

## INTERVIEW WITH STEVE ACQUAFRESCA

My name is Lee Bahrych. I am coordinator of the Colorado Legislative Oral History Library. With me today is Steve Aquafresca.

L.B.: Steve, I'm very happy that you're here today, and I'm going to start this interview by asking you about your family.

S.A.: Lee I'm a grandson of Italian immigrants that settled in the early part of this century in Southern California. Southern California is my birthplace, near the community of Fullerton, California. I moved to Western Colorado at the age of 18 in the year 1969. And of course, now that tells you how old I am today.

L.B.: Well, I won't tell anybody, Steve. Well then, you had most of your education in a, in California, if you were 18 when you came to Colorado.

S.A.: My pre-college education, that's correct, and

L.B.: And your education here in Colorado?

S.A.: I moved to Colorado to the community of Grand Junction as I had a job there. When I started working I also immediately enrolled at Mesa College, which was then a two-year community college. Of course today it's a four-year college even with graduate programs. I worked and attended college part time until I was financially able to enroll at Mesa full time and quickly acquired enough credits and had the grades to transfer over to Colorado State University.

L.B.: At Fort Collins.

S.A.: Yes. And I moved temporarily to Fort Collins for the sole purpose of acquiring an agricultural degree at CSU, which I did, and graduated from the institution and left Fort Collins in 1976 to return back to the Wester Slope, which I considered my, my real home.

L.B.: What made you decide to run for office?

S.A.: I believe it's probably my commitment to agriculture and the grave needs of agriculture and agricultural communities, rural communities, in my part of the state. When I gave that possibility of becoming a candidate consideration early in the year of 1990, I had been working for many different producers, row-crop growers and tree fruit growers as a technical field man, probably working with about 50 different growers. It gave me the opportunity to learn not only about the technical aspects of farming but to learn about the social and political considerations of our agricultural industries which I had previously been unaware of. All,

L.B.: Do you think the public is aware of this?

S.A.: The public knows very little,

L.B.: That's what I thought.

S.A.: About our food production system in the state of Colorado. And because they know very little in the policy making arena, agricultural needs and legitimate agricultural concerns frequently go unaddressed, or the very few spokes-people that there are for agriculture loose their arguments time and time again. Also, during those years I was able to purchase a farm property and start developing my own orchard business on that property which I still own and actively farm on today. I've been on that property for 20 years now.

L.B.: Do you think that some of the state regulations and federal regulations against the orchards on the Western Slope is good or bad?

S.A.: I think it's a very mixed bag. I believe agriculture can probably address their own regulatory needs in many regards but have not done so. There has been a real leadership void in both the farming and ranching industries, and this is some of the impetus for my making the decision to become a candidate. I felt I was not only acquainted with the issues that were so important to agriculture, but I felt that I had the ability to function in a metropolitan environment which Colorado's legislature obviously is.

L.B.: Now.

S.A.: Yes.

L.B.: Huge change from a rural legislature to a more urban/suburban.

S.A. Correct. And during the late '80's I had come to the Capitol on several different occasions to address agricultural issues. I had testified in legislative committees, so I had a little bit of exposure to this State Capitol environment. And I felt very comfortable with, with the little bit of work that I had done here on behalf of the Western Slope and our farm and ranch industries. So when it became obvious in 1990 that the 58th legislative seat would be an open seat, well, there were about four different individuals from our district that rose to the occasion and became candidates.

L.B.: Who were, who was being replaced?

S.A. Representative Margie Masson ,

L.B.: OK

S.A. She had decided to leave her seat and run for the State Senate, which she was not successful in her bid for the State Senate.

L.B.: And she's a lobbyist now.

S.A.: That's correct. All these years later.

L.B.: Well, Steve, how did you feel? You must have had a Primary.

S.A.: Yes.

L.B.: And won the Primary.

S.A.: That's correct.

L.B.: How did you feel when you knew you had won the General Election and you knew you were going to represent that seat?

S.A.: I felt a terrific amount of responsibility to those thousands of people that had supported me in my request for their support to become their State Representative. I felt indebted to these tens of thousands of people that at that point, by November, the day after the election, obviously knew my name and knew enough about me to cast their valuable vote for me. So I felt a great sense of responsibility.

L.B.: Was it difficult for you when you were voting to separate out your own private feelings on a vote and how you felt or knew your district wanted you to vote? That, that's always a, you know, a tug at the heartstrings there.

S.A.: On occasion. Those were exceptional situations. I, I always felt that I represented a wonderful district where people had good common sense, good traditional conservative values, and generally on most issues we were very consistent. There was little question. But, from time to time, yes, due to either my ability to access different knowledge than was available back home, or, or perhaps some more fundamental difference, there were those rare occasions where, where my personal feelings and wishes were different than perhaps the majority of my constituents. And that was always a struggle.

L.B.: I think it, it will be a struggle, it's always a struggle out there on the floor where you come

S.A.: Yes.

L.B.: and those are mostly on emotional issues.

S.A.: Frequently. Frequently.

L.B.: And a, well, how did you feel? So you won the election. You walked in the State Capitol. And now you weren't visiting or you weren't going to testify before a committee, you were going to be the one that carried the vote. How did you feel?

S.A.: That's correct. Well, again, I just felt a tremendous sense of responsibility. That I needed to do this in a manner and a fashion, take positions, cast my vote, in a, in a way that the people back home would approve of and handle myself with a demeanor that they would be

proud of.

LB.: I had a representative tell me, well, he was my representative, and he said, "Lee you have to remember that you share your vote with many other people when you vote for the mayor of Denver, or when you vote for your senator or any oth, governor, but you, you own, I am your only vote in the House of Representatives. You do not share me with any other district." So that is a lot of responsibility 'cause you are the only one representing that district from the Western Slope.

S.A.: In the House. That's correct.

LB.: In the House. Uh huh.

S.A.: And the only other person that was representing my part of the state in this entire legislative process, of course, was our State Senator.

LB.: Um hm.

S.A.: So there were only two of us down here.

LB.: And you shared, and your citizens in your house district shared that senator with other districts.

S.A.: That's correct.

LB.: You were just the only voice for that district.

S.A.: That's correct.

LB.: So now I always remember when he told me that, 'cause I never had thought of it in quite that way before. So you came down and you were sworn in. Were your family here to watch the swearing in ceremony?

S.A.: Unfortunately, no. My parents were planning on coming over for the swearing in ceremony, however my father was beginning to feel the effects of a, of leukemia. And that particular week he began to feel very bad, and so they chose not to come over. And ultimately, early in my second session in January of 1992, we lost my father.

LB.: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

S.A.: Well, of course, now that's been six years ago and our memories now are the fond ones of when my Dad was living.

LB.: Uh hm.

S.A.: However, the loss of a parent during this legislative process - it created difficulties, but also

my work here at the legislature also gave me a diversion and a mission,

LB.: Um hm.

S.A.: and my Dad had told me how proud he was of me when I came over here, and I carried his remarks with me through the rest of my tenure over here at the Capitol.

LB.: Wasn't it wonderful that he knew you had been elected and that you were serving.

S.A.: I felt good about that, and so many of my constituents sent me cards and notes when we lost my Dad. I remember one of my constituents that I consider somewhat of a mentor wrote me a note about how proud my Dad must have been of me. I was grateful for that, but again, it added to the responsibility.

LB.: Yes, it would. Steve, what was the role that you occupied in your time at the State House? Was it mostly agriculture?

S.A.: Not mostly, but certainly that amongst the top several issues on the list. Perhaps I became most well known here amongst my colleagues and amongst the general Colorado populace and maybe in my own district, for being a supporter of agricultural needs. As you recall, Lee, in my Freshman session in 1991, I introduced a bill concerning legal reprimand for farmers and ranchers in the event of false disparagement of their products.

LB.: Yes. Um hm.

S.A.: Now, when we researched this issue and we began drafting a bill with Legislative Council downstairs, we did not feel this was a particularly unique request for a new statute that we were going to make, because many products and services both within Colorado law and other state statutes offer such protection to other products and services. Because of some recent environmental consumer events that had taken place in this country, we realized how susceptible our entire farm economies and rural economies were to the whims of our critics and, in some cases, the media that sometimes tends to shoot from the hip before fully researching out issues. So we felt we had very well-based grounds for our bill, and my colleagues, once the bill was introduced, began to agree with that, and very quietly the bill passed House Ag Committee with, I think, maybe one or two dissenting votes. We thought this was the normal course of business in representing our agriculture communities. When the bill got up to the floor of the House, it had changed. That is,

LB.: The feeling had changed. The bill had not changed.

S.A.: The feeling about this proposal had changed. And the media began to cover the bill and the issue that generated the bill, and they began to scrutinize myself just as carefully of the issue. It became apparent that the, the Capitol Press Corps was very unfamiliar with some of the hard licks that agriculture had taken in recent years regarding the safety and the wholesomeness of our products.

LB.: Was that right after the Al Gore, is it Al Gore scare?

S.A.: It was right after the apple crisis of, which occurred in 1988.

LB.: Yes, yes. OK.

S.A. And, of course, my neighbors and my friends were devastated in that crisis both economically and, I think, emotionally. On our ranch and most of my neighbors' ranches that product that was in question had never been used. And whether or not there was a safety concern or not, our markets were devastated that year. It was even worse up in the state of Washington where it was estimated hundreds of millions of dollars were lost in sales. And Washington state began a lengthy and arduous and expensive law suit after that. This was about the time I was entering the legislature, and myself and other members of the industry realized that we should probably have something in law in our state to protect us from, from, and other crop and livestock industries from suffering those types of losses again. Just as other products and services enjoyed protection under the law. But the notion that food products might require product liability protection was so new and so different to the press and to the critics of agriculture and to many in the general populace, this bill became extremely controversial, to where it became, to where daily coverage of this bill was occurring in both Denver dailies in the rural newspapers throughout my districts and, of course, the electronic media as well.

LB.: Yes. On the national press carried some stories on that.

S.A.: Yes, national and international press as well

LB.: Oh.

S.A.: And soon I began to get inquiring calls from well-known news publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and the list goes on and on, as well as many farm publications which, which are supporters of agriculture. I began to receive contacts from supporters and critics alike. I began to receive contacts from legislators in other agriculture states requesting our background information, wanting copies of the bill, some wanted our entire bill file. We ultimately sent information concerning this bill to probably 20 different states, mostly directly to various state legislators, where in many cases these states began drafting similar legislation of their own. Speaker Barry(?) told me later in that session that as far as he knew that bill received more publicity than any other piece of legislation in the history of the legislature. Now,

LB.: Is that right?

S.A.: Now I don't know if that was right or wrong, but it, it certainly got a lot of attention. But it also got the support of legislators, rural and urban alike, because our argument was well founded, and we tried to make that argument in an articulate and non-emotional manner, we won over the support of members of both parties from all types of backgrounds. The bill did not pass the House unanimously but with a lot of criticism from the media, it passed the

House with a very comfortable margin. As the bill moved over to the Senate, it seemed as if the press corps became, and I don't just mean the Capitol Press Corps, I mean the media system within the entire state of Colorado and the rest of the country, almost began to criticize this bill in a frantic type of a manner. I understand many of their concerns in that we were working in an area of first amendment concerns, free speech concerns, which is what all product liability laws must deal with. First amendment rights' concerns. And I share many of those concerns, and we had no intent of moving ahead with any type of legislation that would thwart or reduce first amendment rights. After careful study, after sitting down with constitutional scholars both within the Capitol and outside the Capitol, we were convinced that the language in our bill was consistent with product and service liability protection that was fairly commonplace, so we continued to move ahead. Senator Tillman Bishop was our Senate sponsor, and Tilly was just a wonderful Senate sponsor on that bill. He became very dedicated to this cause, and he successfully moved the bill through the Colorado State Senate.

LB.: And then it went to the Governor.

S.A.: Yes. It went to the Governor. And at that point there were many media concerns that actually went ballistic. And the Governor's office was receiving lots of contact over this bill urging him to veto it. But the Governor was also receiving a tremendous amount of contact to sign it into law. There was a consortium of crop and livestock associations that put together a very good effort to convince the Governor that this was necessary, that it was in order, and that his concerns concerning the first amendment rights were addressed.

LB.: Did it help that he came from a rural environment and he understood what you were doing?

S.A.: Well, in the end the result was the Governor vetoed the bill.

LB.: Oh, he did.

S.A.: Yes.

LB.: I had forgotten that.

S.A.: Yes. He vetoed the original bill in the 1991 session which pleased the media very much. The Colorado Press Association took a formal position against this bill, which was unheard of.

LB.: Never heard of that being done.

S.A.: Nobody else had either, and it's probably not been done since. So as a group, as an association, you know we all know how concerned the press is with first amendment rights.

LB.: Yes. And rightfully so.

S.A.: Yes. That's correct.

LB.: But this was unusual for them to take that position.

S.A.: Indeed. It was. So, I cannot tell you what the Governor's motivation was, whether he was concerned about his image in the media, or if he had other concerns. We do know that the concerns he explicitly expressed to me in private and that he also expressed in public were addressed. His concerns were addressed, and I felt should have been settled. So I cannot tell you the inner workings of the Governor's mind and what really motivated him to veto it, but he did. The Governor called a press conference to veto the bill, which was also unheard of. But by that time the bill was being followed by the national media, and it gave the Governor tremendous coverage. And I cannot tell you if he was taking advantage of that coverage or just why he behaved in the manner he did.

LB.: Was that the first bill that you had go through both houses of the legislature and go to the Governor?

S.A.: I was trying to think back, because you did share that question with me over the telephone in preparing me for our interview today. And I believe it was not. I think it was the second bill that I had go through. The first bill I had go through concerned public education, which is an area where I also spent a tremendous amount of time in my legislative tenure. To finish the issue of ag-product disparagement,

LB.: OK.

S.A.: I, I accepted the veto, and I went on with my work. I had a lot of other issue areas here I was involved in. I received a wonderful response from home that I was, that I took the initiative to carry this issue even though we didn't get, we did not get the bill signed into law. So I felt comfortable with my home district and we just plowed ahead with other issues. We did come back in the 1993 session, after my first re-election, and we raised the issue of ag-product disparagement for a second time. We merely , we took a very different approach. We merely plugged in some language into existing law that had been developed maybe 50 years ago, 50 or 60 years ago, in the state that a lot of people don't even know is in law, and that is, we have statute that makes it illegal to destroy crop products, food products, deliberately for the purpose of affecting the market. We plugged in language concerning crop disparagement into that existing law in a very short bill introduction which also began to cruise through the House of Representatives, was passed in the first house and moved on to the Senate, was passed there. We tried to work with the Governor's office very carefully on this different approach which we felt was somewhat of a compromise approach, and low and behold, late in the '93 session the Governor did sign that proposal into law. So we do have protection for farmers and ranchers against the false, knowingly false and untrue disparagement of farm products for the purpose of personal gain.

LB.: Steve, did you ever find out what happened in the other states that asked for your, for copies of your bill?

S.A.: Yes. Yes, as of last year in 1997 I learned there are 15 other states that have adopted farm product disparagement laws. In several of those states, the laws they successfully put into



place were identical to our original proposal in 1991. And in those states, they have Governors that were so supportive of agriculture that they signed our original idea into law.

LB.: So you think the changes that you made in that old law that maybe have been on the books for 50 years did what you needed it to do. You don't need to go back and change anything again.

S.A.: A...

LB.: Or would you like to put that original bill on the books?

S.A.: I'm satisfied with.....

LB.: You're satisfied.

S.A. (cont'd): with our second compromise attempt. And I think the fact that we have such a provision in law has really raised the awareness level. The entire debate gave us the opportunity to share with Coloradans and Americans the, the economic plight of rural Colorado and how sensitive our farm economies are to these, these funny whims of the critics of agriculture. During this debate one of the Denver radio stations had me down for a live interview. I think it was on the Peter Boyle's Show, early one morning during the commuting hour.

LB.: (chuckle) Uh oh (chuckle) Uh huh.

S.A.: And we had a very polite and I thought effective debate. We had telephone call-ins that debated the issue, and then Mr. Boyle asked for a telephone poll amongst Denverites or within his broadcast region, which perhaps goes beyond Denver. I asked KOA radio when I left that morning if they would send me a printed copy of those poll results, and in a couple of days they sent me a letter explaining that the callers to their radio station that morning were over 70% in favor of our original legislation.

LB.: Is that right?

S.A.: And remember, those are mostly urbanites.

LB.: Yes.

S.A. (cont'd): that were listening and calling in to that show.

LB.: Hm.

S.A.: So we had a good opportunity to raise that issue to its fullest and due some education, I felt. And as of this date we've not had a food safety crisis based on false information handled frivolously by the media. So I think merely having a law on the books serves as a preventative measure for such irresponsible behavior.

LB.: Yeah, you were talking about, you were interested in education.

S.A.: Well, my district is very interested in education, so I began to increase my knowledge level on the topic of public education, education finance,

LB.: Um hm.

S.A.: I developed good rapport with the professional educators back in my home district. One of the committees that I served on, in addition to House Ag. Committee, was House Education Committee. I served on both those committees for six years.

LB.: Now you probably had a lot of recognition in your district for serving on education,'cause it seems like that is such a high-interest in agricultural districts.

S.A.: It's real important to my part of the state, to Southwest Colorado. In rural communities, the public school serves more than just a building that houses students all day.

LB.: Sure. It's the center of the community.

S.A.: Absolutely.

LB.: Because that's, I came from a rural area. If they wanted to close our school and have the children go 35 miles into the county seat, but people have to be made to realize that was a community center. That's where everybody came, or was a, you know, a neighborhood gathering spot.

S.A.: Right.

LB.: And that's the way it is on the Western Slope.

S.A.: It was. And it was important for me to represent the needs of all components of education, not just the school teachers, not just the educators, but also represent the needs of students, of course, and parents, and tax payers that financed our public education system. And that's a tough balancing act to do, to represent all those parties.

LB.: Well, and then the school finance laws, you know, changed. I think the big change probably came sometime in the '50s for the financing of schools changed from local.....came into the state. And I think you have to, if you serve on a school board, you really begin to understand the finances of your school district.

S.A.: My hat goes off to school board members that serve without compensation.

LB.: Exactly.

S.A.: In a very thankless capacity. I would take the time when in my home district to visit with school boards as frequently as possible. In the six counties that I represented we have 11

separate school districts, so there were 11 school boards to visit with. And that brings me to one of my major concerns about the entire future of the legislative process that I think I just briefly touched on the telephone. The difference between the work responsibilities, the representation responsibilities of a rural legislator versus an urban or suburban legislator. And let me make one of the most extreme comparisons of the two, and I'll use my own district that I'm most familiar with and compare it against the biggest metropolitan area in our state, the city and county of Denver.

S.A.: House District 58 that I represented consists of six counties, so we have six county governments. Much of the responsibility of a legislator is to represent the many different political subdivisions within your district. These are political subdivisions that are immediately affected by state law, by state policy making. So a legislator has the responsibility of working closely with all local governments, all education systems, and many other political subdivisions in the state. In House District 58 we had six county governments. That means six County Boards of Commissioners to work closely with.

LB.: Um hm.

S.A.: We had 11 school districts and 11 school boards, each one wanting attention and having similar to very different needs.

LB.: Um hm.

S.A.: We also have in my district 19 municipalities. That's 19 Town Councils that you have to work closely with. We also have innumerable other political subdivisions in the form of Water Conservation Districts, many other special interest districts and entities, each one that was affected by state policy making. And here I was as one lone State Representative, one lone State Representative having to deal with the needs of all those different entities probably numbering well over 100 year in and year out down here at the Capitol. Let's compare that to the city and county of Denver, which has one local government, one city-county government, the Denver City Council. They have one school district, that's two political subdivisions. Perhaps they have a few other political subdivisions within their boundaries, but also with their boundaries because of their population they have eight State Representatives to represent that small handful of political subdivisions as opposed to a rural legislator, a single individual representing hundreds of political subdivisions over a vast geographic area. And doing so 300 miles away from home and having to commute back and forth to get the job done. In six years of service over here, in six regular sessions, I never missed going home for a weekend.

LB.: And how did you, how did you go home? Did you drive? Or could you fly?

S.A.: Mostly I traveled by air.

LB.: OK.

S.A.: From the Montrose Airport.

LB.: Uh huh.

S.A.: into the old Stapleton Airport. Until my last, my very last session I had to use DIA, which added much more hardship to this commuting process, as well as expense. But much more personal inconvenience because the expense was mostly born by the taxpayers, the additional expense.

LB.: That's further out.

S.A.: Yes.

LB.: By probably what, 20 miles from the Capitol.

S.A. As opposed to several miles.

LB.: Yes.

S.A.: But more important than that, Lee, when DIA opened, immediately our air transportation service on the West Slope began to deteriorate.

LB.: That's right.

S.A.: Immediately.

LB.: That was Mesa Airlines? Is that what you flew or United Express?

S.A.: Yes, it was United Express. And as I understand it, United Airlines contracts with carriers to run their express services. So it was United Express operated by Mesa Airlines, which we quickly learned had little or no commitment to the needs of Western Colorado. But the advent of DIA, in our opinion back home, is probably one of the most divisive features that has occurred in our state in many, many years.

LB.: I've never heard that before, Steve. That's interesting.

S.A.: It is.

LB.: I knew that the airlines flying to the Western Slope were having problems and people trying to get back and forth between Denver and your area of the state. There were lots of problems. I think Senator Campbell brought that out some time this past year of the difficulties.

S.A.: As well as several West Slope legislators have also tried to grapple with the issue. Mostly unsuccessfully. But apparently the commuter services, the express services suddenly realized so many new expenses with the opening of DIA that providing transportation services to the West Slope was no longer economical for them to do. Even with drastically increased air fares. Also, the scheduling of aircraft departures and arrival into DIA, became

major hassles, major problems, compared to the scheduling of aircraft in and out of Stapleton. Our air service today in 1998 is far inferior to the air service we enjoyed on the West Slope 30 years ago.

LB.: Well, you will be pleased to know that I voted against DIA.

S.A.: Well, thank you for your support.

LB.: (chuckle) I just felt it was not good, you know.

S.A.: And one of the previous House District 58 Representatives, a former Representative Glen Underwood, told me that during the debate in the House as to whether or not the legislature should support a new airport for Denver or not, he was the lone dissenting vote against a new airport for Denver. And today Mr. Underwood is so proud of his vote down here now that he has been proven to have been right.

LB.: Well, see that came to the part of, that came to the citizens of Denver, and we voted on that, on the bond issue, and that part.

S.A.: But I think the legislature had a resolution.

LB.: Yes, they did.

S.A.: To support it or not support it, and it passed overwhelmingly.

LB.: Oh, it did.

S.A.: Unfortunately.

LB.: Well, I just felt that it was, what do we owe on a 13 billion dollars or whatever it is, that..

S.A.: I don't know.

LB.: The dollars change all the time.

S.A.: In summary, I would say DIA has been a travesty, certainly for western Colorado and much of the rest of the state as well. But my point was the work responsibilities of a rural legislator representing all those special districts and political subdivisions is monumental by comparison to an urban or suburban legislator that has so few boards and commissions and committees and other political subdivisions that need representation down here. And the difference is so great it almost becomes overwhelming at times, and it was certainly a consideration two years ago when I was making my decision as to whether or not I should continue and seek a fourth and final term down here in the House of Representatives.

LB.: Well, another thing you have to consider is the time element, 'cause you spend a great deal of your time every weekend getting to and from. And you're away from your supporters,

your constituency. Where right here in Denver there just a little small,

S.A.: That's correct.

LB.: no-cost phone call away.

S.A.: Metro legislators go home every evening when we adjourn to their families

LB.: Sometimes for lunch.

S.A.: And to their constituents. They attend their community meetings throughout the week. As a rural legislator, of course, we're absolutely prevented from doing that. And we're home for a brief two days a week, after traveling a long and sometimes tiring trip, whether it's by air or by car. In my last year here, after DIA was our only transportation choice, I started making the trip by car.

LB.: How many hours was that?

S.A.: It's five hours each way when the highways are dry. Of course between here and home we had three major mountain passes to clear, one of them, though, less formidable than the Continental Divide, because that's what it was.

LB.: Uh huh.

S.A.: And, of course, the legislature occurs during our foul weather period during our snow season.

LB.: (chuckle) That's right.

S.A.: So it was a rare car trip that the highways were not either dangerous to real treacherous.

LB.: Yes. Oh yeah. Well, Steve, some of these issues that we've been talking about are on-going. Do you see any change in that? Education goes on, the financing of highways goes on.

S.A.: Um hm. Water issue debates go on and on.

LB.: And that's going to be more important as the years go by, it's always been important. But we only have a certain amount of fresh water, and I think it's being divided into smaller and smaller little bits.

S.A.: Smaller increments all the time. It is. No, I think that many of these issues are perennial in nature such as public education, taxes, uh, water issues, various highways, transportation, other state services.

LB.: Um-hm.

S.A.: They are just perennial in nature, and they will always be legislative issues.

L.B.: What about the growth on the Western Slope Is that going to affect the water for agriculture?

S.A.: Oh, it's, it's been affecting water. Growth has been affecting water in this state since the state was first settled.

L.B.: Is that right?

S.A.: And growth will continue to affect our water resources. I'm a member of a local ditch and reservoir company for irrigation purposes on our farm, and we see more and more non-agricultural influence in, in our water management decision making processes.

L.B.: Um hm.

S.A.: There's less understanding as to why agriculture needs the water that it currently has rights to.

L.B.: Um hm.

S.A.: And many people from outside of the agricultural community feel very comfortable in working to unravel a very well-grounded, well-established water allocation system that we've had for so many years.

L.B.: We've had that allocation system since before the state was even a state.

S.A.: It's over 100 years old.

L.B.: Yes.

S.A.: As a matter of fact the first and right, first in, first in time first in right basis that our water management system is based on was duplicated by many other states in the West.

L.B.: I've always heard that.

S.A.: Because, it works.

L.B.: Yes. I walk along the Highland Canal every morning, and it used to be strictly for the, you know, farmers that could, I think it starts up in Waterton, flows through Southeast Denver, and ends someplace out on the plains in Aurora. And now I look, and it's all for recreation. I don't think anyone still has rights to the water in that canal. Very few. But it was built for agricultural needs.

S.A.: Um hm. We're experiencing a lot of growth pressure in my home community as all West Slope communities are. And it's not only our water system that is being upset by all of this

growth, but just the use of the land, our road and highway system, and our political system often is compromised by needs outside of the agricultural sector at the cost of agriculture.

L.B.: Um hm.

S.A.: So just as when I decided to be a candidate in 1990 to represent these increasing leadership needs of agriculture, the needs for good representation for the farm and ranch communities is as great today as it was in 1990. No one person can come to the legislature as a Representative or Senator and solve those problems. But what each Representative or Senator can do is be knowledgeable and work hard to represent our rural communities in these ongoing processes.

L.B.: Steve, what changes do you see in state government since you served? Do you see many changes?

S.A.: In the last couple of years since I left?

L.B.: Yes. Um hm.

S.A.: Yes.

L.B.: Since you started and now you've been gone two years, and what are those changes that you see?

S.A.: Well, it seems as if much of the time that the legislature occupies itself with has moved away from essential state government functions that traditional communities, such as what I represented, want state government to do. People back home were interested in the very things we've been talking about. They wanted the state government to concern itself with those things that people cannot do for themselves, such as provide a public education system.

L.B.: Right.

S.A.: Such as provide a highway system.

L.B.: Um hm.

S.A.: Such as provide good law enforcement protection for our communities. This is what, by far and away, the majority of my constituents in House District 58 wanted.

(Tape change)

L.B.: Now it's ready.

S.A.: The message the people back home gave to me for six years is that other than those fundamental state services, the people felt the state should provide that they could not do for themselves, the folks back home had a very live and let be, let live type of an attitude.



Today it seems as if, from what I read and what I learn visiting with former colleagues and new members down here, the legislature spends a lot of time and energy on social and moral issues that, I don't think, people in my part of the state feel is the area where state government should be focusing on. That's probably the biggest single change is the shift to social and moral issues in the policy making process.

L.B.: If you could change, say, one thing back to the way it used to be. If you could repeal a law or relocate an office or bring back a particular elected official, what would you change?

S.A.: Gosh, I'm not sure. I'd have to give that some deep thought. I'm not sure. Well, I've told people at home, I said this at a large Republican dinner a couple of weeks after I announced my intent to not seek re-election in 1996. I talked about many things to that group of supporters. But I told them there is one thing that I do regret in my six years over there. I told them that I regret having served only under the one governor that I did serve under for six years, the one, same governor. And if I could change anything, I would have liked to have served under different gubernatorial leadership. It was interesting serving under the governor that I did, but I would have also liked to have worked under different gubernatorial leadership.

L.B.: Um hum. Steve, what is your favorite place in the Capitol?

S.A.: Now that question I did give some advance thought to.

L.B.: (Chuckle)

S.A.: Because it was just such a curious question.

L.B.: Well, it's one of my favorite questions, and it was given to me by Fred Br.....(?) the reporter for *The Denver Post*.

S.A.: That's what you said. And I decided there are actually, I have two favorite places.

L.B.: That's all right.

S.A.: Here in the Capitol, one of my favorite places is what they call 'the pit' on the floor of the House.

L.B.: OK.

S.A.: Down there at the microphone. That whole, little half circle.

L.B.: The well of the House.

S.A.: Uh huh. The well. Because that was where the arguments really took place.

L.B.: That's right.

S.A.: That's where, you know, bills had maybe been changed a little bit in committee, but that's where they came down and all 65 members had the opportunity to throw in their two cents and, and explain and argue away why they, they supported or opposed a bill or any particular part of it, or an amendment attached to the bill; and, of course, it's not the bill itself, it's the policy. It's the actual effect that the activities of the House had on the citizens of Colorado. That's where the rubber met the road.

L.B.: That's right.

S.A.: That's where members went down, and nobody was exempt from this. From time to time members had to spill their guts up there, and share inner feelings concerning an issue, concerning an argument like you do no other place in life. That, that situation does not occur in my home district to that level of intensity anywhere that I've seen. And probably does not occur anywhere else in the state. And that was my place where I could really come forward with the feelings and the needs of the over 50,000 people that I represented.

L.B.: Sixty-five voices had a chance to go to the well and express their feeling on a bill.

S.A.: That's right.

L.B.: And.....?

S.A.: That's right, and at times it became very emotional. At times.

L.B.: That's right.

S.A.: At times it was very intellectual. At times it was unsavory. You saw a little bit of everything in the well. But that's where people's abilities came out, that's where their, their character came out and was disclosed to the entire world. And while this process was going on, of course you had press people there who were covering this process, and if a member was spilling their guts, it was going to be spread throughout the land. (chuckle).

L.B.: (Chuckle) Front page of the paper..this morning...

S.A.: That's right. And sometimes you won those arguments and sometimes you lost them, and sometimes you felt like crying on somebody's shoulder down there.

L.B.: Yeah.

S.A.: There was no hiding down in the well.

L.B.: That's right. Steve, do you know that we're one of the few states that still continues to carry a Committee of The Whole, and has debate like we do.

S.A.: Really. No, I didn't know that.

L.B.: I, I know Chief Clerks that dred Committee of The Whole. And they may have it once a year. They do not have this kind of debate. But I think it's wonderful. Because, like you said, you hear opinions from the West Slope, the South Slope, Up North, the Short Grass Country, all over.

S.A.: Um hm. And on those tough, gut issues there was frequently a lot of blood spilled down there in the well, so to speak.

L.B.: That's right.

S.A.: My second favorite place in the Capitol is a little room up on the third floor numbered Room # 318, and that was my office.

L.B.: OK, OK.

S.A.: That was my office. As a rural legislator I never felt like anything in the Denver community other than a foreigner. Now, not so in the legislature, but I mean here, in this metro environment.

L.B.: Yes.

S.A.: Although I could function in it, I was comfortable, I was not a part of it. As a rural legislator we're stuck here Monday through Friday.

L.B.: That's right.

S.A.: We can't go home during the week.

L.B.: Um hm.

S.A.: Sure, I had different residences where I stayed during the week, but those places were never anything close to home. When constituents would ask me, "Well, where do you live when you're in Denver?" I would reply, "I don't live in Denver. I stay there Monday through Friday when I'm working on your behalf. I live in, near Cedar Ridge in House District 58. That's where my home is."

L.B.: Yes. Uh huh. Now Room 318, that faced the West, didn't it?

S.A.: Yes it did. It was up in the northwest corner of the building with a big west-facing window. And I asked Speaker Berry the day I arrived here as a Freshman, I shared with him it was important to me to have a west-facing window, and I don't know where that came from within me. But, he put me in with Representative John Irwin in Room 318, and John gave me the desk in the back by the window, which was fine with me. And after one session, of course, John Irwin died.

L.B.: Yes. Sad time.

S.A.: Real sad because he was such an effective individual and such a nice, likeable man.

L.B.: Yes. He was one of the heavy-weights on the Floor.

S.A.: He was tough, politically. Tough as nails. And he looked tough. If you remember John's appearance.

L.B.: Yes.

S.A.: But as an individual, he was the kindest man, willing to do anything for his friends and probably just about anybody else.

L.B.: And I tell you a little story about John Irwin. After he died, a Representative from Colorado Springs, his wife called down and asked us if we would clean out his desk. You know Bill Martin, Colorado Springs? Representative Bill Martin?

S.A.: Yes, yes.

L.B.: He's no longer here, but he was here during some of your time.

S.A.: I sat next to him for two years on the Floor.

L.B.: Yeah. Well, his brother is a cardiologist, I think. A heart doctor. And Bill said to me, "I bet we find some anti-acid Tums or different things like that in his desk. I bet he's been having these symptoms and didn't know about it." And we went out to your office, you know, where John was, and we cleaned out his desk, and sure enough, we found Tums, we found, what's that other thing that comes in a tablet form?

S.A.: I don't know.

L.B.: So, he must have been having what he felt was indigestion. And Bill opened up his hand and said, "See, Lee, look". You know, indigestion, that, maybe it was a forerunner of his fatal heart attack.

S.A.: Um.

L.B.: But, you had a good roommate.

S.A.: Oh, I agree. Coming in as a Freshman, I could not have been stationed with a more helpful person.

L.B.: Yes.

S.A.: Now John went home every evening up to Loveland,

L.B.: That's right.

S.A.: So John did not use our office very much. He was on the Floor, he was in committee, and he went home.

L.B.: Um hm.

S.A.: I was alone in that office a lot, even when John was alive and still working down here.

L.B.: He worked on his, at his desk on the House Floor a lot.

S.A.: Yes.

L.B.: He spent a lot of time down there.

S.A.: Yes he did.

L.B.: And see, I came when that was the only office you had was that desk.

S.A.: Um hm.

L.B.: I think that the House lost some of the camaraderie when people were moved out to the offices on second and third floor.

S.A.: I'm sure you're right. And I also realize the value of working down on the House Floor even when we had recessed. And I would try to work quite frequently down on the House Floor, but Room 318 became a special place to me. If I need to get away, if I needed to escape in the morning, or the afternoon, or the evening, I had that room to go to.

L.B.: Uh huh.

S.A.: I always kept the door open when I was there because I liked visitors at the office.

L.B.: Um hm.

S.A.: And it had that west-facing window, and invariably towards the end of each week, I would start to look out that window more frequently.

L.B.: (Chuckle)

S.A.: I had a straight-away view of Mt. Evans and the Rocky Mountains.

L.B.: Uh huh.

S.A.: Of course now there's a beautiful view of the Denver Civic Center, the 16th Street Mall, and many state government buildings, but I looked towards the mountains and that was a

connection, that was a visual or perhaps more a spiritual connection that I could keep, to my part of the state, during good and bad times over here in the Capitol. And so I'll remember all my life every detail that's in that room and the view that's out the west.

L.B.: That was the, that was a nice room because you do have a view to the west and you're up high enough.....

S.A.: And fortunately my successor, Representative Alexander, has my old desk in that very same room,

L.B.: Is that right?

S.A.: Today. Yeah. And, of course after John Irwin died, his successor, Representative Bill Kaufman was moved into his old desk. And I was just lucky with my office because here was another very fine individual to share an office with.

L.B.: Bill Kaufman is. He's a fine representative for that district up there.

S.A.: Bill and I became close friends, and part of it was because we were rooming together in that office.

L.B.: But he went home at night, too.

S.A.: That's correct.

L.B.: Yes. Well, Steve, do you think people are more pessimistic or skeptical or even cynical about state government and politics now than they used to be.

S.A.: Well,

L.B.: Do you see a difference?

S.A.: I think, Lee, that the positive and negative feelings towards government at all levels including state government is cyclical, it's up and down depending on the issues of the day, the debate of the day, the leaders that are in office at the time.

L.B.: Um hm.

S.A.: During my six years, by and large I would go home and when meeting with groups or meeting with individuals, I would share with them that mostly state government in Colorado works pretty well. Mostly, with some exceptions, I think it's doing what you and your neighbors and our other taxpayers would want it to be doing. I think Colorado's an exception in that manner.

L.B.: Did you ever see any vote-buying, graft, anything like that?

S.A.: No.

L.B.: I never have.

S.A.: No. Not amongst other members, and I never had anybody approach me with trading for favors or trading votes tit for tat, no.

L.B.: It's one of the cleanest legislatures that I've ever heard about, because I go to the, used to go to the Chief Clerk Convention - it's called ASLCF, it's part of NCSL.

S.A.: Um hm.

L.B.: And I remember one time the Chief Clerk of West Virginia was telling me that their governor had been indicted, and I remember when my good friend in Arizona had to run the impeachment hearings in the Arizona House for the governor down there. And we just had the cleanest General Assembly that I could - of any of the states.

S.A.: Um hm. You know,

L.B.: Just never hear of the graft or vote buying and all the things that the other Chief Clerks were always telling me about.

S.A.: I came away from the process believing that probably 95 out of the 100 members in both Houses were down here with sincere desires to make Colorado a better place. To make their personal district a better place with sincere intent. And most of them all worked real hard,

L.B.: Hard-working group.

S.A.: Achieving the intent.

L.B.: I don't think that citizens realize how much time a representative and a senator does give to make this process work.

S.A.: And I think that the feelings out there in the public of that nature might be, at least in part, a result of a phenomenon that's taking place at the Capitol and statewide that I have grave concerns about. And that is the nature and the quality of the press coverage of this process. I think that the press coverage of the goings-on here in the legislature is something different than reporting the daily occurrences down here. It's something, it's become with many reporters something different than conveying the issues of the day, the debate of the day, who said what, what's in a bill, what was removed from a bill. They've gotten away from that basic factual coverage in many cases and seem to be shifting. And of course that was a long time ago process, not just the six years I was here they seem to be shifting their coverage towards personalities of the members toward idiosyncrasies of the members which of course that everybody has

L.B. Sure.

S.A. And trying to read intent that may or may not be there into bills and legislators and their coverage of it.

L.B. And what you saying is that they are editorializing then on the front page instead of the editorial page

S.A. That would be it in a nut shell summary. And there are exceptions down here to that I could think of but by and large this seems to be the trend of press coverage and citizens certainly in my part of the state probably all over Colorado including the neighborhoods immediately surrounding the Capitol rely on press coverage for their information and their ultimate opinion of what is going on in state policy making. So, I

L.B. They have to read the paper or watch it on the sound bite on television

S.A. That's right . The press has a very important job ,a very important responsibility , but I think their approaching it differently and not particularly in a positive or constructive manner.

L.B. Steve, have I, do you have any stories that members are saying that are interesting and amusing to listen to 25 years down the road.

S.A. Laugh, Ugh probably many , ugh today has been a busy day for me here at the Capitol, a lot of things going on here at the Capitol . It can be a little bit emotional for me

L.B. Oh, yes

S.A. to come down to the Capitol now. I've only been here maybe three times since leaving two years ago. I think I stopped once time during each session since I left and then I am here today, three times in two years.

L.B. You had a press conference this morning.

S.A. Yes,

L.B. That was at 9:30 right in this room.

S.A. yes, generating some awareness about the 1998 apple crop back home. So that we were trying to generate loyalty in Colorado apples as opposed to buying Washington apples.

L.B. I remember that.

S.A. We thought the press conference was very successful and we hoped to get some good coverage but it's emotional for me to come down to the Capitol, particularly when I spend time on the floor of the House, because that was the place I came to so frequently for those six years with a very important serious mission for a very distant part of the state and its citizens. So it does gets a little emotional--there's a lot of funny things that took place. The seriousness of some of the issues that we must grapple with and make decisions requires



folks to keep our sense of humor. Most members realize that and they work at light heartedness, when it's appropriate and that is important.

L.B. Yes, you have to have a sense of humor and you have to be able to relax.

S.A. That's correct so we have a lot of joking and chiding and sometimes making fun of one another and there is a lot of practical joking going on. I remember the time in my freshman term our Majority leader came back to his office, Representative McGinnis, on a Monday morning and found his office floor about four feet deep in crumpled up newspapers.

L.B. I remember that.

S.A. Probably the most elaborate practical joke I ever saw was about my last year down here, when Representative McPherson going to join his neighbors in a ceremony on the House floor representing his ancestry, which was of Scottish heritage origin, so Representative McPherson joined his neighbors in donning kilts on the House floor. which meant he had to go somewhere and change his clothes and put on a kilt, or as many call it a skirt. He did that with pride and dignity and I enjoyed it and I think most people did. There were some folks that thought this was a good opportunity to play a practical joke. They went to where ever Gary kept his clothes and got access to that room, and later that day Representative McPherson was storming around the Capitol looking for his pants and all he had to wear was this kilt. I don't think he ever found his pants that day so he had to go home. And the next morning we came here and low and behold his pants were hanging from that high ceiling in the House Chamber. Somebody had gone way up above in the ceiling and hung his pants down in the House Chamber.

L.B. You have to be careful doing that because that is not a solid ceiling.

S.A. That is what I understand.

L.B. Did you have a part in this Steve?

S.A. Absolutely not! No!

L.B. We passed the state tartan. That we do for the state tartan now. It was Representative McPherson's resolution.

S.A. Good for him. I felt what an elaborate hoax. What extreme's members will go to have a laugh down here.

L.B. He had to go home in his kilt. That's what you said.

S.A. Although, I'm sure he was quite angry that day. I think the practical joke process is not bad. It gives everybody a chance to loosen up.

L.B. Steve, have I failed to ask you something I should have asked you?

S.A. Probably not, Lee, you know there is a lot of things we could go and on to talk on about for a long time.

L.B. Well, if you ever want to meet with me again. There will be more room on these tapes and I will bring another tape. I am always glad to meet with you again a second time.

S.A. I appreciate that. Why don't I continue to think about our conversation and when I think of something I will jot it down on a piece of paper and maybe I will have a list of a few things items we can get back together later on.

L.B. I would like that very much.

S.A. I still travel around in some of those communities that I represented and within my own home community. It's apparent now that people at home will never stop viewing me as some kind of a representative.

L.B. Is that right.

S.A. They are not sure what now. People frequently ask me sometimes it's the same person over and over again. How do you like being back in private life, and being back home. I certainly like it, but I like it over here. Even with all the trials and tribulations. That was an experience for all its difficulty and all its costliness I would not trade it for anything. And I usually end by telling them everybody should have to do that one time.

L.B. It's public service.

S.A. Yes, serving the legislature and of course everybody cannot. I think they get the idea that if everybody had the privilege, the opportunity to serve over here. The outlook on government all levels might be different. We might have citizens and taxpayers that could more effectively communicate with their government. We might have a more effective system we might be able to get to where we all want to go more effectively.

L.B. Steve, I appreciate your coming today. Let me tell you that there will be a folder downstairs in the library. I have a file case down there, anything you want to put in the folder I would appreciate it. I have had former Senator Joe Shoemaker send the book that he had written about the Joint Budget Committee. Speaker that was Speaker in the early 1950's sent me his book. People send me various things cause they want it in their files. So if you want to place anything in the file let me know and I will arrange to have it placed there.

S.A. Perhaps I will have something. I have not yet gone through the files I took home from the legislature

L.B. I can understand that.

S.A. Not just because of the time requirements, but because of some of the feelings that I brought home with me.

L.B. Yes, you need more time.

S.A. I did recently go through a box that consisted of the items in my drawers in my desk at the house floor and in my office and found all sorts of knick knacks, brickabrack as well as a number of working tools. I thought, "my gosh, look at that, here's this or here's that. How have I gone these last 2 years without thinking about these items?" Because they bring back memories about events and people.

L.B. You bet! That is what it's about down here, people.

S.A. Yes

L.B. Steve, I really appreciate your meeting with me today and we may meet again.

S.A. My pleasure Lee, I look forward to another meeting.

