was from Haines, and her people owned Haines Falls. I told her their big mistake was to sell the land. [laughs] They should have held on to the land. This is something to think about: Are you ever really a part of the community? When do you become a part of it? Now, I've been elected to office, and so it means to me—even though the margin of victory doesn't seem as wide as it should be—that at least there's a minimal amount of trust people have in you.

And yet, when you talk to people who were born here and you hear them referring to other people who were born here, well, there's just something about that that's like having been in the third grade together. Those of us who move into these areas, as much as we want to be part of the community and we try—and we are—accepted, we just can't be. You know, it's kind of like a family of people who are native Catskill Mountain people. I don't think we can ever break through that barrier. And I don't know if it's right that we do, to be honest with you.

I'd be pleased to be counted amongst their numbers. I don't plan on going anywhere, but I still feel that I will never be a native. People talk about things that happened in the 50s around here, or in the 60s, when they were growing up, and I was in Albany at the time.

VS: I was married to a native also.

AB: Oh.

VS: For 19 years. And felt more like one of the natives when he was alive. And he died two years ago, and I didn't think that would change, but it has a little

AB: It has. Yeah.

VS: I feel very accepted, but it's clear that I didn't go to third grade here.
AB: Where do you live?

VS: Roxbury. You may have heard of my husband, Walter Meade?

AB: Oh, of course! I didn't know he was your husband. Oh, I admired his work very much. Wow.

VS: You guys would have had a great time with each other. He was a great storyteller. Well, I have one more question—it's a broad one that you've heard before, Nancy. Do you have any others?

NB: Go right ahead. If we still have some time, then I'll go ahead with mine.

Track 14

Resistance

VS: It's the one we've talked about before, and I think you may have called it an invasion, or the intrusion, of the City on the region, in the case of these watershed regulations. There have been intrusions like this before, for the reservoirs. You could even say the early development of the Catskills as a tourist area was a kind of an intrusion. Why

do you think that this time the Coalition was organized when at other times there wasn't a coalition organized that could fight so effectively?

AB: The invasion that we've had of New Yorkers before, really, those people brought money with them and to a large extent they supported a good part of the economy, and the wealthy tourists from New York were always welcome here. They're still welcome here if they bring their money, and if they provide a valuable addition to the economy.

I think there are two issues here: People are better educated about their rights. They're more aware that they can fight regulatory excesses in the courts. And, you know, there's been a problem with the environmental movement in the sense that many of the environmental measures we've seen since the 70s really are necessary. And I think the environmentalists are right when they say that Eastern Europe and Russia are really paying for having neglected the environment.

But I think too many of us have felt that if these measures were being mandated by environmental considerations, it was almost as if there could possibly be no end to them. That they could proceed without reason and without end, and there were people who had good reason to be concerned that we were really fighting for our existence here.

Now some people could say that that's an exaggeration, that the City just wanted to keep its waiver and keep the water quality pure. But you know how "The power to tax is the power to destroy"—well, the power to regulate is the same thing. Since World War II and the Vietnam War, people have learned to distrust government in a way that wasn't really in vogue in the 20s or the 30s.

In the 50s, when Cannonsville was being constructed and lands were being appropriated by the City, there were people who were fighting. Lawyers had cases, and they were fighting the takings. But I'd have to attribute it mostly to Lyndon Johnson and the Vietnam War and what happened in the 60s: how people view the government, and how they feel that they can challenge government—that they're not powerless. And we found out from McNamara that he was wrong about what was going on.

So some of us were saying, "Well, why not?" I mean, why not challenge the government and keep them honest. I think that's what we were doing with the City. And we thought we could do it and we thought we could have a lot of fun doing it, and we did.

VS: Go ahead.

NB: Well, I have two sort of wonderings. One of them is where you came from and why you got so involved, why you spent so much time. And the other one is what are your hopes and fears for the future?

AB: You mean where I came from originally?

NB: Yeah, as far as your background.

AB: As far as background, it has nothing to do with this issue. To be honest with you, it had never occurred to me. As I said earlier, what really got me into this was the prospect of a good fight and dealing with the City and, to that extent, it began kind of as a lark. Once we got into it, it began dawning on me the seriousness of the issues, how much it meant to this area, and the complexity of the issues, that there was nothing black and white. While we had a lot of fun trashing environmentalists—some environmentalists—trashing the environment was never an option for us. We still believed in the environment. And we took pride in that.

We used to brag up here whenever we heard that New York City had the champagne of drinking waters. We took pride in that. And it wasn't until later on, when we started realizing the potential cost to us, and the damage to our economies, and our autonomy, and our home rule, that all of a sudden we started reacting in a negative way.

But once we got into it, I felt I could contribute something to the debate. We all had different strengths and weaknesses. I could help out in the dialogue, and in the debate. And I think I did. If you ask some of my friends—stay away from my detractors, but ask some of my friends—I think they would tell you that. And that kept me in it. I mean, nobody is irreplaceable. But I was there, I was already in it. Believe me, there were a lot of nights where I could have stayed home or I could have done something different, but we went out of a sense of contributing.

NB: And this is time that you were probably taking away from work, some of it, and time that you were taking away from your wife. Did your wife support that?

AB: Yes, she did. She really did. And when a meeting was canceled, she'd say, "Great." But, you know, I used to talk to Ken about this and I'd say, "Well, this may be the most important thing that we ever do in our public lives." And he said, "Yeah, it may be. It may very well be."

I think that was part of that. I think part of it was fun in the sense of a contest with a great foe, and yet I felt that we really could help the people in the watershed. And we didn't get paid anything to do it. In fact, we weren't even reimbursed for our expenses. If we went on a trip, we paid our way.

We're not looking for medals for that, but the best thing I ever got was a credit card they gave me so I could talk on the phone. So I'm grateful to my other members, because they know I like to talk on the phone, and whenever I felt like slamming these lawyers in New York, I could just pick up the phone and it wouldn't cost me money to do that. [laughs] Which I felt like doing most of the time, by the way.

Track 15

Hopes for the Future

NB: Hopes for the future? Fears for the future?

AB: This particular issue just had great significance. You know, we got into this thing and people were saying, "Gee, you know, what's fashioned here could be a model for the rest of the country," and, "How are you going to strike a correct balance between the economy and the environment?" I mean, a classic dilemma.

Perry and others used to shake their heads when I would use this analogy about the Amazon Basin. I don't know whether you ever had to suffer through that. But I used to say if the Amazon Basin is the lungs of the world, then the watershed here is like the fountain of New York. And if people around the world are going to slash their wrists over concern about losing oxygen and the natives cutting all those trees down, then they should do something. It behooves the rest of the world to provide some sort of economic alternatives to destroying the rain forest.

Well, the same is true up here. The City should provide an economic alternative. So this comes back, really, to what your question was. I found that, in discussions we had with various groups, including the environmentalists, if we would prepare ourselves to acknowledge that we were going to play by a different set of rules, that perhaps we would voluntarily acquiesce in not doing certain things that can be done outside the watershed, then we needed help—you know, with new technologies, with satellite transmissions and fax machines and modems. Firms that are working in the City now could be relocated here.

Communications and technology are going to change everything, and we could have sources of employment—you know, high-tech work, good quality work for our children—and therefore not be poor. You have to have some forms of endeavor that are consistent with the City's water quality objectives. And so one of the things I always used to advocate was that somehow the City had to come across with the necessary funds to develop the types of alternatives if we're going to develop an alternative economy and sources of employment.

Those things don't happen by themselves. We need money. We need money to attract people to these areas. And the principle I have in mind here is not necessarily attracting more people here, either, you know. I mean, I think what people want here is prosperity, but not necessarily more people—or more permanent people, anyway. I think what ruined East of Hudson was the large number of homes. So the issue for the watershed is: Are we willing to agree to somewhat limit our growth in exchange for a different form of prosperity, or prosperity that's not based on a large number of homes and permanent populations?

I think that's a fair question. And I think if you ask the people of the Catskills how they've felt about their future, whether they'd be willing to remain rural . . . I mean, we're here because we like rural life. That idea is not anathema to the people of the watershed. But they don't want our economies to be stifled and destroyed. They have a right to have good career opportunities for their children, so that's going to be our goal: preserving the environment and enhancing prosperous forms of endeavor and employment for people in the watershed.

I think it can be done, but it can't be done without technology, without the new technologies. So we have to be in the forefront of examining what technologies are there, and I'm sure it's going to mean fiber optics and spending money having lines brought in up here—that sort of thing. So I don't know the answers to those questions, but I'd like to be in charge of finding the right people to come up with the answers or to come up with the ideas.

Track 16

Hardball: Part 3

NB: You've talked about it being a model for elsewhere in the country, which is one of the reasons I thought this story might, indeed, have national implications. And then I'd hear somebody like Ken Markert, who'd say, "Oh, not really," and "There are very few places that have unfiltered water." But I feel there are some really important issues that have been resolved here, and that the process of resolving them has been pretty extraordinary.

AB: Well, yeah, I guess so. But the thing is that this hasn't all been reason and light. You know, the City is not given to generous gestures, and the City has its own financial woes. What is it, $3–4 billion over budget? To be sure, they would not have volunteered any of the economic programs unless they were forced to. And so it's nice, and we maintain a great deal of cordiality with the commissioner and the people who come from the City. It's actually like the Patty Hearst syndrome: We're greatly enamored of our captors, and they are, personally, for the most part, nice people.

But, for sure, we wouldn't have had anywhere near the economic benefits settlement that we have if we had not been tough and had not been willing to sabotage—I hate to use that word, but that's exactly what it is—to sacrifice, the waiver. I'm convinced of that. So I don't think this was a product of human good will or anything like that.

This was tough, and we faced economic calamity by sacrificing many hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money in litigating this, and by the decision to put our communities in debt for principles. And so, we kind of did what we thought best, but we were always worried about that, about how much we should spend.

We were always constantly evaluating the prospects of success in litigation. We contemplated litigation that I'm going to call cosmetic litigation—litigation that was important for some reason, either because of public concern about a particular issue that might have some strategic advantage or winning a particular litigation that wouldn't in itself have a long-term effect. But every time you started talking about another lawsuit, you were talking at least $30,000, and so you're spending, like Dirksen said, "A billion here and a billion there, and it adds up to real money."

We were very concerned about how money would be spent, and the wisdom or folly of winning on a particular point, and then if it was going to have a long-range effect or if maybe the short-range effect was worth it. That was going on for the last five years. And so, our lawyers—I have to credit them a lot, because I believe they were very honest with us—gave us a really good analysis of the cost and likelihood of success; had they been less responsible, we could have been suing everybody for everything and would have spent a lot of money, but we were very selective with the litigation.

Track 17

Country Life

NB: Could I ask you about where you were born, where you went to school, and all that, because I would really like to get a sense of who the players are as people.

AB: Oh. Okay. I was born in Albany in 1944. I was a war baby, I guess. My dad was a grocer and he also used to buy houses and fix them up and do wonderful things that I wish I could do. I went to Christian Brothers Academy, in Albany—you can tell by my military bearing that it was a military school [smiles]—and then Union College. I was an English major at Union College, and then I went to Albany Law School. I met my wife in Albany after I graduated. She was from here. She was a student who was getting a master's degree at SUNY. And you know she fell in love with me immediately [smiles], so we moved here in 1972. I have two children.

I love living in the country. I had a sheep farm for a number of years. We live on a property of 150 acres, and there's nothing I like better than to get on my tractor, go out in the woods and do things. Cross-country skiing. I like opera. The Italian language. I love to cook. I took courses at the CIA [Culinary Institute of America]. You know, it was a lot of fun. You should try it. Adult ed courses. I have a lot of friends who are chefs.

You know, you talk about New Yorkers and how we feel about them. I meant what I said. I know you snickered when I said, "Some of my best friends are New Yorkers," but the truth is, there are great guys and women—chefs, caterers, some real quality people—who have places up here. I mean, I have to tell you, it just contributes a great deal to the quality of life up here.

I think you really have great opportunities living here. And it is a little over two hours to New York, if you want to go down to the Met. And now, with our great Chinese restaurant across the street, it's fabulous. You really should try it. It's really good. I mean, that was one of the hardships of living in the mountains.

VS: We lived here before there were Chinese restaurants. Jarlsberg cheese wasn't available, and neither was Dannon yogurt. I can remember that, too.

NB: This has been nice.

VS: I think we've covered a great deal.

AB: I didn't wear you out, did I?

VS: No! I do have a solution to the "Am I a native or not?" problem. I don't know if they still sell them—Walt's and my favorite souvenir from Colorado.

AB: Uh-huh.

VS: You know the Colorado license plate? It has green mountains against a white sky. Well, when we were there, we saw bumper stickers designed the same way, and instead of the license numbers, it said, "Native."

AB: [laughs]

VS: So I got one for Walt. And then I got one for me that was just a little bit longer, and it said, "Semi-native." So we put them on the back of the truck, and I came out of the bank one day and Walt was just laughing, and he said, "This guy, clearly a guy from the City, came out from the bank and walked around the truck and looked at the bumper stickers and shook his head and rolled his eyes and walked off."

AB: [laughs]

Track 18

Tony Bucca's Office

NB: You know, I've also been wanting to ask you about your W.C. Fields statues here. Tell me about them.

AB: Oh! W. C. Fields. He was the great iconoclast, and kind of a folk hero of mine. And so is Abraham Lincoln, everybody knows. And this other guy was in a shop in Florence. It's a lawyer—Avocato. And I noticed you were admiring my sign. Do you know Italian?

NB: No, but I was trying to translate it.

AB: Okay. *Melio il topo in bocco del gatto, che il cliente in mano avvocato*. It means, "Better the mouse in the mouth of the cat, than the client in the hand of the lawyer." [laughs]

NB: And what else have you got up here? Is this a Thomas Cole drawing?

AB: Right, that's a gift from the Historical Society—*Kindred Spirits*. And the other one is Main Street, Tannersville. That's a photograph of my son and my daughter from about eight years ago; my golden retriever; and there's my tractor, of which I am inordinately proud. That load of wood we cut Abraham Lincolnesque style. [laughs] The other is a Daumier of the judges sleeping. In my courts I wish some of the judges *would* sleep, so that I might have a chance to win a case once in a while. And you see that? Jacques Pepin did that. Skip Pratt lives in Twilight Park, and that was for Skip's daughter's wedding. As a matter of fact, my friend Jean Claude, who is the chef I told you about, catered the wedding, and I helped him. I did! You didn't even snicker?

VS: No.

AB: I'm telling you, it was a wonderful thing, because Skip has a beautiful house at the head of the Kaaterskill Clove, with the most magnificent view of the Clove. And there were 150 guests. Jacques Pepin was there—he designed the menu, and that's a reduced copy of it, I guess. And my first assignment, after having graduated from the adult ed course at the CIA, was to swat the flies in the kitchen, which I did so well, I was promoted to counting the shiitake mushrooms for the salads. And he had this wonderful black truffle sauce—there was like two quarts of it and it was probably worth about $2,000—and I was promoted to stirring the sauce to keep it from burning, and I kept stirring and stirring.

And Jean Claude and Jacques Pepin go downstairs, and I'm alone in the kitchen, and my friend Wally Gallagher, who's on the Town Board with me, is out on the deck drinking beer with some of the other people. So I went out to visit for a while and had a beer and came back, and of course this black truffle sauce is foaming up, you know, and then for the first time, I noticed these little bits of black things in it. I thought I had burned it, and later it turned out to be the truffles. But I said, "My word. Where am I going to get sauce? Where am I going to find black truffles in the watershed on a Saturday afternoon?"

So we had a lot of fun doing that. And all the ladies would come in and they'd compliment the chef. And one time several of them came in and they looked around for the chef, and I was there by myself, and they said, "Well, Chef. *Magnifique! Formidable!*" And I'd say, "Nothing, really." [laughs]

NB: You have a good sense of humor.

VS: Let me ask about one more thing on the wall.

NB: Go ahead.

VS: The Custer print. Are you a fan?

AB: A fan of Custer? No, I'm a fan of Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull, but I've read a lot of stuff about Custer. That particular print is also a reproduction—is that the one that was in all the bars? It was about twelve feet long, and it also shows some of the native Sioux, with sort of Oriental characteristics, you know. Somebody gave me that. I thought you were going to ask about Puccini.

VS: That's how I knew you like the opera.

NB: And I see you have Puccini arias, here.

AB: I do, yeah. It's great stuff, isn't it? It really is.

[Tape off, and then on again.]

Track 19

Perry Shelton

AB: You know, I rivaled Perry for the chairmanship last year [1995]. Close vote: 5–4. There was kind of a feeling that everything would be over by the end of 1995. It was almost true that things were over. But I want to tell you, we went to the World Trade Center on November 2—I have the card here. The governor wanted to make the announcement at the World Trade Center, and so we went down.

I rode down with the lawyers. Perry and Alan Rosa rode down together with Eric Greenfield. The room was crowded, and there were people in the limelight who *definitely* didn't belong there. We certainly didn't mind the governor being in the limelight, but for those of us who had been there for five years and had gone through all of that . . .

There were elected officials from the City Council, and state senators from the City area, and assemblymen who were being introduced, and we just sort of stood in the background. I mean, we were behind the governor, but were still in the background just shaking our heads and saying to ourselves, "Well, who was *that* guy? Who was *that* guy?"

I called Perry the next day to tell him that I was sure that, in his career, he had had many fine hours but that that occasion in New York was his finest hour, because the attention of the known world was put on him, and of course on the governor and the mayor. We met Mayor Giuliani. And the credit was interspersed amongst the big shots, but Perry was the one who deserved the credit.

Even Commissioner Gelber didn't receive the credit and the attention that we thought she deserved. But Perry was the one who had the decency to recognize her and some of the other people in the Coalition who had worked on it, so I give him a tremendous amount of credit for that. You know, he's a real fine gentleman, and he rose to the occasion that time—and at other times, too.

NB: I was going to ask you to talk about Perry.

AB: Well, actually, there are two subjects, and this really could go on for a long time, but one subject is: "What was the reaction, the aftermath, once the headlines and the announcements came out, and everyone was getting credit?" Do you know Hy Rosen? He's a cartoonist. He was with the *Times-Union* for many years. Well, he's a friend of Orville Slutsky's, and they were down here and Orville told him about the settlement and what it meant to us. So Hy did a cartoon with Governor Pataki blindfolded like Justice, with a sword smiting the mountain and the water coming. The caption of the cartoon said that Governor Pataki single-handedly rescued the watershed.

We don't begrudge the governor any credit that he deserves, because he did take risks. I used to say, if you get involved in breaking up a dog fight, you're liable to get bit. That very easily could have happened to him, so he deserves a lot of credit. But there were a lot of other people there—who we had never heard of, and who had nothing to do with anything—and they were getting a lot of the credit for what had happened. But we were just resigned, philosophically, because that's the way of the world. That's the way it happens in big government.

What was the other thing that you asked about?

NB: I asked about Perry as a person.

AB: Well, you know, Perry's a real strong individual. And, as I understand it, he was the town supervisor from his town. And in Delaware County, they have a Board of Supervisors as a county legislative system, so not only do you participate in running the town, you also participate in running the county. And so, being a supervisor in Delaware County, I think there's a lot more power than being a supervisor here in Greene County.

But, anyway, he had been the supervisor for 30 years or so, and he had been a budget officer in the town. He was a forceful person. I mean, he believed that he could run meetings and get things done through the force of his personality—and he did. You know, sometimes those of us who didn't grow up knowing him had to make some adjustments to deal with that. And there were nights we had arguments and then apologized.

In fact, one night, Pat Meehan—he's the Supervisor from the Town of Windham—was upset about something or other and he got up and went out of room. And some

people went out to try to get Pat to come back, but he wouldn't come back. He sat in the truck, you know.

But I thought that Perry was always able to conduct himself with the dignity that that post required. And I think people respected him.

ERIC J. GREENFIELD

Executive Director of the Coalition of Watershed Towns
(1995-1996)

ERIC GREENFIELD	Executive Director, Coalition of Watershed Towns (1995–present)
Interviewed by:	Nancy Burnett
Location:	Mr. Greenfield's conference room, Delhi, New York
Date:	November 7, 1995
Total time:	45 minutes

This interview was conducted just after the announcement of an agreement-in-principle on watershed regulations. It would be two more years before the New York City Watershed Memorandum of Agreement was signed.

Track 1

A Win-Win Situation

NB: You were talking to me in your office about what you thought were the reasons that we came out with what looks like a win-win situation this time in negotiations with New York City.

EG: Well, it's a heck of a deal for the City. I mean, $1 billion vs. $4–6 billion, plus the O&M costs over a long term, not to mention the debt service over the long term. I believe that the water rate increase is certainly fair, considering that they are still below the average of what water costs in most places, if I remember correctly. The City raised rates, actually, in the past couple years, but there was one point where the New York City rates were lower than what was being charged by a lot of our local municipalities that were charging for water.

NB: Really?!

EG: Oh, far below! I mean dollars per thousand gallons below, which I thought was downright amazing, considering the type of costs that go into producing a decent water supply. And that just amazed me initially when I first did that research. Win-win situation? Heck, City residents are still getting off very, very, very cheap considering what they could have paid for water.

As for us, the reason why it's a win-win situation is because we got the programs we asked for, the programs we believe that will realistically take care of water quality problems. I mean, for example, the septic system remediation program. Let's get real here. This is the type of program that will not only protect water quality for the future, but will certainly improve water quality. We already have an idea that the water

quality is actually improving here in the watershed. It probably has a lot to do with the downturn of agricultural uses on the land. But as far as going retroactive and trying to clear up septic system problems, there's one win.

We're also talking about water quality infrastructure improvements such as wastewater treatment plants. And although the stereotype or perception of a wastewater treatment plant is that it's dumping raw sewage into a watercourse—which is absolutely silly—what we're looking for is tertiary treatment in wastewater treatment, to basically put water that's close to drinking water quality back into the stream. I would much rather have wastewater treatment plants in a densely populated area than septic systems that have the potential for leaking into the water courses. I gotta tell you that the treatment in a wastewater treatment plant is much, much more thorough than a septic system. And that's one of the bigger wins as well.

So we have wastewater treatment plants, septic system remediation, storm water remediation. We take care of a lot of the storm water problems with a retrofit in some of the densely populated areas—$7.625 million for storm water retrofits for hamlets and villages. Taking care of that storm water problem alone will give us incredible progress as far as phosphorous loading to the reservoirs. So a win-win situation—well, heck, these are the types of programs we thought would actually work for water quality or produce some real water quality protection or improvement, and they're getting off cheap. Can't beat that!

Track 2

Property Rights

NB: Now, in getting to this Agreement, one of the things you talked about was finally coming around to focusing on water quality, as opposed to environmental issues or open space issues or . . .

EG: . . . property rights issues.

NB: Yup. Okay. Talk about that a little, will you?

EG: Well, it's interesting that we actually did quite a bit to protect the property rights of the individuals that live in the watershed. For the most part the regulations have been negotiated in a way so that, as an individual homeowner, you will not have to go so far out of your way to use your property in the way you intended to use it. People also have to understand that individuals in the watershed are not out to pollute the area, which is sometimes the perception of development.

Human beings settle. That's what they do. They migrate and they settle. As far as what they want to be surrounded by in a homestead sense, you've got to really

question a lot of the rhetoric about how individuals may treat their property. I mean, we're talking about the potential for abuse here, but, quite frankly, I haven't seen that yet in the west-of-Hudson watershed. We've got a lot of individuals who indeed want to live on a nice piece of property, who want to keep it maintained, who want to keep it pristine—that's why they live here, that's why they moved here.

NB: Do you think that there were cultural perceptions of the upstaters toward the City and the City toward the upstaters that changed during this negotiation process?

EG: Well, let's be honest. It took a bit of litigation to finally turn New York City around as to how serious we were about the resources we could muster in order to fight this. Quite frankly, I don't know if the stereotype of the rural American held up over the long term. Maybe at the beginning these individuals had no concept of what water quality was truly about and they were not up on technical or educational issues, but our survey conducted by Cornell certainly proves that to be quite the opposite now.

I mean, the individuals of this watershed—partly because of this issue, I believe—have basically been educated more than people in a lot of other areas in the country (heck, even across a county line to the north), as far as how aware they are of environmental issues such as water quality issues that pertain to the watershed. They've been just outstanding in their ability to both understand and also contribute to the process that we're developing in order to basically form a grassroots or partnership effort with New York City. I mean, these people hold up their end. These residents will definitely hold up their end.

Track 3

Ken Markert

NB: You talked about Ken Markert's technical study. How important was that?

EG: Technical *studies,* plural. Even if Ken did not know an answer, he was incredible in gaining the information if he could find it somewhere, whether we used a technical consultant or we used an economic consultant. We used an individual, Steve Roy from Apogee, to help us with the land acquisition criteria. In other words, we sought out people that had worked in this field, and asked for their advice.

Ken, by nature, was a planning person, but he has degrees in biology, so he understood what we were trying to do; and at the same time, in bringing that power of his expertise to the table, he empowered us to be able to carve out a niche for the people that live here. You *can* do both. You *can* provide real water quality protection *and* protect the rights of the individuals within a living watershed. And I believe this Agreement proves that—proves his theory.

He did a heck of a job. I mean, he put in a lot of long hours. He put in a lot of hours that weren't paid for. He sacrificed his personal life and professional life in doing this. Four and a half years paid off.

NB: Why do you think he cared so much? What motivated him?

EG: Personal interest, I believe, motivated him quite a bit. Also, the interesting thing I noted about Ken is this: You know, he's not originally from the area. He's actually from western New York, but if you listen to the rhetoric from western New York, sometimes it resembles this area as far as their feelings or their stereotypes against New York City. So even though he's not necessarily from the Catskills, he certainly carries an upstate quality. He definitely carries an upstate upbringing or cultural background.

Let's talk about his characteristics. The man is incredibly logical and rational. One of the more interesting aspects of this issue is that it's very political. And political rationality does not always necessarily match with the scientific or theoretical—or the type of rationality we'd all like to see out of a process like this. It just doesn't happen with human beings. I mean, we can think of what pure rationality is. But when it comes right down to it, we rarely follow any pure logic or pure rationality. But Ken is one of those purists, and I think what aggravated him to no end was the fact that the regulations absolutely made no sense as New York City proposed them. What also aggravated him was the way they believed they could walk over the residents of the watershed to implement the program.

He saw through the rhetoric of the environmental community, he himself being a conservationist. I mean, you can say that many people are environmentalists, but whether they buy into the political rhetoric or not is another question. He certainly did not. I mean, as far as the philosophy behind the property rights question, I think Ken was culturally steeped in the property rights question. He was not necessarily an adamant follower of the political interest groups that pushed those agendas, but he came from an area that believed strongly in those rights.

As a planner, he knew what lines not to cross, or what to cross. I mean, he even followed, or understood, what the court decisions were on zoning, and how that protects the safety and welfare of people. He understood both sides very well, but in a very different way. In other words, he took a very logical view of both approaches, which didn't always necessarily mesh with the political interests but certainly made for middle ground—or potential middle ground—and a compromise.

Track 4

Law of Diminishing Returns

NB: Now, when you talk about the political interests, what are you talking about?

EG: The political interest or the political rhetoric from environmental communities or property rights communities, no matter what interest group you belong to, tends to be blown out of proportion—but obviously it has to be, in order for them to push their agenda.

NB: What would the environmentalists be saying?

EG: One of the bigger problems with the environmental rhetoric that Ken had trouble with was the set-back limitation. I mean, it was actually not a technical argument as much as an open-space argument, and Ken saw right through that. In other words, buffering streams or limiting the amount of pathogens or even storm water runoff that gets into a watercourse can oftentimes be engineered; or maybe it can even be a smaller vegetative buffer that can help protect the watercourse.

Ken understood that the buffers they were talking about, or horizontal travel time, is not as important as maybe a vertical travel time—in other words, as it goes down, rather than across. And he picked up on that right away. He also understood technical realism, so to speak.

In other words, you can't completely engineer everything. One of the requirements by EPA was microfiltration. Well, microfiltration is a very cost-intensive technology that's used mostly by beverage companies to basically filter out impurities to help their processing of juices or beer or other different beverages. And he understood the difference between wastewater and beverages. There's a point where it becomes asinine to spend taxpayers' money on getting a very small increment of protection.

He also understood that if we were to concentrate on some realistic cost-benefit scenarios, or risk reduction, in doing water quality protection, we'd also have a better chance at protecting water quality. Because let's be honest: If you have your choice between a $5 million wastewater treatment plant that nobody can afford and a $2 million one that would be more realistic and that everybody can afford, and you've got almost the same amount of protection with each plant, you're going to pick the $2 million plant.

If I recall, the improvement is very small compared to what you get out of the other technology. And he realized that the water quality protection plans would have to be adopted in a political climate, where taxes always come into question as to what you're paying for, and how much benefit you are getting out of your tax money. And

he realized that microfiltration in the long term cannot work realistically as far as the money is concerned.

On the other hand, he was also very rational in his approach to dealing with who paid for those types of upgrades, and he said, "Obviously, if they want that much more protection, then, by God, let 'em pay for it." Which is actually in the spirit of what they passed in 1905, when they built the reservoirs—and that is, to basically pay for any of the improvements upstream that would benefit the water quality downstream.

NB: Which makes sense.

EG: Well, that's Public Health Law 1104.

Track 5

Mistrust

NB: All right now, given the history that we have of New York City having taken over property, having condemned it, having paid people far below what the real value of the land was, how did you get over the mistrust upstaters felt?

EG: I can't say that we have completely gotten over the mistrust that's there. I believe this package offers a bit of reparation for that. I believe this package offers the opportunity to work together, rather than against. But I have to be honest, I think this Agreement is still going to be a long term problem—or it'll be a long term solution.

I don't believe that mistrust is the type of dynamic that'll continue if this truly works. I mean, if people take it seriously, if people take advantage of the program to benefit themselves and the larger whole, I believe it will work to our advantage. They're talking about some education programs that'll be taught down to the elementary level, so that these children can understand.

In any historical context, we have to take the good with the bad. New York City had to provide water for a population boom that we have taken advantage of in this country. The cultural diversity of immigrants coming into New York City helped us develop into the type of culture and country we are today. On the other hand, yes, New York City sacrificed the lives of people that lived here in order to build the reservoirs. And I think you've got to take both the good and the bad when you look at something like that.

That's the type of education that needs to be done. I don't think it's a negative to have feelings of sadness, or to empathize with the people who lost their homes when the reservoirs were created. On the other hand, we've come a long way now. It's time to move on. I mean, one only has to look at the European Community since World

War II ended to see that it can truly happen, and the more you focus on the positive, the more the war becomes a memory of the past.

There will always be people who will still harbor those grudges about the creation of the reservoirs, but over time, the Agreement is the type of program that can turn people around a little bit, I believe. Instead of having upstate/downstate, we're New York State citizens. Interesting, huh.

NB: What an achievement!

EG: It is! Or it could be.

NB: Right.

EG: That's an important point to make. I also have to point out the open-mindedness, or the willingness, of our local leadership to negotiate in the face of that history, in the face of the practices of the City. Some of these people were personally hurt, emotionally hurt, by some of the things that have happened in the past, but they're persevering. You only have to look at one individual, Perry Shelton, to understand the type of person I'm talking about.

Perry Shelton went through the Cannonsville Reservoir construction. He's been a leader in the county since then. And he's also the same leader that helped foster this partnership. If anyone should have a grudge, if anyone should have hostility, if anyone should feel that paranoia or anxiety, it should be Perry. But Perry kept an open mind. Perry remained passionate in his desire to help the people here, but at the same time he realized that working together would certainly help us more than fighting for more years to come.

NB: Nicely said.

EG: Thank you.

NB: That's exactly the kind of thing I was hoping to get.

EG: And you are going to edit this?

NB: Absolutely.

EG: I stammered!

NB: No, this is wonderful.

EG: Great.

NB: You are very articulate. I knew that the first day that I talked to you.

EG: Thank you. I just apologize—I think I'm getting burned out. [laughs] It's happened to Ken, too, a little bit.

Track 6

Burn-out

EG: I mean, you've got lots of help, and there's lots of participation, but there's still lots of work to be done, and what happens is, sometimes you get mired down in the details that you need to fix, because if you don't, it doesn't pay the bills; but at the same time, you have to be focused on the forest rather than the individual trees. And from time to time it's hard to reconcile the two.

I have to admit it helped having had so many different part-time jobs in the past that made up a full-time commitment. For example, when I was an adjunct at Delhi Tech, I was the mayor of Delhi. You know, those are the types of situations that I think benefitted me or helped me to accept this position and feel comfortable with it. In other words, "I've gotta change my hat. I've gotta change my way of thinking. Quick!" I've gotta be able to respond, you know, in a moment's notice, and to being caught off guard. I have to admit I think exhaustion is starting to set in now as a result of that type of pace, but I'm hoping here soon to take a little time off, and then come back strong.

NB: Good. I would think that when the thing is settled, you'd need to take a vacation. You need to just say, "Thank God, the pressure's off."

EG: Yeah. I think everybody's looking at that Thanksgiving break as being a *break*. And the holiday season should be good for all of us. I mean, as much as we used to have to work through those times and those periods of the year, none of us had a summer to really enjoy ourselves. But with the pace that we've now set up, with the security of a certainty of the future that we now have, I believe these people can now pace themselves.

Because I have to be honest: A fatigued leader or decision maker is not a good thing to have when we're this close to the end. I want to make sure everybody is rested; I want to make sure everybody's happy and comfortable as we go through this. Because there's going to be some tough issues to deal with and I want them to be ready for them.

Track 7

Educating the Constituency

NB: What do you think people are still going to have to deal with? What do you see coming up?

EG: We still have the details to deal with in the document, and we need to keep focused on local government control—that home rule that we still want and desire. I mean, home rule is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, you get to make your own decisions. You get to determine your own destiny. But on the other hand, you also are held directly accountable to the people of the watershed. And sometimes in political systems, that accountability can come back on you, in a way. We've seen many a supervisor or town board who decides to go through re-evaluation because they believe that it's a better way of making things fair for everybody. But what usually ends up happening to that individual after re-evaluation is they get voted out of office.

Popular politics in the United States is still the same as it used to be: You have to rely on the fact that you've got to get out there and educate your constituency when you go through a process like that so that everybody understands what you're doing, so that everybody participates, participates well, and participates constructively. And that's not always an easy thing to do. It's a very hard thing. I think we've got that hope with the resources that we will have available to us. But with the resources of the past, you could just not muster that kind of effort unless you pulled a lot of voluntary participation from the individuals that you were relying on.

And I have to be completely frank. The same individuals who play that role here locally also are the same ones that help in this organizational effort and help in church and help in Boy Scouts and help in Girl Scouts and help with the food pantry — I mean, the list goes on. Oftentimes the most active individuals are the ones that end up also getting the burden of the decision making as well.

And locally, that hasn't changed. You always pick the person with the most to do if you really want to get something done, but that has taken a toll. We're asking a lot of those people, but they're also the type of people that we need to help make this happen. It's going to be a tough one for these individuals. But they've been willing to make the sacrifice in the past. I'm hoping that we can get a pace that they can live with, and maybe we can work on this over time.

NB: So, I understand the educational side of things. That you've got to deal with all the skepticism of the local residents.

EG: Oh, certainly. Although I have to admit that for five years the Chamber of Commerce had success in raising money and getting the issue out in the open. And the Coalition

had success in getting the issue out in the open, getting individuals to get geared up to fight. We did such a good job of it that it became a problem because you couldn't get people to back down off the fighting issue. I mean, they were armed—armed with information.

And it's the same kind of information that will help them understand the importance of the Agreement. You're not dealing with the confusion or the ignorance that you were before. So, as much as we've got a lot of work to do, the one advantage that we have is that this constituency is very well educated on these issues—not to the degree that any of us internally on the negotiating team are, I'm sure, (I mean, the learning curve on this issue is incredibly steep) but certainly, as far as the building blocks or the foundation, the basic knowledge is there, which is something that gives you a lot of confidence in trying to sell an issue like the Agreement.

I have to be honest with you: although I was cautious in how we proceeded and uncertain what people's interpretations would be, this Agreement has been selling itself, in essence. Because individuals can focus on the Coalition goals, which for the most part included the following: "We will not bear the direct costs of this program. We will not bear the indirect costs of this program above and beyond what's required outside of this watershed area. We will not accept regulation without compensation." And you can see that in black and white in this document. It's clear. It's easy to understand. People understand where the regulations have allowed the small guy to prosper.

In other words, the thresholds for storm water plans and the thresholds for single-family home development are not that stringent. This is something that can continue in the way people are used to it happening. Yes, they're going to have to focus on a couple of issues, including storm water and their septic system. But for the most part, it's pretty much the same. The same type of growth trends we've seen in this area will continue—I mean, they will be allowed to continue—because, quite frankly, the growth trends in this area are not what they are in the bedroom communities of Westchester or Putnam Counties. And will not be. We're geographically separated. Our access routes are limited. I mean, there is not one four-lane highway in the watershed, with the exception of some small areas. So we just do not have that kind of access.

Track 8

Local Culture: Part 1

NB: One of the things I've been thinking as you've been talking is, "What motivated you? What kept you going?"

EG: I've had a few experiences that have shaped my life dramatically. One is my parents. I believe they raised me correctly. They raised me to take a concern in the people around me, to help my community and give back to my community. It was the reason for my getting into local politics originally. I served a two-year term as village trustee before I served a two-year term as mayor of the Village of Delhi. I've now since moved out of the village.

NB: And as an aside, you were incredibly young when you did that term. How old were you then?

EG: 25? Yeah, 25. I felt I owed something back. This community, the Delhi community, Delaware County, I believe did a heck of a great job raising me in the community spirit.

NB: You grew up in Delhi, then.

EG: Yes. My parents did a wonderful job. But on the other hand, the community also did a wonderful job—and my church did a wonderful job—in giving me the values that I need to do well in this area.

As you grow up in this area, one of the things that you become instantly aware of is the poverty here, the lack of attention this area has received in terms of programs. I mean, when people think of Appalachia, they think West Virginia, they think of the South. Well, we're designated as Appalachia, and a lot of times I think that gets ignored because we happen to be in the State of New York. I mean, "the State of New York!" Why should this be the case in the State of New York?

If you look beyond the downstate community, and with the exception of a few metropolitan areas there are many regions in New York State that struggle: the Adirondacks, the Catskills, western New York, central New York. There is poverty here. You can't ignore it. And I think a lot of people lose track of that when they think of New York State. Again, when you think of Appalachia, you think of West Virginia or Virginia or western Pennsylvania—the list goes on. You tend not to think of New York State as being in that situation.

But as I grew up, you noticed that instead of individuals buying existing homes or building their own homes, the mode of living became a modular home or a trailer, which is more affordable. There's a lot of pride in that individual ownership. There's a lot of pride in a work ethic. But that work ethic gets them minimum wage, which sometimes brings them below what they could be getting on a welfare roll. And you have to admire these people for their pride.

It absolutely amazes me that we have a huge percentage of people in Delaware County who are eligible to take social services, yet a smaller amount actually do avail themselves of the services. I mean, the information's out there. They can certainly do

that, but their work ethic is there. They do not want to be forced into that role. They don't want a handout. They want to work for what they get.

So when you see something like that, and you realize that there aren't many opportunities for them—whether educational or job opportunities—you realize that you really want to bring something back, if you can. I've seen so many of my peers leave the area. The top of the class in high school, or the active individuals in high school go on to other areas where they're certainly making a contribution. But I'm hoping to see more opportunities in this area so that that peer group stays here and helps, comes back to their family and friends and says, "Here's a hand. We'll work side by side to bring this area back up to speed."

I think that's why I came back to this area. I came back to this area after some years of college. I went to SUNY Binghamton, which at the time had sit-ins for almost any imaginable issue that they could think of. And then I came back to Delaware County and realized, "Gee, these people don't even care about animal rights. They just want to live." I mean, you get down to a hard reality, and you start to divorce yourself from all these wonderful idealistic issues that—if I had a nice high median income, if I had the income that I needed, if I had the job that I wanted, if I had the family situation that I wanted—would be great! If I can focus on that issue, wonderful.

But you're talking about individuals that are just scraping by. And it became clear to me that this is where they need the help. I mean, those issues are fine, but we've got to focus on some basics, like maybe helping our families and friends live in a decent home, with a decent income, with opportunities for education, with opportunities for advancement, or job opportunities. And that just wasn't happening.

So after I left Binghamton and came back here, I did want to give something back. In 1990, when the regulations came out, you conjured up all the history from the reservoirs first being built and saw how those people were taken advantage of. I mean, there were some individuals that sold early and took off and bought wonderful farms in the Finger Lakes, where they're actually making money in farming. But there were so many other individuals that were tied to the land. They felt a history—personal, family, cultural—and they wanted to stay.

Their ancestors worked hard to clear land in the Catskills. Good Lord, you look at the effort! They pulled stumps; they cleared trees, stones, and rocks. You continue to pick rocks out of Delaware County fields. And to see that sweat disappear when you leave, I mean, that just doesn't feel right. The investment of time and effort that these people have seen and that they've made from their ancestors up to their present generation—I understand why they want to stay.

And I want to encourage them to stay. These are the people that built this area. These are the people that shaped the culture of this area. And you definitely want to see them stay and you definitely want to see them prosper. And that's why I came

back. I love this area. I absolutely love this area—every little aspect of this area. I'd like to see more educational opportunities and job opportunities for a lot of these people, and that's why I came back.

NB: And this gets at what NPR wants me to do with this story. See, this is supposed to be part of a folklore series.

EG: Right. Oh, good.

NB: And so they want us to talk about the culture, and all those things you said about why people didn't just leave.

EG: Right! They put in so much time. . . .

NB: Because I don't think people in the City understand that at all.

EG: Well, they're more mobile. It's definitely a more mobile culture. I mean, their mobility in the City is so much different than what it is here. You can say that some individuals are actually trapped, but it depends on your point of view. As an outsider, you'd say these people are trapped in this poverty, that they don't want to get out. But that's not necessarily the case. These people believe in this area. These people understand the investment of time and resources that their ancestors and their family have put into this area. They enjoy their relationships with their friends and family in this area.

And, quite frankly, sometimes you wonder . . . when you start to see an aging population and realize that part of the commitment of a family, or an extended family unit, used to be taking care of everybody from birth to death. To see that happen here and realize that the answer to the question "Now, if I had my choice of a nursing home or living with my family, which would I choose?" becomes, "Family." That's the type of culture that's here. It's not so much "old fashioned" or "traditional"— let's get rid of those terms. Let's get down to what it really is, which is a practical way of dealing with the life span of a human being in the best context possible.

We're social beings, and as much as we think we're so much above other animals, I don't necessarily believe we are. I still believe we need that ability to reach out to each other, to connect, and I just don't think we can leave that behind. And I think that's what's lost in a mobile culture like that. I think that's why a person's word maybe means more in the country than in the city.

I mean, it's interesting when you get into gossip, or the type of news that rural people find, let's say, newsworthy. The types of events that are going on in the community that grab their attention. Marriages, funerals, personal accomplishments of an individual in the community, different relationships among people. I believe what they're focusing on is sometimes more legitimate and more—in the long run—

productive than what we sometimes focus on in the political arena or in looking at governments or international relations.

I think one of the better terms—and you can use this for so many situations—is: "Think globally, act locally." I can't emphasize that enough. It works for more than just different political agendas. It's truly what I believe needs to happen more often. If you really realize that you're reaching out to someone who may be different within your own small culture—let's say someone who is a transplant—and connection is made, those are the types of relationships that, over time, if there are enough of them, will branch out from state to country to world. And those are the types of things we need to focus on. This is the type of culture; this is the type of thinking that you want.

I mean, certainly, there's sometimes a bit of fear of what's on the outside. But if positive relationships are built with the outside, that won't be such a dynamic. That dynamic will be taken away.

NB: And, indeed, that's what this Agreement is doing.

EG: In a way, yeah.

Track 9

Land Acquisition

NB: Now, what do you see as the impact of your possibly tripling the amount of land that New York City is holding?

EG: Well, first of all, it's interesting when you say "tripling the amount of land they're holding." They don't own that much to begin with, so when we say that, maybe it's, what, 80,000 acres? No, it's just under 80,000 acres, I believe. Don't quote me on that one, 'cause I'm not sure.

NB: Okay. I thought 80,000 acres was a lot.

EG: But they don't actually own that much land compared to what other cities' water systems own in a watershed. The Safe Drinking Water Act was designed to address smaller systems, for the most part, not the New York City watershed, which is a very different system from a lot of other cities'. I mean, most cities own their watersheds. Most communities own their reservoir and the property around their reservoir.

And you can tell what the engineers did by the age of the reservoir. In other words, how New York City's thinking changed. You go to the Croton Reservoir, and there's development right on the sides of controlled lakes and reservoirs. You get further up

to the Ashokan Reservoir and, okay, it's further away, but it's still awfully close to the reservoir. And then you finally get to the Cannonsville Reservoir, where they bought up to the top of the hill. So it's interesting how even their thinking changed as time went on and they realized they should own the area around their reservoir directly, so that they could prevent some problems from happening.

As far as their land ownership in this area, again, it's a double-edged sword. As much as they can be a market force that you wouldn't typically have in a real estate market, as much as they can take land directly out of development that may have gone to help a tax base, on the other hand, they're providing some communities with an incredible amount of taxes, mostly in the impoundment towns. I mean, one only has to look over the hill at the Downsville School District, a very small school district that's prospered primarily as a result of New York City tax money.

You can point to something like that. You can also point to some problems, mostly in the towns that don't have an impoundment—in other words, something that's not assessed that high, as far as the property goes. And they have a reason to complain, because these were the towns in which the villages or that bottomland or that wonderful agricultural land once sat and generated some nice tax revenue. But on the other hand, again, it's not a black and white situation. They're a good taxpayer. They pay on time. They pay the large bills. And in some cases, like an impoundment town, it benefits them greatly.

NB: What's an impoundment town?

EG: It's where a dam is built. I'm sorry.

NB: Oh! Okay.

EG: And the dam, the structure . . .

NB: We're talking Gilboa.

EG: Gilboa, certainly. Neversink, Wawarsing, Deposit—I mean, there are a couple that benefit greatly from this structure itself. But New York City is also one of the better taxpayers. You know, they don't default. You don't have to go through the expense of a tax sale with New York City. They'll pay it. Sometimes they'll challenge how much you're asking for, but they have to pay the bill first because that's the way the tax law works.

And as far as the property goes, as long as there's a willing seller-willing buyer, there are some people, I'm sure, who want to leave the area who maybe bought land in the real estate market boom in the late '80s that they never developed, or never wanted to develop, or who thought they could make a buck. I'm sure there'll be some people that get want to sell their land.

Track 10

Growth Trends

NB: I hope you're having as much fun as I am.

EG: Yeah, this is fun. This is definitely making me feel much better. Thank you.

Where was I? Oh, about the growth trends in Delaware County. The growth will continue. The growth will continue in the same way it always has. If anything, we may see some real positives as a result of job opportunities or economic stabilization, which is wonderful. As far as their land acquisition program, we're trying to make sure that we can keep agriculture as an industry in Delaware County, and I hope it works.

But even some of the land that will probably be sold will be by farmers that wanted to get out, that finally want to get out: whose sons or daughters did not want to continue, whose family did not want to continue. The Watershed Agreement provides them an opportunity as much as it does New York City. And by the time New York City gets done with their next land acquisition phase, we're still going to be land rich here in Delaware County, or Ulster County, or Schoharie County. This area is just not developed to the degree that you see in the bedroom communities, or any communities surrounding a larger metropolitan area.

I mean, you have to drive an hour and a half to get to a larger metropolitan area. And how do you usually get there? Two-lane roads. Not four-lane roads, not a railroad, but two-lane roads that snake over mountains and hills to get to where you need to go. And I believe that's the type of geographic isolation that continues to benefit us. I would also submit that if you ask individuals whether they'd want to see the type of development that's occurred in those bedroom areas or metropolitan areas, I don't think they do. I think they want to remain the same, in essence. I think they want the status quo.

It's interesting that planning tools don't usually develop until there's that stress. In other words, in the late '80s, when the land boom occurred, that's when you saw a lot of planning come to Delaware County. Was planning necessary in Delaware County before that? No. Because you were basically maintaining the status quo.

Agriculture uses, in essence, zoned everything else out. Farmers had large tracts of land. If anything, the farmer subdivided off a house for his son or daughter; they didn't buy up a farm and then subdivide. And I think as soon as you saw that land boom, and as soon as you saw houses start to dot the hills where a farm used to be or where someone's forested lands used to be that they used to roam when they were a child, I think you started to see people in the area look at what is happening

and say, “Well, hold on a minute here. I like what it used to be, not what it’s becoming.”

Track 11

Local Culture: Part 2

EG: Even in the way that you look at a downtown retail sector, there’s a lot of interest in preserving the historic nature of a downtown. There’s a lot of interest in maintaining that community that was always there. You won’t find a lot of support for large-scale strip mall development, because that’s not how people like to shop. I mean, you can go to Oneonta and do that. You don’t need to do that everywhere. Certainly, those developments will occur, but you’ll still always find a connection to a downtown retail sector. Those are the types of patterns and traditions that these people hold on to.

And they’ll always want to be able to know everybody by their first name. They’ll always want to be able to know what’s going on in other peoples’ personal lives. I know that sounds funny, but what I mean is, for someone who’s paranoid about what other people are thinking about them, this is not the place to be. But I think we can also look to that same community as providing you with support.

When I looked back and said, “Why did I return?” the answer I gave myself is: “This community raised me.” Do I feel an obligation back? Well, certainly, I do, and that’s why I did what I’m doing now. And quite honestly, I’m hoping someday to get back in the classroom. I’m not working with the Coalition of Watershed Towns for my own personal ego. I want to see this issue get resolved, and then I can go into a career field that I’ve always wanted.

But these communities are support structures for anything you could possibly think of. If you’re having a hard time—personally or professionally—they’ll give you a chance. And, since it’s such an insulated community, you can also pretty much segregate out your criminals. In other words, people will always be wary of certain individuals. There’s room for forgiveness, of course. But I’m talking about what would happen if you started to see a criminal element come to this area. I doubt it will happen, though—there’s a lot of people who want to make sure it stays out.

And I’ve got to be honest: That type of behavior happens in a place with lots of apathy, and this area just doesn’t follow that pattern. There’s a lot of caring, even for an individual who’s maybe gone the wrong path. There’s a lot of help out there. There are certainly a few people out there who have such an ability for forgiveness; they’re willing to accept people back into the community to help nurture them back to where they should be. And the criminal behavior subsides.

I mean, when you talk about reform for prisons or what have you, it's interesting that a culture is able to do something like that—change anti-social behavior. With fires and tragedies, this area comes together so quickly and overwhelmingly. Someone will see a picture in the paper of someone's house that got gutted. People from neighboring communities will lend all sorts of support, unconditionally. They'll just give of their soul and their personal lives to help uplift this other family that they don't even know. It's amazing. You just don't see that everywhere.

I would believe it's the type of culture you want to encourage to exist. And it's interesting—when you compare that with, let's say, the Christian paradigm, in some cases it's truly Christian. Not that anyone's pushing a theocracy over here—I don't think that's the case. But it's interesting to note that the paradigm that Christ set up originally two thousand years ago can still be used to some degree.

Sure, we have to focus on some things that Christ mentioned—I mean, forgiveness being one—and maybe that's something that's hard to accomplish all the time, but there are always individuals out there who are willing to give someone a break. It just amazes me.

The local senator in town [Senator Charles Cook] provided opportunities for individuals. He grew up in Rock Royal. Came up through the ranks. And people think, "I know politicians." But he just doesn't fit that mold. I mean, the man does not fit that mold. He will give people a chance. He will give people an opportunity. When he goes to Albany, he votes his conscience. In fact, what gets him in trouble politically is voting his conscience.

How could you ever criticize that? Why would you criticize that? Don't you want to encourage that?

NB: We're talking about Charlie Cook.

EG: Yeah.

NB: And he got in trouble with Pataki because he didn't support Pataki when he was a candidate.

EG: No! He didn't support the majority leader a couple times.

NB: Yeah.

EG: And I know why, and if I were in his shoes, I would have had a hard time with that decision. But he didn't have a hard time with that decision. He picked principle over politics. And that amazes you, doesn't it?

NB: Yes.

EG: That an area like this can breed a politician like that—I mean, I think that speaks volumes about this area. To put someone like Charlie Cook in Albany to represent us—I think that says a lot.

NB: And I think that's why we so much wanted to have an Agreement like what we have come out of this.

EG: Yeah.

Track 12

Depopulation

NB: It was a whole way of life that was threatened, potentially.

EG: It was a whole way of life that was threatened. I can't deny the fact that I believe there was a bit of a depopulation agenda behind some of the original proposals that came from the City. Some of the more radical people in the environmental community believe that we should all live in densely populated areas and keep our hands off the rural areas, or wilderness areas. And I feel like I must always have to remind them that a human being is indeed a part of the ecosystem.

Certainly, we may screw up from time to time, but it's not so unlike other animal species that screw up from time to time as well. We fluctuate. We have an ability, and we'll have to control it, eventually, as far as population. Actually, over-population is probably our biggest problem on a world-wide scale. But the argument was that we shouldn't be here—or that's my interpretation of what City people were trying to say. That no one should live in the watershed.

Not only were we in a watershed that supplied wonderful water to the City of New York of nine million people, but we were also in the Catskills, which in New York City's way of thinking was a crime. And I just can't see that. I mean, we're dealing with settlement that occurred in the early part of the history of this nation; we're going back to the people that I mentioned—individuals who invested, who put in their time. And the saddest part about that was, a lot of times it was in a tenant-farm situation rather than their own land. Not only did they bust their hump, so to speak, to clear their property, but they also paid rent to a patent holder—Livingston, Hardenbergh, or Rensselaer—no matter who the family. And you just wonder, "How could you deny their right to prosper here?"

I mean, certainly, we don't want to see anyone rape the land. But you also have to understand that these individuals never were out to rape the land. They wanted it to produce food, they wanted it to produce a subsistence form of living—and I still think you find a lot of that today, unfortunately, that subsistence farming.

I can't tell you that the dairy industry right now is very good to farmers. I'd love to see that change. That's a way of life you want to encourage. It's a type of life that encourages a wonderful work ethic, that encourages self-sustainability, that encourages a cooperative work environment. Why would you want to discourage these types of activities? I don't think we do.

If the original agricultural regulations New York City proposed had been implemented, it would have changed a way of life. This area has relied on agribusiness and agriculture for its livelihood. It used to be what made this area prosper. We're dealing with some tough times for agriculture, overall, but still, it's the type of lifestyle you would want to encourage.

NB: And you know, it also struck me that I've been through that same kind of thing as you, when you were talking about the animal rights demonstrations and so forth at SUNY Binghamton, and the difference between pursuing agendas that are sort of "out there" and that are sort of intellectual and agendas that you can get really het up about.

EG: Yeah.

NB: But it comes right down to what is really true and what really matters. You're a person who is quite aware of all those environmental theories and you were probably very active in some of those movements.

EG: I used to be a liberal. I still believe there's room for compassion. And I have to admit, I keep on looking at a Perry Shelton, who exemplifies that point. A man so compassionate and so forgiving and so level-headed as to get us through this entire process over these years, after the history he's had. It's just amazing. It's just absolutely amazing.

Track 13

Perry Shelton and Alan Rosa

NB: Tell me a little about his history.

EG: I think you'd have to go to him.

NB: I will go to him. I am only asking you so I can ask him some leading questions.

EG: Right. He basically grew up in that area. In the Trout Creek, Cannonsville area. In the Town of Tompkins.

NB: His family lost their farm and stuff?

EG: I don't know. I think you'd have to literally ask him. There's also a book he wrote.

NB: No kidding!

EG: I don't remember the name of it. There was a story in the *Walton Reporter* three weeks ago. I asked for a copy. He said he ran out, but they're going to make more, so I'm going to get one. But he does chronicle the history of the Town of Tompkins, all the original families. I believe his family is fairly new to the area, if you compare it to the Scotch that moved here. [laughs] I mean, how new is a family to the area? How many generations do you have to be here? I believe he's fairly recent—like two generations—versus some families that have been here since the early 1800s.

Perry's definitely somebody you should talk to. I think it'd be interesting to get his upbringing. How he was raised. What made him who he is. Here's a man who doesn't have a four-year college education, but certainly holds the position and esteem of someone who has. And who certainly has the intelligence. I don't think anybody doubts that. The man is just incredible.

And Alan Rosa is another one. An active participant on the Board of Supervisors, chairman of the Watershed Committee for Delaware County, and also one of our more active Executive Committee members for the Coalition. And here's a man whose generational roots actually go all the way back. That's an old family. But here's a man educated at Cornell. Came back to the area. And truly fills the model of the public servant that I'm used to in this area: the individual who already has too much to do on their plate.

The individual who already has too much to do and is very active is, of course, the one they get into the decision-making role, where there's not a lot of praise, where there's no financial compensation, no room for big egos. There are no egos, for the most part, for these people that you see around here. That's not why they're there. I mean, where are you going to go? Are you going to become President of the United States from Delaware County? It may surely happen, but these people aren't there to climb up the ladder. These people are here to do the best they can for the people they serve. That's what they're really there for.

That sounds so idealistic, but it's true. Populism has survived in Delaware County. It's funneled toward different political parties, but if you listen to it, it's true populism. These people truly listen to their constituents. Do they listen to all their constituents? Yes. Do they understand or listen to the ones that may be a bit extreme? Well, certainly they do. Are they sensitive to that? Yes, they are! Do they ignore them? No! They truly take an interest and will represent their constituents.

NB: And also don't you think that there's something about living in a small area, where you pretty much have to interact with everybody or else you're not going to have anybody to interact with, which makes people across political views talk to each

other? You can't segment yourself into your own little community of people who think the same.

EG: No. We just don't have the same hard-ball politics between Democrats and Republicans, for example. You won't see that rhetoric. Everybody, after it's all over, are still gentlemen (or gentlewomen). Everybody's gracious. There are some exceptions to the rule, but for the most part, you just don't get that contention. Because you're right: If you cut yourself off, you're literally cutting yourself off. There's no way to get back in. And you just don't see people at each others' throats, and you won't. A lot of times, political opponents are friends—long, long-term friends—and have been ever since they were children growing up. Got into trouble together. Those are the type of individuals we have in this area, and I think it makes for a wonderful community. Some people can say that it also fosters a very narrow way of thinking, but I don't think so. For the most part, you see a lot of individualism, as well. I think you get a lot of different inputs into the system.

Track 14

Governor Pataki

NB: Talk about Pataki, and his election, and the role that it had in making all this come together.

EG: Well, certainly four and a half years of homework, the litigation, the strategy of the Coalition, was working to stave off the dreaded package. Pataki's election really helped us get there faster. We may have been fighting for years more if Governor Pataki didn't get involved. Interestingly enough, this is a man you saw take advantage of the ABC vote—Anybody But Cuomo.

But he's also an individual who is—despite maybe the perception out there—actually down to earth. I still don't understand why he wanted to get involved in this. This was a losing proposition. If you were truly looking at it from a risk point of view, this is a losing proposition. You either tick off one side or the other and that's how it would seem it would work. But being an upstate individual, I think, had a lot to do with Governor Pataki's interest in this issue.

In other words, it was just another one of those political situations in New York State where the larger population seemed to be governing or dictating for the rest of the state, and I think Pataki saw that clearly and he threw his counsel and his staff into this fray, understanding that there are other issues out there for the state to deal with, but also understanding that this is the type of model or reform effort we need statewide. Not only statewide, but it provides a nice model to be used nationwide, I believe.

The Governor's Office used alternative dispute resolution—or negotiated rule making, as an offshoot of that—to get us to where we are. Certainly, there was some political haggling and some sausage making, but for the most part, the dynamic was an alternative dispute resolution mode. In other words, let's get our interests out on the table, let's see where we overlap, let's see what similarities we have, and lo and behold, we had quite a few similarities.

It didn't come as a surprise. We'd been trying to sell this package for a long time. We said, "Look, this is consistent with what you want to do, New York City." But, unfortunately, I believe that sometimes political idealism got in the way, or political rhetoric got in the way. So even though it drew a lot of criticism, the governor demanded that both sides not talk to the press, and that we meet—not secretly, but certainly behind closed doors—so that we could express our feelings openly without retaliation.

That worked very, very well. It allowed us to really get the issues off our chest, so to speak. It's the type of therapy that families sometimes go through in arguments: "Tell me what you're really feeling. Why are you angry? What made you angry? Is it something that we can address? Is it something we can fix?" And that was the type of dynamic that worked here.

His election, though, was what brought us to where we are today. His effort brought us where we are today. I mean, I just can't emphasize enough that the time and the dedication of his staff was incredible. Certainly he solved a situation involving his larger constituency, the City, but I believe he also helped the upstaters feel as if they now had a role in state government. Certainly they always had that role in the Senate, but it was always hard to see where you could get an in, as far as the Governor or the Assembly. And now we finally have seen that. And it works! I'm hoping that upstate-downstate cooperation becomes the model.

He put his political life out on the line. He put his political reputation out on the line. And I hope he benefits from it. He *should* benefit from it. Again, I'm a registered Democrat, but darn it, he did well. I'm not going to deny him that. I *will not* deny him that.

NB: How about some of the people on the City side? What are some of the personalities that you worked with?

Track 15

Marilyn Gelber and Dan Ruzow

EG: Oh, Marilyn Gelber was incredible. If you want to talk about another individual with incredible compassion, understanding, open mindedness, a willingness to listen or

work, willingness to tear down fences and build bridges—Marilyn Gelber was key. She comes from a background that encourages grassroots participation in planning. Her expertise and her understanding is also what helped in this process.

And our counsel, Dan Ruzow—same frame of mind. I mean, everybody thinks, "Oh, he's a lawyer. He wants to litigate." No, that's not Dan Ruzow. Dan Ruzow is someone who worked hard on the SEQRA process in New York State. He understands what it means to have public input. He understands what it means to not necessarily compromise, but to get those interests on the table so we can actually address them in a realistic way.

Dan—again, compassion, individual involvement. This man didn't need to do the things he did. Marilyn Gelber didn't need to do the things she did. Perry Shelton did not need to do the things he did. They all wore their hearts on their sleeves. They all left themselves vulnerable—personally, emotionally, professionally. And they all benefitted from that effort.

We had to use litigation. Again, it was part of our strategy. And it drew New York City's attention. But Marilyn Gelber, from the time she was appointed, started making visits to the watershed, wanted to understand why we were upset, and appreciated why we were upset, understood the history that was involved, understood where her predecessor may have gone wrong.

And she didn't always get praise. The peacemakers never do. Not until it's all over do they ever get the praise they deserve. It's interesting that the press sometimes compared this issue to the Middle East peace process. You've got to take your hat off to those people for reconciling two so seemingly different points of view. They're incredible. Absolutely incredible.

NB: Great.

EG: Does that help?

NB: Yup. It's wonderful.

KEN MARKERT

Executive Director of the Coalition of Watershed Towns
(1991-1995)

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KEN MARKERT	Planning Director, Delaware County (1987–1995) Executive Director, Coalition of Watershed Towns (1991–1995)
Interviewed by:	Virginia Scheer and Nancy Burnett
Location:	Mr. Markert's home, Delhi, New York
Date:	January 18, 1996
Total Time:	2 hours

Track 1

Prelude to the Coalition of Watershed Towns

VS: I'd just like you to talk about your recollections, because they are the history of the Coalition. And if we need to, we can focus more narrowly than that: on the beginning of the Coalition and what got it started, who was doing what, what got you involved, what got other people involved, who were the insiders, who were the outsiders, how all of that worked. Anyplace you'd like to start.

KM: Gosh. Well, where do we start?

VS: Perhaps you could think about the first time you heard the Coalition proposed.

KM: Okay, I started telling you that on the phone, didn't I? The first time had to be in January of 1991, thereabouts. See, at the time, Delaware County had this legal firm, Whiteman, Osterman & Hanna, which represents the Coalition now.

Delaware County had a big problem with the landfill. And in fact the county sued DEC [Department of Environmental Conservation] to get a decision reversed that would allow the county to expand the landfill at Walton. The lawyer we were working with, Kevin Young, was a pretty sharp guy, and his boss, whom we'd only met once, was Dan Ruzow.

The watershed issue had surfaced officially in September of 1990; that's when the discussion draft of regulations came out. And ever since that time, the local concern was building and building and building. Kevin Young was interested in the issue because the discussion draft included some regulations on landfills. It had some outrageous regulations on landfills in there. The regulations were a potential complicating factor in our goal of expanding the county landfill. So Kevin Young was brought into it with that concern.

But then he and his colleagues up in Albany thought that the best way to tackle the problem overall was to have some type of coalition, to have a united group of as many people and organizations and towns in the region as possible band together and go up against New York City. So they had put their finger on that. They were the first ones I had heard it from, anyway.

VS: This is Dan and Kevin?

KM: Dan and Kevin.

VS: I think I missed exactly who they worked for—are they county?

KM: They were consulting attorneys to the county.

VS: They're from the legal firm.

KM: Yeah. Kevin and Dan both suggested that they ought to come to the county Board of Supervisors meeting and make this pitch. And obviously it was partly a business proposition. They saw an opportunity, business-wise; they were saying as well that this was the best thing we could do for ourselves. So they came and made this pitch that we needed a coalition, a group to go up against New York City, and they spoke about organizing it with other towns and counties outside of Delaware County. I think that happened in February or early March because all the towns in the watershed got together I think it was like the third week of March.

I think that it was the 21st of March or thereabouts that all the towns met in Margaretville and decided to form the Coalition. And there again the lawyers made their pitch that this was the way to go, that we had to get together like that. I guess I remember specifically that County Board meeting. I don't remember who said it was okay to have them come, but it was probably Howard Nichols, who was chairman of the Board at that time. And so they came, and a couple of supervisors were pretty negative about it. Jerry Macken was one; he called them "ambulance chasers." And Bob Homovich was pretty negative about it, too. He didn't like the idea of technical people having any kind of prominent role in such a thing.

The way a Board of Supervisors meeting usually happens is that the majority will just sit there and listen, unless they already have their minds made up about something or there are already some factions that have been created. So if you just listened to what was said, you might get the sense it was not a very favorable reception. The majority were quiet, but when it got down to it, they said, "Go ahead and let's do this. Let's at least find out what the other towns are interested in."

Track 2

Formation of the Coalition of Watershed Towns

KM: I remember Howard Nichols contacting me—we spoke, anyway—and I said, "Do you think I should do this; do you think I should call the other towns?" The board was favorable on the idea, but they never really said who should do what. He said, "Yeah, I guess we should do it." So I called up all the town supervisors who weren't in Delaware County and set up a meeting date, and that was that meeting in Margaretville in the school cafeteria.

And Perry Shelton was very favorable from the beginning towards putting some money towards it, and he was the County Budget Director. So the fact that he was interested and that he wanted to commit money towards it was important. And when they actually did meet in Margaretville—it was a Saturday morning—all these people came. The lawyers made a pitch about why we ought to do this, and I got up and said some things about why we ought to do it, too; and I don't remember who else spoke, actually. But then things got rolling. And this was a very enthusiastic crowd. I didn't know what to expect, how favorable they would be to this type of idea and so forth, but they were, like, "Where do we sign?"

And I remember that at one point after everybody decided we needed to do what the lawyers suggested, which was get involved in this Environmental Impact Statement process, that was beginning. And in fact the first milestone in it was that people had to comment on the form and the proposed content of the Environmental Impact Statement by April 12. That date seemed to stick in my mind. And so if we were going to get together and do something, that was the first step.

VS: That's a matter of weeks.

KM: Yeah.

VS: To prepare to give that response.

KM: Right. Now, it wasn't a response to the Environmental Impact Statement. It was a response to the proposed Scope of Work for the impact statement. So it wasn't an exhaustive thing to do, but there was some work involved. And it would have been the first thing where we could have gone officially on notice to say, "We don't like what you're doing. We want you to look at some other things." So they all said, "Yeah. Let's do that."

And they all agreed we ought to set up a Coalition. And I had worked with the lawyers ahead of time and thought up what type of structure we ought to have in terms of a board. And I had the idea that we ought to have—assuming all the counties got in—

three from Delaware County, two from Greene, two from Ulster, one from Schoharie, and one from Sullivan.

When we got to the meeting, we had copies of a proposed Agreement that we circulated to everybody; it had that structure in there, plus organizational stuff like paying dues, and membership privileges. And one of the key things was that Tony Bucca, who is the Greene County representative, sat in the front and made himself felt right away.

There came a point where everybody was agreeing with everything. Everybody was ready to go, and that much success or unanimity kind of caught me by surprise. I didn't really know what to do next, and was, like, "Well, it's time for the meeting to end." And we got everybody agreeing that we ought to form a coalition, we ought to get involved, we ought to pay some money to form this organization, we ought to get involved in this Environmental Impact Statement. Everything was, "Yes, yes, yes," all the way through; and then—what more can we do?

Track 3

Formation of the Executive Committee

KM: And then Tony's, like, "Wait, wait, wait. Before we quit, let's get the counties together and pick their people today." That was a good idea, because if we hadn't done that, who knows how much more time we would have lost getting organized. So they broke up into groups by county, and within a few minutes—twenty minutes or something—they came back with their slate.

There were enough people. Seventeen of the nineteen towns in Delaware County are located in the watershed, so seventeen people could vote for their representatives. They picked three. I don't think they had all seventeen towns represented, but they had enough—fifteen or something—to make it a valid vote.

So they picked representatives right then and there. And it was critical that Tony spoke up then. He wound up being one of the two from Greene County; Ron Wagner was the other one. Ron had already worked on forming a Mountaintop Watershed Coalition for Greene County, so this kind of got folded into the Coalition of Watershed Towns. Jim Gorman was the single representative from Sullivan County—there's only one town in the watershed in Sullivan County, so all he had to do was agree to go along and pick himself, basically. Schoharie County had three people and they picked Jim Brown from Gilboa, who was a new supervisor. He has stayed with it since the beginning. Now he's chairman of the Schoharie board, and he's still with the Coalition. And in Ulster County, they had Clayton Brooks (and he was a new supervisor, too) and Russell Roufs, who was on the county legislature. And then in Delaware County, they picked Velma Clark (who was the Delhi supervisor) and Perry

Shelton and Bob Homovich. I had no idea who they'd wind up picking—I didn't even know they'd pick that day. It was good we had the bunch ready to roll. And then we met—I think we met one or two times as that group before April 12 to put together comments and submit them to New York City Department of Environmental Protection.

VS: This is Tony, Ron, Jim, Jim, Clayton, Russell, Velma, Perry, and Bob—that's the Coalition.

KM: Yeah. That was the Executive Committee. And eventually—I don't know how quickly it happened, whether it was right then and there, or when—but soon, there were some alternative members who were chosen who were stand-ins, and there were nine of them, too, representing each county in the same proportion as the Executive Committee. And some of them turned out to be very diligent members. They came to all the meetings and so forth. One was Bob Adsit from Ulster; he was a town councilman at that time, and he came to all the meetings, even though he was an alternate. And Alan Rosa was another.

Track 4

Where to Meet?

KM: We figured we needed to meet in a somewhat central geographical location in the watershed. Like Delhi, for instance, is a pretty far haul for people from Denning, which is where Clayton is from, or Neversink, or even Greene County. So Margaretville wound up being the spot; we'd meet in the Town Hall on Main Street, actually. We held the first meetings there, so Alan, being the keeper of the key, wound up coming to all the meetings in the beginning, even though he was just an alternate. Eventually he wound up being a full member on the Board. But even though he wasn't on the Executive Committee from the beginning, he was there from the beginning.

VS: That's important to know.

KM: Yeah. Ah, let's see; who else? There was Charlie Buck, who was from Jefferson. He came a lot and he was the supervisor. His son is the supervisor now.

VS: He came as an interested party?

KM: As an alternate for Schoharie County.

VS: Were there any other alternates you can think of who might have been important in the process?

KM: Um, I don't think so; no one jumps to mind. But, anyway, that was the kind of core group.

VS: It must have been difficult overcoming the problems of time and distance, bad roads, etc.

KM: Yeah, most of them traveled around an hour to get to Margaretville. That just gives you an idea of how big the watershed is, too. Tony was coming from Tannersville, Clayton was coming from Denning, Jim Brown was coming from Gilboa, and Perry was coming from Trout Creek, which was one of the farther trips.

VS: I found that out when I drove over there last month to visit with him.

KM: Yeah, it's eleven miles from Walton, and then Walton's like about a half hour from here, and then thirty-five minutes on a good day to Margaretville, so all told that was a good trip for him. He would drive in and we would always meet at the County Office Building, so he and Velma Clark and I would always go over. Velma in particular always enjoyed that time, because they would always tell stories about people who are ancient history now, or tell stories about people we all had mutual opinions about. So we always had a lot of fun on that. And then I'd try to prepare them a little bit before the meeting, in terms like, "Well, this is going to be on the agenda, and someone is going to want you to do this and that." I'd kind of talk that way going over.

VS: The drive over was a preparatory meeting.

KM: Yeah.

VS: Very interesting. I wish I could have heard those stories.

KM: Yeah, gee. And then a lot of it was just visiting type stuff, too. But, yeah. What else?

VS: Well, I noticed some things you said earlier that I wanted to ask about, that really intrigued me.

KM: I just kind of rambled.

VS: You did just the right thing. That's just what we want to know.

KM: Oh, there is one other thing I should tell you about the name, the Coalition of Watershed Town.

VS: Um-hum.

Track 5

Choosing a Name

KM: Well, as for the name "the Coalition"—of course I was telling you about this on the phone, too. This was in the first month of 1991, and that was the same month that the Coalition in the Persian Gulf invaded Iraq or was preparing to invade Iraq—I don't remember which, exactly, but the word "Coalition" had this bigger meaning at that time. That Coalition meant that you got all these forces together that usually didn't work together and went and stomped the bad guys. That was very synonymous with what we were talking about.

And so we talked about forming a coalition, and that brought that word to mind. Because when you turned on the news at night, they talked about the Coalition this and the Coalition that—they're talking about in the Persian Gulf. There were some other parallels to the Middle East, and I remember Russell Roufs in particular saying we all ought to declare ourselves "water sheiks," and Tony Bucca wanted to call it OWEC—the Organization of Water Exporting Communities.

But that didn't take. They were saying we ought to dress up in long Arab garb and call ourselves OWEC. I always said to that, "You know, the only difference between us and OPEC is they have their hands on the knob and we don't." So for whatever reason, that never became the name; but it was a kind of subtitle on the Coalition letterhead: The Coalition of Watershed Towns: An Organization of Water Exporting Communities.

That name never stuck, but the name "Coalition of Watershed Towns" did stick. I came up with that one, working with the lawyers: "What do we call this thing?" And I was thinking, "Catskill Coalition of Watershed Communities." And they didn't like the word "Catskill" in there because they were kind of hoping that we would get Putnam County and maybe even Westchester in on it. I never thought that would happen, but I kind of deferred on that. Okay, we'll leave the word "Catskill" off and call it Coalition of Watershed Towns. And in fact the word "towns" turned out to be sort of a misnomer because counties became members and villages became members. But it had a good ring to it, anyway. The acronym also was COWT, so some people referred to it as "cow towns."

VS: I grew up in a cow town, so that has a certain resonance for me.

KM: So that was the name; the name had kind of a funny story behind it, so I thought I'd tell you that.

VS: Names are really important. And all the parallels and references that you've just recounted are important. Even if you didn't call yourselves water sheiks, I remember that parallel. I didn't when you said Coalition in the Gulf, or even OWEC. That went right past me.

KM: Uh-huh, okay.

VS: But I remember someone saying, "Water sheiks—we're like those people over there." I should say at this moment—since I've interrupted you, anyway—that as a citizen, every time I heard one of these positions on the part of the Coalition or a formulation of a way to talk about what was going on, it made me feel really good that you all were doing this. I hadn't been in the area that long—well, sixteen years at that time.

KM: Oh, jeez, a relative newcomer.

VS: Absolutely. But my sense was that in general, a thing like this would impose itself on the region and there wasn't anything to do about it but complain.

KM: Yeah.

VS: And here was some step way beyond complaining. And it felt good.

Track 6

Reaction to the Draft Regulations

KM: Actually, you saying that kind of reminds me of another thing. Those first drafts of the regulations came out in September 1990, and the City made a couple of "dog and pony shows" up and around the watershed. I actually didn't go to any of those. But there was one up at the college in Delhi, and I guess the people who did go to it—particularly some of the State people I got to know later—said that it was almost to the point of people throwing chairs, but not quite. The people from the City and state who were there were scared. And it was a volatile atmosphere.

People were mad; and I wasn't there for that, so I didn't see that firsthand. I think those first meetings were probably the most intense. A lot of people were really upset about it, but nothing was being done—all winter long, nothing was being done. I think a lot of people were looking at the document and trying to understand it. And my role in the Planning Department—one of the things I was doing—was interpreting the document and trying to make people understand what it meant.

And we made maps, like a map of the Village of Delhi, and showed all the properties that would be unusable because of the regulations. It was a lot; I mean, it was this entire side of the entire Main Street commercial block, for instance. You couldn't ever do anything there; you couldn't add on to a building, or put in a parking lot or anything. So I tried to do that and get people thinking about the implications, but no one had come up with a strategy of how to address it. And one of the planners in my office was always kind of nagging me: "Well, nobody's doing anything. Nobody's doing anything."

And I said, "Yeah, I guess that's true." It wasn't until the lawyers said, "This is what you need to do," and they found a receptive ear with me, and then me and them with the supervisors who dealt with Perry and Howard, that it started to roll into something. But by that spring I think there were a lot of people who felt they knew enough to know that this was real dangerous, and they could see that nothing really had happened.

VS: Dangerous as in the impact it's going to have on the region?

Track 7

Ad Hoc Task Force on Agriculture

KM: Yeah. And at the same time, there was that farm thing that got going, too. That started almost immediately after — it started in November of 1990. And that kind of took the farmers out of the picture a little bit. Bill Murphy in Stamford had started to organize—did organize—a farmer's group against the watershed regulations, called the Farmer's Preservation Alliance.

I don't know if they actually hired them, or what exactly happened, but they got hooked up with a law firm in New York City, and as I remember, the attorney's name was Lou Stone, but I don't remember the name of the firm. That really sent shivers up the spine of New York City, because whoever this law firm was, it had a big reputation there. I had the guy's card, and it said something like, "office in Paris," and stuff like this. And so they had a big-deal law firm with a big reputation.

So the City—for that and other reasons—immediately fell into this Ad Hoc Task Force on Agriculture, which was to come up with a better way of dealing with the agricultural issues. That kind of took the farmers out of the picture. And by spring, they were feeling, "Hey, we're going to get a good package out of this." But then there were all the other things, and one of my little catch phrases was: "The regulations were one hundred and eight pages, and the agriculture part was two pages. We've got to deal with the other hundred and six." And that kind of put it into perspective: that there was a lot left to deal with.

VS: So by the time the Coalition of Watershed Towns was forming, the agriculture agreement was pretty much in the works.

KM: Yeah, it was in the works. It was coming together.

VS: So the farmers were not part of the Coalition to begin with.

KM: Yeah, they peeled off and formed their own group before there was a Coalition. In fact, Bill Murphy was upset with the Coalition people because he feared that creating

the Coalition would dry up any funding that he was hoping to raise for his thing. But at the same time, that group got what it needed through a non-legal process. So they didn't really need the attorneys after all. But I know there was a legal bill that Bill got stuck with for some work this group had done before the Coalition had formed, and I guess Bill wasn't able to raise the money after all to pay them off. Bill suggested the Coalition pay it, but Perry didn't want to pay it.

Track 8

Financing the Coalition

KM: Perry kind of felt that that was a critical mistake you could make in this type of thing: spending money before you had it. So that became another one of the Coalition's slogans: "We're not going to spend any money until we have it." That actually was a little bit oversimplified, because we've spent money that we anticipated getting, but we knew we were getting it. It was just a cash flow thing.

VS: And that worked with—I can't say the name of the law firm.

KM: In fact, they totally paid their way, because in this Agreement now, New York City pays all the legal bills, which I remember we were asking for from the beginning. And every time we got a little further into it, we'd hear them say, "Well, what do you guys want?" And we'd answer, "Well, one thing is we want you to pay our legal bills." And they'd say, "Get lost. There's no way we're ever going to do that."

And now it's in the Agreement: $1.3 million, or something like that. Plus, they're paying the county for all the time I spent on it. In other words, I was diverted from my county planning role, so the City's going to pay the county for that. So that worked out pretty good in that sense—they paid for themselves, one hundred percent plus.

VS: What happened to supervisors who spent a lot of time on this? Did they do it on their own time—or as supervisor time?

KM: What's the difference?

VS: True.

KM: They get paid two thousand dollars a year, or something. I guess the average one gets around five or six thousand—four, five, six thousand dollars from a town—plus two or three from the County. Plus Perry got a little extra: maybe a thousand or two extra for being budget director. But all told, they made something like fourteen cents an hour. Whenever they took on an extra duty, it was out of their personal time. They couldn't decide, "Well, I'm not going to do the books for the highway fund this month

because I'm working for the Coalition." They just had to take it out of the rest—out of their personal life, I guess.

VS: So it added on to their jobs, in effect. They put in a lot of time on this project.

KM: Yeah, I think the ones who stayed with it from the beginning put in an awful lot, like Perry did, and Alan, and Clayton Brooks, and Jim Brown. Tony Bucca especially put in a lot of time. What happened to them? I don't know. I guess it probably changed their lives. Perry, you know, stopped being supervisor partway through it because it was just too much for him. His wife was not well and he had a lot of responsibilities with helping her, and then it was good that he did. I think he really was overburdened.

VS: But he could have quit the Coalition.

KM: But he could have quit the Coalition.

VS: And he could have stayed supervisor and taken care of his wife. But he chose the Coalition over his job as supervisor.

Track 9

Eligibility Guidelines for the Executive Committee

KM: Yeah, that's true. In fact, to be a member of the Executive Committee, you have to be an elected official. And if he'd just quit, he couldn't have been on the Coalition Board, either. So he ran for Town Board and got elected to that; I don't think he's on the Town Board because he's just dying to get involved in town politics—you know, decide which highway's going to get paved, or whatever. But I think it's pretty much strictly because he wants to keep eligible to be on the Coalition Board.

No, what actually happened was, it worked out that they were all elected officials. Probably because we invited towns and villages and counties to the thing. Maybe it was understood that that's the way it was, but it was never stated anywhere.

And then Russell Roufs lost his election for county legislature in Ulster County; he came to the next Coalition saying, "Well, I'm going to stay with you guys. I'll keep working on this," even though he lost the election. He wasn't one of the best members—he didn't show up all the time. And therefore he wasn't that well informed. To have him announce he was going to stick with us meant, I think, that there was a feeling—at least on my part—he was kind of a liability now. Because for the people who did get elected, we depended on their support financially and politically and everything. And to have him on there in a prominent spot might have been a problem. So I guess we decided that it had been understood that the person had to be an elected official. Now we made it official, that you had to be an elected official, and so

Russell couldn't stay on. And that carried through all the way, and I guess nobody else ever was on the Board who lost an election.

VS: That's a sign of support for the Coalition, too.

KM: Yeah. When Russell lost, IT WAS only a few months into the Coalition thing, so I don't think that was helping him yet. If it had been a year later, maybe it would have. Actually, Bill Sukenburgh lost just this fall; he was an Executive Committee member.

VS: Does that mean, though, that the person who won would sort of inherit his place on the Coalition?

KM: No, because it's not by town—it's that the person is elected. For instance, in Delaware County, the seventeen that are in the watershed pick three from among them to go. So when the supervisor's term runs out, the Coalition then holds its elections over again. The Coalition elects its people every year. So there are some lame ducks, from November to January, but then each January or February, they re-elect.

Track 10

Public Support: Part 1

VS: Very interesting, because if towns really disagreed with what the Coalition was doing, they could express their displeasure by voting their supervisor out.

KM: Yeah.

VS: No one seems to have done that, really.

KM: Yeah, they could vote their supervisor out, as supervisor. Or—if their supervisor wasn't the problem—their supervisor could vote in that election of seventeen; he could get some other people in there. And there were pressures that way at different times; there were some closer elections—not general elections, but the Coalition elections—that were contested races. For instance, Alan Rosa ran and beat Bob Homovich for a seat on the Coalition board, and shortly thereafter Bob Homovich quit the Coalition.

There were enough towns—at least the supervisors—that were unhappy with what Bob Homovich was doing on the Coalition that Alan ran against him. I think Alan was the one who was most unhappy, so he ran against him and beat him, knocked him off. And that's the only one who ever got knocked off, too. Last year in Ulster County, there was a contested race, but the incumbent stayed on.

VS: What I'm hearing, then, is a real sense of consensus.

KM: Yeah, on the Board, uh-huh. And in general I suspect so, too.

VS: And a second form of representation for citizens through an organization that was not governmental, even though it was made up of elected officials.

KM: Yeah, it had no governmental responsibilities. It didn't collect taxes, it didn't provide any services—except for dealing with New York City.

VS: Some things I noticed actually back at the beginning—sort of two sides of the same thing—and one side is Homovich's feelings about this from the beginning. You said he had some negative feelings about technical people.

KM: The attorneys, yeah.

VS: About them taking prominent roles; and on the other hand, you said that the majority were quiet in the meeting, and yet when you came to meet in Margaretville at the cafeteria, you met an enthusiastic crowd that just said, "Yes."

KM: Yeah, yeah.

VS: I'm really interested in that process. What had gone on in people's minds or in their conversations with each other before that meeting? How do you account for that enthusiasm?

KM: Hmm. I don't think there was a big change of heart or anything from the time the lawyers came till the meeting in Margaretville. I don't think it was that. I think the comments that were negative about what the lawyers had to say were flippant comments and sort of undisciplined comments, but not very deep.

And so, at the same time, people were thinking, "Who's got a better idea? Time's a wasting. April 12 is the date. You've got a better idea? Time to speak up." Nobody had any. So that was part of it. People realized time was going by. Plus, I think there were a lot of people who had resented New York City from way back. Here was a chance to lash out at them; whether it would be successful or not, nobody knew, but we had to give it a try.

Track 11

Anti–New York City Feeling: Part 1

VS: What form did that resentment from way back take?

KM: I guess what I was aware of was just eagerness to fight them. That's how it manifested itself to me. I don't know when it was, but in one of the elections—probably it was '92—there were a number of people running in Greene County, Ulster County—with one of their simple platform things, such as "Supports the Watershed Coalition," or "Second Cousin to Somebody on the Watershed Coalition," or some kind of tie to the Watershed Coalition. We'd never heard of this person, but they were tying themselves in somehow. I think a lot of people rallied behind the idea, the most superficial level of what the Coalition stood for, because it just meant opposition to what New York City was trying to do. "I don't know what New York City is trying to do, but if they're trying to do it, then we're against it."

VS: I'm wondering what experiences—if you heard them say—made them be against the City?

KM: Some of them were people who had lived in New York City at one time in their lives, and for whatever reason, they despised the City now—the City government, at least. They despised it. Probably because of their own experience down there.

Although I never heard too many stories about that, it seemed like some of the most virulent anti–New York City people were people who were from there. And then of course there were people who had some kind of direct problem stemming from New York City being up here—you know, people like Clayton Brooks was a good one. He and his family were raised in Rondout Valley, and his family homestead was flooded out to build the Rondout Reservoir.

Then his people relocated down in the Hudson Valley somewhere, and he wound up being—as a young man with a wife and small kids—in the target zone for Stewart Air Base. And they kicked him out of there. Then I guess he left that Orange County area, and came up to Denning, near where his family had always been. And then, lo and behold, here's New York City coming after the land through regulations and purchase, eminent domain and everything. Once again. It's kind of like following this guy everywhere. And so he had a particular experience, not necessarily with New York City. But his family had one when he was real small, and then the State at Stewart, and then New York City again.

Perry Shelton's town of Tompkins had the most land taken from it for the Cannonsville Reservoir. The biggest village in the town was flooded out, and he was on the Town Board for that entire process. He was supervisor for most of that; I don't know if it was most of that, but it was for a good part of that time, anyway. At least the last four or five years of the dam project, he was supervisor and he was on the Town Board before that, so he saw it from a town standpoint. His parents had property that was taken. He wrote a book on the history of the town of Tompkins and he recounts a lot of the great things in the town—like a really unique stone barn that the City needlessly destroyed to build the reservoir. It was above the water line of the reservoir.

VS: That's in Rock Royal?

KM: Yeah, I think so. And you know, things like that. And of course he's had the long-standing tax assessment battle with the City, both from the county-wide perspective as budget director and from the town perspective as town supervisor. And his town was actually being sued by New York City at the time. Of course, the roads were in abysmal shape around the reservoirs, and he was well aware of that because the school buses that came up from Walton towards Trout Creek had to travel that road.

VS: And those are roads the City was supposed to maintain as part of the dam project.

KM: So, he was one who had a lot of grievances.

VS: Did you ever hear anybody call it "the damn project"?

KM: I've heard that a number of times.

I'm trying to think of some of the others. Jim Gorman was a New York City cop. He was from Liberty, and as a young man he went to New York City and became a policeman there and retired from there; and he moved back up here and eventually became the chairman of the Board of Supervisors in Sullivan County and was kind of the elder statesman of politics in Sullivan County. But his town is where the Neversink Reservoir was. It had been flooded. I don't know if his family was affected by that or not. And then he had a tax assessment problem, too. They had to settle a suit a couple of years before.

Jim Brown in Gilboa. Schoharie Reservoir (or dam) is in the Town of Gilboa. And they had just concluded a lawsuit with New York City, unfavorable to them. And they had bad roads around their reservoir. And same with Neversink and Jim Gorman—they had bad roads there, too. So there were some particularly motivated guys. One other, Bob Homovich, had a dam in his town. I don't think the bad roads affected them as much over there, but they had them and they had the tax assessment problem. So, disproportionately represented on the Coalition Board were towns that had dams or a large amount of City land like Perry's town. And so the tax assessment issue was something that definitely was a driving factor motivating some of these people to want to take some licks on New York City. And hopefully get the tax assessment issue solved, too, along with the regulation thing.

VS: Because the regulations included buying land—that New York City would buy land around the reservoirs.

KM: We didn't know that at the time. When the Coalition got formed, that wasn't on the table. Later, it was. But it was just the idea that if they are going to try to get those regulations through, then they've got to come clean with the other things they're

supposed to be doing. They're supposed to be paying a fair load of taxes. They're supposed to be maintaining the roads.
I remember Perry saying somewhere—I think I saw it in print somewhere—that they were going to tie the City up in court "until hell froze over," unless they addressed some of these problems. And that's exactly the kind of thing the City didn't want to hear, and the State didn't want to hear. I think they were always somewhat skeptical about our ability to do it until we actually showed them we could do it.

Track 12

Anti–New York City Feeling: Part 2

VS: So you were saying that Perry Shelton had said they would tie the City up until hell froze over, with lawsuits. And that DEP really needed to be shown that the Coalition could do that, before they would pay attention.

KM: I think they were paying some attention, but I think that particular scenario scared them. I don't think they believed necessarily that we could do it, but eventually we showed them we could. So that's how come we got our deal now. That kind of talk that came out so early was because there were so many grievances from way back.

The Greene County people, on the other hand, seemed much more unaware of the long-standing problems. They don't have any reservoirs, really. They have part of the Schoharie Reservoir, in Prattsville, but not much. And not much in the way of any roads. Not much in the way of any tax issues. Hardly any.

The majority of their county is way up above the reservoirs, and they just basically haven't had any dealings with New York City before. So those people seemed just a little bit more behind in terms of the vigor they had for going after New York City from the other counties. They caught on quick, but they started slow.

VS: And it makes sense. If you've had a major experience in which large numbers of your population and amounts of land have been totally dislocated for a reservoir—with certain promises made to ameliorate that, and then the promises aren't kept — it makes sense that people would feel this way. It doesn't seem unreasonable, but apparently DEP didn't take that into consideration when they thought of the new regulations.

KM: Well, they're so far removed—particularly the people who were doing this who were not people who are up here. They were people from Queens—probably a good number of them had never been up here. I remember at one public hearing— I don't remember when it was, but anyway—there were a lot of people, hundreds of people, at the hearing, and there were some really strong feelings about New York City expressed.

One of the senior DEP guys—it was Dick Gaynor—told people he remembers being told about the feeling upstate about what DEP was trying to do, and now he tells people about the feeling upstate and says, "But you really don't get it until you're here and you feel it." It was something pretty tangible to those guys. The ones who were working on these regulations hadn't been exposed to that. Eventually, a lot of them were. But in the beginning, they weren't.

VS: So they had one view of the area and of the people in the area, and once they were exposed to the people of the area did they change their view, or how would you characterize that view they had?

KM: Well, we changed them, changed them out. In other words, a lot of the people we were dealing with in the beginning are now collating copies and pulling staples in the basement of DEP. Because they couldn't get anywhere—they had failed. Part of it, of course, was Dinkins losing, Appleton getting tossed out, a new regime coming in. But those sorts of second- and third-level people who were interacting with the people in the watershed, they got shifted out, too. I remember in August a year and a half ago, dealing with a group of DEP lawyers and technical people negotiating on the regulations. It was a whole new crew from what we had been dealing with a year or two before—they had changed them out.

VS: Because they hadn't been able to make progress, so they brought in new DEP people to talk.

KM: In fact, a lot of them were people who weren't in DEP before. In fact, Mark Hoffer was one. He's their lead attorney now; he was involved in developing the Watershed Agreement. Some of the other ones who were in the lead at that time are gone. And they may be gone for reasons that have nothing to do with the watershed, I don't know. All's I know is they're gone. I think there are some—there are others, I'm pretty sure—whose inability to engender goodwill in the watershed kind of came back on them.

Track 13

Al Appleton: New York City Arrogance

VS: What did they do to engender ill will?

KM: [laughs]

VS: Besides write the regulations.

KM: Well, that was a big part of it. It was the way they did that whole thing. They alienated everybody—even people who, I think, with a couple of different tactics, would have

been on their side. People who would have been more on the environmental end of the spectrum—they alienated those people.

VS: How?

KM: For one thing by coming out with this—it looks like done and finished product: regulations with absolutely no consultation with anybody upstate. They didn't try to find out what the problems were. They didn't even talk to their own engineers up here. This was Appleton's style. He was kind of taking over the DEP with an environmental agenda, as opposed to the bureaucrat-functionary types who had been his predecessors. And so he had an ideological perspective to bring to it, and they weren't going to deal with the entrenched types who were too complacent on environmental issues. They were all going around them.

VS: Within their own department. What was his ideology?

KM: Well, it was urban environmentalism, which, when misapplied to the Catskills, created some backlash.

VS: What were some of the attitudes in that urban environmentalism?

KM: Oh, well, some of the attitudes . . . For one thing, it was really bizarre, the idea that we were responsible for the City's financial problems, and that therefore—we being part of upstate and upstate was siphoning all this money from New York City—if they could stick it to us on this issue, it's just one step toward getting even overall. And they expressed that, and it really burned people. Oh, what other things . . .

Just the total arrogance about trying to deal with the communities up here. That people like Perry and the Coalition had reached out—not in the most friendly way, but they had reached out—and would say, "We're willing to talk about this," and they would do things that would undercut those people who were at least trying to reach out for a solution.

Like one of the big issues was the roads. And right from the very beginning, New York City recognized that they had to do something about the roads. So almost coincidental with the regulations coming out, they announced a plan for upgrading the roads. But they could never deliver on it.

And they had fixed a small section of road over in Sullivan County and I think that was kind of personal between Dick Coombe and Appleton—that Appleton was scratching Dick Combe's back. But in the rest of the watershed, nothing happened, nothing moved, even though there had been these promises.

And so many times Perry thought they had the deal to do the roads, and there was always something new, some new complication from some new office in the City that

had some new perspective on how this thing couldn't go ahead. And it was always undercutting Perry. He would be saying, "Well, we're about to reach this agreement on the roads," and it wouldn't happen. And then he'd say, "Well, we've got new reassurances," and then it wouldn't happen. And this kept going on and on and on. So they were inept that way—I mean, they could have made these things happen. And then the new Commissioner did. And it's just that they didn't pay enough attention to the problems they had caused to the people in the watershed—what our problems were that they had caused. They talked a good line, but they never followed through with these things.

VS: You said arrogance. Did you sense a disapproval of the people upstate by the DEP?

KM: Well, there're a lot of different people in DEP, and some were very much able to understand where we were coming from—maybe not necessarily agree with it, but they understood where we were coming from. But Appleton, I think, was very disdainful and belittling of the people up here. And a lot of it was behind our backs.

I remember I got tapes from the Museum of Natural History—they had an event on the watershed for something: the 150th anniversary of the first time they kicked somebody off their land, or something. It was in New York City, and Appleton made some keynote speech, and he was belittling the people upstate in this forum where he figured we wouldn't hear him. It was just that kind of thing. Of course, a lot of people were there from the Catskills, and somebody gave me tapes of it. I mean, he wasn't getting away with anything. But it was that attitude.

VS: Did that attitude go down from the top?

KM: I wouldn't say he cultivated it in the lower levels, but he was certainly permissive of it in the lower levels. There were some particular people causing problems that we complained about. He made note of it, but nothing ever happened. Ever since Commissioner Gelber came in, there haven't been any of these kinds of local flare-ups where the City has been creating these kinds of problems.

In particular, they had sent out these kinds of—I don't know what they call them, but they were teams of people from DEP who were going to insert themselves in the planning board at the local level, and kind of lobby or cajole the towns into doing things their way. And some of these people came in, under Appleton, very offensive and dictatorial sounding, and just really created a lot of problems right off the bat. But he let it go on.

Once Gelber came along, I never heard from any of those people anymore. I think she was enough of a politician to know what kinds of things you should be doing to try to make peace, while Appleton was more of an ideologue; he didn't care what we thought. He wasn't interested in compromise.

One of their big things was, when we had talked about getting mediators involved in the process, they were against having mediators because the word "mediation" would mean compromise—if you are going through mediation, then that meant compromise was inevitable. And they weren't going to compromise. That's why it took five years to get this. We had to wade through the Appleton period and outlast him before things could start to happen.

Track 14

Marilyn Gelber: Agreement

VS: So there was a major change with the change of administration.

KM: Oh, yeah. I guess at the time, I didn't view Appleton as darkly as I do now, but I've had time to look back at it. The new people were more constructive and more respectful of the people up here.

I don't think anybody was too fond of Appleton at the time, but he was the only one we had. After a while it kind of wore thin. But Jim Brown had a good little saying, which I think was true. He said, "If Dinkins hadn't been defeated and Appleton tossed out, we would have had to live with Whole Community Planning"—something we were working on at the time, which was an imperfect solution to the watershed situation. But it was something; it was the best we could get from the City under Appleton. But then, of course, he was defeated; Appleton and Dinkins were tossed out. And Giuliani came in and brought Gelber in.

And Gelber made a proposal: $61.4 million is what she would offer to set things straight. Jim Brown said that if Cuomo hadn't been thrown out, and Pataki hadn't come in with new DEC [Department of Environmental Conservation] and new DOH [Department of Health] commissioners, then we would have had to take that deal—which was better than Whole Community Planning, but it wasn't what we were looking for.

So now, with the active support of the state, we've got this deal that's worth at least ten times that. So the important thing—the moral of the story—was that we had to outlast some of these things. And stay in the game. I think in the beginning, a lot of people were impatient, thinking that big things would happen sooner, and in some respects they had reason to believe it, because the farm thing got settled out pretty quickly, and pretty satisfactorily. By September 1991, there was a written document laying out what was agreed upon. So it was a year. Actually, I think it came out in December of '91, but the contents of it were agreed to in a meeting in September 1991. But this other thing took all this extra time.

Track 15

Agriculture

VS: How do you account for the difference between what towns had to go through and what agriculture had to go through?

KM: Well, it was a couple of things. One was the City didn't know anything about agriculture when they wrote the regulations. They were totally lost. And they knew it. They were willing to bluff their way through it until they got caught, but then at the early meetings of this agricultural task force not only did the watershed farm people like Extension Service people, Soil and Water Conservation district people tell them they were totally out-to-lunch, the state agency people told them that. Cornell University told them that.

Everybody who had anything to do with agriculture told them they were nuts for proposing what they were proposing. And they didn't have enough knowledge or resources to propose anything else. So they had to go with what this group came up with, and this group was dominated by—well, it wasn't dominated by DEP. So a more equitable solution came out of it.

I think they were sensitive to the bad P.R. of picking on little old farmers, too. And it would run counter to Appleton's urban environmental ideology that farms are a good thing, generally.

VS: He felt that.

KM: Uh-huh. And in fact, I think that they maybe even over-sold themselves on that point, but we let them if they wanted to.

VS: But the towns didn't have those agencies behind them the way the farmers did?

KM: They didn't have the agencies or lobbying organizations like the Farm Bureau and the state agency especially for farms; we didn't have a state agency especially for small, rural towns. And if they did, we hadn't heard about it. The head of the Office of Rural Affairs was a Cuomo appointee who wasn't about to get involved in this. They did send a person to a couple of meetings, but the Office of Rural Affairs didn't have the muscle that Ag & Markets [New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets] had.

Then—what else? I guess part of it, too, was they felt more comfortable with the development type issues. They felt they knew what they were doing on those. And that there weren't any benign developers like there're benign farmers. That things we were doing up here—as towns—seemed wrong to them.

NB: Let's stop for just a second.

[Tape turned off briefly.]

VS: Are you rolling?

NB: We're okay.

VS: Okay. Starting up after the break. Just before we stopped we were talking about the approach of the DEP and why the towns didn't have the kind of support that the farmers had in making an agreement with DEP. And then while the tape was stopped we talked about Appleton's belief that farms were better than development, which is different from what I as a citizen had gathered, especially from the draft regulations. And you spoke about the survey of farmers going out of business, and how 40–50% of them seemed to be willing to sell to developers at one point, but that was affected by the buy-out. And that, in fact, after ten years, only 10% had actually done it.

I know something I would like to ask you about that. There was a conference that the Catskill Center held, which had speakers from many different places, that seems to have been affected, if not by the DEP's approach, then certainly by the Riverkeeper's approach that predicted wholesale development in the Catskills by—now.

KM: I guess I wasn't at that one.

VS: I wondered if that was influential. Maybe not.

KM: I don't know about that.

VS: That feeling that development was just imminent in this area.

Track 16

Development: The Riverkeeper Perspective

KM: I don't know much about that. I know Riverkeeper didn't know what they were talking about up here. I wrote them and told them so. And they came out with their report, "The Legend of City Water." And so I wrote about a two-page critique of it, and basically said that they had done a pretty thorough job documenting the problems of the Croton system and that there was all this contamination going on and nothing was being done about it. And that their conclusion was, "We need a development freeze in the Catskills."
And I basically said, "Well, something seems to have missed a joint there. You document all these problems over there; you didn't say anything about the Catskills; but the answer is to freeze development in the Catskills." That's basically what the

report said. And there were a lot of other faults, but I thought they—for whatever reason—couldn't propose anything profound for the area they're from, where they lived.

And they reached up here—the guy who wrote the report, David Gordon, had never been here—and decided that we needed a development freeze. I met with him once. He saw the *Catskill Mountain News*, where I was quoted in there saying the report was "despicable," and he called me up and he said he wanted to know why. I said, "Well, I'm in the process of writing down two pages of reasons; I'll send it to you." And I did. And he wanted to meet with me about it, so he came up here and we had lunch in Delhi Diner, and it was only the second time he had been to the Catskills. So they weren't unapproachable, but they were really wrong. So I tried at least to enlighten him a little bit. I don't know how far I got.

VS: *New York* magazine had an article about Robert Kennedy.

KM: Oh, yeah. I saw that. I read parts of that; I couldn't read the whole thing.

VS: Me either.

KM: That was such baloney. I mean, they said he had attended these 250 some meetings. I checked. I knew—because I had been at a bunch of them and he hadn't been at any I had been at. I guess he had been at two or three out of 250, or whatever the number was. And the whole idea that it was his idea was I think a kind of political pay-off. The other environmentalists who were more pragmatic twisted his arm into supporting this thing, which he really didn't want to do, and so the pay-off is that they let him get a lot of credit for it. And the people here and in the Governor's Office realized it was part of the pay-off, too. So they didn't contradict these things, they just—

VS: Let him take credit for it.

KM: Let him. Right. They got a big problem off their back, I guess. Now he's supporting this thing—somewhat reluctantly, but mostly supporting it—because he gets credit for it. Not because he knows what's in it or knows what the effects are going to be, but—

VS: I think it was Gordon who spoke at the church basement meeting this fall.

KM: Oh, yeah. That could be, yeah.

VS: He mentioned that Kennedy had had a change of heart, that he'd had a conversion experience during the meetings at the Governor's Office. And that we could expect him to be more supportive.

KM: Yeah, I guess that probably had something to do with his funding sources, I suspect. I don't know exactly why, but I got the distinct impression that some of the other environmentalists were more pragmatic and felt this was a workable solution, and that they needed to call off the dogs. And then that was done. I think he comes across as a sort of free agent in this thing, but I don't think he is. I think he's got bosses.

VS: It's hard to be in politics and not. For you as a professional planner, how does this fit? Was this what you expected to do when you got out of planning school?

Track 17

Ken Markert: Educational Background

KM: In a way, the theme I was interested in in planning was integrating natural resource information, the technical and scientific information, with planning policy. So that's what I was doing—except I was sort of on the other side of the fence, in a way. And I certainly was interested in the problems of rural areas when I studied planning. I wasn't one of the metropolitan or urban planners who predominated in the planning school. So I considered it a good thing from an intellectual standpoint to be working on that type of issue on behalf of a rural community. It certainly really challenged me in terms of my professional training to deal with all the issues that I dealt with. I certainly didn't expect it, but it was good that way.

VS: Was your interest in rural problems—which you already had when you were in school—because you're from a rural area originally?

KM: No, I was from Hamburg, New York, which was a village maybe three times the size of Delhi, and I had lived in smaller towns after that. I liked that and studied agricultural issues particularly. I did my thesis in planning, so I kind of fell into that. I wound up working for four years, after I graduated, in one of the places where I did my thesis work. It was a small, agricultural community in Virginia. I kind of got to liking that better and better. So when I picked up to come here, I didn't really know that much about what was going on here, but for what they hired me for, it sounded good. And then it turned out I could define my role quite a bit here. There wasn't a lot of direct oversight or expectation about what I was supposed to do. And so that let me kind of gravitate toward the things that I wanted to do, or what I felt needed to be done. And certainly the watershed turned out to be one of those.

Track 18

Ken Markert: Coalition Involvement

KM: I mean, I didn't have to get involved in the watershed issue—nobody asked me to; nobody told me to. I just kind of fell into it. And I fell into the solid waste thing, too—in fact, I kind of pushed my way into that. The Highway Department was dealing with that and they weren't really interested in getting any input from other departments in the county, but eventually the Planning Department wound up being a pretty big part of setting solid waste policy in the county and getting the whole problem solved.

VS: The expansion of the landfill?

KM: Yeah, and that's how we met the lawyers. And so for that reason I probably got drawn in at the beginning, through the lawyers. I just naturally supported the Coalition Board, administratively, staff-wise. It was kind of what I did with other boards I worked with, and I could see it needed to be done here. And just one thing led to another. Pretty soon I was their staff person. I was from the beginning, and it was just as a natural thing—it just happened that way.

VS: And no one ever said to you, and you didn't say to yourself, "Gee, is this what I should be doing as Delaware County Planner?"

KM: Oh, yeah. They asked me—I remember one time in particular going into Howard Nichols's office and meeting with the oversight committee that was in charge of the Planning Department. And they said, "This is taking a lot of your time," and I think basically what they were saying was, "We're glad you're doing it, but it's not what you were hired to do, and if you've got some problem with it, let us know—say so now."

I said, "No, no. This is fine."

And it was—I can't remember what precipitated that. There was probably some kind of minor reorganization we were doing, or something.

VS: And they wanted to make sure that it was all right with you.

KM: Yeah, yeah.

VS: Not to question you about why you were doing it.

KM: Right, right. In fact, Howard Nichols was kind of urging me to jettison the Planning Department—that I should just be doing watershed, and that I ought to just fob everything off on somebody else in the Department. And that was good advice. I probably should have taken it.

VS: In terms of workload that you had?

KM: Yeah.

VS: My husband, Walt, told me about the kinds of experience people had in Roxbury when zoning was first introduced as a concept probably in the late 60s and were just met with hostile feelings before the meeting even started. Very much the same kind of reception that DEP first felt when they came up here about the draft regulations. Threats of violence of the throwing-chair variety, and people stomping out of the meeting in a huff. And it strikes me that people who are reacting strongly that way might not unify even behind something that's going to do good things, and yet they did. So I guess I'm going back to that Margaretville cafeteria meeting and the enthusiasm and saying, "Isn't it remarkable that everyone came together."

Track 19

Coalition Unity Tested

KM: Well, I think we owe some of the credit to New York City. I don't know. Things are obviously different now than they were back whenever they were throwing chairs in Roxbury, because I was involved in them turning the zoning down more recently in Roxbury. To me it just didn't seem like there was that much interest at all. There were never many people at the hearings, but eventually it went down. And I think there were a lot of things going on that were beyond the control of people involved in the zoning and some things that were within the control of the people in the zoning that could have been done better, but weren't. But it wasn't a cataclysmic ending, it was just voted down.

I guess what I'm saying is, I think the forces that make people come together are pretty basic. It's a common enemy—an overpowering enemy. It doesn't have a lot to do with whether you have zoning or not, I don't think.

And there was opposition to the Coalition along the way, too, and there were times when I went to some of the City hearings at the end that were pretty sparsely attended. I looked around the room and these pretty much were the same people who would come out to the anti-zoning meetings. I'd think, "What am I doing here?"

By the time we had chipped away a lot of the problems, a lot of the remaining die-hard people who were still foaming at the mouth were the ones who would have been foaming at the mouth for some innocuous zoning proposal in the town. That, to me, was a point where the unity of the Coalition was a little bit taxed because the core people, the real majority of people who supported the work of the Coalition—maybe some of them would have supported zoning and some of them wouldn't—came together because they were against what New York City was trying to do. But that

group was losing interest because some of the problems were being solved and it was dragging on and kind of becoming more of a back burner thing.

At that time there was more pressure on the Coalition to stay together and perform. And a lot of people who stayed with it, who maybe weren't always supportive of what the coalition was doing, grew impatient and didn't realize that it does take time to move these kinds of things and to make something happen.

There were people gravitating towards a lot of quick-fix type answers. And I think time has proven the Coalition right on these things, but I don't know if there's much parallel. A lot of people did say it was remarkable that all these towns came together and so forth, and I guess I've taken that, accepted it. That's what people feel: that it was remarkable. I don't understand why it's remarkable, but if they say it is, I guess it is. But I mean, just the commonality of the dislike for New York City was certainly one thing that didn't make it all that remarkable to me.

Track 20

Regional Identity

VS: Do you think there's a sense of region for the Catskills?

KM: Hmm, no. Not for the Catskills, but I think for the watershed.

VS: The watershed towns? The people who live within the watershed?

KM: Yeah. I mean, where does the Catskills' northern boundary lie? I can tell you within an inch where the northern boundary of the watershed is. And most of the people—not everybody, not even a lot of people, but many people—know where the watershed begins and ends.

I just ran into some people—some guy I met the other day. He's from Treadwell. We got to talking about the watershed. There's definition of region there. And then the watershed is kind of inward looking now, with Margaretville as its capital. Those people, there is something common there.

Middletown and Shandaken hooked up to do this Central Catskill Planning Alliance because basically they share a lot of things in common. They realized after getting involved in the watershed issue that they had more in common than Margaretville has with Sidney or with Hancock, or whatever. That they share the ski center and they've got the same watershed problems and so on. And economically they're pretty well tied together. So I think the watershed region is a little more cohesive than the Catskills as a region.

VS: And there are definitely things that are happening, like the Central Catskills Planning Alliance, that are building that identity.

KM: The farm program is probably building that identity. I remember Dennis Hill, the farmer from Harpersfield, who's on the Soil and Water Conservation District board. After the farm deal came out, he says, "How can I get my farm in watershed?" [laughs]

VS: But this is primarily a West-of-Hudson identity.

KM: Yeah.

VS: It doesn't include farms in the East-of-Hudson part. So it's a sort of sub region of the mountain range.

KM: And in Greene County, they already had the mountaintop and the watershed, which are basically co-terminus over there, so they sort of had already an identity that this just reinforced: that their mountaintop is an intact sub-unit of the watershed.

VS: Alf Evers, I believe, is credited with saying that the Catskills are really a dispersed region—that's not his word; I'm trying to remember his word—where people tend to identify outward from the mountains. We have three area codes, and we have no central focus. I've seen it in the way my employees relate. If they live beyond Pine Hill, they go to Kingston for services. If they're in Roxbury, they go to Oneonta. If they're just a little bit away, they go to Catskill. But that's always worked against a regional identity. Sure enough, when someone talks about the Catskillers, I say, "Me?" Have you ever heard terms that refer to the home? Or do they say, "Watershedite"?

KM: "Watershedders."

VS: Watershedders? [laughs] That's good.

KM: Or "Shedders," as Tony Bucca calls them.

VS: Did he make up the term?

KM: Shedders. Yeah. I know with Economic Development there are something like four regions. That Schoharie part of the watershed reports to Albany—no, to Utica, I think—the Greene County part to Albany, the Delaware County part to Binghamton, and the Sullivan and Ulster to Kingston. So in terms of economic development programs at the state level, we're all in the Back 40 of somebody's lot, and so now that thing to put the Economic Development office in Delhi is a direct reversal of that trend. Their idea is to try to create an inward-looking focus.

VS: This new office down here is that agency.

KM: Yeah.

VS: Oh, I didn't know that.

KM: It's the Department of Economic Development and the Department of Labor primarily, and then they're going to have some Department of State people there who'll . . . I'm not sure what their exact role is, but they'll be involved in more general watershed duties.

VS: So Delhi may become the capital of the watershed.

KM: Yeah. I don't know about that. The office is there now. I think that they may wind up in Margaretville. If there's ever something bigger created in terms of the Watershed Coalition having a permanent location, I doubt it'll be Delhi, just because of this geography thing. The state's the State. They pick their place and go with it. But I think if the communities get together, they'll pick something more central.

VS: We were talking earlier when we were off the tape about the T-shirts and the buttons and things that have been made. Do you know the story behind any of those?

KM: Well, not too much. I think the bumper stickers were being sold. There's a thing called the Prattsville Businessmen's Alliance that was selling them.

VS: Those were the ones that said . . .

KM: "Just Say No to Watershed Regulations." I guess if you had to think of a slogan and you didn't have a lot of imagination, that would be the one to come up with.

VS: That was at the time of "Just Say No" to drugs.

KM: Yeah. Nancy Reagan's thing. I guess that reverberates, even though I never liked that because I knew it wasn't that simple. We've had the watershed regulations here since 1953, so I guess we should have been saying no a long time ago. [laughs]

VS: And apparently some people did and some people didn't a long time ago.

Track 21

Coalition Strategy: Watershed Regulations

KM: I don't think the regulations themselves were an issue at all. They certainly were innocuous for most of that time. And then the City started stepping up its standards for the septic systems, in 1988 or 1989, and that started some screaming. That was

the beginning of the oppression: the very early stages of what we're seeing the end of now.

But no, just saying this would go away . . . If we just wished hard enough that it would go away—that was just not a possibility.

VS: Did you run into that a lot?

KM: In different forms. One of the things was the constitutionality lawsuit: that we should file a lawsuit that says the law that gives the City the authority to do this in the first place is unconstitutional, and that'll make it go away if we win. I had a couple of responses to that: (1) Even if you're right, you won't know it for ten years, and (2) You're probably wrong, because the State is actually the agency putting the regulations into effect.

And even if I'm wrong and the lawsuit is decided in a reasonable time frame, and we're still alive at the end of it, what's going to happen if we win? Think the City will pack up its reservoirs and go away? No. I mean, they'll come in with something else. Something that will meet the constitutional challenge. That's what we see all the time in legislation that's struck down. If they're really intent on it, they'll weave around it somehow.

The other argument was the filtration thing—that making New York City filter would make the problem go away, too. While the first argument was a legal dream, the second one was a technical dream. You know, "There's other cities that filter water and don't have regulations upstream."

VS: You said that the people who would just wish the local regulation issue away had a legal dream when they thought they could challenge the constitutionality of it, and a technical dream when they thought that filtration would solve all the problems.

KM: I guess that would be a pipe-dream.

VS: [laughs] A pipe-dream? That's good.

Track 22

Coalition Strategy: Filtration

KM: I think the problem with that argument was that filtration wasn't just a yes-or-no thing. While these other cities had more intensive filtration processes, New York City wouldn't need to go to that level and the water supply is already so clean that they are—at the very worst—borderline in terms of filtration criteria.

If they were required to filter, *if* we were to make them filter—That is one of the other problems with that whole scenario: having the power to make them do it. But if we could make them do it, what would they do? Well, they wouldn't go down and build the same kind of filtration that Washington, D.C., has for the unregulated Potomac. They would build a much simpler, less costly—well, less costly on a unit basis, but a hugely expensive—filtration system that's dependent on the water quality. Quite simply, the filter, as you might imagine—the size of it and how you maintain it—depends on how clean the water is. Anything you might want to filter, if you start with cleaner water, it's going to be easier to filter it.

In New York City's case, ease of filtering 1.2 billion gallons per day and whatever you get in terms of cost savings relative to filtering clean versus dirty, you can multiply that times 1.2 billion, and that's your cost factor. This was documented by a scientific panel for the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] that was actually antagonistic to the DEP. They were recommending filtration, but they were recommending filtration *and* regulation. They said that both were needed, that that's the state-of-the-art approach, that New York City could build a filtration plant for a lot less if they could preserve the water quality at its source, and the EPA felt they needed to do both. *That's* the likely thing that would happen if New York City were required to filter. They wouldn't give up on regulating the watershed—it would be too expensive. So that was another pipe-dream.

I spent a lot of time trying to convince people that those were dead ends and that the negotiated settlement was the best that we could go for: Identify our interests, look to preserve them, and do that through a negotiated agreement. And that's, I think, where we've come out.

One of the key things was when Bob Homovich (who was a filtration advocate) and Pataki came up here to Delhi—I think it was in January, a year ago [1995]—and met with a bunch of the Coalition people and supervisors privately, and they all talked about the problem A to Z. They were all impressed because Pataki was taking his own notes and asking his own questions. You know, it was done very directly that way.

But Bob Homovich said that he felt the answer was that New York City had to filter, and Pataki told him, "Well, I have to disagree with you." And he told him all the reasons why that wasn't going to happen and why it shouldn't happen. And I think that was the end of filtration as a strategy: What little bits of it kept bubbling up, I think that kind of finally put an end to it; that they got to wake up and get in the real world, where a negotiated settlement is the way to end this thing. And I think the Governor added his piece saying that that was the way to go—that he wasn't going to want to be governor and preside over New York City being told they have to filter and face all these costs and so on.

Track 23

Public Support: Part 2

VS: You got the Governor involved, and DEP commissioners, and mayors of New York City, and supervisors of Catskills towns. Would you say, after it's all done, that the Coalition and the watershed issue and the response to it has been primarily a grassroots phenomenon, or was it pretty much carried on by people who were trying to do this sort of thing, anyway?

KM: It was both. Particularly in the beginning, it had a lot of grassroots strength, and as it wore on, it became more of trench warfare between the lawyers, and technical battles and so forth. I'm not really all that in touch with it now to say in terms of what, you know, general public opinion is of it and so forth. But it certainly started out with a lot of grassroots support.

And I think that the Coalition worked at cultivating the public understanding and support. I really don't have much sense about where that stands now. I think it was flagging for a period there, where people were just kind of losing interest, and then the technical people and the lawyers carried on whether there was interest or not. You know, they had to.

I guess I really don't know for sure now where it stands, but I think probably most people could say they did a little part to make it come out where it is. Something they did—you know, they bought one of those T-shirts and some of the money for it went to the fund, or they went to the hearing and told New York City where to go. You know, a lot of people did a lot of little things that mattered. A lot of other people like me are paid to work on it every day all the time. So it was probably both.

Track 24

Burn-out

KM: I announced I was going to quit in the week between Christmas and New Year's, and at that point I was still thinking, "Well, if they really get something constructive underway, I could delay for six months or something. But I can't count on that happening." And then when I saw—some of it firsthand, but most of it from Eric Greenfield and others—what kind of schedule they had to keep to do it, I said, "Whew! I'm glad I got out when I did, because I wouldn't have lasted." I was pretty used up at that point.

VS: And having a child.

KM: Yeah. I didn't know how demanding that would be. I just thought, "It would be a good time to stop now." I was already thinking about it before we knew we were going to have her, but that kind of iced it.

VS: I think I must have read about it in the paper. I don't remember hearing about it; I remember reading it. You made big points with all the feminists because you said, "I want to get out of this all-consuming issue so I can give attention to my daughter."

KM: Yeah, I feel lucky that way, that I'm really pretty close with her at this early age.

VS: And if you'd been involved with the Governor's Office that would have been really hard to deal with.

KM: Yup. That would have put a lot more burden on my wife. She had it kind of rough in the beginning. Like I said, I didn't know how demanding it would be. I guess if I'd known, I would have quit earlier. [laughs]

VS: If you'd known how demanding the Coalition was?

KM: No, the baby. [laughs]

VS: You would have quit earlier and rested up.

KM: Yeah.

VS: Well, I don't think I have any questions. Have we skipped anything?

KM: I could go on forever. I was involved in it every day for years. There are so many things that went on. Whenever I got on the phone with somebody, I always kept a notebook and I'd write what they were saying—not verbatim, but I'd write down points—so I kept all these books, and if someone wanted me to do something, I made a big star next to it and turned the page. And every couple of days, I'd look back: "Oh, I forgot to do that."

I have this record of things I was supposed to do, plus a record of things that people said or what-not that sometimes would help me relate things to other people. But I have them all, and so when you called, I went and looked back around the beginning of the Coalition and I went, "Oh yeah, I remember that happened."

One of the funny things was, we had our first meeting with the Coalition in March in the cafeteria on Saturday, and I guess it was the next day, on Sunday, fairly early, that Tony Bucca called up and wanted to know something about something, and my wife said, "Who the hell is calling at this time of day?" And I said, "Oh, it's just one of these guys—the new people in this watershed thing." That was kind of a beginning. It didn't get any better after that. [laughs] But that was funny.

The Planning Director job was kind of a sleepy job, when I got here. And it turned into being more than I could handle. Actually, not more than I could handle—more than I wanted.

VS: It did seem to be a burn-out job. Every time there was an article in the paper, your name was mentioned. It was clear that you were not only the center of activity, but the clearinghouse for information. It seems clear to me who gets to write the book.

KM: I don't know. I made a couple of false starts on that, but I don't think I would. Early on, I thought about it. And I thought, "Oh, it's just going to drag up all these things I'd rather forget about." And then later on, when the Agreement was announced, Perry said to me, "You ought to write a book," and Georgie Lepke said the same thing to me, and Charlie Cook at one time kind of joked that I ought to write a book, but I think he was partly serious. And then I said, "Well, gee, maybe I should."

And then I had a chance to teach a course that was either going to be a course on the watershed or it was going to be a course on environmental science, and they picked environmental science, but if I'd taught the watershed, then I would have been forced to structure things and basically make a book. And I kind of pinned it on that. "Well, if they go with that, I'll do the book. If they don't, it's too late. Somebody else can do it."

VS: I gather there are people writing about it. Could you tell me about that?

NB: There's a guy who's doing a fellowship of some sort at the Catskill Center.

KM: Hmmm.

NB: Goldstein, I think was the name.

KM: Ah, Goldstein. Yeah, I think I know who you mean. I met him once. I don't know if he's . . . Deborah DeWan introduced him to me. He came here in the summer and talked to me about it. I heard Reg Oberlag was doing one, too. Or going to. There's lots of rumors, I suppose, but yeah, somebody up here ought to write one.

VS: I think Diane Galusha's keeping track of the material.

KM: Yeah, I bet she's got a lot of stuff. Because they were in it from A to Z, too. The only paper [Catskill Mountain News] that was.

VS: But nobody could bring to it your central experience. Maybe you'll feel like it sometime.

KM: Probably the longer it goes, the less likely it is. [laughs]

VS: Well, all the more reason we should do this interview.

KM: This is easier for me, anyway.

VS: Good.

KM: I'm kind of a laborious writer, too. I'm a plodding writer, so it would be extra hard for me, I think.

NB: Do you think that this whole experience has had an impact in other places across the U.S.?

KM: Hmm. I don't know. It's not really that unique, when you think about it. I mean, you look around at other things that have happened—other places that have gotten together and fought the bigger powers, you know. I mean, the particular facts are unique, but the whole thing that happened, I don't think is functionally that unique. But if it emboldens some upstate communities to stand up to some stuff, well, that's good. I don't know how well word travels or what the word is that travels. [laughs] Are we the property rights group of the Catskills?

VS: Do you think that's the coming issue?

KM: No. I wonder if people think that's what the Coalition is, maybe.

Track 25

Anti-Rent War

VS: I've heard that allusion. Since the tape is on, I do have one more question. It's a thorny one.

KM: Thorny. Oh!

VS: Well, according to me. Or it could be. In one of the early newsletters, and I remember hearing as a resident, there were comparisons made between the formation of the Coalition and the Anti-Rent Wars of the 1840s.

KM: Oh, yeah. [laughs]

VS: That was sort of saying, "Beware! Those Catskill people will take up arms if they're really objecting to something." I wonder how far that kind of rhetoric went, how you felt about it at the time, what kinds of feelings that generated.

KM: I guess if the shoe fits, wear it, right? [laughs] I used it one time in a speech. There was some particularly eloquent language in one of the speeches that one of the anti-rent people used, so I borrowed from it. You know, it was good stuff. It wasn't about inciting violence or anything like that. It was about standing up for personal liberty and passing on a heritage of freedom to your children and things like that. And that's what this was about in some respects.

The thing I remember, though, probably no one remembers. What I remember was Burr Hubbell standing up at one of the hearings with a tin horn and explaining to the City guys exactly how it all worked and that it could be repeated with some nasty overtones, and I think that was a little more direct.

Certainly nobody associated with the Coalition advocated any violence or hoped to see any. In fact, I remember Alan Rosa told me he spoke to some of the more hot-headed supervisors about, "Gee, can you imagine what would happen to us now if somebody got hurt up here? Boy, they would just come down on us like . . ." You know, he was kind of laying it out: "Well, think about it for a minute. What would happen if something like that happened?" And some of them thought, "Boy, that really would be doom for us."

I never really thought there was much potential for violence. I think there was a lot of hot talk, but . . . So I think to the extent that the Anti-Rent War stuff united people and empowered them a little bit and made them feel like they did have some potential to change things like their forefathers did—well, then that was good. I didn't really hear anybody inciting to violence with it. In fact, there really wasn't that much violence in the Anti-Rent War except for that one guy who got shot. And he probably was asking for it, so . . . [laughs]

VS: Is it significant that the Andes Historical group put on a play about the Anti-Rent War and the killing of the sheriff?

KM: I don't know. Hmm. I certainly can't imagine that it motivates anybody to be violent. I think it motivates them more to be dedicated and to be committed to standing against the kind of stuff that New York City was trying. Makes them feel maybe a little more bravado, perhaps, but I think that's about as far as it goes.

VS: When I first heard something—in the beginning, when the draft regulations came out—I thought, "Maybe we'll just wise up and do the same thing." To me, it really said, "Oh. We're really focusing on this."

KM: [laughs] Well, I guess that would be another pipe dream. That one, I think, never got off the ground. But I do recall—and the significance of it only dawned on me later, around the middle of April last year, actually—when Mick Mann was proposing a watershed militia.

And I remember Perry Shelton acting quite agitated at that choice of words. I was on the Chamber of Commerce Board at the time, and Mick Mann, in an unauthorized way, went and got these little stickers printed up that said, "Watershed Militia." They were like decals that you put in the window of your car. He didn't get any clearance from the Chamber Board or anything—he just did it. And I heard about it later.

They never went anywhere. He was trying to sell them at the fair or something, and they never went anywhere. I never even saw one on a vehicle or anything. But, like I said, it wasn't until April of last year that the significance of the word "militia" dawned on me. And I think there were some undercurrents that way.

VS: April—you mean when the building was bombed in Oklahoma City?

KM: Yeah. I suspect Mick was probably a little more plugged into that circle where they talk about militias and stuff, and the word "militia" had a particular meaning to him. It didn't, to me, at the time. When Perry heard it, I don't know what the basis of his objection was, but he objected to that. So maybe if there's a violent component to this thing, maybe Mick Mann would be the one to talk to about that. [laughs]

VS: That's very interesting—especially in light of recent concerns about armed militia. I don't know if there's a difference between armed and unarmed.

KM: I don't know. I suppose there is. I would rather face an unarmed one, if it was up to me. [laughs]

VS: Well, maybe that's what the Coalition has been. An unarmed militia, armed with their brains.

KM: We're not a militia type. More like Minutemen—let's put it that way.

NB: You talked earlier about the one bumper sticker that you weren't nuts about, but talk about some of the other T-shirts and slogans.

KM: Slogans. I don't know if there were any. Well, I guess there were lots of slogans. I don't know if I can think of any offhand. The T-shirt of the cow with diapers on—I think that was kind of a laugh. It was kind of saying, "Look at the ridiculous things New York City wants us to do." That's kind of what it was about. And then the sticker was, "Don't tread on me." I think that was another Mick Mann project.

VS: I got that as a button. The coiled snake. "Don't tread on the Catskills."

KM: That was kind of in line with the Anti-Rent War and all that, except it's going back a little further.

VS: Yeah. Identifying with the Revolutionary War.

KM: Yeah. Those were popular. In fact, on that exhibit that went around, they had three of those on that, and they could never keep them on there. They were always disappearing.

VS: That exhibit still exists. It's in rough shape because it's been shown so many places, but I'm trying to get Janis Benincasa to consider documenting it—take pictures of the panels or something.

KM: That would be good.

VS: They have all the planning materials, but nothing that shows how it really looked. My favorite panel was the one of the "No Trespassing" sign from the reservoir with the hole from the shotgun.

Track 26

Major Figures in the Watershed Negotiations

VS: We're talking about people to interview for this project, and, Nancy, something that I haven't told you yet is that we do have an appointment with Clayton Brooks, but it's not tomorrow—it's a week from tomorrow.

NB: Fine.

VS: So we'll be seeing him. And from what you said, it sounds like we'll get both the Coalition information and the story about the reservoirs.

KM: Probably get all the right details. Yeah, Clayton would certainly be the one, because he was the Ulster representative from the beginning. And Tony Bucca, because he was the Greene one from the beginning and really stayed with it. They would be pretty big ones.

VS: Georgie said one of the most telling things, when I first met her at the meeting at Frost Valley (when I met Clayton as well). She said, "They came up here and they treated it like it was vacant land."

KM: [laughs] Georgie's very articulate, and one of the more—I don't know what the word is, but she's a good thinker. She hasn't been involved from the beginning, but she's been involved for a long time. She'd be a good one to talk to, if you have time.

VS: Now, she's from . . . ?

KM: Neversink.

VS: Neversink, which is about the same as Denning.

KM: Right. They're pretty close. Even from here, you might go through Neversink to get to Denning. Let's see. Who else? Well, you talked to Perry. Who else did you talk to?

VS: Just Perry and you.

KM: Oh, okay. Well, Alan—obviously, he's been in it from beginning. It might be interesting to get Charlie Cook. He's pretty busy, but he was in it from the very beginning, too. He held those hearings in the high school at—was it Roxbury or Margaretville? I don't remember which.

VS: There was one in Grand Gorge that I went to.

KM: Ah, yeah. That was one of the series.

VS: Appleton, Charlie, and . . .

KM: And there were some in Margaretville. There were three days in Margaretville before that. But that was early, and he had gotten in early. In fact, he tried to form a group to deal with this. It was one person from each town. And they basically reviewed the regulations page by page, and had a stenographer, and they sent comments on to the City.

That was before the Coalition got started. He had a limited purpose for them, and that group eventually disbanded after they filed those comments. But maybe he sort of had the same idea. He's been following it pretty closely right along, and John Hamilton, who's his counsel, was in on all the negotiations this summer, and I'm sure he talked to Charlie quite a lot about it.

VS: There's another whole project—the whole negotiation phase of the Coalition's work. It's very interesting, and it's been under wraps for so long, while it was going on.

KM: Probably the real juicy stuff—it's too early for it to come out. [laughs]

VS: It was interesting talking to Perry during the negotiations. My interview with him happened while he was going back and forth to Albany for the negotiations. It certainly affected what he was interested in talking about, because even though we set out to talk about the beginning of the Coalition, each issue for him very easily and quickly focused on how it was being dealt with in the negotiations. He couldn't talk about it, but he talked about what the concerns were going in, and what the outcomes might be.

KM: The attorneys, like Dan, would be interesting to talk to. Jeff Baker, too.

VS: He's from . . . ?

KM: He works with Dan at Whiteman, Osterman & Hanna. They weren't involved that much in the beginning, but it was in large measure their idea to form a coalition, although I think other people were thinking the same thing at the same time. But they were the ones who got it off the ground. . . . Who else?

VS: Sounds like a good list.

KM: Yeah. You have plenty, probably. You'll probably think of others.

ALAN L. ROSA

Member of the Coalition of Watershed Towns
(1991-1997)

ALAN ROSA Executive Member, Coalition of Watershed Towns (1992–1997)
Alternate Member, Coalition of Watershed Towns (1991–1992)
Supervisor, Town of Middletown (1990–1999)

Interviewed by: Nancy Burnett and Virginia Scheer

Location: Town Hall, Margaretville, New York

Date: February 6, 1996

Total time: 90 minutes

This interview was recorded immediately after a flood that devastated the Village of Margaretville and the surrounding area.

Track 1

How Alan Rosa Became Involved in the Watershed Negotiations

NB: This is Nancy Burnett, interviewing Alan Rosa, February 6, 1996, with Ginny Scheer in attendance. And this is the sixth tape in our series. Alan I'm going to ask you, for the tape, to identify yourself and tell us how you got started in this whole Watershed Coalition.

AR: My name is Alan Rosa. I'm the Supervisor—Town Supervisor for the Town of Middletown. How I got started was about five years ago, when the City of New York came out with a set of regulations that were supposed to take effect at a certain date. It alarmed the Delaware County supervisors within the watershed.

Delaware County's made up of 19 towns. Out of the 19 towns, 17 of them are either totally in or partially in the watershed. The only two towns that don't have any property in the watershed are the Town of Davenport and the Town of Hancock. So it covered a very large area. When you look at it on a map, you can see that the watershed covers about 50% of Delaware County. The Town of Middletown itself is entirely in the watershed. 100% of it is in the watershed.

And when you looked at the regulations, it was really going to stop anything that we could do. All development would cease; property rights of people would cease. So we had to figure out what we were going to do. And basically, what happened was, our planning director at the time, Ken Markert, and our budget officer, Perry Shelton, who was the supervisor at that time for the Town of Tompkins, got together and we decided we'd try to bring in as many towns as we can to see if they're interested in seeing what we could do to stop the City with this unnecessary burden on the people here.

So we all got together and a meeting was called. It was held in the Margaretville Central School, and I believe there were approximately 33 or 35 towns that all came together at that point. It was decided then that we were going to call ourselves a coalition and we were going to name ourselves the Coalition of Watershed Towns. And at that meeting it was decided that representatives from each of the counties, would go in their little group and decide who would represent them to try to set up some kind of an executive committee.

So we all got in our little groups and decided who was going to be alternates or whatever, and it took a couple weeks before we got everything finalized, but basically, what came out of that was the Executive Board of the Coalition of Watershed Towns, which is what it is today. I was an alternate. All the meetings were held here in Margaretville. I was an alternate up to probably three years ago, when the supervisor for the Town of Colchester stepped out and I stepped in as an executive member.

And, of course, I was probably one of the few who had been in this from day one — even though I was an alternate. The meetings were here; I hosted all the meetings. I was there through the whole thing. I can't tell you how many meetings I attended. But I was in it from Day One from the start, and I'm still in it today.

Basically, that's what's happened at this point. That's where we are. The meetings are still basically all within the Margaretville/Arkville area simply because this is the center of the watershed. If you take the part of Greene County and Ulster County and Schoharie County that's in the watershed, and you put that circle around it on the map, you see that Margaretville/Arkville/Fleischmanns is dead in the center of the watershed. So that's basically why we thought it would be good to have people meet here so they didn't have to drive clear over to one side of the watershed or the other.

Track 2

Alan Rosa's Childhood

NB: Tell me a little bit about your background.

AR: My background. Where do you want to start—when I was a kid?

NB: Yup, I do.

AR: Okay. Hmmm . . .

My father was a New York forest ranger, and I was pretty much born and brought up in these mountains. I mean, I can remember before I could walk very well he put me in a pack basket. He'd carry me to paint lines and what-not. I was always with my father. And I learned a lot from him. I probably know more about the woods around

here and the streams than the best environmentalist with all his PhDs. You know, I come from the School of Hard Knocks—being out there. And by the time I was six or seven years old, I was out camping in these woods by myself. I was an avid fisherman at that time. I was a kid and I didn't have anything fancy—whatever I could put together was my fishpole.

I attribute a lot of what happened, as far as my knowledge of this area, to my father. He had his uncles who were basically in this area. The family's been here for over two hundred years, and his uncles taught me a lot, too. And they taught my father a lot simply because they lived off the land. My uncle Bill Hen, basically how he made his living was, he was a fox hunter. Furs and stuff like that is what my whole generation, or that generation, came up with. They lived off the land.

Fact is, when I was a kid, I was brought up on deer meat and apple pie, and I think I've had deer meat every way, and apple pie and apple crisp and apple sauce, and today I can't stand either one! That's the way we were brought up at the time. I look back at that and I realize how fortunate I was when I was a kid. You know, I know more about erosion and stream pollution than these people with PhDs. I'm fortunate that way, and I think in that way I've been a help to the Coalition.

NB: Keep going.

Track 3

Alan Rosa's Young Adulthood and Working Life

AR: Well, I graduated from high school and I worked for the A&P Tea Company. I wanted to become a forest ranger and I was accepted at Wanakena—the New York State ranger school. Unfortunately, at that time, to get a job I probably would have had to become a surveyor, and I hated surveying. I did enough of it with my father, running State lines. I used to help him quite a lot, and I just hated it. I hated surveying. And basically that was the only job that was open back in the early '70s, say 1972, 1973. I couldn't become a forest ranger, you know; it just wasn't going to happen.

So I ended up getting a full-time job at the local A&P store and I became a bookkeeper and an accountant type person for them. And I stayed with that. Every chance I had, I was outdoors because that's what I really loved. I hated my job. But, you know, I got married, I had kids, I had responsibilities. It wasn't all so bad because what A&P did, they had a program through Cornell University and I ended up taking several college courses, and that's how I really got my education behind me. Believe it or not, I got certificates for business law. I mean, I'm no lawyer or anything like that, but that's basically how I got my college education. They paid the full shot. So it was a good company to work for. It's just that I hated my job and what I did. I stayed with it for 20 years.

I got out of it and got into the electronic business and put in satellite dishes and stuff like that. And I became supervisor. And what was nice about doing the electronic business is, I only had to work maybe four or five days out of a month and I could be very flexible and I made a good dollar at it. It was very flexible. You don't get rich being a town supervisor.

And now we've had the flood and I can't work at the electronic business, so things are quite different. And my wife works for the A&P Tea Company. She's unemployed now, too, but I guess that has nothing to do with the watershed issue.

Track 4

Commitment

NB: I'm also interested in why you cared enough to stay involved all this time.

AR: Well, that's pretty easy. I was born and brought up here. I've traveled a lot, and this is probably the prettiest and nicest area there is to live in. You have the four seasons here. The outdoors is basically your backyard. And it's all here. I had a good life here. And I wanted to see my children have the same type of life, if they choose to.

This troubles me, because there isn't really a whole lot for them to do. I've stated this before: The Catskills' best export is their children. They can't stay here. And if we can create something where we're going to be a generator of a product that could then be clean water, there should be many job opportunities for the local children who are here and who already know the area. And I guess that's why I got so heavily involved.

You know, I think I'm probably the only person on the Executive Board who has small children at home, and I don't know if my children appreciate what I'm trying to do here. Basically I'm looking for a future for my children—and possibly their children. That's why I'm sticking with it.

Track 5

The Negotiation Process

NB: Tell us some of the anecdotes from the long period of negotiation. Talk about the process.

AR: Painful. Well, we can start back with basically what happened. We had the mayor—Mayor Dinkins—and we had Al Appleton, who we first started the process with. And when we thought we were getting someplace with the process, there was a change down there. Now we had a new mayor. Mayor Giuliani came on board and the players

all changed, so it slowed the process to a halt. Basically, we went backwards and we had to restart the process again, because we had new players involved.

The player that we did get involved, Marilyn Gelber, after she was caught up in the process and got up to speed on it, probably has turned out to be the best thing that's happened in the long run, because she's been to the area, she understands what we're talking about. I wouldn't say she's a political person. She's a person who understands the importance of trying to protect people's rights in the area, but yet trying to protect her major objective, which is the water supply. So once she helped us understand what her objectives were and we made her understand what our objectives were, things moved on rather nicely for a spell.

And we played hell trying to get the state government involved. Under Governor Cuomo we couldn't get to the Governor. Basically what happened is we were meeting with DEC [Department of Environmental Conservation] and DOH [Department of Health] finally, and we believed that the watershed was going to become a political issue in the Governor's race. That never really happened. The issue was kind of kept under wraps. Whether that was an agreement that the two parties made or what, I don't know.

But then we saw the change of administration. We had a new governor—Governor Pataki. So that was another setback, we thought, because now we'd have to begin the process all over again. Which we kind of did, but we didn't—because Governor Pataki was smart enough to realize that the people he had already involved in the state end of it, he was going to keep involved. And they were people like Glenn Bruening from DEC and Ron Tramontano from the DOH. And he was smart enough to say, "Well, we gotta keep these people involved and let these people bring me up to speed to see whether it's something I want to get involved in."

And he did. He got involved in it. It was something he didn't have to get involved in because basically he was in a no-win situation, and if things all went to pot, the City would be looking at a $4–8 billion filtration plant and he could be labeled as the blame for it. So he had a lot to lose by getting involved in this thing. But he did.

And you know, he brought—he had the wisdom to get—this Mike Finnegan, and I don't know where they dug this guy up, but he's super; and, you know, he started putting this thing together. And things started happening. Mike Finnegan had some people who worked for him: Nick Garlick, who was an attorney under Mike Finnegan, and Erin Crotty, who has something to do with the Governor's Office, too.

They basically orchestrated every meeting, got us together, and when things started getting out of hand, they were like the schoolteacher, you know: slap the ruler on the table and say, "Look this is what we gotta do," and, "We can't solve this. Let's move on to something else." And basically what ended up happening is, we didn't start arguing so much about differences, we started talking about where we could agree

upon things. And then that's how we eliminated the problems. We went through things that we could agree upon, and things that we couldn't agree upon were left for a later date. And the process worked out rather well.

But it was painful because it was a constant repeating of what we felt against the City and what the City felt about us and so forth and so on. It was a painful process.

Track 6

Changing Attitudes

NB: Do you think attitudes changed during that time?

AR: Yes. A lot of attitudes changed. We became friends with the people we were involved with. I mean, you take people like their attorney there—I'm trying to think of his name. I should know his name right off the bat, but I'm sorry I don't. Mine were Dan Ruzow and Jeff Baker. Elizabeth St. Clair was one of their attorneys, but their main attorney was a fellow, and I can't remember his name. And I should.

NB: It'll come to you.

AR: What happened was the group was small enough that we all became friends and we were able to start talking—joking, really—about our differences. And it was nice to be able to do that. I mean, it wasn't where we wanted to sit across a table and take a swing at one another. It was actually, "Well, this is the way it is." And they'd say, "Well, this is the way we see it." "Well, you're wrong because of this." Or they'd say, "Well, you're wrong because of this." And that's how we started working out our differences. Mark Hoffer—he was the other attorney.

And, you know, we found out they're just regular people like we are. And that was helpful. They weren't some monster that was there to crush us. They were just regular people trying to do a job. The City is so large, it could be a state within itself, and when we finally formed the Coalition and looked at the landmass that it represents, the only thing we didn't have was numbers—you know, people numbers.

But the City also understands that for any kind of regulatory system to work, if the local people don't take part in it, they can't enforce it. That was a big thing to bring to the City's attention, and they realize it now. You know, they understand, "Hey, the only way we're ever going to enforce this is with the locals' help," and I think that's where we are today. They understand that's where things are coming from and we can tell them what we can do and what we can't do. And they understand.

Track 7

Local Responsibility

NB: And that's why the Agreement has taken the kind of shape that it seems like it's taking. It's individualized, really, for the farm or for the town or for the business.

AR: That's correct. You know, everybody has to have a piece of it. And you just can't say, "No!" You have to look at something and say, "Maybe if we can do this." And that's basically what the whole program is designed to do.

NB: Talk about that a little more, can you? About how you see it shaping up?

AR: Well, I think what we have to do, the way it's going to shape up, is: Okay, there are things that we can do to keep pollution from happening. Now, I just went through a major flood here. I think the people here locally realize that there are a lot of things that happened to not only put pressure on the City to do something about the water supply, but now also are going to put pressure on us as individuals, because we were extremely lucky that we didn't have any loss of life right here in this town.

We had LP tanks that were exploding and it could have been a deadly disaster. We were very lucky and very fortunate that didn't happen. I think most of the people who went through the experience realize that they have to take a part and make sure that they do things the best they can to not endanger local firemen or the local volunteer who's trying to help out the neighbor. And I think it was a real eye-opener for everybody.

NB: And how does that relate to the City and the watershed and the pollution?

AR: Well, I think the people realized that if we do things right, the City won't have to worry about pollution. You've got to realize the City isn't the only one that uses water. Everybody downstream uses it and it's our neighbors that use it. So I think local people realize that they can't pollute the water.

The federal government has put flood controls in for a reason. I think people recognize that it's probably a good thing that there are these types of controls, and now we've got to live up to these controls.

Also, I think these towns themselves will probably take a look at areas where federal and state government regulations might be lacking, and make suggestions of what they can do through our local planning boards. It'll be interesting because basically the people here are all good people. I'd say the majority of us have never gone through a disaster like the one that's just taken place. Now it's a real eye-opening thing that we need to do things correctly, and right now the town is constantly working to move debris away from the rivers, because we use them, too. We use

them for fishing and, you know, whatever else. So we're working at that. And we're using correctional people to help us bring the debris to the roadsides to be hauled away, and a lot of that work won't be able to be done until springtime, when things thaw, so we can get the stuff out of the frozen ground.

I think the Agreement satisfied most of the environmental groups that we have. Bobby Kennedy seems to be on board. A lot of the business community seems to be on board. And the local residents seem to be on board. So now it's just a matter of really getting the fine wording down in print and see if we can get the towns to sign the Agreement. Hopefully that'll come sometime this summer. There's a lot of funding there, too. You know, we've had this disaster. There's a lot of funding there that could really help economic development as far as, you know, getting us back into shape where we should be.

VS: Rebuilding after the flood won't siphon off funds from the Watershed Agreement, will it?

AR: It could siphon some off, I suppose. It's a bit early for me to even comment on it, but you have to understand that through FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency], only 75% of the damage as far as to the public infrastructure is reimbursable. So that means the state and local share has to make up the other 25%. So if you take a look at my budget and the hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of damage that I have had here, it makes it extremely difficult to come up with the other 25%. I couldn't even borrow that kind of money, let alone have the taxpayers pay it back. So we might be able to tap into watershed funds and see that certain things are done.

Track 8

Future Role of the Coalition

NB: Do you have questions, Ginny?

VS: I've jotted down a number of them. You spoke about the City realizing that if local people don't take part in designing the regulations, the City couldn't enforce them. I wonder if you could comment on the role of the Coalition as an administrator once the Agreement is signed.

AR: Again, it's a little too early because we're still, you know, not sure if it's going to be a Coalition, or if we're going to have a Watershed Council, or what's really going to happen. All I can do is give you my thoughts. I believe that the Coalition should remain as an entity—maybe separate and apart from the Watershed Council. First of all, we should define it. We know what the Coalition is: It's a voice to bring our concerns to larger entities of government. That's what it's for, and there may be

another day that we need to be heard, and the Coalition can do that. I believe the Coalition should stay together, but that's just my thought.

I would have to say that a lot of the people in the Coalition right now would probably have to take a major part in being on the Watershed Council if that happens. But it might be a little early to talk about the Watershed Council until we've defined what the role of the Watershed Council is going to be. I'm not sure what that role is going to be. I'm not sure how much of a role we want to take as a Watershed Council. These are all questions that we've all got to kind of sit down and hash out and see what the role of the Watershed Council is going to be. And what its duties are going to be.

VS: As a resident of the watershed and of the Catskills, I have always considered the Coalition to be "us" and I wondered if in taking on this role—or the Watershed Council, once it's established—it'll become "them" instead of "us."

AR: Well, that's where I'm coming from. The Watershed Council may be able to oversee and see that things are put in place for us. And that's exactly what I'm talking about. We have to establish what the role should be for the Watershed Council. We don't want to create another bureaucracy or another layer of government that people don't feel that they're part of. That's what we've got to do, you know. People have got to feel that they're part of it.

VS: What is there about the Coalition that has made people like me feel that we're part of it? Is it because it was made up of towns?

AR: Yeah, I think it's because it was made up of towns and it's pretty easy to go to your local supervisor or your local council person (whoever it may be) who's sitting on that board and talk to them, tell them what's on your mind. I know I've had countless meetings with just people—whether it's the American Legion or the local Chamber of Commerce or, you know, whatever. And I think it just makes it very easy for people to communicate with them. You know, it's not like trying to call your senator or your congressman or something like that.

You can pick up the phone and you can dial the number and say, "Hi Al, how are you? Been out much? What have you been doing?" And then you can go on into what's concerning you. That's the type of communication I think you need to have to make you feel part of an organization, and I think that's what the Coalition has done.

Track 9

"I Didn't Think I Could Ever Sit Down with the City."

VS: Back to you, Nancy?

NB: Great. I love this back and forth.

I'm thinking about the whole history with New York City and the watersheds, and the many people who lost their land and their town. First of all, have you had any personal experience of that sort?

AR: Well, part of my family was displaced by the City of New York when they built the Pepacton Reservoir. My uncle Orville down here used to have a gravel bank, but where the sewer plant sets, that was his farm. So yeah, I know what people went through.

I was too little to know what happened, but I was constantly brought up on that hatred—you know, how the City just kind of came in and did what they wanted and bullied people around. So I was brought up hating the City. I mean, if it's drilled in your head from the time you're a kid, you hate the City.

And you know it wasn't only just the City that took property. The State of New York took some property, too. And even though my father was a forest ranger and we lived at Huckleberry Brook at what we called the old fish hatchery, the State owned that fish hatchery. My father used to live there for a while, but it came to a point where they basically told him he had to leave, so he had to build another house and we had to move. But that was home to us, even though we didn't own it. That was still home. It was not just the City—the State did some things, too, to push people out.

Yeah, I'm quite aware of the history. I was brought up that way and I didn't think I could ever sit down with the City. I thought I had too much hate for them. But after a while, you realize the only way you're going to get anything done is to sit down and talk it out.

I mean, it's just like me: I'm a Town Supervisor. I get people off the street who are mad at somebody—maybe on the Highway Department, or mad at somebody in one of our offices, whether it's the Zoning Office or whatever. They come to me thinking that I'm almost like a god and I can make a decision for them that they're going to like. And as you go up through the chain of command, if you go up through the state government and you go up to the federal government, you expect that somebody is going to make the decisions for you. Everything's going to be all right and everybody's going to go home and if somebody doesn't like something, they can blame it on God, so to speak.

Didn't work that way in this whole process. The State didn't tell us what we were going to do. The Feds didn't tell us what we were going to do. It was just the human aspect, the human ability to come together and all sit down at one table and talk about it and try to come up with a plan that's going to satisfy everyone. There was nobody telling anybody what they were going to do.

Once you've been through this process, you really feel how delicate things are, and you know, the thing that brings the best out of people is a disaster, unfortunately. Everybody comes to help each other, and if this guy was your enemy last week, you don't think of him as your enemy. You're working to bring kind of a human feeling together to build something. And that's what really happened in this whole process.

Track 10

Suing the City, Eminent Domain, and Property Rights

VS: The watershed regulations could have been a disaster, but somehow the process achieved the desired end, but without the disaster.

AR: That's correct.

VS: You were describing bringing everyone to the table to talk about mutual good. We were a long way from that in 1990.

AR: I guess, again, people expected somebody to tell us what was going to happen, but it didn't happen. We all came together to fight this thing and it ended up being a lot better than what was slated for us, let's put it that way.

VS: What did it take to convince New York City that coming together to talk that way was the solution?

AR: Lawsuits. [laughs] That was pretty evident. I mean, we stopped them as far as purchasing their property. You know that the City gave a criteria to the EPA of their goals and what they were going to do to avoid the filtration waiver. As far as I know, they didn't meet any of their criteria, which jeopardized their filtration waiver. And we had 'em tied up in lawsuits.

So they had no choice but to say, "Hey, it's time to sit down and talk about this." So I guess that's what the good lawyers—Dan Ruzow and Jeff Baker—do: They help the little guy get the attention to get somebody to sit down. I mean, we were fighting a big giant, and I guess what we did was hit them in the side of the head with a two-by-four and it got their attention.

VS: You want to talk some about the land acquisition issue?

AR: One of our biggest concerns at Delaware County was eminent domain. You know, just coming in and condemning people's property and taking it wherever they saw fit to take it. And basically in those meetings that we had at the Board of Supervisors, our biggest concern was not so much to tell a person who they could sell their property to, but not to allow eminent domain. And that's where the concept of willing buyer–willing seller really came was from, out of the Delaware County Board of Supervisors.

And it wasn't accepted by the entire watershed. We've got towns that don't want to see any property bought in their town. Even if you're a willing seller and it's your property, we've got towns that don't want to see you sell it to the City. Delaware County didn't take that position. They believed that that's a property right of a person. They should be able to sell their property to whoever they choose to. They shouldn't have some local government telling them who they can sell their property to.

So that had to all be worked out within the scope of the Agreement to give towns and villages the option: Do they want to tell people who they can sell their property to or not? And that was written into the Agreement. Whether you are a supervisor or you're a mayor and you think you should be able to tell a landowner who they can sell their property to is totally up to local government. That's their business, as far as we're concerned as the Coalition.

Track 11

Regulations for Land Acquisition

AR: We worked a lot on criteria for land acquisition. Fact is, I guess I was probably one of the major people involved in that. You know, I certainly don't want to take the credit for it because I don't know if it's good or bad, but what I did was use the knowledge that I have of the Catskills to set the criteria of where New York City could buy property. And basically the whole thing—the regulations and wanting to buy property—was designed at first to control population density. And yes, maybe you can control population density to a point, but if you start buying the developable pieces of property, you shift the population to a piece of property that's less desirable for development. And what you really end up doing is causing more erosion and more degradation of the water than if you had allowed someone to build on a piece of property that is more developable.

And that is where a lot of common sense came from about what types of property the City should be eligible to purchase. I mean, to me it wouldn't make sense for the City of New York to go up on Route 28 here, between Arkville and Margaretville, and try to purchase every piece of property through there on the upper side of the road, because that is the best developable property we have, and that's where we might want to look at maybe encouraging some development. And not encourage it to

happen down by the riverbanks, you know, in the flood plain, where you can still build, as long as you meet certain criteria, but it might not be the best place to build.

And the other thing is by taking that type of property, you're encouraging people to move back further onto our hillsides. And that is where the "had to be greater than 15% slope" clause came in, because a 15% slope is pretty steep, and this is a criteria that the City could use to purchase property, to maybe try to discourage certain development to happen on a steep slope.

So that's how the whole criteria system was written out. It was to really try to safeguard the areas where development should take place as opposed to the areas where development is currently taking place. And that's tough to deal with, and we need to address these issues, too, because all our villages and hamlets where we'd really like to keep the center of our businesses are all located along our streams. So this is an issue that we're going to have to deal with. How are we going to safeguard our little villages and hamlets?

Take, for instance, the Village of Margaretville after the flood. You know, we need to safeguard their tax base, because they've lost considerable amount of property that's off the tax rolls right now, and that's a big concern to the mayor. And how are we going to keep our village going based on the tax base?

And one of the things I talked about with mayors of both villages was, "Dis-incorporating isn't the answer. It's not going to save you any money, really, in taxes." Because what happens when a village dis-incorporates is, the supervisor then has to set up a street district, a water district, and a light district, so basically you're still paying for those services within that incorporated village, anyway. So you're not saving anything.

The person we've got working on the streets in the Village of Margaretville would have to continue to work on those streets. Also, he'd have to continue to work on the water. You're not bringing in a larger entity of taxes to help offset the local residents. And these are all things that we have to address to see what type of development can take place within these little villages to see that they survive.

VS: It sounds like the Agreement includes an assumption that there will be development of villages in the watershed rather than a shrinking or even depopulation of areas.

AR: That's our goal, yes.

VS: Was there ever a sense that New York City desired that there be fewer people, fewer villages, and fewer farms in the Catskills?

AR: That was our main concern: that New York City would want to control population density and in the end virtually depopulate us.

VS: The original regulations.

AR: Yes.

Track 12

Cooperation with New York City

NB: Talk a little more about that. Talk about what New York City came in with. What were their attitudes and their approaches?

AR: Their attitude, when they first came in, I can't remember. I was too small. And that never changed until maybe three years ago. Their attitude was, you know, "We're here. We'll do what we want." And they pretty much did what they want. The attitude change, like I say, came two years or three years ago, and it's really been improving ever since.

When I was over my head in water here two weeks ago, and I needed ten-wheelers and I needed leak-detection crews to help find the leaks for the Village of Margaretville water system, the Arkville water system, the Fleischmanns water system, and the Halcottsville water system, I picked up the phone and called Marilyn Gelber and told her I needed help. And, you know, she responded.

She was the first one to send help to the area—only because it takes time to get the federal agencies all rolling, and through FEMA it takes a while to get the National Guard, or whatever you call these people, en route. She's got these things at her fingertips and she can get them on the road in a few hours.

And she came up. I mean, she was here. I lost all track of time. The flood was Friday. Saturday we were in disarray. And Sunday—I believe it was Sunday—she was here, personally, with her deputy and some of her staffers from the Mayor's Office. And all you could do was walk into the Village.

She was up to Fleischmanns and she got on the phone and said, "What's the first thing you need?" and I said, "I need cones. We can't find any traffic cones." "How many you need?" I told her 750. She says, "Well, I made arrangements." I mean, 15 to 20 minutes later, she says, "I made arrangements to get you 2,000. They'll be up at Downsville Office and you'll get 750. We're going to leave the other ones to try to help other communities that might need them." I mean, we had washouts everyplace and we just didn't have enough cones or reflectors or anything. And I thought she'd at least send us old ones that they had down there, but they were still in the boxes and we went out with them.

She had six dump trucks and I sent those to Davenport to get cobble rocks 'cause we needed large cobble rocks to draw. And I got on the phone with Ray Christensen and told him what I needed. He says, "I'll make arrangements. We'll get 'em for you, Al. Just get your trucks there, 'cause our trucks are trying to help our roads, too." So we sent the trucks there and they brought cobble rocks, and then the leak-detection crews started to work on the water systems and found the leaks, and people were able to go in and fix the leaks.

NB: And those leak-detection crews were from New York City, too?

AR: They were from New York City, yes. They came up here and responded. And it was nice to be able to do that. I guess now that it's over with, people worry. Well, they were grateful that the City helped, but now they wonder, "What's going to be the payback?" And that's not going to happen. The City's not going to expect a payback.

You know, the City has sat down and we're both committed to being partners and, you know, I don't think that'll be an issue. When we go back to the table to get the MOA [Memorandum of Agreement] fleshed out, it's business as usual and they don't expect anything from it. They helped us in just the same way we would try to help them in some matter if something happened. She [Marilyn Gelber] had the stuff at her fingertips and she was able to respond to the area quickly. And it was nice.

So that's a big attitude change over what it would have been four or five years ago.

VS: If the people with the attitudes that were shown in the draft regulations in 1989 were in the same position, I can't picture this help happening.

AR: It wouldn't have happened.

Track 13

Local Culture

NB: The other thing that amazes me is that we didn't just lie down and have New York City run over us. What happened this time? Why didn't it go the same way it went all the times before?

AR: I guess we had enough young blood over at the County Building. I don't know if you call us radicals or stirrers, but I guess there was just enough young blood to stir it up and get it going, and it made a difference.

You know, just because you don't like something doesn't mean you have to lay down, and basically the local people here are well laid back, but I think they're learning to not be so well laid back. And what really happened this time is that we weren't laid

back. We had just enough young blood over there to get up and say something, and that's basically all that happened. And then once we got the lead started, we were surprised at how many other towns in surrounding counties felt the same way. And we just all banded together, and it helped.

NB: Keep going.

AR: You have to look at the makeup of the Boards, too. A lot of the Board members are not really what I call local natives. There has been an influx of a different type of people. On the 19-member Board of Supervisors, myself and maybe three or four others are the only natives. The rest of them come from someplace else—Long Island or Westchester or someplace like that. You know, their father wasn't here and their father before that, and so forth. You know, they're people who came to the area.

NB: So they knew those techniques of standing up for themselves.

VS: It's interesting that the people we interviewed as being the Day One group—Clayton Brooks, Perry Shelton, and yourself—all have that long-time tie to the area.

AR: Perry actually came from Indiana. And I think Clayton came from Westchester County. He was displaced once before, Clayton was, when the reservoirs were built. He wasn't a native of the area—you know, a real native. I'm not sure about the Executive Board, but I think I'm the only one who's what local people really classify as a native. I mean, I guess I've been here since the boat came. [laughs] That's what people really classify as natives. I'm not sure about Georgie Lepke. I think she probably is a native person.

VS: How did you feel being the only native?

AR: Well, I'm not sure I should comment as being the only native, but it makes no difference to me. I just knew the area. I know the Catskills like the back of my hand. I don't think there's a mountain or a stream or a trail that I haven't been on. Again, I have to attribute that to my father's occupation. Of course, what really got him involved in it was probably his father and his uncles—living off the land at the time. If you'd seen our original home—what we call the Old Rose Homestead.

Fact is, my last name's spelled Rosa, but I guess it was originally spelled Rose, and fact is, the deed that I have to the property, which was from my grandfather, was transferred from Albert Rose to Alan Rosa and here he is my grandfather. You know, somehow the "e" got changed to an "a."

But to see the Old Homestead, where my camp is, it was amazing to see how these people lived back in those days. Two-room cabin, and a little barn with three or four cows and they had their pigs, with a wall put in the side of a bank so they couldn't get out. You know, they lived off the land. Pretty amazing.

NB: I'd really like to hear some old family stories.

AR: Well, I can remember my grandfather and my uncle Bill Hen talking about when they were both kids, probably 15-16 years old. My uncle Bill Hen loved to hunt bear. He was an avid bear hunter. And he got up early—I guess it was in the middle of November. There was probably a foot and a half of snow on the ground, and he decided he was going to check some bear holes and see if he could get a bear to bring back. That was a delicacy to them, you know. That was a treat. I would much rather have a nice roast pork, but that was the way it was. So he got up to go hunting early in the morning. And I can remember him telling the story.

It was late in the afternoon, and my grandfather had just gotten through the chores and he heard a heck of a rumble outside of their house, and he happened to go out and here was a bear in the apple tree. So here's my uncle way up on top of a mountain looking for a bear to bring home. My grandfather shoots the bear and hangs it up.

My uncle gets back, and of course he's the bear hunter and he's telling them there's no bear, they've all held up; and he says in all the holes that he checked there was no bear in 'em and it didn't look very good. And I guess my grandfather, being the subtle kind of a guy he was, just said, "Well, I just went down the road here and got one." He says, "I knew right where it was."

My uncle didn't believe him, but my grandfather took him around the house and there he had the bear hanging in the tree. So from there on, it was, "Who was the big bear hunter of the family." You know, these are the type of things that went on.

They visited a lot, too. You know, you'd walk down the end of the road, or the end of this log road—horse and buggy trail—to a neighbor's house. And that's what they did in those days. They didn't have TV or something like that. It was more personal.

You know, it's funny. My wife is from New Jersey. She graduated from Bergenfield High School. I was married once before, and my first wife passed on. My oldest one graduated from high school here about three years ago, and we go to the graduation class, and it was really hard for her to grasp that all the kids knew everybody in the entire school from K-12. There are 550 kids in school, where the school that my wife graduated from had, I think, over 750 kids just in her graduating class.

You know, it's these types of things. Today because there is television and there are things for you to do, we sit in front of this boob tube and it's maybe not the best.

You know, my wife says if I say I'm going someplace, she says, "You won't be back for three or four hours, because you're going to shoot the breeze." And it's true, you know. I'll go down the street or something and go in and everybody's talking, and that's how we visit today, because at night we don't go out and visit. So, it's

interesting the way things are done today and the way you are perceived by the outside. My wife, being an outsider, thinks that's pretty funny.

I had a fire meeting last night. Fire meetings are usually over by 8 o'clock. She says, "You won't be home by 8:30." She was right. It was 10:30 by the time I got home, because we get in there and we visit, you know. And that's what we do.

NB: When did your family come? Are there stories about when the first people came?

AR: My younger brother is trying to look back at the whole family history, and he's really the fellow to talk to. He's done a lot. My original ancestor that we've checked back as far as we can, I believe came in around the 1600s. He came to Rose Mountain, which is down below Pine Hill. And I guess he's buried there. But he would have been one of the great-grandfathers of the community.

And basically my great-grandfather, which was my grandfather's father, was a sawyer. He sawed in the sawmills for what they called the Allaben Lumber Company, and I guess they had large tracts of land that they called the Allaben Reserve, and he went from place to place and sawed lumber. They came up out of Shandaken. We have a lot of relations who lived in the Shandaken area. But he came up out of Shandaken and he moved into Arkville here.

They had a place up on the mountain someplace here by Pakatakan, and they had a saw mill, and then they moved up Dry Brook, where my brother now lives. It was my grandfather's place, and they had a sawmill down the river by the Dry Brook stream. And that was basically how we've been here as long as we have.

Fact is, our property was bought from the Allaben Reserve. My great-grandfather became ill, and died and my great-grandmother stayed there with my grandfather and his brothers and sisters. And that's how we ended up in Dry Brook.

NB: And your brother is a lawyer?

AR: I have one brother that's a lawyer. He has an identical twin brother, Gene, who is into computers and works for the Gilboa Power Authority. And he's the one who does the family research. Gene's been probably researching this for ten years, and eventually what I think he wants to do is write a book on the Rosa family.

On my mother's side, she was a Kittle, and I guess the Kittles were famous bridge builders at one time—you know, covered-bridge builders. I don't know too much about them, other than my grandfather was kind of a handyman type guy and his father built covered bridges. That's really about all I can tell you about my mother's side. We don't know too much about them.

NB: And where did they all come from originally?

AR: Originally, I believe we came from Scotland. And the Kittles came from Ireland.

NB: Interesting, because they talk about this being like the Troubles in Ireland. And the scenery here is very much like Scotland. I went to Scotland and when I came back, I kept seeing scenes that reminded me of Scotland.

AR: That's what they say.

VS: And some of the German settlers here said, "Oh, it looks just like Bavaria." So maybe we settle in places that look familiar.

I have two more questions, and this is going to cast back. I'd like to hear more about the fox hunting. My husband has talked about it.

AR: Who was your husband?

VS: Walter Meade.

AR: Oh, Walter Meade. Yeah, my father would have known Walter. He was quite a naturalist and an outdoorsman. He took a lot of pictures. A lot of beautiful pictures of animals. I'm into that, too, but nowhere's near the quality that he could do.

VS: Now that I've heard what your growing up was like, I wish that you could have talked to him about it, because that's how he grew up, too. Very much like that.

AR: Yup.

VS: And in a way, he taught me, so anytime anybody sends me to town, it's just like with Walt: "Oh, she won't be back for several hours." He taught me to visit, too. That serves a really important function.

AR: [laughs]

VS: That, and waving.

AR: Yup. You can always tell the locals' waves. I mean, they go like this [Alan raises his hand like a blessing]. And you can always tell somebody that's not a local. They do this, you know [flapping his hand]. Or they give you the finger.

VS: Or don't wave at all.

AR: Or don't wave at all.

Track 14

Local Knowledge

VS: You talked about how the people who were negotiating the regulations from the City eventually recognized that people from the watershed were regular people. Likewise the people from the Coalition who were negotiating with the people from the City recognized that they were regular people. Before that, you said that your own knowledge of the area—of the woods and of the streams—came into play. Was it hard to get folks from the City to recognize that knowledge as valid knowledge?

AR: I think Marilyn Gelber recognizes it. I'm not sure if other people from the City recognize it or not, because I'm a very quiet type person during those negotiations. What I end up doing is, when things get out of hand, I ask for a sidebar, and I take my little crew over and we get things hashed out. I speak directly through my attorney when we're in the negotiations—the Coalition's attorney, Dan Ruzow or Jeff Baker, whichever one at the time is there.

I don't believe it's up to me to burst in and say certain things unless I'm directed to by our attorney. So when things get out of hand, Dan always makes it a point to sit next to me, because he knows I am a little bit quiet and timid. In fact, he made the comment that it took a good while to get me to say anything during the course of those meetings. I'd always whisper in his ear and he'd have to express it for me. You know, that's the way I work.

I'm not sure if Mark Hoffer or Elizabeth St. Clair or Jeanne Fox knows exactly how much I have put into this thing. Tony Bucca and Georgie Lepke and Clayton Brooks and Perry Shelton know how much I've put into this thing, and I try to be a gentleman through the whole thing. I'm not a guy who goes nuts. I only did that once [laughs], but that was in the Governor's office.

NB: I'd love to hear that story.

AR: I go through Dan Ruzow. I think Dan recognizes that I have the knowledge, and I think Marilyn does. I'm not sure of the question.

VS: Well, maybe it's based on my experience with Walt, who also had a great deal of . . .

AR: . . . knowledge.

VS: And he was basically self-taught, and he'd run into other people and they'd say, "Oh, what college did you go to? Well, you must have advanced degrees in natural history or ecology or biology or wildlife biology." And on the one hand, he was flattered; but on the other hand, he could tell at different times he had to justify his knowledge with them.

AR: I never felt I had to justify my knowledge about it, simply because when they got going about certain things, I could point to them where they were absolutely wrong. You know, we talk about the water quality getting worse, which is absolutely non-factual. We've been good stewards of the land. Local people have been good stewards of this land. The water quality has actually improved.

Years ago when I was growing up, everybody had a farm. I mean, just about everybody had some kind of a little farm. They had 10 or 12 cows. Today, I think, here in the Town of Middletown, I've got maybe three or four working farms left. And basically the farmers don't let their cattle in the water. They're fenced out of the water. But when I was growing up, everybody had cows. I can remember certain times when the Bragg Hollow Stream would just run red from the cows being in the stream. That doesn't happen today. That's a pretty clear stream.

And that's what really contributes a lot to the pollution. I mean, we don't have the cows and dairy farming and the farming process that we had, you know, 50 years ago or 45 years ago. So, water quality has improved. And they have no data to say it has gotten worse. We had no benchmarks. To look at water quality, you have to establish a benchmark and then you have to put something in place and then look at it to see where it comes on the benchmark before you can establish anything as far as water quality goes. And to me, that was just common sense.

The story of when I blew up in the Governor's office, or actually it was Michael Finnegan's office, it was with EPA—I guess it was with Jeanne Fox—and the whole thing was over impervious surfaces. And we had talked about this. It seemed like every time we had a meeting, this was one of the last things we had to come back to because we just couldn't agree on impervious surfaces. And EPA's thinking was ridiculous. Just ridiculous.

And I said right out: You know, I can understand like here where the A&P store is in Margaretville, when they plow the parking lot, they plow the snow into the river, and yes, there are some water quality problems when you do that. But just to make an outright ban on impervious surfaces, that you can't do anything unless you're 100 feet from a watercourse, is absolutely ridiculous. Now, a watercourse, mind you, is anything that's, you know, a ditch that water will run through certain times of the year. Maybe only once a year, but it's defined as a watercourse.

I ended up getting in really a pretty good argument with Jeanne Fox—I believe is what her name was—and people commented that they could see the veins come out of my neck because I was getting rather irritable with her.

I says, "Well, how can you blame this on the people in the Catskills?" And she says, "Well, how can you blame it on the people of New York? We're trying to protect the rain that's coming out of the sky and polluting the water because it doesn't have time to run through vegetation before it gets to the stream."

And finally I says to her, “What do you do from mid-November to mid-April?” She says, “What do you mean?” I says, “Well, anybody that’s in the Catskills, usually from mid-November to mid-April, the whole damn Catskills is impervious surface because the ground’s frozen.” She made the comment, “Well, anybody knows that it doesn’t rain in the Catskills. It snows.” And I says, “Well, isn’t that what we trying to protect? Isn’t the same stuff that you’re trying to tell me that’s coming out of the rain, in the snow?”

And that ended up being quite a conversation, and finally got stopped because she was wrong. I mean, when the ground’s frozen, it doesn’t matter what the precipitation is. It’s going to end up eventually in the stream, and it’s just like if you’ve got two feet of snow and the ground’s frozen underneath it. When the snow melts, it’s going to run into the stream. Simple as that. I mean, you don’t have to be a rocket scientist to understand that.

So the impervious surface thing has been watered down. I’m still not happy with it, but I guess if the Coalition wants to live with it, I can live with it. But I just think an impervious surface rule is absolutely ridiculous.

Track 15

Land Acquisition

VS: I know what they mean about veins standing out on your neck, because when I met you at that meeting, it was a day, or a couple of days, after the City had revealed that it did indeed have an acquisition plan. And up to that point, they had been denying it; and, yes, you were quiet, but you sat there shaking your head.

AR: Well, what happened was, Clayton Brooks and Georgie Lepke and myself became pilot towns in trying to develop a pilot program that we thought would eventually be implemented at a town level, and be able to not have the City regulations, and that would protect us from having land acquisition take place within our town.

Well, come to find out with all the work that we put into the pilot program, they came around the back door. Al Appleton came around the back door, and he had to know it. He wasn’t up front with us. He wasn’t honest with us. He announced the land acquisition project. And that just devastated all of us. I mean, why did we go through all this work and why did we get all of these community people involved in setting up what we called CACs, which were . . . I’m trying to remember what CAC stood for.

NB: Citizen Action Committee?

AR: Something of that nature. And basically these people came together and helped us draw up a plan, which we thought was what was going to happen, because Al

Appleton led us to believe that this was a way that we could get around regulation by New York City. He really had no intention of doing it at all. So yeah, my veins stood out.

VS: I was glad to see it. Because it was really important to me not only that whenever I heard the Coalition quote, it was what I was hearing in my own town and also what I was thinking, but then to also see that someone was going to stand up as strongly as you were.

AR: Dean Gitter had put together an upstate-downstate partnership thing that I was involved in, but finally I gave up. There was no sense in talking, because what was happening was the group said that they were not taking a position, but in reality they wanted large-scale land acquisitions. That was their position. Yet they didn't want to admit that that was their position. Every time I mentioned the condemnation procedure, they didn't want to address it. They didn't want to talk about it.

Eric Goldstein, whom I became good friends with, basically wanted to see the large-scale land acquisition program. Whether it's through condemnation or whatever, he wanted to see some kind of a large-scale land acquisition. He was honest enough to state that the land acquisition should be designed to stop development. So, I mean, he was honest enough to tell us that. The other players there, I'm not sure. They weren't so vocal about it. I like somebody being honest with me, to tell me, "This is the way it is," and Eric did that.

NB: So they would have tried to not have any people here and not have any development. First, no development, and then pretty soon there's no people.

AR: Only the very, very wealthy would be able to afford to be here.

NB: And that's not the people who have been here for 200 years.

AR: No, I'm afraid not.

VS: I think if we can gossip a little here about the partnership . . .

NB: Sure, gossip is great.

VS: When I discovered that that group had an agenda, I was so concerned before I even went, I called Ken Markert and I said, "Is this group okay?" He said, "Sure, go. I'm going. Let's go see."

And Tony Bucca and I were sitting next to each other at a time when we were getting the drift about land acquisition as a way of preventing development and preventing population, and finally, first one of us and then the other, said, "Aren't we talking about depopulation here?" The supposedly neutral moderator flagged us down and

said, “Don’t talk about that!” And that’s when I realized there was an agenda. I think I went to one more meeting. I think I was only at one meeting when you were, and then I stopped.

AR: Allen Zerkin was some kind of a person who dealt with mediation and ran these types of meetings, and you know, I like Allen okay, but it just seemed to me he was being orchestrated by someone or something. And whether he was or was not, it was just a feeling I had and I couldn’t accept it. I just couldn’t accept it. I don’t know whether it was actually going on or not, but I felt that someone was paying him to conduct these meetings and to orchestrate them. And I don’t know if that was true or not, but that was just the feeling that you get when you’ve lived here all your life: You become very suspicious about people who are all of a sudden taking a role in trying to run a meeting. I became very suspicious of the whole thing, and I just bowed out. I couldn’t attend those meetings anymore, because I could just see how things were progressing, and it wasn’t something I wanted to take part in.

Track 16

Hopes for the Future

NB: This has been a great interview. Is there anything we haven’t asked you that you can think of saying? What are your hopes? Let’s put it this way: your hopes and fears.

AR: We have a lot of vacant buildings. We have a lot of vacant businesses because we can’t think of businesses to put into these places. I guess my hope is to take the buildings that we have existing and be able to start looking at filling these buildings and these businesses up with something that can happen for the area.

If my kids or someone else’s kids from the area want to live here, my hope is that they’re going to have some kind of an opportunity to make a living and to stay here. Not, mind you, get rich. But to be able to make a living and live here. Because just living here to me is being rich in one way or the other.

If you have lived down towards the City, I think people understand what I’m talking about there. It’s pretty amazing the different lifestyle it is. You take a $50,000 or $60,000-a-year job, and you have to live down there and put up with hustle and bustle. Just getting out of your driveway can be a day’s work. To me, I don’t want to have any part of that. I would rather live up here. To me, that’s richer if I can support myself and my family here than having that type of a job and putting up with that on a day-to-day basis.

We’re not farmers anymore, and the logging industry is not too good anymore, either, so I think we’ve gotta think about something else that we can export besides our kids; and since we are exporting clean water, I think that’s what we’ve got to build

upon. And maybe we can get the City to hire local kids instead of bringing in people from Timbuktu. Maybe these are jobs and opportunities for our local kids someday.

NB: Sounds like a reasonable vision.

AR: Right. And I've mentioned this at some of our meetings.

VS: I think that's a real challenge, though. I guess part of the reason I'm focusing on local knowledge is that people in Roxbury have the same perception of the missing younger generation. And if we send them out to get the training so they qualify for those jobs, chances are that half of them won't come back because they'll get a job offer somewhere else.

NB: Maybe we'll give them the training here at SUNY Delhi. I know they're already thinking about that sort of thing—the Watershed Institute.

VS: If we can. But also, kids who grow up here, if they grow up around the woods, they have the kind of solid experiential common sense knowledge that can be so important in doing these jobs.

AR: The animal rights groups—they're so uneducated. One of the reasons why the rabies epidemic was so severe here in Delaware County was because they've killed the fur industry. And one of the reasons why the Pepacton Reservoir has such a problem is because they won't allow trapping on the property and the animal rights group would put such pressure on City officials that they wouldn't allow this to happen, anyway. But this does two things: It spreads disease and pollutes their water supply. And now you're taking away a valid industry that the local residents used to profit from because there's no market for furs anymore.

When I was a kid, I couldn't wait to go trapping. I mean, I trapped the mink, and boy, when I got a mink, I was right in heaven. There was a $25 bill. And when I was 10 or 12 years old, a $25 bill was as good as $200 is today.

You gotta somehow start figuring out how we can educate these special interest groups. Another thing is, people get all upset about deer hunting. This year, I'm feeding about eight deer. In fact, I've got 'em named. One's called Buck . . . and Shorty. You can just feed so many deer and then you can't afford to feed them anymore. I can actually go out and pet Bucky and Shorty. You can hand-feed them, and my wife's got pictures of me doing that. I'm an avid hunter and I've been in the woods, but I love animals.

But hunting is necessary. If anybody has ever witnessed a deer starving, they would just shake their head in disbelief. It's much more humane to have a hunting season, shoot some of the deer crop off to keep them from starving, and this year has been particularly hard. We had deep snow a week before deer season right straight

through until we had this flood. And before that, we had the drought, so all the browsing is gone.

And you know, there's nothing wrong with hunting, but people have got to be educated about that. DEC is not doing things wrong by having special seasons, and maybe having a doe season here and there, but what you have with DEC is sometimes they don't listen to the locals who tell you that, "Okay, you gotta back off on this and put something more on this."

Right now, we've got a problem with turkeys because they eat most of the deer feed. You know, it's nothing to see 50 or 60 turkeys in one field running along behind the manure spreader. So instead of having a $2 fee for a permit for turkeys, they might better drop the $2 fee; and maybe if they need more revenue, when you get your small-game license, just pay an extra buck on that. Forget this $2 fee, because we've got too many turkeys right now. And these are all things that we need to really sit down and get educated on and work on for the area to work.

When I hear about these animal rights groups against trapping and so on, I can't agree with them. They're actually hurting these animals and hurting the ability of managing your land rather than helping.

VS: When you speak of educating, you say we've got to educate the animal rights groups, we've got to educate DEC, we've got to educate agencies from the City. Does this education that takes place outside school walls take place in meetings?

AR: Well, I don't know how. I'm not a very good educator, I guess. I don't know how you would do this. I mean, again, you don't need a PhD to be able to explain this to people. Basically, a lot of the people who probably have degrees in this really don't have the real background that someone who is brought up in these hills has. And again, that is a local function that could take place, if it was allowed to, and maybe built upon. And I guess I would have to leave that . . . I haven't really thought about how that could be done.

VS: But you've done it. Getting New York City to sit at the table and talk.

AR: Yeah, on one aspect.

VS: A major educational achievement, I think.

AR: I can't take the credit for it. It was a lot of help from a whole bunch of people, and that's what we need to do to continue to make the dialogue work.

PERRY SHELTON

Chairman of the Coalition of Watershed Towns
(1991-1997)

PERRY SHELTON	Chairman of the Coalition of Watershed Towns (1991–1997) Supervisor, Town of Tompkins (1958–1993) Delaware County Board member (1958-1993) Delaware County Budget Director (1970–1993)
Interviewed by:	Nancy Burnett
Location:	Mr. Shelton's home in Trout Creek, New York
Date:	February 20, 1996
Total time:	66 minutes

Track 1

How Perry Shelton Became Involved in the Watershed Negotiations

NB: Would you identify yourself and talk about how you got involved in the Watershed Coalition?

PS: My name is Perry Shelton, and I've been a supervisor in the Town of Tompkins for 36 years and on the Board of Supervisors for a like number of years. I was County Budget Director for 23 years and I was involved in various other things.

But how I got involved in the Coalition of Watershed Towns was that New York City came out with these proposed regulations late in 1990. I don't think anybody had much prior notice. I think it hit us like a ton of bricks when it finally did.

So we were setting there wringing our hands at a Board meeting one day when we happened to have two attorneys in the room from Albany who had had prior experience with DEC [Department of Environmental Conservation] matters and in fact they were working on a lawsuit for the County of Delaware against DEC over our landfill. The subject of these regulations came up, and one of the lawyers said, "Why don't all of you towns band together?"

Well, you know, I seized right on that because for years we had been involved in lawsuits with the City. We have had two lawsuits with the City of New York during the time I've been Town Supervisor, and both of them lasted for seven years. The lawsuits were over the assessment on land that they own in the town—which is one quarter of this town that they own.

So I always thought if we'd get together and help each other, when one town got sued, the rest would come to the defense and so on. So the minute the lawyer said that, I said, "Well, you know, this is something I've been wanting to do for years!" and there was a little talk that went on and others thought it was a good idea, too. So

finally, I don't remember whether it was me or someone else, but somebody made a motion that we have the Planning Director contact all the towns in the watershed and see if they'd be interested in forming the coalition, or get together and form some kind of a group.

And so, he sent out letters, and the response was 100%. I mean, everybody said yes. We set up a meeting—our first meeting—in Margaretville Central School, and there was no big argument about it—it was a very short discussion.

Obviously what discussion we had revolved around the regulations and what they were going to do to everybody and the towns and the people and so on, and right that day we more or less formed a coalition and we come up with an Executive Committee. Not all the towns happened to be represented that day, but we knew they were all interested.

Anyway, we picked delegates and so on. I didn't have any intention of getting involved in it—I just wanted to see it get going—because I was in about my 34th or 35th year on the County Board, and I was getting ready to retire; it was long past time. I think mostly because of my involvement with the City and the lawsuits and the fact that most of the Cannonsville Reservoir is in the Town of Tompkins—anyway—I said, "Well, you know, I'll help out for a while." So once we got into it, there was no turning back, I guess.

Track 2

Negotiations with New York City

PS: It just got to be such an important effort as we really begin to find out what the regulations really said. And we began to try to get talks with the City of New York and, you know, we found out that most of the people from the City of New York—at least in DEP [Department of Environmental Protection]—didn't like us any better than we liked them. I've had the former Commissioner tell me his staff said to him, "Why do we even talk to them people up there? Just do what you want to do and let 'em go!" DEP people thought they should just do what they want to do.

But it went on for about three years with that Commissioner—2 ½ years, something like that—and then the administration in New York City changed, so that meant we had to begin negotiations from the beginning again. Up to that time we'd had just dozens and dozens of meetings—I wouldn't even want to guess how many. I'm sure we had well over 200 in the five years. And we've had well beyond 200 when you consider the meetings we've had in the last few months with the State of New York involved.

But we had meetings once or twice a month in Margaretville, and we met all over the watershed and went to New York and so on and so forth. We thought we were getting close to an agreement with Commissioner Appleton, and then, as I said, the administration changed, so we had to go back and educate a new commissioner.

And that took a year or so. But she [Commissioner Marilyn Gelber] was obviously much more forthright. She sort of come up here with the right idea, and right from the beginning one of the first things she said was, "I assure you that I'll never pull any surprises on you, and I hope you won't pull any surprises on me." So, you know, we got along really good, with that kind of an understanding.

She told me, "You know, when I took this job, I was told by Mayor Giuliani that my number one job is to get this problem with the upstate communities settled on the reservoirs." And to avoid filtration of their system.

Like I said, that took a year or so. Then along comes the new state administration, and unlike the former one, they were willing to get in there and help us get the thing settled. I guess they had committed to some people—maybe the City, too, and probably Senator Cook and some of them—that they would try to help us get the issue resolved. So then we had to educate them because they didn't know any more about the situation than anybody else had when we first started in.

But I guess maybe you could say they were fast learners—or faster learners. They took ahold of it and they really got intense in the talks. And I think the talks started along probably in March, or maybe a little later, more like April or May, of 1995. And they were going to be concluded by August 15, but they never could meet that deadline. And then they set up a deadline of October 15, and they still didn't meet that one. And I can't remember, but I guess it was down around the third of November when we finally went to New York to announce the conceptual agreement. So things did move a lot faster once the Governor's Office got involved in it.

Track 3

Proposed Regulations

NB: Would you give us a short summary of what the regulations involved?

PS: Well, the regulations was a thick book. There's no way of giving a short version of it, and I wouldn't be able to if I had to, but some of the most troublesome ones were especially for farmers, who couldn't spread manure within 100 foot of a stream or watercourse. Well, when you get into these hills and valleys in Delaware County and the watershed, it would almost rule out everything.

They had to berm up around the streams and all other kinds of things around the farm and so on, and then you couldn't build within 250 to 500 feet of a watercourse. Again, in these narrow valleys and so on, if you couldn't build within 250 to 500 feet of a watercourse or a stream, you aren't going to build, unless you build on top of the mountain somewhere. And so those were some of the most troublesome regulations. Obviously they also involved runoff, salt, petroleum products, household products, you name it. They had everything including the kitchen sink, I think, in there.

Whoever wrote them had to be somebody who just didn't have any conception of what they were doing. Because you wouldn't have been able to live in the watershed if all those regulations got put through. And I think probably nobody could have been more surprised than they were when they found out that they weren't going to be able to do that without a fight or at least [laughs] some good arguments.

And so that was really where we started out. Of course, we started out trying to learn about these things—like I said, various viruses and so on in the water—and we were fortunate in that we had this guy Ken Markert, who I'm sure everybody's heard of, who was absolutely excellent. He had a degree in biology and he had a degree in planning, and he's just a guy who could take ahold of anything and run with it.

And then we also had Rick Weidenbach from Soil & Water [Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District], who was another guy who has a really great background in that sort of thing. And those two guys were really our main artillery, I guess you could say—or they were certainly the people we leaned on to give us advice and to argue with the City. Obviously, you know, I could say, "You can't do that. It's going to devastate us." But that wasn't a very good argument—you had to tell them *why* it's gonna.

So I'll tell you, after a short time we had the City thinking somewhat different—no question. But, of course, they still obviously haven't given up the idea that they would like to see this become a park. I don't think everybody in New York City has given up that idea. Maybe only animals would be able to live here. Only I guess they wouldn't let the animals stay here because they wouldn't be able to control them.

Track 4

Condemnation

PS: And, of course, when we did begin to make some headway, and we thought we were close to an agreement with Appleton, he pulled out of his hat this idea of buying 80 thousand acres of land. Well, you know, that stopped everything right dead in its tracks, because that's what everybody was so mad about originally: the amount they took and the way they took it—especially in the way they treated the people. I could

tell you a couple of horror stories, but other people, that lived them, can tell them much better.

NB: Well, I want to hear some of them from you. I think you, particularly, have been right in the middle of that.

PS: Well, for instance, Mrs. Lewis, who lives right up here—you know, they had large holdings and so on. And when the City finally wanted the land, the Lewises didn't give up easy because they didn't want to give up that land that his grandfather had practically built from scratch, and the buildings and so on.

NB: Wait. We should start back. We should say that this time, the City wanted to take the land by eminent domain. The Lewises had no choice.

PS: What the City really did when they first started buying land, when they started talking to people was to deal with the willing sellers. And obviously, like it would be anywhere else, if you went into Unadilla, Sidney, or anywheres and started buying homes, there'd be a lot of people lining up to sell their homes. When they came into these areas, there was a certain number of people—not a lot, but there was several people—who, for one reason or another, were anxious to sell and get out.

So they got those. And then they offered pretty good prices, you know. This was just before, unfortunately, the price of land went through the roof when they first started buying land, about 1955, 1956.

And then maybe they go to some prominent individual in the town and give them a really great price for the land and in some way entice them to sell, and other people in town begin to consider selling. Their neighbor sold, and then they begin to feel insecure: "How long before it's going to be me? Maybe I might just as well be looking and get rid of it at a price and not have to fight a lawsuit for years and so on and so forth."

But there was certain people—and amongst them was the Lewises—who refused to sell their land. They didn't want to sell their land. They lived at the upper reaches of the reservoir. Their land was amongst the last land that the City did acquire. About as far up the Trout Creek stream as they went.

But when they got ready for it, they just come in and they nailed up these here 18 x 20 posters or whatever they may have been—good-sized posters—which just said, "This land now belongs to the City of New York with the use of eminent domain." And in most cases they gave them very short notice to get out.

Well, what that amounted to—and especially to another family I can tell you about—was they had to start scratching for a place to live. And they had people—people that

lived on these farms, people that ran the stores, the post office, the machine shops—that had to start finding some other place.

But one other lady—she's a widow now—has told me about their farm, which was right down near where the wall of the dam is, just above the wall of the dam, down in the valley. And, of course, that's one of the places that they wanted to start working. They wanted to start doing borings—you know, test borings and so on, and get ready to work on building the impoundment.

So the family didn't want to sell out, really. It was another family farm that didn't want to sell out. They had hoped to live there the rest of their life, obviously. And they weren't much more than probably in their 40s or something like that. And so, you know, New York City finally just did the same thing with them. They just took it and said, "This is ours by eminent domain." And give 'em a short time to get out.

Well, that meant that they had to go find a farm—because they didn't want to quit farming—so that meant they had to start out looking for farms. Obviously, other people were looking for farms who had been driven out already, or had left or whatever. And they had to go clear up around South New Berlin to find a place, which is quite a long ways off. That means moving everything.

But the bad part of it was when the City took land by eminent domain and the case was going to go to court before the Commissions, then the family only got a certain amount, I guess, of the assessed valuation of the property, which probably wouldn't even make a down payment on a farm. And I don't know if they did, but let's assume it had a mortgage on the farm. I'm sure they wasn't able to buy the other one, you know. They had to go there and borrow money to buy a farm. So then here they are with two places and I don't know how long it took 'em but it was a long time for the Commissions to finally settle their claim, and they got their money.

And those are just some of the cases. Somewheres around here I've got something that [state Senator] Charlie Cook had where some woman wrote about it. You know, that would practically bring tears to your eyes to read it. This woman went upstairs. She'd been there all her life on the farm. Born and brought up there. And she just didn't want to leave, and the people from the City came to tell them they're going to have to leave or whatever and she run upstairs and wouldn't talk to them and cried and so on. Practically went beside herself. And it was things like that that were in our minds during the negotiations. Obviously, like I said, there were some people who were glad to get out. But so many people, especially people that had roots in the town for years and years, did not want to leave. And it made it tough on them, there's no question.

As I said, the Lewises I don't think was much different. They moved up to Trout Creek and they built a great big barn but unfortunately the soil up here is nowheres near as good as it was in the valley. Just about all of those farms the City took were river

valley. Because that's what they bought was the river valleys. They bought the mountains, too, to protect themselves, but they bought all of the best land. Every foot of river valley in the Town of Tompkins. And of course up the Trout Creek valley, too, which wasn't as good as the rivers but was much better than going on top of a mountain somewheres to try to farm it. So there was an awful lot of bitterness. As I said, some people maybe didn't need to be so bitter. But, again, everybody has their own feelings. So really, from that point on people upstate didn't trust New York City.

And, of course, already the Pepacton Reservoir had been built. Many people were driven out of there. In fact, some of them came to this area and bought a farm and they had to get out. In fact, one of them lives over in the Town of Masonville now. So we seen 'em get run out of Pepacton and you see 'em get run out of here. And the City fought the financial settlement for land that was taken by eminent domain. Once land went to condemnation, New York City sort of just fought the settlement to the last breath, seemed like, and held the people up. And then, even when the Commission would set a price, they even took many of those cases to court. In fact, I think both of the ones I described ended up in the courts.

NB: Who was the person who went to Masonville who had come from the Pepacton?

PS: I think their name is Paul.

NB: Still there now?

PS: I think so. And I know there's others, but that's the only one I can think of. As I understand it— and the older folks may not be alive anymore —they live out on the Beech Hill section. Seems like their name was Harold Paul or something like that.

NB: So I hadn't really realized that New York City bought the land when they initially came in but, as they whittled it down, they then condemned the holdouts.

PS: That's what I said: They had this method. First they come in and said, "If you want to sell your land, here we are." And there was some people who for one reason or another were glad to sell and get out, and prices that they were paid were not that bad if you wanted to sell. If you didn't want to sell, you didn't want to put a price on it.

And I remember another person—I'd just as soon not mention the name—who worked in the creamery there, and they had four or five children, something like that. I'm sure he didn't have a very good financial background, and he had a house that was not very valuable, obviously. But he finally had to get out. And I think in the end he got $6–7,000 for that house, and he didn't get any part of that right away, you know, he only got that small part. And he had to go to Walton or someplace to find a home to live in. And I don't really know whatever happened to him. I think he's passed away, too, by now, but this was tragic and I'm sure that's not the only case that happened like that. That just happens to be one that I know of.

I think that they took somewhere in the neighborhood of 50 farms. Now, that sounds pretty high, but they took quite a lot of them, there's no question about that. And they bought out the Johnny Brook section. There was probably half a dozen farms up in there, maybe more. They simply bought 'em all out and closed it off.

Track 5

Roads

PS: You know, you always learn the hard way. One of the first things they did was come to the Town Board to talk about replacement of the highways in the town. Although there were county and state highways, they talked about replacing them. Some of them were town highways, too. Anyway, they wanted to just build one road where we had roads on both sides of the river. They only wanted to end up building one road.

Well, we didn't really see any harm in it at the time, not realizing what they were going to do. And when they did that, they just built up one side of the reservoir and then switched over to the other and, as I say, that one section—hundreds of acres—they just closed it off. Nothing there.

NB: Now, why would they have even had a case for coming up and building a road?

PS: They had to replace the highways.

NB: They already owned land up here, did they?

PS: They had to replace Route 10, for instance. The courts made the City replace those roads because they put 'em under water, obviously. So they had to build new roads. And then there was the other roads—county and town roads. We had some on the back side of the river that were town roads. Route 10, of course, was all state highway all the way up through. So they rebuilt Route 10 and gave it to the State. The State took it back.

In the Town of Tompkins, they never replaced any roads for the Town except where they had a certain amount of land that extended down to the reservoir. What the City built here, from Rock Royal to Route 10 or where this accident just happened over here where all these people got killed, is I think about a mile and a tenth of road. It was the way they went in behind Rock Rift to get into the Chase Brook and so on. So they had to rebuild those roads, and they own them. They own the road from Rock Royal to Cannonsville.

NB: So this was after they had taken the land and flooded it, then they had to rebuild the roads.

PS: Well, they built them before, but after they bought the land, they had to replace the highways, and they were obviously replaced as they went along. And they take care of them now, or are supposed to, but for 25 to 30 years they did *nothing* to them roads—only since we got in this hassle with the City, because every time Appleton said something to me that he didn't like, I reminded him of something that I didn't like. And the potholes—you could hardly drive down that road and not hit a pothole. I don't care how much driving around you try to do, how much you try to avoid the potholes.

And so that was one of the first things we got out of this. They hired the County to replace—well, what they did was they chewed that road up and put it back down and put another top on and so on. But that's the first time that they ever did anything to the roads except to patch them occasionally. And it got so they didn't do that. They said they didn't have any money to buy patching.

Track 6

Reaching Agreement

PS: But I think this is all part of what's good about us talking to the City and having an Agreement. Now we talk to each other. Mrs. Gelber, like I said, calls me up and talks to me. I call her up anytime I want to. She never refused to take a call.

She's been here to the house, you know. And she's visited with other people in their homes and so on. She come to the fair one year—to the Walton Fair—and, of course, nobody recognized her. She was in dungarees and so on. And she spent many times upstate. I wouldn't even want to guess how many.

Of course, Appleton, too, spent a lot of time up here in the country. But Appleton kind of fell for the farm program. Obviously, there was some reason why he was thinking of that. Every farm he could keep in operation wouldn't be subdivided and have more homes on it. And he didn't want the farms subdivided. Plus—I guess you got to give the devil their dues—they probably, like the rest of us, like to see a nice farm somewhere once in a while.

So the farm program is, to the best of my knowledge, going good and they've done some good things, and I think it's helped the farmers. My brother's place is right down here. His son runs it, but they're talking about doing $74,000 worth of work for him, and various things. You know, the barnyard, and the pad for the barn cleaner, and some crop rotation and things. They like to see corn put into grass to keep the soil from eroding. You don't get the runout from grass field that you do from a cornfield. So that seems to be going good. You know, I hope that once we get this going, it's really going to be a shot in the arm for the area, and it's certainly going to be good for the City, too.

NB: Talk about how it happened that, after all of that history of bad feeling, you ended up talking like friends?

PS: Well, to begin with, obviously, we had something they wanted and we had all the reason in the world not to sit by and take the kind of regulations and so on. So after we got together and we talked and we got to know each other, you know—I don't think I ever heard of a Commissioner of DEP ever coming up here except till Appleton came up here. And he got so he was up here and he'd stay late into the night and go home. The same way with Mrs. Gelber. She stays up here late at night and drives back to the City after dark and so on, if need be.

And, you know, you get to know people. We met in Kingston, we met in the Hotel Neville, at resorts, at Cooperative Extension places, all around the area. And we'd have meetings with sometimes 50, 60, 70 people setting around a table. Most of 'em were listeners or people who were observing, but the City would come with maybe 15 or 20 people. And just about every one of those probably would have done us in if they could. And Appleton told me himself—you know, I've already said this—that many of them said to him, "Why do you even bother to talk to them people? You don't have to listen to them."

But, anyway, I think he gradually sort of got rid of some of them people. And I think Mrs. Gelber soon found out who her friends were, and she sort of came up with a new team.

NB: Those old DEP people felt like they could just put in the regulations.

PS: Well, they got away with it before. So they didn't think there was going to be any problem this time, and they didn't think that they should have to consult with us, and they didn't think that we couldn't do anything about it. But, as I said, Mrs. Gelber pretty much assembled a completely—yes, almost an entirely—new team. And as soon as she found out the people that had a bad attitude toward upstate—because she recognized the fact that some people *did* have a bad attitude—she got rid of them. And I think a big thing was when they got up here and saw what conditions really are, their attitudes changed. You can set down in New York City— like us setting down here and trying to make regulations for New York City. You know, how much more foolish could you be than to think that you can set up some kind of program that New York City should do?

And so they found out we didn't have horns or anything, either, I guess, and we found out they didn't have horns, so it just got to be we began to trust each other. But it really changed considerably with Mrs. Gelber — Commissioner Gelber. She was just an altogether different person. We had some pretty pointed exchanges with Appleton and some of the others early on.

NB: That's right, you were just talking about when he suddenly sprang the idea of acquiring 80 thousand acres of land.

PS: Well, you know, he dropped it like it was a soft-, a hard-boiled egg, maybe, and it wouldn't bust or something. We hadn't heard a word about it. Then the first thing you think about is this old business of condemnation. That's what upset this gal up in Middletown there so bad. Or up in Colchester, I guess. And other people, too. Many people had a real fear: "They're going to come in and condemn my land."

Of course, that's one of the hardest nuts we had to crack: condemnation. We talked and talked and talked and talked about that. And I think probably, you know, it never really got completely settled until the State of New York, you know, the Governor's Office stepped in. The Governor didn't involve himself much, except maybe in the background, but he had about three attorneys there: Mike Finnegan, I think, was his main attorney, and Nick Garlick, and then they had a lady attorney, Erin Crotty, who was great. Well, they all were great, for that matter, but she was really great. And they really worked, and they never got upset too much, I don't think, with the City or with us. They always tried to let whatever was said be said, and let us sort of work it out ourselves. I have little doubt that somewhere along the line the Governor's Office put some pretty strong propositions up to the City.

Track 7

Economic Development

PS: I think what's coming out of this program, if it's fully implemented will be good for us. If we can't do something for ourselves now, nobody else is going to be able to help us. Because with $75 million in economic development we can do a lot.

I once thought what if we had $5 million? I used to be chairman of the Delaware County Industrial Development Agency. And we've tried to put together many projects, where if we could have got ahold of $50 thousand, it would have made the difference in getting that small business or something going. So I just can see all kinds of things that we could have done with $5 thousand. We're going to get $75 million—the Governor's Office has thrown in $15 million more in in-kind services and programs and so on.

And one of the first things I used to say, because I went through it with industrial development, was when we had a prospect here and we was trying to work with somebody, one of the first things we had to do was go to Binghamton to get some help. And maybe you get 'em for one day and then they're off to some other county or to Chenango or Otsego or wherever. And so I just said, "You know, what we need is an Office for the Catskills." Because when you take all the Catskills, part of them

would be in the Kingston office, part of them in the Albany office, the rest of them in Binghamton. We need one place where we can go.

I just thought about economic development. But now they're going to have an office and it's going to be staffed and it's already up in operation in Delhi. DED [Department of Economic Development], DEP [Department of Environmental Protection], DEC [Department of Environmental Conservation], DOH [Department of Health], DOT [Department of Transportation]— the whole alphabet, I guess. Anything. It's sort of what they come to call one-stop shopping. If you wanted to make an application to open a factory or a new treatment plant or whatever, you could go there and pretty much in that one office get just about everything taken care of.

The office is temporarily in Delhi. I hope that it gets moved into the center of the Catskills, because this is too far to one side. I want to see it somewhere like Margaretville or somewhere where it's pretty central to the watershed, because we—the Coalition up to this point—have become a very close-knit outfit. I never dreamed that I'd know the people that I know down in these other towns and all. I'd never had a chance to meet them. And every one of them are no different than we are, you know. And we just come to be a pretty close outfit. And the one thing that I want to see is fairness. I want to make sure everybody gets the same shot at this money. The same shot at whatever it may be.

Obviously, in some towns like the Town of Tompkins, for instance, there's not a lot of opportunity for us to get a factory, a business, something big—although there's no reason why we couldn't. We got industry right down here in the old creamery building that hires, I guess, 25 or 30 people. And the kind of things that I look forward to seeing all through the watershed is small business. I'd like to see some high-tech things get in here. There's no reason why they can't, with the communication systems that they have today. But, you know, as I said, I want to see everybody have equal access and an equal shot to whatever grants we can come up with.

Track 8

Septic Systems

PS: You know, DEP is going to 22 small hamlets like Trout Creek and Bloomville and Delancey and Hamden and different ones throughout the watershed, Fleischmanns. They're going to build something like a community septic system. It won't be a treatment plant in the sense that Walton has one, but everybody in Trout Creek would be hooked onto one community system. And the City has agreed to build them and pay for them. And the most that anybody that uses them will have to pay is $100 a year, to maintain them.

NB: There seems to be a real spirit of, "We'll help you do what's necessary to protect the water for us."

PS: These are all things I argued about. I even had Appleton sold on that. They agreed to fix any system in the watershed that's failing. That might get simmered down a little bit to only people with a low income. Because I told them there's any number of people that live throughout these valleys in this watershed who have septic systems that, because of the soil, barely work or don't work properly. And the people that have them can't afford to spend the kind of money it would take—$3,500 at the lowest to maybe $12,000 for an aboveground system. They just can't afford that.

And I said, "If you really want to protect your water, this is the sort of thing you should be doing: fixing up the failed systems. Help eEverybody get their system pumped once and then set up a program where you would do that every three years, every five years." I think five years, for most people—unless it was a big family and they had a small system or something—would be time enough. And then build these community waste treatment systems and so on. And, of course, they've agreed to this.

And if they want Walton to do something more on their septic system than what DEC, the State of New York, calls for, then they gotta pay for it. They gotta put it there, pay for it, and pay for the maintenance and the operation of it. They've agreed to do that, and it's right that they should.

We had some goals that we set out and we think we've accomplished most of them. And one of them was, "We do not bear any cost for the protection of water quality beyond what everybody else in the State of New York has to do. If you want something more than what the State of New York calls for, then you have to pay for it." And that's pretty much where we've landed. I think we've landed there and hopefully a little beyond.

They've agreed to build salt storage sheds. We're even getting our legal fees back. [laughs] But, you know, they're the ones that brought this on, not us. But if we hadn't have gotten our legal fees back, I wouldn't have went to bed crying over that. And we got a $3 million fund set up. If they challenge us on assessment, we can go to that $3 million fund to fight them with. And hopefully that'll make them think twice before they take us on.

Track 9

Assessments

PS: You take the Town of Tompkins here. They challenged us twice in seven years—and all during those 14 years or so I was Supervisor. How do you run a town when you're being threatened with the loss of a quarter of the revenue from City-owned property

when they own a quarter of the town? In other words, it's quite a big hunk of money that the other people in town would have had to put up if New York City could have got their taxes reduced to where they wanted them reduced.

They want to call all the land they own abandoned farm land. And, of course, we don't agree with that. They're using it to store water in, which is one of the things that we use to sustain life with—to say nothing of other uses, but certainly to sustain life with. So we think that that land . . . for instance, they built the Cannonsville Reservoir in the most natural place it could ever have been built. They couldn't have went down the valley hardly any further at all, and they wouldn't have been able to build a dam because then it opens up like this. There was a natural embankment there that they just built against. But how would they hold the water without the sides of the mountains? It seems to me they're just as important as the bottom was. But, anyway, they always used to throw it in our face: It's abandoned farmland. Well, you chased the people off. It wasn't abandoned by any stretch of the imagination. Beyond that, we felt that they should pay taxes on it the way we were getting taxes on it when it was being used for other uses.

Track 10

Jobs

PS: So I think we've come a long, long ways. I know there's always somebody who thinks we should have got more, but I just know one thing: We got a lot more than we ever started out asking for. But as we went along, we saw these problems the Agreement didn't address. I don't say that we should have thought of those things early on. It was things that we didn't think of.

The industrial development was another thing. I read about the Tug Hill Commission, which is up in the Adirondacks, in the St. Lawrence region. And they used to get so many million a year from the State. I guess it was a million a year or something. And I thought, "Boy, why can't we get something like that?" You know? For the watershed area. And when we started out, I thought if we could get $5 million, we'd be in great shape.

But, you know, the thing of it is, the City finally began to recognize what they'd done is, they'd devastated the area. When they come in with those regulations, there's no question but what it depressed the value of land. I don't think it was as much as some people would like to say it was, but it did depress prices. The value of land went down in the last few years, anyway. There just isn't the people coming out of the City that used to come out.

You know, when people first started coming up here and buying the land, they'd buy a whole farm. Well, I think some of them began to find out that was pretty expensive

when you had to keep up a whole farm and pay taxes on a lot of land you weren't using and so on. So then it began to whittle down into parcels and you got into this subdividing and so on. But that has certainly cooled off because, as I said, I think that there's just not the money there used to be in the State of New York, and, I don't think, there's any state in the U.S. that hasn't been affected.

And we can see it right over in Sidney, at the Bendix Corporation. I worked there for 41 years, except for the time I was in the service a couple of times; my wife worked there 43. We couldn't have been there at a better time—all the war years that people worked there. But it was still the place to go back and get good wages. With the defense budget being cut back, it's just not as it should be, of course—there's just not the money. And the computer business, you know, IBM and so on, has got so much competition, it's nothing like it was. Computers have become much more obtainable in prices and it's just a different world. New York City still has a lot of money down that way, but people are just not coming out to buy land like they used to. So that's partly, I think, to blame for lower land prices, but the other thing is when you never can tell what's going to hit you. How does anybody want to start up a business when they don't know if they're going to be able to use the septic system in the village?

And, of course, that's one of the other things that I leaned heavy on. They didn't want any expansion of the local treatment plants. Part of the Agreement is that now we can expand the local treatment plants. Cannonsville is the most polluted reservoir in the whole system, according to all accounts of what the scientists say, and I have nothing to dispute them on. Don't seem like it should be, because so many farms went out of business. But in any event, if we can cut down, show less pollution—and they're going to be checking streams and so on—then they're going to give us credit toward expanding the local treatment plant if there should be a reason to.

But, you know, the realistic fact is that around here you take any of these little villages and there's not a great deal of chance for any of them expanding a great deal. I think maybe the City finally got smart and realized that. You take Walton: They're boxed in. They got mountains and rivers and hills and roads and so on and, you know, you could just expand up and down, maybe, but there's not much of any other place to build.

And there's not a reason to expand as long as young people have to continually leave this area to find good jobs after they get a good education. That's why I'd like to see some good high-tech jobs and things like that. So that the people who go to college won't really have to go off to Oregon or Washington or California or some other place to find a job if they don't want to.

So the bottom line of what we're really trying to get out of this—along with being able to live here—is that, hopefully, we can get some jobs for people. Some way we can create new jobs and, hopefully, better-paying jobs. And with that kind of money we

should be able to attract some good people. I'd like to see good, clean industry here. We don't need any of these old-fashioned smokestack industries—which there aren't that many of them left anymore. But, you know, something that doesn't really cause a lot of problems to any of us.

Track 11

Perry Shelton's Background

NB: Tell me about your background. Where did you come from? Did you grow up in this area?

PS: I was thinking that Commissioner Gelber and I make a great pair. She's a great lady from the streets of Brooklyn, and I'm a hillbilly from the Ozarks. That's where I came from—the Ozark Mountains in Missouri. But I was only a baby when my folks got here. I've lived here basically all my life, but I guess I still have a little hillbilly in me.

Anyway, I just hacked around with a truck awhile when I was first married, and then I worked at Bendix. I remember when I went in the service in World War II, I sold all my tools and everything. I said, "I'll never be back here again." I didn't want to work inside. Within two weeks from the time I got out, I was back there working. I drawed one week of 52/20, I guess they call it. And then I got called back again to go in the Korean War for a short time in the reserves. Other than that, it's been pretty much a life of living around here in Delaware County.

The 36 years I served as Supervisor and worked on the County Board were good years, and it was a big chance to learn a lot of things, just as this City thing has been a great opportunity to learn things that you'd never otherwise even had any interest in, probably.

NB: Like the environmental stuff.

PS: Yeah, like what's in the water, and all those things. And you know, when you stop and think about it, I don't think that any of us should really resent New York City having water to drink. I always say to them that they oughta be damn grateful that we're upstream from them, as opposed to them being the upstream water source, because I was in the Navy around New York a lot, and I know what floated around the river down there.

NB: They'd be polluting it a lot more than we are.

PS: Yeah. Absolutely. But you know, I can remember when, as a kid on the farm, if the water got high, if you had something you wanted to get rid of, you threw it in the crick.

I guess you never stopped to think if it washed down on the next guy, or washed wherever. I guess you thought it was going to go out in the ocean.

So I guess a lot of things that people always did weren't very good for the environment. But there's not just a few people on this planet anymore. So we have to take that into account. You know, if you go out here to get rid of something that you'd like to get rid of, you have to think of someplace where it wouldn't affect somebody's water, really.

I never used to realize how much water traveled under the ground. I never realized that there were so many crevices and so on and that the springs run underground. Lord only knows where your water comes from, and how much territory it has covered. Some of it can travel a large distance underground. And the aquifers and so on. Those were things I'd heard the name of, but it never meant nothing to me until they started telling us our landfill was over an aquifer.

NB: And you grew up in Rock Royal, right?

PS: No, I grew up right here.

NB: In Trout Creek?

PS: Right down here, where my brother's farm is. We had two farms, and the barn burned down in 1933 or something like that. You know, that was back during hard times. And my folks got enough insurance that they could pay off the mortgage and go up to this other farm and fix up a barn and try to farm it without a mortgage. But other than that, I lived in Trout Creek until Theresa and I were married, and she lived in Sidney before we were married. And we've lived here since 1960.

NB: But you were probably aware of what the area was like before it was flooded to create the reservoir, right?

PS: Down in Cannonsville? Oh, sure. I went to school in Deposit. Rode the bus down through there all those years, and knew everybody. You know, when I ran for supervisor, I practically called on everybody in the town, even the Democrats. And I knew everybody. But today, I don't. So many new people have moved in. Well, of course, I don't have reason to get around like I used to, but there's so many new people that I wouldn't know them all even if I did get around more.

Track 12

Relocation

NB: You know, when I was thinking about doing a TV story, I was thinking about the Trout Creek cemetery. It's a really dear little cemetery. Were the people who were relocated because of the reservoirs buried there?

PS: Most of the people that were moved out of Cannonsville and that area were taken to Pepacton cemetery or Walton cemetery. If they could find relatives, you could have your people taken wherever they wanted to be taken. And so the lion's share of them, I think, went to Walton—especially the people who still had relatives.

Those that they could find no relation to went, for the most part, to the cemetery up around Pepacton somewhere, which I've never seen. But they have all kinds of records. If you were searching for anybody that was ever buried around Cannonsville or in that flooded area, they know where they're at. I surmise that there wasn't a lot that went with some of them, though. I just wonder whether they didn't just stick up a stick and say, "This is . . ."

But they built a cemetery on the hill going up Sands Creek, and a few people are buried there: the Judds, who were long-time residents of Cannonsville. Some of them live in Unadilla. Ricardo and his wife—well, they're both dead now. You know Jeannette Vanderlip? If you went up to Unadilla from Sidney way, they live on a side street somewhere near the diner there. I've been to her house, when I was doing that book. But her and her husband, Harry, they came out of Cannonsville. They were, of course, younger people.

So many people are all gone. Families, practically everyone. I hardly know a single person that was, say, in their 60's, something like that. Well, it's been 35 years, practically, so most of 'em are gone. But there are some young families like that that are around.

They lived in town. They didn't have a farm or anything.

NB: The Vanderlips?

PS: Yeah.

NB: The Judds? Where did they live?

PS: The older Judd family had a farm originally down by where Trout Creek ran into the river. They had one of the historic old homes in the town. One of the first ones that was ever built there. I forget what it was called—it was something or the other.

But Joe died. He ran a hardware store. They moved to Bainbridge, and his wife just died, too. And Ricardo and his wife moved up to Unadilla, and they both died. And there's just two boys left, I think. One is Gleason and one is George. Gleason lives around Afton, and I don't know where George lives.

NB: And is it Steve Judd who runs Arc?

PS: Well, Steve is one of the Judds and there's a Joe Judd, Jr., or something. I think it's Joe Judd, Jr., who has Arc in Otsego County. And then there's Steve, who is an attorney with Steve Rothenberg, I think.

NB: And are they of the same family, or are they cousins?

PS: No, they're all the same family. There was only the one Judd family there. They had an uncle, George Judd, who lived in the area at this time, but he had originally been with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He was the business manager of it or something. He didn't play in it, he wasn't the Director or anything. I can't think of the title he had, but he was a nice man. Very interesting man to talk to, obviously.

But the Judds had five sons, and one of them got killed in World War II. Got shot down over the Pulaski Oil Fields. His name was Stephen, Jr. And then out of the other four—as I say, there's just two left now. Gleason, who's an athletic coach/teacher. And I don't know what George does. He'd gone to Ohio, last I knew.

Track 13

Looking Ahead

NB: Do you have any concern that the City will not come through with all this money?

PS: No! That would be the biggest mistake they could ever make. That's what we're doing right now, see. Right now, several of our people are down in New York. The Association of Towns is meeting. And at 2:00 some of them are going to be on a panel to discuss the Watershed Agreement.

Thomas was just telling me how this morning—he had a meeting downtown about flood damage and so on, with FEMA and all that. He was down in Florida and picked up a paper about how this settlement was a pattern to the whole country, and how much Governor Pataki had to do with it.

Well, certainly Governor Pataki had the guts to take the challenge on, but his attorneys and so on did a lot of the work. It was really head-knocking with us and the City day in and day out, with them there to keep the thing on track. You know this is just all my assumptions, my thinking, with nothing to prove it or back it up, but I have

no doubt that at some point, the Governor told the Mayor and them that, “You’d better, if you know what’s good for you, in your long-run best interest, get things settled up.”