Arizona Historymakers™*

# ORAL HISTORY

In Our Own Words: Recollections & Reflections

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## BRUCE BABBITT

Date of Birth - 1938

2005

Arizona Governor and
U.S. Secretary of the Interior

The following is an oral history interview with Bruce Babbitt (**BB**) conducted by Pam Stevenson (**PS**) for the Historical League, Inc. and video-graphed by Bill Leverton on August 10, 2004 at the law offices of Robbins & Green, Phoenix, Arizona.

*Transcripts for website edited by members of Historical League, Inc.*
*Original tapes are in the collection of the Arizona Historical Society Museum Library at Papago Park, Tempe, Arizona.*

**PS:** This interview is being conducted with Bruce Babbitt at the law offices of Robbins & Green, Phoenix, Arizona, on Tuesday, August 10, 2004. Bruce Babbitt has been named a 2005 Historymaker by Historical League, Inc. of the Central Arizona Division of the Arizona Historical Society. The interviewer is Pam Stevenson, representing the Historical League.

Congratulations to you on being honored as a Historymaker, Mr. Babbitt. Please introduce yourself and give us your name, birth date, and where you were born.

**BB:** All right. Bruce Babbitt, I'm here ready to talk. I guess that's the best kind of introduction. I'm not used to short ones, but there it is.

**PS:** Okay, let's start at the beginning. Tell us when and where you were born.

**BB:** It's interesting that whenever I'm introduced before an audience, I am always introduced as an Arizona native without exception. Every biography I've ever put out in my entire life states the fact which is that I'm a native Californian, born on June 28, 1938. But I guess the important thing of all that is to explain why the confusion.

When my grandfather and his brothers came to northern Arizona in 1886, the railroad had just been built: the Santa Fe Railroad across Northern Arizona. The Babbitt family homesteaded that country in an era in

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which it was almost impossible to get to Phoenix. There was a stage coach track that ran through Prescott and then down through Black Canyon, but it took many days to get from Flagstaff to Phoenix.

In contrast, when you got on the old Atlantic and Pacific Railroad, it was just an overnight trip to Union Station in Los Angeles. So, for generations, the city that we looked to up there in Northern Arizona was Los Angeles, not Phoenix. Phoenix was a foreign place, impossible to get to. That meant that our banking and medical and all that stuff was in Los Angeles, and that's why my folks were in Los Angeles when I was born. I went to school there for one or two grades before we came back to Flagstaff.

**PS:** Was it just that your mother went to Los Angeles to have her child?

**BB:** Actually my parents were living in Los Angeles at the time. I think it was in 1945 that they came back to Flagstaff.

**PS:** You mentioned your grandfather and five brothers coming to Flagstaff. Tell us about that part of your family.

**BB:** It's all fairly well known; that ground has been plowed and documented a lot. In a nutshell, the outline of the story is fairly typical: five brothers, growing up in Ohio, looking west at the end of the nineteenth century. This is the great westerning period in American history. They wanted to go west, own a ranch and be cowboys; so they sold their little grocery store in Cincinnati. They sent one of the brothers who scouted the area for the better part of a year. The letters still exist; he was like their advance agent. He traveled through Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, and New Mexico in the 1880s, comparing cattle prices and looking at ranges and doing what they call today due diligence.

Through a variety of accidental circumstances, the due diligence led them to Flagstaff where they showed up in the spring of 1886. They went about finding a cattle herd for sale, getting it out on the range, homesteading. There were five of them so there was plenty of manpower. They branched out very quickly into all kinds of businesses, retailing, and Indian trading on the reservation. At one time they had an auto dealership in Phoenix and another one in Tucson. They did all sorts of entrepreneurial things. Ranching was the real lynch pin; it was the base of all of this. They were enormously successful.

The open range era was coming to an end and even that early on, ranching was becoming more of a business in which you dealt with cattle futures and financing and management. They were pretty good at it. They understood being on horseback out there, but they also had a bit of the green eye shade in them, bookkeeping skills. In a nutshell that's what it was all about.

**PS:** Tell us about your father. Which part of the business was he in?

**BB:** My father, Paul J. Babbitt, was born in Flagstaff in 1898 and was educated in California. This is all part of the Los Angeles tradition. He went to law school, became a lawyer and spent the early part of his time practicing law in Los Angeles. He came back to Flagstaff in 1945 when his younger brother was lost in a hunting party and died in a snowstorm in Flagstaff. The brother was a State Senator at the time, but his dying so suddenly created a gap in the family business. In the style of the time, my father was summoned back to Flagstaff, where he practiced a mix of management and law, running the family businesses.

**PS:** If that hadn't happened, do you think he would have stayed in Los Angeles?

**BB:** A good question. You know there are a lot of *what ifs*. Eventually everyone came back to Flagstaff. When I look at it now, three, four, five generations later, it's really quite striking, this magnetic draw back to the family place.

I was up in Flagstaff over the weekend and was walking through the past with a nostalgic eye toward the town. It's absolutely astonishing. Most of the family is still there. Many, many of them leave, but then come back. I've got two brothers, actually three brothers, who live within three blocks of the family home where we grew up. I suspect that it's an enormously attractive place with the history and the setting. It has a magnetic pull. I suspect I would still be there if things had been different.

**PS:** Tell us a little bit about your mother. How did your parents meet? Was she also from Arizona?

**BB:** My mother's family lineage runs through the Northwest. She grew up in Santa Barbara, California and went to Immaculate Heart College in Los Angeles. My mother, Frances, who met my father when he was in law school, was educated as a musician and really wanted a career in music. At one time she played in the Los Angeles Symphony Orchestra. She had a very musical side to her, but it's a typical story. In earlier generations a woman, however career-bent, married and had a family and followed the husband.

I think my mother looked at her daughters-in-law with a trace of wonderment at what might have been. She talked with my wife, Hattie, from time to time, and said, "It's really quite remarkable. You, Hattie, have grown up, been educated, and have entered a world where women could have careers." I think she would have liked a musical career. But that just wasn't in the cards coming to Flagstaff, Arizona and in those generations. So instead she had six kids. She raised six kids and had a full life, but I think a very different one from what she might have anticipated when she was growing up.

**PS:** Six children. Where did you fall within that group?

**BB:** Number two.

**PS:** One older brother?

**BB:** Yes.

**PS:** Were they all boys?

**BB:** There are five boys and one girl. All are in Arizona except my sister who lives in California, in the Bay Area. The rest of them are all in Phoenix or Flagstaff, again the magnetic draw. We were educated or worked out of state at various times. Well, five-sixths of us did, but, I guess I'm sort of a straddle. It's not clear where I live these days; I guess you could say still mostly in Washington DC.

**PS:** But your heart's in Arizona?

**BB:** Yes, yes. I spend a lot of time here.

**PS:** Tell us about growing up. You say your first years were in Los Angeles. Do you remember that period?

**BB:** Well, not much. No, no sort of great epiphanies or visions of the future or the past, just tiny scraps, Sundays on the beaches, not much.

**PS:** Where in Los Angeles did you live in?

**BB:** In the middle of Watts in south central Los Angeles, fairly typical. Barry Goldwater grew up in what is now downtown Phoenix, which was then out there on North Central Avenue. I grew up in what was then the outer fringe of Los Angeles. It's now the inner city.

**PS:** What did you think about moving to Flagstaff as a boy? What did you think of Flagstaff?

**BB:** Well, it's hard to recreate clear images that far back. I think images, historical memories, get filtered through the present. They get transformed into metaphor and symbol. I think memories really are quite inaccurate. For what it's worth, and you know a lot of this is retrospective, what growing up in Flagstaff was to me was really about two things. One was the out of doors.

Flagstaff was a very small town and our lives centered on stuff that we were doing outdoors. I used to go deer hunting in the morning before going to class when I was in high school. You could literally walk down to the end of the street and head into the woods and think that this was going to be the morning that you were really going to be lucky. You could make a good clean shot, dress out the deer, get it back and still be in time for your 8:30 morning class. I mean it was that kind of closeness.

The second memory I have, and it's colored by reflection, is of growing up in a small town where there was just one high school. You were in the mix of a complete cross section of ethnic and income groups. Flagstaff wasn't this white bread, Iowa town full of Norwegians all from the same part of Norway and nothing else. Flagstaff had a long-standing strain of Hispanics who had come from southern Arizona and Mexico. A significant group of African-Americans had come, who had been recruited from Louisiana, to work in the lumber mills which were the mainstay of the town. There was also a sizeable concentration of Navajos and Hopis, a really rich mix, much of what you can still see in the town today. My memory is rooted in these two memories, at least in the retrospective of time.

**PS:** Did you live in town or out on a ranch?

**BB:** We lived in town; but it was not much of a town. We actually lived on North LeRoux Street where that big rally was a couple of nights ago.

**PS:** Did you have ranch chores and things like that to do?

**BB:** No, no. I wasn't growing up on the homestead.

**PS:** You talked about going to school. Were you a good student?

**BB:** Sure.

**PS:** Did you have favorite subjects?

**BB:** Yes, it was outdoor stuff, like science, which was a foretaste of things to come. If you were a good student, you were expected to study science. It was the Sputnik era, and national security in the nineteen-fifties was thought to rest on everybody going into science and engineering. I was attracted to the natural sciences, the outdoor part. I think it was a natural thing. Our teachers encouraged us if we had academic skills to do science, and science related to my interest in the out of doors. I collected everything in sight; I had mineral collections--all that stuff. Those interests flowed together quite naturally.

**PS:** Did you think then about what you wanted to be when you grew up?

**BB:** Not much, but I'll tell you what triggered my current understanding of it. It was an insight I had when I was Secretary of the Interior touring the Edison Laboratories in Montclair, New Jersey, now a national historical site. During the tour, the director said, "I've got something to show you." He brought out a letter that Barry Goldwater had written when he was ten years old to Thomas Edison, which said, "Mr. Edison, I admire you and I want to be famous as an inventor." I thought, "What a fascinating little insight." But I really wasn't into much of that type of interior thinking. I really wasn't. I never consciously did think

about where my life would lead me.

Part of it too, was that Flagstaff was a small town. There was an implicit sense that you would fit somewhere into this stream of inter-generational history, that there would be a place for you, and that it would all unfold. But I wasn't sitting out there looking at the far horizon.

**PS:** Did you think you would work in the family businesses?

**BB:** I wasn't much thinking about it. I suppose I had that implicit assumption, but not in any explicit way. I got more thoughtful about these things when I went off to college. There were some important moments in my later education, when I began to think explicitly about what my real interests were, whether or not they would allow me to break out of that magnetic field I've talked about.

It was particularly intense when I was in college, because I still came home to Flagstaff and still spent lots of time in the web of my high school friends, even as they began to go elsewhere. I was enmeshed in that web of culture and friendships. It was a bit of a jump to begin breaking out of it and think about how my life was probably going to lead me somewhere else. I talked with my father a little about it. He obviously sensed that, from his perspective, it would be nice if I came back to assume my place in the inter-generational progression. I think he clearly understood and obviously was quite fascinated with my choices; he became involved in my gradual drift away from that option into the rest of the world.

**PS:** Did you work, as a boy, in any of those businesses?

**BB:** Well, yes, sure, summer jobs. The most interesting one, I guess, is that the family had an ice plant. They had every kind of business you can imagine and there was an implicit kind of feeling among the older generation that you should get the hard jobs as summer jobs. But, I got the very worst one. I worked for a full summer on the graveyard shift in the ice-making plant. It taught me a lot because I worked from nine in the evening until six in the morning in the solitude of all that machinery in a cold storage warehouse where I was the only guy, except for the truckers who would come in occasionally to get their vegetable loads iced down. It was really a very, should I say, interesting experience.

**PS:** Why did they make you work that night shift?

**BB:** I think it was just the idea that you ought to start at the very bottom with the least desirable job. That was it during that particular summer.

**PS:** Did the job persuade you that making ice wasn't going to be your career?

**BB:** Yes, exactly. To spend parts of several summers out on the fire lines working for the Forest Service

was a taste of another world which I came back to much later in life. I have vivid memories of working on the lines. It's the sort of thing that novelist Norman McClain wrote about in his novel, *A River Runs Through It,* the sort of small town, the sort of experience that, when there was smoke on the horizon from a fire, the Forest Service, being desperate, would recruit people out of bars and off the streets because they just didn't have enough man power. It was work that was available when there were dry summers and the skies were full of lightening. It was an important experience for me.

**PS:** How often did you do that?

**BB:** Sporadically, not a lot. I never got into the seasonal kind of thing; it was just sort of a pick-up game. You know, there you were.

**PS:** Do you remember any other memorable jobs?

**BB:** Those are the two that really stick out.

**PS:** You had a huge family that you grew up with in Flagstaff. Do you remember family gatherings, holidays, other occasions? They must have been important to the family.

**BB:** Yes, but not in the sense that these events are important in my life now. They are really important now because our kids are elsewhere and holidays are about getting together. But in a small town, you're together all the time. (Laughs)

Holidays in terms of family stuff is all very nice. Back then, holiday events were rotated. My uncle got everybody together for Christmas. It was our job to get people together for Thanksgiving. But Thanksgiving was not a big event. There would be a few in-laws from outside Flagstaff; but we saw each other every single day, so there was a family reunion 365 days a year. Day in and day out, almost to the point that maybe it was a little too much family in a small town.

**PS:** I've talked to people that grew up in small towns. Everybody keeps an eye out; you couldn't get into much trouble without everybody knowing.

**BB:** There's a lot of nostalgia about growing up in small towns; it's part of the American myth. Most of it is true, most of it, in my experience. But it can also get very close because, if you've got a few eccentric relatives in the closet and a little bit of conflict, there's no escaping. It's not perfection, but it's awfully good.

**PS:** Let's talk about the family. Your mother was the outsider coming in. Do you know how she felt about moving to Flagstaff?

**BB:** I think that's the hardest role to assume. It really is, to leave an urban life and all of a sudden be transplanted. I think it was confining for her. That led her to reflect on, and get a lot of pleasure out of her daughters-in-law, and Hattie specifically, because she could share vicariously in my wife's experiences. In my mother's generation, she had all the talent and education to do many things, but it was just not possible. Hers was a much more structured world.

**PS:** Were your parents or your family involved in community and civic affairs?

**BB:** Sure, but that's not a large statement in a town of a couple thousand people. (Laughs) I think the most distinctive trait in terms of my family in the community was that there was always a public service elective office strain that was manifest. That's pretty clear. When the five brothers came to Flagstaff in Territorial days, within a couple of years the younger one was already in the Territorial Legislature. My father never entered elective politics, but two of his brothers did. The one who died in the snowstorm clearly had a large political career ahead of him. He was elected to the State Senate quite young and I've actually gone back and in the course of family life, looked at the press clippings and related articles. He clearly would have moved on up.

He was succeeded by his brother, appointed to the seat that was vacated. For a period his younger brother was president of the State Senate and involved in public affairs. I had another cousin who was in the legislature, and younger brothers who have been in local politics in Flagstaff. I think if there were a distinctive strain, that was surely it.

**PS:** Did you get involved in politics as a young man?

**BB:** Not really. I was on student council, of course, but did not think of myself as one who was aiming for a political career. I felt my destiny, if you will, was going to flow out of my interest in the natural sciences, that science would somehow be the strain I would be on. That was true into college. Then I went to graduate school, studying science. I spent various summers abroad, working in South America and doing field work in the American West. It looked like it was all blossoming; it seemed like the inevitable channel. Science is something I'm still interested in, but my life didn't go that way. I occasionally look back and I wonder what life would have been like on that side of the fence.

The political stuff was a bit of a natural bent, but it wasn't the dominant strain. It really wasn't. It came later on out of a couple of other strands. One is that I went to college at Notre Dame University. It was a particularly interesting time in Catholic education. There was a reformist social activism side to Catholicism in those days, and Notre Dame had a very dynamic president, Father Theodore Hesbergh, who I got to know quite well. I got interested in the civil rights movement and was a bit of an activist in college.

It didn't translate immediately, but after a couple of years in graduate school, I went to law school and from there drifted into the Civil Rights Movement. I was in Selma during the famous week in 1965 and went on to work for a couple years in the South in the Civil Rights Movement. I spent time in Venezuela, a long summer in a community action program there, and the next summer in the Peruvian Andes. My political interest really came out of that social activist experience. It wasn't out of a desire to be in elective office, but much more out of an awakening to civil rights and social issues.

I had a moment which I've talked about frequently, and it was really very important. In the summer of 1961 or 1962, I did fieldwork in Bolivia in pursuit of scientific issues. I was in school in England at the time. That summer really changed my life. I began to see tremendous disparities in poverty and chaos all around me. It had a very deep impact on me, but all that came later.

**PS:** Let's back up a bit and talk about why you chose to attend the University of Notre Dame.

**BB:** It was pretty simple. My parents said, "Look, you can go anywhere you like, but it ought to be a Catholic school." Pretty simple. A couple of my family members had gone to Notre Dame, although my father, interestingly enough, graduated from Georgetown back in the 1920's. Notre Dame was the place that family members in the next generation had gone to, but it wasn't a very articulated decision. The framework was set. Again, you go to a Catholic school. That's where most of them had gone, and so you just follow the stream.

**PS:** What was your major?

**BB:** Geology.

**PS:** Did you decide to go to graduate school?

**BB:** Yes, I got interested in graduate school during the summer of 1959. I was doing some geology fieldwork when I came across a professor from England, a really interesting guy, who was working in Northern Arizona. He was not well known then, although now he is considered one of the giants in the history of geological science. He had formulated a theory of what is now known as plate tectonics, the idea of continental drift explaining that the continents were once a single landmass which broke up and moved over the eons into their current positions.

[A group of British geologists from the University of Newcastle upon Tyne demonstrated continental drift by matching pole positions. The poles as recorded in England's rocks, for example, can be matched precisely to those in North America by closing up the Atlantic Ocean.]

**BB:** This professor was a visionary. I got intrigued by what he was doing, so I applied for a Marshall Scholarship, much like a Rhodes Scholarship that the British government awards on a competitive basis. I think twelve or fifteen Marshall Scholarships were awarded every year back then, although forty are accepted nowadays. I applied for a Marshall Scholarship and, remarkably enough, all things considered, I got it.

So I went to study under this guy at the University of Newcastle in Northern England. I had no idea where the University of Newcastle was, but I knew what I wanted to do. I think that's the reason why it all came together. I think the people in charge of the scholarship program were astonished that an American knew of an English university other than Oxford or Cambridge.

I arrived at the University of Newcastle and had a remarkably interesting two years because the revolution in earth science is *the* most important moment in the study of geology during the twentieth century. Textbooks were being rewritten. Everything was being thrown out because a new understanding of the world was evolving in the hands of this professor and his group of fellow British scientists. Every summer we would literally spread around the globe. Each of the professors working in this group had a continent to go to work on.

I spent one of those summers in the American West and second in South America, the Amazon, and on the eastern front range of the Andes in Paraguay, Brazil, and Bolivia. I worked with the old Gulf Oil Company that had complete logistic facilities while they were doing field work in oil exploration. They had a helicopter, camps, and all of that equipment. In the course of that particular summer, I found my work to be a much removed experience, really a strange kind of place to me, new, exotic. But it got me thinking quite clearly. I started to see what was around me. Wandering through those little villages in Bolivia and looking at all the human disarray, the poverty and chaos, I would come back to camp at night asking myself, just where do my real interests lie? The juxtaposition had gotten to me.

That was the moment when it started to come clear to me that I belonged in the marketplace of people rather than in the ivory tower of research. It could not have been a more clear contrast. I was either going to be doing really exotic academic stuff, although in a very abstract way, or else I was going to be absorbed with the issues of the human condition. I came back from that summer and I knew it was time to move on.

**PS:** What did you decide to do?

**BB:** I selected a default position. If I knew I didn't want to be an academic, the default position was law school, because that's the place where, when you don't know exactly what you want to do, you pick up a skill which you can parlay and use. That proved to be a very shrewd decision. Here I am today, after thirty years of public life, but still required to earn a living. All of a sudden you think, "Aha, there's that law degree. You can dust it off, hang it on the wall, and go to work." The law degree wasn't really a focused

thing, but it was the correct decision.

**PS:** Your father was a lawyer; that must have had some influence.

**BB:** Ah, yes, but I don't think a whole lot. Perhaps in the sense of seeing the law as a flexible type of employment; however, since he didn't spend a lot of time at work, he was able to involve himself in the matrix of the family business. I suspect that out of that I saw more clearly the utility and the special role for better or for worse that lawyers have in American society, which is not true in many other parts of the world. A law degree in this country is a license to mettle in everything. I think I intuitively understood that. So that was the law school decision. It wasn't a large, philosophical thing, but very pragmatic, and the correct thing to do.

Interestingly enough, when Hattie graduated from Arizona State University and was thinking about how she might balance her life between career and family, I was then headed toward politics. I said to her without a moment's hesitation, "Go to law school." She has managed her career very well. If I gave her one piece of advice out of my experience it was, when in doubt, go to law school.

**PS:** Good advice. Tell us how you ended up going to Harvard Law School.

**BB:** It was *the* place to go. Here was I after two years in a British university, five thousand miles away from my roots. I had a brief moment of introspective thought about that. But then, having said, "I'm out of science," I put my boat onto other waters. For a moment I thought, "Should I go to Arizona? Should I make the Arizona connection?" I wasn't sure that I was going to return to Arizona, but I wanted to. I knew by then that I wanted to be out here in the marketplace of human affairs. But I wasn't quite sure, hadn't focused enough, to come back to Arizona. I thought, okay then, just go to the top, and it was not any more focused than that.

**PS:** I want to back up a little bit. During the Civil Rights Movement what year were you in Selma, Alabama? How did you end up there?

**BB:** It was 1965. By then I was a third year law student. I had spent two summers abroad, expanding my commitment and interest in civil rights and poverty. Law school turned out to be just about what I had anticipated. It wasn't terribly exciting. Although I accomplished quite a bit during my time in Cambridge, it was not very compelling. I went to class thinking, I have to pay my dues to this ticket to show the world that I'm interested.

I spent the summer after my first year of law school in Venezuela, working in a slum in Caracas with a couple of guys I had known from college. We formed a type of private Peace Corps, now known as Acción. It's still a dynamic organization. We were on the ground, out in the slums, working at setting up

community organizing projects.

My second summer of law school I spent in the Peruvian Andes leading an international student work camp at a place called Ayacucho. Ironically, I was getting a taste of things abroad again rather than at home. Many times you don't understand what's around you until you've seen it in unfamiliar, contrasting forms elsewhere. Those were very important summers. By then all this experience was beginning to make me look more carefully at society around me.

The events in Selma began to gather momentum in the spring of 1965. There I was in my last year of law school, bored to death, watching events on the evening news as the protest was coming to a climax. I went back to my dorm that afternoon, called up to make an airline reservation to Montgomery, Alabama and went.

**PS:** Didn't you go with a group?

**BB:** No, it was just a thoroughly spontaneous decision. It was in the context of a very important moment because there were people from all over the country, mostly clerics, interestingly enough, but other activists going as well. It was clear that what Martin Luther King, Jr., John Lewis, and the other leaders were banking on was that there would be a great manifestation, that this could be drawn into something than a local confrontation. This was going to be the moment; it was in the air. Ideally there had to be a lot of people bearing witness right in the thick of the city, with violence that could in a sense, I suspect, get out of control, that something might happen and that there would be victims. It had to be more than just a couple of anonymous, local Black kids like Jimmy Jackson who nobody cared about who would be victims, and that's exactly what happened. It was a climactic moment in American history.

**PS:** Why did you decide that you needed to go?

**BB:** Again, it was an absolutely logical outgrowth of the transition that I'd been making. The transition from pure abstract geophysics to spending summers doing community action in Venezuela and Peru, beginning to see that that's what I was interested in.

**PS:** But didn't you go with a group from college, or anything?

**BB:** No, no. I called up one of my younger brothers here in Phoenix to invite him to join me. "Come on," I told him. Let's go. This will be an interesting, important moment in American history and we ought to go and make a difference." It was just the two of us.

**PS:** What did you do when you got there?

**BB:** What you do in these situations is that you spend your time camped out in a basement, in this case the basement of the AME Church in Selma. You get up in the morning and gather in the town square and let people throw rocks at you. Then you organize and, in the case of Selma, you march out to the Pettus Bridge. Everything comes to a halt and you just wait until the final gathering and the start of the march to Montgomery.

[The Pettus Bridge was erected in 1939 and named after Edmond Winston Pettus, a General in the Confederate Army in the Civil War and U. S. Senator after the Civil War. The demonstrations for minority voting rights that occurred at the bridge led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Civil rights marchers were attacked at the Pettus Bridge on March 7, 1965 by Alabama state troopers. This event was given the name *Bloody Sunday* and the Pettus Bridge, a civil rights landmark, is part of the fifty mile Civil Rights Trail from Selma, Alabama to the Dallas County Court House in Montgomery, Alabama.]

**PS:** Were you in that march?

**BB:** No, I wasn't. I left Selma. I spent about a week there, but my conscience bothered me. I was worried about final exams, so I went back to law school just as the judges finally cleared the way for the march to Montgomery.

**PS:** What did you get out of that experience?

**BB:** I gained an understanding of the importance of social activism and its relationship to elective office. I became firmly committed to the accountability and responsibility of political life. It was a very important moment. When I graduated six weeks later, that commitment translated into my going into the anti-poverty program in the Johnson administration. I got a job in the bottom ranks, a GS-7, and found myself right back in the South for two years working on and carrying out that commitment. I was no longer a demonstrator, but the guy who came to town when the demonstrations had reached an impasse. I was the federal employee who would try to make peace and put these programs into operation. There were legal services, Head Start operations, and job training programs.

The experience that summer made me understand that the next step in my own personal evolution was to go back, not as a demonstrator but, if you will, as a member of the establishment. In a sense, I was a part of a government program that was down on the ground, trekking through all those small towns, brief case in hand, mixing it up, trying to bring people together and settle disputes putting programs into operation, attempting to integrate Black and White and make things work. During that time such work was a common experience. Vernon Jordan was doing exactly the same thing out of the office in Atlanta and many, many others, too, in a variety of places. It was a very important moment.

**PS:** With your law degree, did you think about going to work in a law office?

**BB:** No, I still had this notion and it seemed pretty consistent that the reason I'd gone to law school was to get an insurance policy for the future. After graduating from law school I had no intention any time in the foreseeable future of practicing law. But my father gave me a useful piece of advice. He said, "Look, you better go somewhere and take a bar examination. If you get a law degree and don't take the bar exam, you'll come back five or ten years later and bar exams get very hard to take when you've been out of law school and have forgotten all those lessons." He insisted, "You must become a member of a bar somewhere." By then Arizona seemed more probable as a long-term destination than any other place that was on the horizon. So I came back here long enough to endure the bar review course, take the bar exam, and head back to the South.

**PS:** Were you thinking of coming to Arizona even though it seemed like your work was in Washington and all over the country?

**BB:** I was actually working during most of that two-year period out of Austin, Texas which became an important place to me because that's where I met my wife. But I'm thinking, if there is a house with a yard, a white picket fence, a couple of kids, and a dog somewhere in the future, it's more likely to be in Arizona than anywhere else.

**PS:** Was this work in Texas with VISTA?

**BB:** Yes, partly. It was a two-year stretch and the first year it was in a governmental position for an entity known as Community Action Program. It was the Johnson administration that began the War on Poverty: legislation that was deeply involved in civil rights issues and the attempt to put together programs to expand opportunities, particularly for ethnic groups. It was a mix of job training, Project Head Start, and legal services. VISTA was an important part of it. During my first year, I was mostly in the Community Action Program in the South. Then I transitioned into leadership of the VISTA program and spent time in Washington organizing directions for the entire effort.

[VISTA, Volunteers in Service to America, was founded during the Johnson administration in 1965. It is a national service program designed specifically to bring low-income individuals and communities out of poverty. Its motto: *Fight Poverty with Passion*.

Project Head Start was begun as part of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty and the Great Society. Office of Economic Opportunity launched Project Head Start as an eight-week summer program in 1965. The following year it was fully authorized by Congress as a year-round program. Head Start was designed to help end poverty by providing preschool children from low-income families with emotional, educational, social, health, nutritional, and psychological needs.]

**PS:** You mentioned meeting your wife in Austin. How did that come about?

**BB:** As we go through this interview, I'm thinking, reflecting, tying the pieces together, but one strand I frankly hadn't thought of is that I drifted in a stream of chance, a metaphor for most lives. You are on pathways that are opened and flow, ones that you are on just by accident of circumstance and coincidence. That is certainly the case with my meeting Hattie.

We were passengers on an airplane from Dallas to Austin, a very short flight. I was the last guy on the plane. I was a standby and remarkably enough, the last seat on the airplane was next to her. We struck it up during a thirty-minute plane flight. I managed to extract her phone number in the course of a thirty-minute flight. It was one of those odd things. We're sitting in the bulkhead and there was a tapestry. It was a Braniff flight and they had tapestries of Latin America. There was a picture in one of those tapestries of a pretty, interesting-looking woman. I turned to Hattie and said, "Have you ever been in Ayacucho?" Of course I'd spent a whole summer there. I thought it was a chance to . . . and out of that, well, it was a terrific plane ride. That's how we came together.

**PS:** Obviously you followed up after that.

**BB:** Hattie was a student when we met. She was going to summer school in Austin. I was living and working there in the Community Action Program. She came from a very Southern, conservative tradition. She grew up in West Virginia but her parents were living in Texas at the time. We struck it up very quickly, but I will always remember her father, at the rehearsal dinner when we were married, saying, "This is very improbable. A guy comes into the life of my daughter; he's ten years older than she; he's a Yankee; he went to Harvard; he's a liberal; he's a Catholic." All, the antithesis of the entire Southern and mountain West Virginia culture they came from. But, it obviously worked out very well.

**PS:** That's definitely a chance meeting (both laugh).

Do you want to talk a bit more about your work with VISTA and becoming a social worker?

**BB:** A social worker is exactly right. I see the evolution of a career. Out of the initial transition, my work is beginning to focus on social activism, social work in the real sense. What I learned out of those two years in the Community Action Program and the VISTA experience was that I gradually came to see the relevance of elective politics. I didn't start off that way because in the civil rights movement, the elected establishment in the South was the enemy. Those state capitals were full of governors who were waving the Confederate flag, sending African-Americans off to jail. The whole civil rights thing was an attempt to break down all of the de facto racism and segregation that had grown out of the failure of Reconstruction and the reaction that had set in over the generations.

So, it's really quite ironic that I started on the outside, thinking that politicians are the problem. Here I am on the federal payroll. It's a wonderfully ambiguous position: you get a lot of stuff going, and then all of a sudden the local Congressman comes into town and calls you on the carpet asking what all this activism is about. I say, "Well, the activism is out there; we're trying to channel it and get to change." But it wasn't a very popular kind of thing.

I started to sense the importance of politics. By the time I arrived back in Arizona, I hadn't made the decision to run for anything. I had a nice Southern experience in terms of seeing the relevance of politics, and I had actually worked during this time in VISTA and done a couple of projects in Arizona.

In 1966 I was sent out to the Tohono O'odham Nation in south central Arizona to organize a legal services program. I spent a couple of days at Sells, the capital of the Tohono O'odham, working with the tribe to organize and fund the program. I also spent time working on the fringes of the DNA - Navajo Nation Legal Services, Inc. around Mexican Hat, Utah, just because. Although I was based down in the South, I was interested. I just cut out and dispatched myself to do these things.

Although I'm not a natural, I started to think about political life. You see, there's this duality that has been running through my life. There's a pretty introspective side and that's why all this science stuff is interesting. I'm quite content as a bit of a loner, in the out of doors and all of that. Then there's obviously this social worker side increasingly starting to emerge, and some tension, or at least inconsistency, between the two. So here I am back in Arizona, again in the default mode. I ran my string in the South with the Anti-Poverty Program cause, but it was all coming to an end in the late sixties. Viet Nam had begun to preoccupy the country. The enthusiasm for these social programs was disappearing; it was a time of great disillusion with government.

**PS:** Then Nixon was elected.

**BB:** Yes, well, you could see it coming. I was back in Arizona in 1967, back in the default position. I had moved out; the string hadn't gone anywhere. So here I was, back in Arizona, law degree in hand, practicing law.

**PS:** Tell us about your decision to come back to Arizona.

**BB:** Again, it was a default decision. I had gotten deeply immersed in the civil rights issues and found a lot of satisfaction doing the work. But it had basically come to a halt. The turmoil was now being channeled into the anti-war movement. The civil rights issues and the government commitment were just fading away. This is the point where the default option works. There is a wonderful phrase, possibly from Robert Frost, "A home is where, when you gotta go, they gotta take ya." Obviously, that's a family-centered thing. That's the way Arizona, my home, was for me. When you're adrift and there isn't a clear picture of

where the future is headed, there's home.

So, here I was. By this time, Hattie was coming back although she hadn't finished college yet. She had left Sweet Briar, spent a year in Spain and was a junior now. I was coming back to Arizona and we're still tracking, but it's been complicated because we're always in different places.

But Hattie made what I think is the real commitment. It's not about getting married. It's about coming to Arizona which, for her was a big decision; because she was out from her West Virginia-Texas roots and just beginning to see the world. All of a sudden, I was moving back from all of that; coming home.

The question for Hattie was, "Am I going to follow this guy to a place I've never been, which doesn't seem like the center of the universe when you're twenty years old, and have just spent a year in Europe?" But I was coming home and she followed to finish school at Arizona State University, so we just settled in.

**PS:** How old were you when you came back to Arizona and what were you doing for a living?

**BB:** I think we were back in the 1968 time frame so I was about thirty years old. I was practicing law in a Phoenix law firm. I think the moment that really got me thinking about the next step had to do with a lawsuit. I took on a case for the Navajo Tribe. In the 1970 legislative reapportionment, the legislature did a job on the Navajo Tribe. They carved the reservation up into bacon strips in order to make sure that there would be no Indians in the Arizona legislature at the state capital in Phoenix.

I took on the case for the Navajo Tribe and filed a reapportionment case in federal court. It went to trial and I showed up every morning before the trial, getting ready to put the witnesses on for the day. Defending the State of Arizona on the other side was the Attorney General, actually an Assistant Attorney General. I walked into the courthouse every morning, thinking that this was really quite remarkable. On behalf of the people of Arizona, an Attorney General was standing in front of this court defending a blatantly unconstitutional and racist piece of legislation.

Now all the pieces were coming together again. They were really coming together. A light went on and I thought," I could have his job." Here I was practicing law, billing by the hour, doing all this mundane stuff, with the exception of this case, and I was thinking, I could have his job. It was an important moment because it was kind of a bridge. I wasn't sure that I really had the confidence or the persona to be out running for office. But I saw the bridge here. I was already a lawyer. I had learned lawyer skills. This was an easy bridge because, as I saw it, I would just become a public interest lawyer. That led very quickly to the decision to run for Attorney General, to be a lawyer on the public side. Then I was in the stream and it just flowed to its inevitable course. But getting into the stream was the important decision.

**PS:** The stream being politics.

**BB:** Elective politics.

**PS:** You could have just gone to work as an attorney in the Attorney General's office.

**BB:** Yes, of course. The psychological hurdle was saying, "I'm ready to go out and be a candidate."

**PS:** When did you make that decision?

**BB:** I made this decision in the spring of 1970. The statewide election was in 1974, an important date because the legislative reapportionment that generated this litigation took place in 1970. The case that I just described must have been in the 1972-1973 timeframe. The law firm where I worked had a sabbatical program in which you not only got a few weeks off every year, but once you'd been there for four or five years, you got to take off three, four, or five months.

My first sabbatical had come up. Hattie and I took a trip around South America. We carried backpacks, a traveling style we used to hitch hike through Central America on our honeymoon. But now it was sabbatical time, so we planned a three-month trip all the way around South America. That was a very important time. It was then that I made the decision. It enabled me to get enough distance away from what I was doing, practicing law.

I'm a nester. When I settle into something, I'm pretty content doing what I'm doing and it takes a little push to get me to change. I would have been perfectly happy with a lifetime of being a teacher, social activist, scientist, or a Forest Service employee. I don't easily take the next step, but if I got into the Governor's office, I could have been happy there forever. They made me Secretary of the Interior; I stayed until President Clinton left. "You put me there and this is what I'm about."

As a nester I was drifting into a career as a corporate lawyer. But I'd had this Navajo trial experience, and then the sabbatical came along. After the sabbatical I followed in the tradition of many lawyers who did not come back to their firms. That's why I don't think law firms give sabbaticals anymore. A high proportion of lawyers who take them say, "There's gotta be more to life (laughs) than going back to work in a law firm every day." My sabbatical crystallized it. Absolutely crystallized it.

I actually hadn't thought of that we would wind up in Chile and become immobilized there. We hiked out of Bolivia, went into Northern Chile and arrived in Arica, Chili at the very moment that a coup d'état was being staged against President Salvador Allende. General Augusto Pinochet took over in Bolivia. A curfew was imposed on the country and we were stuck in this little town of Arica in Northern Chile for the better part of a week with nothing to do. Couldn't move. The gendarmes had locked the country down. (Laughs) It was a great sort of monastic experience.

We went out every day and watched the same movie. There's only one little cinéma and they were showing a Lowell Thomas travelogue. They showed it every day at two o'clock. All we would do was go and watch "Siete Maravillas del Mundo" over and over. We'd just sit there. It was a nice little experience because we get to talk back and forth and I said, "You know, Hattie, we're going to take a few chances in life. We're not ready to settle in." By the time we got back to Phoenix a month or two later, I'd made the decision.

**PS:** What did that entail? You were married at this point; did you have any children yet?

**BB:** No. We were on the cusp but not there. It wasn't terribly complex. There's a basic routine of running for political office; it's fairly well known. You go out and raise some money, beg for money, assemble a team. You've heard it a hundred times.

Politics has gotten much more adversarial, much nastier, and much more contentious in the last generation. We were still in the early 1970s, amateur hour in Arizona politics. It wasn't very contentious and the press was pretty relaxed and it just kinda happened.

I got stuck in a primary that was a little more argumentative than I would have guessed. Republicans had been running the state for a long time and I thought I'd get a free ride in the Democratic primary, figuring Democrats don't win; nobody else was going to be interested in this. But it was the year of Watergate. [1974] It was the year that culminated in Nixon's resignation. That wasn't the reason I chose this particular year; it just happened as part of my own progression.

There are plenty of people who start a political run and realize, "Aha, this is going to be a Democratic year." So it happened. All of a sudden I was stuck in a three-way primary and it was a pretty intense experience. But I had some ideas. People were ready for a change. There were a lot of contentious issues, like land fraud, going on in a very unsteady time. I played straight into the middle of that and it was a Democratic year. Raul Castro was elected governor and Carolyn Warner was elected superintendent of public instruction. We briefly had a majority of Democrats led by Alfredo Gutierrez in the Senate. It was a big moment.

**PS:** Do you remember who your opponents were?

**BB:** Sid Rosen, for one. He is still around town and quite active. I see him from time to time; we share an interest in Mexico and Latin America. Jack McCormack was Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Consumer Fraud Division. He was a feisty consumer crusader and he and I had by far the most interesting primary race. Everybody else was being gentle. But we were really mixing it up, talking about reform and anti-fraud measures and such. It was a good experience. The general election was easy after that.

**PS:** Who were you running against in the general election?

**BB:** Warner Lee, who was also around town, practicing law, a good guy, He was appointed Attorney General; his predecessor had resigned and he was appointed by the governor. I think that when you take office by appointment, it's a bit of a burden because you are saddled with the charge that you are a tool of the existing establishment, that they are appointing somebody to maintain the status quo. Not an easy thing to overcome, but change was in the air.

**PS:** You had to get involved with the Democratic Party and run statewide. Did you do a lot of travel around the state?

**BB:** The most remarkable thing about running for political office is the chance you have to enter into peoples' lives and cultures and institutions on such a vast basis. It's really an experience that's almost impossible to duplicate anywhere else. That was true for me. I had already gained the confidence of the Hispanics and the Indians and other minority groups because that's where my interests had been as a social and civil rights reformer. From the moment I came back to Phoenix, I had a pretty good understanding in those areas.

What I didn't appreciate was Southern Arizona. I'd probably been to Tucson twice in my whole life and running for political office was a wonderful opening to the politics of Southern Arizona, which even to this day, are very interesting. Phoenix, to oversimplify, is about money and investment and getting ahead. Tucson's always been a contrarian place full of neighborhood organizations and the huge influence of the University of Arizona. It's a much, much more activist place. The Democratic Party's got a deeper and much longer tradition of involvement in the environment and civil rights. I felt right at home, but it was a new experience.

**PS:** When you took office as Attorney General, what were you plans? What did you want to do, and why? What did you expect?

**BB:** The campaign had focused a whole lot on the issue of corporate fraud and land fraud. It was a remarkable time. Promoters were carving this state up selling lots on street corners, then, basically taking the paper and peddling it off. There was a notorious character named Ned Warren. Of course, this all flowed into the assassination of the reporter, Don Bolles. But there was a lot of organized crime going on, including in some financial institutions; but the land piece of it was really the awful piece. Organized crime became a campaign issue and, in some measure, I think it was responsible for the response I got.

I got to know Don Bolles quite well. He was very interested in this land stuff and understood it. I managed to persuade him very early on that I was serious. He was a great skeptic and as a typical investigative

reporter, he felt that all politicians, if not crooked or incompetent, were at best, indifferent. I persuaded him that I really meant business and was granted an audience with Eugene Pulliam who was the great kingpin of the press. This was in the day when Phoenix was a small town, run by three or four people. I managed to persuade them that I was real. They took this stuff and started prosecuting people and went to the legislature and said, "You know, we gotta start re-rewriting the laws of this state to get rid of these guys and to clean it up." The whole thing got a lot of momentum.

That was one wonderful moment. Phoenix was a small town in 1975. I went over to the legislature and said, "If we're going to clean this stuff up, we've got to have a statewide grand jury system." It was my view that we had to get above this business of having local prosecutors who didn't have the budget or the resources or the expertise to do this work. But the legislative establishment and all the county attorneys deep sixed the project.

On Easter Sunday, 1975, Gene Pulliam wrote an editorial and put it on the top fold of the front page of the Sunday paper, *on Easter!* The editorial said, "Babbitt is right, we've got to take this seriously," inferring that the legislators were all, if not in cahoots with the crooks, at least shirking their duty. The legislature came back the following week and passed everything. We had a lot of juice going and got a lot done. It was really an important time and we made progress. But it was interrupted by the murder of Don Bolles, which became a huge galvanizing event and the source of a great deal of controversy.

**PS:** Let's talk about that. You mentioned that you knew Don Bolles.

**BB:** Yes.

**PS:** Tell me about the day that he was killed. Where were you and how did you find out?

**BB:** I was in my office; it must have been around midday. Jack LaSota, chief of staff, came in and told me there'd been a car bombing and that Don Bolles was grievously wounded and probably would not survive. As it turned out, he did not.

**PS:** What were your thoughts at that time?

**BB:** My thoughts immediately turned to two things. One, thinking about his family and secondly, of course, wondering who did it and what was behind it. Those are questions over which there is some dispute to this day, as you know. It was a very intense time. My feeling was and is that the police and the investigative trail fingered the correct people, and we conducted very complex prosecutions that went on for a long time.

The principal target is now deceased. The rest of them have in varying degrees been prosecuted and

convicted. But it was very complicated because there were other theories including the tremendous controversy over dog racing and Emprise. The last word on Bolles' lips was *Emprise*. Of course Don had no reason, as he lay dying on the street, to know precisely what had happened or who had bombed his car, but there was an Emprise group around town.

Out of all this we organized everybody and got the prosecution process going. It had its ups and downs but largely demonstrated what it was all about. Eventually I learned that I was on the hit list as well, which was the subject of some interest.

**PS:** At the time though, wasn't it a shocking incident? Things like that just didn't happen.

**BB:** Well I think people were coming alive to it. Ed Lazar had been dispatched in a parking garage. You may not remember it, but that event was the moment that woke people up. People recognized that Lazar was an associate of Ned Warren who had turned state's evidence before the county grand jury, and Lazar had recently been murdered in a parking garage. It was a contract killing and it had never been solved. I think that's the point at which people said, "Hey, this isn't just amateur hour with a few excited salesmen peddling remote subdivisions. This is organized stuff."

**PS:** Isn't it an unwritten law that you don't kill reporters?

**BB:** Yes, that true. It's essentially an irrational act. You don't kill prosecutors and reporters because there are lines of journalists and prosecutors waiting behind them to take up the cause. All you do is give more intensity to the scrutiny that takes place.

**PS:** Initially this was a local case being prosecuted by the county attorney. Tell us about how you got involved.

**BB:** The county case was getting off track. The reason was that the county attorney was busy voicing his opinions about who was guilty in the national press. There are some basic rules to public prosecution, one of which is really important, occasionally breached, but enormously important. That rule is prosecutors do not voice their opinions about who is guilty. You just do not do it. You do not do it in front of a jury. You present evidence and the rules of ethics require that you refrain from doing that.

The prosecution was getting out of hand. It was turning into a witch-hunt being led by the county prosecution. We decided it was time to put an end to it. I went to the governor who had the power, I didn't, to transfer the case and that was done.

**PS:** You stepped on a few toes doing that.

**BB:** No question.

**PS:** There was a big investigation in addition to the one going on legally with the reporters that came into town. How were you involved with IRE? [Investigative Reporters and Legislators. Don Bolles was a founding member.]

**BB:** It was a remarkable kind of phenomenon. It really was. It was led by Robert Greene, who isn't an active journalist anymore; this was a long time ago. Greene was a Hercule Poirot character, a huge dominating guy who was a skilled investigative reporter. He was working for *Newsday*, a Long Island newspaper. Greene assembled a strike force of investigative reporters. They came to town, rented the top floor of the Adams Hotel and went to work. They were going to solve everything in sight and used some interesting investigative techniques, mainly going to the law enforcement agencies and getting into their files.

It's a process that needs some sort of ethical fences around it. At any rate, every law enforcement agency in Arizona was ready. Greene brought these people together; it was going to be a national story. And nobody wanted to be on the wrong side of the IRE. So they had access to everything in sight. It was a powerful and intimidating crowd. I remember keeping my distance. I got a call from Bob Greene, "Bruce, I want to come and see you." I remember when he walked into my office that it was sundown on a winter day and I thought, "Here's the guy who is he going to declare me ally or adversary. He sat down and said, "Mr. Attorney General, we've examined your life from start to finish and we think you're okay. You're part of our team." I thought, "This is really incredible. Here are these guys, all these strangers in town announcing that, even though I'm an elected official, I am now part of their team."

Stories aside, I have three thoughts about the outcome. First, they didn't come up with very much other than a lot of ancient and colorful stories of isolated, personal indiscretions and events from the past. There were a lot of innuendos and accusations, but they didn't directly uncover anything that significantly advanced the course of the investigation. Second, they did put on a lot of heat, which was very useful. It provided us space to get the legislature to appropriate money, keep everything going, secure more federal cooperation, and get the U.S. attorney involved. That was very helpful. Third, they founded the IRE, Investigative Reporters and Editors, a national organization that created a climate of investigative reporting that today is even a more secure and standard part of American journalism, by and large a productive thing. Reservations still surface about the occasional witch-hunt that took place; but as an institution IRE is a positive and laudable outgrowth of their work.

**PS:** When did you learn that you were a possible target of this same plot?

**BB:** It was much later on in the year. I learned of it only as the witnesses began to come forward. It may have been during the Robeson prosecution or the Dunlap prosecution, but I was working the weekend in

the office on a Sunday afternoon when Bill Schafer, the lead prosecutor, came in and said, "I'd like you to know that we have now learned that there were three people on the hit list, and you were one of them. In fact, you were at the top of the list."

According to testimony, they subsequently revised the order because Don Bolles had written a story that prompted a reshuffling of the list. I remember it quite well, because I went home that Sunday and gave a bath to our son. He was probably a year old and I can still hear the water splashing in the bathtub as I watched him churning around, thinking, "Life is a tenuous thing, a mysterious, problematical, beautiful thing, yet here I am and here we are and every day is a gift."

**PS:** So it hit home with you?

**BB:** Oh yes, oh yes. I had a little conversation with the Phoenix Police about security, but I got over it quickly. There's a certain chanciness to everything, but it was briefly an unsettling experience.

**PS:** Did you have any security as Attorney General?

**BB:** No. I've since had a lot of security at the federal level, but there are limits to how much it helps and how much of it is justified, and it wasn't and isn't at that level.

**PS:** Did you come away with any conclusions? Who do you think was responsible for the death of Don Bolles?

**BB:** I subscribe to the police theory that the people who have been prosecuted were all involved, and that Kemper Marley, in some measure, was involved.

**PS:** Is there anything else about that period that you want to talk about?

**BB:** No, I think I'd say it ended very quickly.

**PS:** What do you think were your greatest accomplishments as Attorney General?

**BB:** Our accomplishments were in getting the criminal justice system restructured to deal efficiently with organized and white-collar crime, straightening up the regulatory system, addressing land fraud, looking at financial institutions. We prosecuted Lincoln Thrift and put them under and got a better understanding and oversight not so much in banking, but at the lower level thrift and loan associations that were becoming so much of a problem. We worked hard on consumer issues, but what we were best at was that the Attorney General's office put together a law enforcement portfolio. Prior to that time we had operated without much organization, both in the regulatory and the prosecution side, but now we had law

enforcement operating as an important central state function.

**PS:** Were you happy doing that job?

**BB:** Oh, yes, I loved it. I was actually running for reelection. I thought it was a perfect combination of lawyering and public life. I had put together a reelection campaign and was on my way toward eight years.

**PS:** Things changed in 1978. Would you like to talk about how you suddenly became governor?

**BB:** Yes, one's life is inevitably dictated by chance; in this case a pretty spectacular example of that.

Raul Castro had been appointed ambassador to Argentina. Castro is a fine public servant. He had rendered some really wonderful service to his country as ambassador. He had been ambassador in the Johnson administration, and I think he found being governor contentious and was ready to move on. So Carter appointed him ambassador to Argentina and Wes Bolin became governor.

Wes had been Secretary of State since statehood almost. There's no question that he found being governor very stressful and one can speculate as to whether his demise was a direct result of all the pressures or not. In any event, he most unexpectedly died of a coronary in the middle of the night with no advance warning after less than a year in office. I learned of that with a phone call from Bill Reilly at six o'clock in the morning. That was how I became governor. I don't remember the precise words. He said something like, "You're the governor."

**PS:** What were your thoughts at that moment?

**BB:** Well, that I needed more sleep. (Laughs) We'd been out rather late the night before at a political event in Mesa. I remember it was raining hard on the way home and I stayed up after I got home for one reason or another, working on something. It was Saturday morning when the call came and I wasn't ready to face the day.

I have had this experience a number of times. Something happens that is potentially so overwhelming that you could almost be paralyzed by it. Of course, what you do is break things down into small steps and just take one step at a time. It wasn't all that complicated once things got going. You knew that you would now have security and that there would be somebody at your door and you better get ready to go onto a press conference. It just all happened. I never went to back to the Attorney General's office. I never saw my office again. I just went to the State Capitol at 10 o'clock, conducted the press conference and walked up to the ninth floor. I just did it, one thing at a time.

What I found most remarkable out of those first months was that now I'm into elective politics. As Attorney General, I had decided that I was going to stay in public life and run again. But someday the question would have been, "What next?" I thought I would run for Congress or for the Senate. I never thought I would run for governor because I thought governors cut ribbons. There was this stuff about Arizona, how the governorship was run: the governor basically attended the ceremonies and the legislature ran the state. I'd internalized that vision; it just didn't seem like the appropriate job for me.

But then there I was and I found myself thinking, "I really like doing this and I'm pretty good at it." It didn't occur to me that I had executive talents, but it wasn't that overwhelming once I got passed that first week. The first two weeks were pretty interesting. I had a really intense time with the legislature because the idea of weak governorship had always held sway. The legislature had been the dominant force. There hadn't been a tradition of assertive governors.

Bills were streaming up; it was the middle of the session and I made myself busy vetoing them. Arizona governors didn't veto bills and the legislative leadership viewed it as an affront of the first order and actually went into recess after I vetoed one particular bill. It was a tax reform measure that affected the mines. They were so unhinged by the fact that I was looking at bills and vetoing them. It created tension, genuine tension and some conflict; but we got past it pretty quickly and I found I liked the job. It was really a lot of fun and not that overwhelming. I didn't mind hard work, so there we were.

**PS:** When Governor Bolin died and you took office, it was when the state was flooding. I recall seeing Bolin on the news the night before, reporting from a helicopter, surveying flood damage. I had gotten a call at five that following morning from our office at Channel 10 to come in to do an obituary. So, I see that you took office in the midst of the flooding crisis.

**BB:** It was a remarkable time. Arizona is about feast or famine when it comes to water. There was clearly way too much and there was an incredible sequence of floods. I learned a lot about emergency management. But again, I felt quite comfortable doing it. One of the interesting things I discovered was the enormous utility of the National Guard. I was surprised by that but understood it very quickly: use the National Guard for all kind of things. I had a great time. They were responsive and that was part one. I remember the night that I got the call from Salt River Project. They said if it keeps raining, Stewart Mountain Dam may overtop. A challenging moment because I had to call a press conference saying that if Stewart Mountain Dam goes, we would have to evacuate Phoenix from Thomas Road to a third of the way to Baseline because this would be a genuine disaster.

Then there was a little crisis when Cave Creek Dam almost overtopped; it was lapping over the top on the west side. There was just a continuous series of those kinds of crises. Well, we just marched through it. I learned very quickly that when there's some emergency or problem, that's when the governor executes. He's out there standing in the water, showing people that the system works and that he is capable of

making decisions and imparting the sense that this is all manageable.

In retrospect, there were a long series of these challenges. In Southern Arizona there was a big flood on the Santa Cruz River that displaced a bunch of people, but we made it through. We made a lot of changes, instigated an examination of the entire Salt River Project system and provoked a reconfiguration. There were no bridges through Phoenix. For a couple of weeks all we had was the Hattie B running on the Southern Pacific track.

**PS:** I remember that (Laughs). That was pretty innovative. Talk about why it was necessary.

**BB:** The bridges were all out. Phoenix was cut in two and the only tracks left standing were those tracks on the railroad bridge through Tempe. I called the president of Southern Pacific in San Francisco and said, "We have to have a commuter train." He was reluctant. The guy said, "I've heard about you and I know what's going to happen. We're going to allow you to put up a commuter train and you're going to demand that it be kept there forever. So the answer is no." I said, "This is a friendly request but it could turn into an unfriendly demand." He answered, "Well, I don't like to do these things and I haven't heard you promise that you're not trying to put up a mass transit system." (Laughs) I said, "The issue right now is getting across this river for a community that has been cut in two." Southern Pacific finally warmed up and we had our first train out to Tempe, so it became the Hattie B. Of course, I would have loved to have kept it, because it demonstrated what is now twenty or twenty-five years later becoming a reality. Of course we need a rail transit system, and of course the beginning of it should be on a line running between downtown Phoenix and Tempe-Mesa. The Hattie B was a foretaste of the future in a rather unusual, but factual context.

**PS:** It was amazing how quickly you got Hattie B running, found places for it to stop and got the train station activated in downtown Phoenix, a station that lots of people didn't even know existed. It showed that the government could make something happen quickly. I lived in Tempe and rode it.

**BB:** It's a truism that disasters, whether floods, droughts, civil insurrections, wars, whatever, by shaking up peoples' perception of the status quo, lead to unintended and unforeseen consequences. This was just a little capsule version of that truism.

**PS:** Let's talk about the effect on your family of you becoming governor. It was a big change in Arizona to have a young family in the governor's mansion.

**BB:** It was a huge change, interestingly enough, not for our kids, but for my wife. The reason was that when I became governor, Christopher was just three years old and T.J. was born in November of 1978, so he was at the very beginning of life. My new job didn't have much impact on our sons. I think my tenure as Secretary of the Interior was more complex for them because, by then they were teenagers.

It was a major issue for Hattie because she had graduated from Arizona State, liked the law, had clerked for Justice Hayes on the State Supreme Court, and had been working, practicing law. By having me as governor, her life became vastly more complicated because of Arizona traditions, just as I was talking about with my mom back in her generation. There were roles which were sanctified by time and tradition and one was that you lived in a way in which the First Lady was always around entertaining and doing things as a wife.

By now Hattie is in her late twenties, had one child and another one on the way and was practicing law. She said, "Hey, wait a minute. What's this?" But she handled it very well. She simply said, "Look, I'm going to say to the people of Arizona, 'I'm raising some kids and working. I can't be holding tea parties every afternoon.'"

We lived in the Governor's Mansion very briefly and found that wouldn't work. It was given to ASU, so we were back to our default position. We stayed in our house where we led a family life. We had young kids. I heard a wonderful story which made it easier. Mayor Daley, the legendary figure of Chicago politics, was a family man. He raised seven kids and never went to social functions, never. The word came down as part of political lore that Richard J. Daley always had advice for elected officials. You gotta make a choice. You either go out all the time or almost never; because if you go out half the time, the half that you turned down are going to be mighty unhappy. But if nobody is seeing you out and about, it's okay. It's understood that you're committed to doing something else. That little story really helped us realize that we could spend time at home, particularly in the evenings. If it were consistently understood that we had young kids and had a family life, everybody understood. In fact, they did and it worked out pretty well. But it was still a significant adjustment for Hattie.

**PS:** You ran for office the first time in 1978 and were governor for eight years.

**BB:** Ran for office and was elected twice.

**PS:** One of the big issues throughout that time was water. We started off with water flooding Phoenix, but I know you were involved with water in various ways.

**BB:** March along. That's the light motif of my life, you know. When in doubt, march along.

**PS:** Initially, flooding was the big issue, but what were some other water issues?

**BB:** There were two strands to water issues. The first one was the Central Arizona Project. Flooding. In the wake of the flooding, there had to be a reassessment of CAP. The question was highlighted by the flooding. Whether to build more dams to store more water to prevent downstream flooding, interfacing

with CAP for storage as the main canal moved toward Phoenix.

It was a difficult time because the thinking of the water establishment was that Orme Dam had been largely forgotten. But Orme Dam was the Holy Grail of the water establishment, "We've got to have it. Yes, it's going to flood out the Fort McDowell Reservation, but that's the price of progress and we've got to have more storage on the Verde River; it's part of the flood control downstream. CAP is part of that project and nothing's going to change."

It was a stressful decision because I had concluded by then that Orme Dam was unnecessary. President Carter had cancelled a bunch of water projects and had called Orme Dam into question. The environmental community was against it. Fort McDowell Indian Tribe was apoplectic about it. It clearly was absolutely unnecessary. There were other ways of configuring the project. But an awful lot of the water establishment said, "It's Orme Dam, or you are a traitor to the cause of Arizona." Now, when they start waving the bloody shirt of the CAP, you better duck for cover unless you're prepared to get on top of it.

The Bureau of Reclamation was very helpful. The Carter administration was in its final years, although there was a bit of space and Cecil Andrus was still Secretary of the Interior. I wasn't going to go out and kill Orme Dam by standing up on Central Avenue. We put together a committee calling it the Plan 6 Committee. I got together with the progressive water buffalos, the Bureau of Reclamation, and we put together a group to examine the alternatives. To make a long story short, everything worked out very nicely. We got rid of Orme Dam. We simply stepped up the storage capacity in Lake Pleasant and got all these issues sorted out and did it quite satisfactorily.

In the long run the more important issue was about groundwater. That was another crisis. It's hard to make big changes without upsetting someone, either deliberately provoking a crisis or taking advantage of one in the making. It was just the way things worked back then. The groundwater crisis came to a flash point in the same time period. It was a heaven-sent opportunity. I called the leaders of the water establishment together the day after Thanksgiving in 1979, sat them down and met with them once or twice a week for nine months. I just shut the door and told them, "We're going to explore my way out of this problem and we're going to draft a meaningful water management system for the state of Arizona."

Cecil Andrus and I had a side discussion going. He was threatening to kill the CAP if we didn't reform. Periodically, I would call him up and say, "Cecil, get me some leverage. Threaten to kill it, and then I will go public and condemn you as interfering in our business, telling you to stay out of our affairs. At the same time, I will go back to the group and say, 'you hear him, and he just might do that.'"

As a result in early summer of 1980, we marched out of the room with a completed plan. We created the Department of Water Resources, set goals, wrote groundwater rules, created active management areas,

and quantified water rights. Twenty-five years later it hasn't been duplicated anywhere else in the country. It was a testimony to many things. We'd been painted into a corner by a combination of state court decisions and problems with this over-drafting. A quarrel had developed between the mines and cities, and the courts had made a bunch of conflicting decisions, scrambling it all up. The provision in the CAP authorization corrected all this. It had been a crisis just loaded with unpleasant possibilities, but was solved. It was a great moment.

**PS:** Talk about the groundwater problem.

**BB:** The groundwater problem is simply over-drafting. We are blessed in Southern Arizona with vast alluvial groundwater basins. We're sitting on one in Phoenix and Tucson sits on another one. Agriculture benefited with the invention of really good water pumps in the 1940s. It became economical to extract vast amounts of water, so the cotton industry came up like crazy, covering Maricopa County and Pinal County and extended way beyond the boundaries of Salt River Project, which was surface water. But the pumping down of these basins was going to bring an end to the whole thing. You can see in Southern Pinal County a lot of areas that went out of production. The great cotton boom around Eloy and that whole area is just tumbleweeds today because they pumped down groundwater to the point that it was no longer economically useful. They were simply going to destroy the resource.

There had been a few attempts to deal with it, but they weren't really terribly effective. The trouble started in Tucson, in the Avra Valley. The farmers realized that the city of Tucson was reaching into the Valley, exporting the water into Tucson. There were also problems with the mines immediately south of Tucson. The city seemed to be made for conflict. There was no surface water supply like what the Salt River Project had. Everybody in Southern Arizona got their straw into the groundwater. You can see it today. The Santa Cruz that ran through Tucson was once a real river. Silver Lake Road in Tucson is named Silver Lake Road for a reason; there was once a lake out there. The pumping destroyed all of that very quickly and then it began to empty the groundwater basins.

There were three big users side by side: mines, agriculture, and the city. That was a foreshadowing of the problem. The legal problem started over pumping water and transporting it from one place to another. The courts got in an enormous tangle over the whole thing. CAP came along and, in the authorizing legislation in 1968, there was a provision put in as a condition of the authorization and construction of the project, that Arizona would take meaningful steps to control the over-drafting of groundwater. Well, it wasn't entirely ignored as the project was being built, but nobody paid any attention to it.

However, in the late 1970s, the two things came to a head. The courts began issuing injunctions against the city of Tucson for transporting water out of the Avra Valley. Suddenly municipalities realized that, not only were groundwater basins being depleted, but there was going to be trouble over exporting water from underground basins to those with only a surface water supply. So it moved from an abstract discussion to

a major crisis.

**PS:** What did President Jimmy Carter do?

**BB:** President Carter did two things. He drew up a famous hit list that said we're not going build uneconomical dams in the American West. No more pork barrel reclamation politics. That decision was just unheard of, a lightning bolt out of the sky. Orme Dam was on the original hit list, but nothing was done about it. The dam just sat there, in this indeterminate status.

In 1980 the Reagan administration took an innovative approach that said if you want reclamation projects, you would have to share in the costs. That really brought people to their senses more than the hit list did. All of a sudden the federal government is saying, "If you want these projects, show us some money." A sense of realism ensued. It strengthened the idea that we had to be more rational about how we configured these projects to retain support for them.

**PS:** As governor you were in the middle between CAP, the sacred Arizona project that had been approved without partisan politics, and the government.

**BB:** Yes, it's true, but the Reagan administration's approach transcended all the usual stuff. Arizona had had a pretty good history of Washington paying attention to water issues. I would say that Carl Hayden was the giant of Arizona history. We had a bad time in the early twentieth century with Arizona going it alone. Old Governor Hunt was out there waving the bloody shirt of state's rights. Representative Lew Douglas and a lot of other Arizona politicians had this theory that Arizona could just ignore the Colorado River Compact situation, stay outside it, and build its own project.

Carl Hayden was a canny, visionary guy. He was very low key. There wasn't much of a presence of him in the Arizona press, but he represented the state in Washington for fifty-six years. He steered Arizona through the controversy over the bridge canyon, and as a result, the Boulder Canyon Project Act was passed that paved the way for the construction of Hoover Dam. Hayden maneuvered Arizona into making peace with the federal government as the prelude to all of this. It was really quite remarkable. Out of that experience came this culture which says that the Arizona Delegation will be united and that is Hayden's legacy; he created that culture which lasted over those fifty years.

There was a crisis moment with the authorization of the CAP over the so-called 4.4 priority for California. That was another tough moment. The state's rights crowd was back waving the bloody shirt saying, "Arizona will never compromise its entitlement." It was a replay of what happened in the lead-up to the Boulder Canyon Project Act. This time, the Udalls, especially Mo Udall, got the entire Arizona delegation involved.

It's a complex thing and I'm no expert on the history of the Congressional personalities of that time but, as he was moving into increasing influence, Mo Udall was the kind of guy who said to the water buffaloes, "We gotta be realistic; Arizona may or may not ever have another opportunity to build this project. We have to get this authorized." Interestingly, Carl Hayden left the senate in 1968. He was in his last inning when the CAP was authorized and he must have had had something to do with it.

[President Johnson declared September 30, 1968, the day that the Central Arizona Project was authorized, as *Carl Hayden Day*. In his remarks on that occasion, Senator Hayden said, "I consider it [the CAP authorization] the most significant accomplishment of my career."

The Colorado River Basin Project Act of 1968 authorized the construction of a number of water development projects in the upper and lower basins of the Colorado River, including the Central Arizona Project. It made the priority of the CAP water supply subordinate to California's apportionment in times of shortage. It directed the Secretary of the Interior to prepare long-range operating criteria for the Colorado River reservoir system.]

**PS:** And Stewart Udall?

**BB:** Stewart Udall was Secretary of the Interior from 1961 to 1969.

**PS:** Did Stewart Udall say that 1968 was the year [for the authorization of the CAP] because they knew Senator Hayden would be leaving office?

**BB:** That's exactly right. When it came together and the Arizona Delegation went along with it, it was because there was that tradition of unity, and it was the right decision. There are those who look back and say it might have been different, but it was the correct decision.

**PS:** There was controversy over the dams at the Grand Canyon. Should we discuss that here?

**BB:** That is really Stewart Udall's story, not mine. But again, they were good decisions.

**PS:** Were you more involved with CAP at the point where it was actually under construction?

**BB:** My task in CAP was to go back and beg for appropriations along with the annual ritual to solve the Orme Dam reconfiguration issue. I also dealt with internal management through the groundwater code and the creation of the Department of Water Resources.

**PS:** Tell us how the creation of the Department of Water Resources came about.

**BB:** We were in the flow of history. We had done a pretty good job in Washington dealing with Colorado River issues. Throughout all the stops and starts and controversy, the Washington leadership was very good and they kept it all together. But nothing happened internally in Arizona. We were really in the dark ages. One reason was that SRP was the water agency and they said, "We don't want any state involvement in water. Everything's fine. We're the water guys and it's far too important for a mere governor to be involved with." Not literally, but that was the culture.

The controversy over groundwater demonstrated that we really were in the dark ages of managing our affairs internally. We had gotten the federal piece together, but hadn't set up a state management system. We had an Arizona Water Commission, that was how Wes Steiner came in, but the Commission was for the Colorado River; they had no other jurisdiction. What water administration existed was in the State Land Department, a very sleepy organization. It was almost inevitable that we created a department to manage water resources. Late one evening, after six months of groundwater negotiations, it became clear that if we were going to have a management system, we had to have an agency. It's one of those things that just happened; we loaded it in so there would have to be a Department of Water Resources. It had to happen.

We have gone in one generation from the SRP as the eight hundred pound gorilla, to an arena in which there were three big-time players: the Central Arizona Project, the Arizona Central Water Conservancy District, which of course grew from zero as the CAP came to town, and the State Department of Water Resources, which was bulked up along with the Salt River Project. Given the importance of water, institutional diversity is quite a good thing. It means that there is going to be a lot of pushing and shoving and contention and debate and it is working quite well.

Our internal water administration in the last twenty-five years has gotten very sophisticated. They include the groundwater code, the State Water Bank, all the water storage features, and the Ground Water Replenishment Act; but there are still gaps particularly in the interface between groundwater and surface water in the rural areas. But by and large there's been a flowering of state-centered administration. It's very positive and we're a long way ahead of most states. We're in the midst of a drought. We need to do more, but the basic system is in place and it is working quite well.

**PS:** Considering that people think of Arizona as a desert, there's a lot of water going on here.

**BB:** There is, although Arizona is being a bit casual in the way we use water. We need to impart more of a conservation ethic. We need to work on the demand side. The supply side has been handled beautifully; the demand side needs work. We need to move toward more flexibility in the marketing of water into the allocation of water, moving it more toward where the demand is. There is going to be an increasing need, but also a lot more progress on those fronts.

We left the State Land Department behind in our discussion of all this, but we did manage to wake that place up with the Urban Lands Act. It's an important idea. Rather than merely selling a parcel of desert to the first guy who walks in and writes a check, we're going to plan. We'll put entitlements on the land and increase its value by getting the planning and zoning done, then auction it off with real value.

We had a productive period of land exchanges with the federal government that did a massive consolidation of federal lands and a blocking up of state lands. This action redrew the land tenure map of public lands of Arizona and put a lot of energy into the state park system, including Slide Rock Park and Oak Creek Canyon Park. It wasn't as if the State Land Department disappeared. It is more that we modernized it and gave the water to somebody else. Now we'll watch to see if we get that going. The work continues and the State Land Department is a vibrant place now. There's a lot more to be done, but it's coming along.

**PS:** Several people have observed that the water commission merely got a name change, becoming the Water Resource Department.

**BB:** There is nothing comparable between the two at all, except the constant presence of Wes Steiner. That's all.

**PS:** It's unusual that the head of an agency would survive. Usually, if there's a big change, the person in charge changes.

**BB:** Wes Steiner is a remarkable person, a really important bridge and role player in all of this. You can't underestimate his significance. Wes and I had a fabulous personal relationship and it made a lot of sense. If I had had a State Water Commissioner who was not on my side, I could have been marginalized in the CAP discussions. He was a classic state water engineer. There's a tradition in the West where the state water engineer was *the* person and the governor was just a mere agent of the state water commissioner. That tradition is pretty much past, but it was certainly true in Arizona, New Mexico and to some degree, in the other western states. Wes was the epitome of the new standard in the best sense of the word.

**PS:** There's a cartoon calling him the Water Czar.

**BB:** Yes, absolutely.

**PS:** He was a Californian and when he was hired and came over here in 1969, there was a lot of suspicion. How could Arizona hire a Californian? *He must be a spy who is going to steal our water.* Had that belief gone away by the time you were working with him?

**BB:** Yes, but it reflects the kind of insularity that typified a lot of state government for a long time, in the

sense that nothing was going to change, that any fresh wind or new face was part of a conspiracy. That's all behind us now. We have gone through a transition and we are increasingly open and accepting. Talent is where you find it. It's about change and reinvention and progress. It means not getting frozen into place and honoring only the past. History should be appreciated, not as a force to freeze everything in place, but as an understanding of what happened in the past, and then setting about extracting lessons and applying those lessons to the future.

**PS:** There has been a traditional conflict between California and Arizona when it comes to water. Still is. Were you involved in any of that?

**BB:** I was involved in a lot of it as Interior Secretary. For reasons that I can explain as we go forward, the Arizona-California conflict has been vastly overstated. Understand that it's rooted in the history of what happened at Santa Fe in 1923. Arizona came back from those Colorado River Compact negotiations with the state's rights crowd in charge, waving a bloody shirt led by old George W. P. Hunt saying, "We're going to go it alone. We didn't get what we wanted, and we're going to fight the federal government. We're going to put our Navy down there at Parker on the Colorado River. We're going to oppose the building of dams." Headed toward disaster.

In 1928 Carl Hayden quietly went against the wishes of the Arizona political establishment and pulled the rabbit out of the hat in terms of the structure of the Boulder Canyon Project Act that said, "Folks, the Compact is in place. Arizona is free to go it alone; there's a little space here, but the River is effectively allocated and someday Arizona will come home." In the meantime it was structured, and Carl Hayden had a lot to do with it. The Act was basically deferring to the state, saying: "If you don't want to be in this legislation, fine. You just go ahead and continue to holler to the mountaintops. Okay. Arizona is a sovereign state and we're not going to participate." But the Canyon Project set structure in place, rescued us from ourselves, and we gradually came around.

The 4.4 Limitation was viewed as a great conspiracy by California. It wasn't; they used their leverage. During my time as governor, I came to really understand California. I think that understanding contributed a lot to my success as Secretary of the Interior. When the deal was cut over the 4.4, the Metropolitan Water District said, "We will support CAP." During the nine years I served as governor, I spoke with the Metropolitan Water District every single year and they continued to support the Basin Project. There was no conflict. I acknowledge that from time to time I would lapse into the Arizona tradition of saying that California is the enemy, (laughs) and close behind is the federal government. It was all over when the 4.4 priority decision was enacted. That was the last conflict point of any significance, until my time as Interior Secretary when we had to get back to having California live within its limits. That's a story for the future.

**PS:** You were governor when the first water was finally delivered to Central Arizona through the canals. Do you remember the ceremony?

**BB:** I do remember it. I thought it was an ersatz, made-up ceremony, quite frankly. The project had been underway for years. Everybody knew it was coming. I remember, Don Hodel, Secretary of the Interior, was there. He seemed terribly distracted and didn't have much to say. Politicians of every stripe were there. We had to listen to them personally assert paternity for this project. (Laughs) It wasn't one of those great transforming moments. It was a bureaucratic celebration, not a communal celebration. Those things had all been done. I don't know if there was even any water in the canal that day. I have no idea. (Laughs)

**PS:** It is interesting that you've talked about politicians. One of the Bureau of Reclamation engineers I talked to, who was actually involved in designing and building the canals, had the same impression. He said that here were his guys actually out there constructing the canals, and these politicians came in and acted like they'd done it, like they'd been out there with their shovels. (Laughs)

**BB:** Yes, I know exactly. I understand.

**PS:** One of the things we didn't talk about is the issue of relations with Mexico because of the Colorado River. As governor how did you deal with that issue?

**BB:** Those were largely federal issues and they were not that complex and were entirely predictable. Minute 4.4 was the big moment. I may not have the number or the year correct, but the deal was settled in the 1940's. The interesting thing was that the United States was on the threshold of World War II and we were looking for labor and help from Mexico. Both the Rio Grande and Colorado Rivers surfaced as subjects and the State Department said, "We are going to make peace with Mexico; the details are insignificant. We are going to settle these river issues because we're in a world war and Mexico is an important part of our economic and labor picture." Things got settled and there was nothing that remarkable about it. Allocating a million and a half acre-feet of water to Mexico was perfectly reasonable. Maybe it was a little less than they were entitled to, that's a matter of judgment. But surely they were entitled to a million and a half acre-feet.

The second issue that came up was the salinity issue. Frankly, that also was a plain vanilla issue. It was handled entirely at the federal level and entirely appropriately. When the lettuce is dying in Tijuana because the water is too salty, you have a moral obligation to live up to at least the implicit promise of the deal. They did, and perfectly appropriately.

**PS:** What about the Yuma desalinization plant?

**BB:** Well, that's another matter. That takes me forward into the Secretarial years and remains an issue that needs resolution. The old warhorses are going to come out of the barn again saying, "What Mexico wants

is irrelevant. We want that desalter and we're going to deliver nothing but the bare minimum called for in Minute 44." Increasingly there will be a whole constituency saying that we need to rethink this. The delta was dried up completely. But the Ciénega de Santa Clara is now a living reality based on a saline return flow from Mohawk Innovative Technology, bypassing the river. The idea that you just shut down that desalinization plant is one of those looking-to-the-past things that is not a good starting point for working it out. That's the reason it is now becoming something of an issue.

**PS:** How do you see the future of water in Arizona? CAP began because of farmers wanting water for their crops but more and more, the water is going to the cities. What do you see for the future?

**BB:** It's a transition issue. Arizona's entire water budget is made up of approximate figures about how much we're using in the CAP service area. It is important to understand that in the CAP service area, we're using around four million acre feet a year. I think more than half of that is still in agriculture. It's inevitable that if we are going to have a balanced water supply, that there be a continuing transition from agriculture into urban uses. The only question is how we manage it consistent with meeting reasonable expectations of the agricultural sector, pricing water appropriately, and setting up mechanisms to make the transfers in a fair and equitable way. There is enough water. There will be reallocations from the agricultural to the urban sector. It's been going on for a half century. It will continue.

The real water problems in Arizona are going to be outside the CAP service area in rural Arizona. The reason for that is that the surface water up there has already been appropriated by the downstream users. The greatest land use planning decision in Arizona history was made by the federal government when they built Salt River Project. That decision was about appropriating the surface water of Central and Northern Arizona. These communities, now without surface water, have increasingly gone to pumping groundwater. That's what happened here a hundred years ago. Of course it dried up all the rivers. In this century, we live in an environment in which it's not appropriate to dry up the Salt, the Verde, the San Pedro and all their tributaries, the springs and Grand Canyon. So rural Arizona does not have the historic pathway of Southern Arizona and there is a genuine, quantifiable lack of water in rural Arizona. It's going to be a major and difficult problem. But it's not about Phoenix and Tucson. It's not about Pinal County.

**PS:** Let's move on from water. One of the most troublesome issues was the Martin Luther King Jr. birthday holiday. How did Arizona's celebration of it come about?

**BB:** It's quite remarkable that sometimes change is so obviously on the horizon that it's almost incredible that there was such a dispute at the time. Of course I'm informed by my own background in the civil rights movement. It was transparently clear to me that we were on the pathway toward a national commitment to honor Martin Luther King, Jr. There wasn't any question about it. It was one of the transforming moments in American history recognized by almost everyone in the country. Here in Arizona, once again, was this Colorado River mentality. "We're going to do it differently and this is a state's rights issue. The federal

government be damned, American public opinion be damned, world opinion be damned." I'm thinking, "This is just unreal." So what did I do? I proclaimed the holiday. It took them ten years and Jerry Colangelo to turn it around. That's the story.

**PS:** Did you ever think at the time that you proclaimed the holiday that it would be controversial?

**BB:** I knew the holiday was inevitable, but that it would be controversial?

**PS:** Yes, to the extent that it was.

**BB:** Evan Mecham was in the mix and his running provided a unique perspective, guaranteeing controversy. I didn't think it would take as long as it did to be proclaimed, or that it would take a Super Bowl to turn it around. But there we are. The Martin Luther King Jr. birthday proclamation was an important accomplishment of one of my fellow Historymaker honorees from previous years, Jerry Colangelo. He is not widely appreciated in this town. He brought to Phoenix a commitment to minority advancement and civil rights and opportunity for women that made a huge difference in the state because he had an established platform on which the business community and the economic establishment was really respected. Here was Jerry, in the Phoenix 40 and in all these other places, with his message that a lot of people in Arizona hadn't heard, explaining the meaning of equal opportunity. That is a wonderful part of his legacy to the state.

**PS:** Ultimately he just stepped up and led the movement.

**BB:** Yes.

**PS:** When you first issued the order for the Martin Luther King Jr. birthday holiday, did you think the controversy would just blow over in a few months or a year?

**BB:** I did not anticipate that it would turn into such a political hassle. I really didn't. I would have done it anyway because it had to be done and it was inevitable. It was just time to get it done, to do it.

**PS:** I know it was suggested that you thought you were doing it the easy way, instead of putting it to a vote.

**BB:** There is always a leadership decision of when do you lead and when do you follow. This was an obvious opportunity to say to the people that this should be done and that I have the authority to do it, period. I was elected to provide my judgment and leadership, and there it was.

**PS:** You mentioned the Phoenix 40. What was your relationship with that group?

**BB:** I think its members would be the first to admit that the Phoenix 40 was a much overrated threat to the liberties of Arizonans, or a benefit to the state, whichever way you want to put it. Much overrated. About 1970, or 1975, the state was run by an oligarchy (laughs) and again, for better or for worse; you can argue it both ways. From my years growing up in Arizona, it's really true. This state was run by Walter Bimson, Gene Pulliam, Frank Snell, and Bob Matthews; and if pressed, I could probably put another three or four names onto the list. Nothing got done without their blessing and nobody got very far without their acquiescence. That all started coming apart about the time I got into public life.

The state was getting a little too large and diversified for one newspaper publisher, one lawyer, and two bankers to be running the show. The Phoenix 40 was coming apart, coming of age, take your pick. It was a throwback to what was a more paternal authority in the state. The thought was that we could no longer have quite so selective group as just two or three, so they decided to have forty.

I was greatly amused when Hattie was invited to join. She came home one evening and said, "They've invited me to be a member of the Phoenix 40." I said, "Do they know that you're a female? (Laughs) Do they know you're a registered Democrat?" It was really a nostalgic bow to the past and a well-motivated attempt to provide some community leadership. But behind their masks and hoods, they really weren't any threat to the state, they were nice people, but I think that's the context in which it turned into such a discussion piece.

**PS:** Were you ever a member?

**BB:** No.

**PS:** Did Hattie join?

**BB:** She did and she came away much impressed with some things, notably Jerry Colangelo's commitment. She said, "Jerry was sitting there lecturing these people about things they had never heard of before." So, there you are.

**PS:** What do you see as your greatest accomplishment as governor?

**BB:** I am asked that all the time, and I always pass on it because that's for others to judge. The usual suspects are the complex of water issues, the resource problem and water revolution, restructuring of the State Land Department and its laws, reconfiguring of public lands, and the pattern of the state. Certainly, AHCCCS and the move into Medicaid which we originally never had. Now with AHCCCS, arguably we can boast of the most advanced program in the nation because of the way we set it up. A lot of the university issues come to mind: the research parks and the emphasis on research and science.

Other things could be mentioned. I was reading in the paper yesterday about the upcoming referendum on extending the sales tax for transit. "That's really interesting, why is that expiring?" I read on and it said, "Well, it's been there for twenty years." I remember that. We signed that transportation bill setting up the freeway system in 1984 by putting it on a broad financial base. I'm a little more ambiguous about that now than I was. Others may see it differently and I'd rather talk about state parks than freeways.

**PS:** You certainly have seen a lot of change in freeways in the Valley.

**BB:** The system certainly got built out.

**PS:** Were you a part of that whole movement?

**BB:** For better or worse, yes.

**PS:** When you left office, did you leave knowing you were going to run for President?

**BB:** Yes.

**PS:** Right after the next national election was when Evan Mecham was elected governor. How did you feel about that?

**BB:** As a political event, I thought it was full of interesting lessons for Republicans and Democrats. It was really quite remarkable because it looked like the Democratic succession was underway. Bill Schultz dropped out when I had become Governor. Nine years earlier he was in, ready to run for governor. Well, eight years later he was back and looked like the odds-on favorite. He is a very competent, outspoken guy. But he dropped out of the race. Then Carolyn Warner was in and Shultz re-entered as an independent. That's a red flag on the horizon. Very likely there would have been a Democratic succession and there would have been a quite natural Democratic follow-on, with either Bill Schultz or Carolyn Warner as *the* candidate. But once there were three people in the race, the contest became precarious.

If you turn to the Republican side, there was Burton Barr. In my nine years as governor, I frequently had a contentious relationship with the legislature. But there I was. I was saying, "I am the governor and I enjoy this and like doing the job." It included stating what I think and maybe disagreeing, and using my veto power. We got that all adjusted and when we did, it turned out that I had some really good leaders in the legislature. Stan Turley, Burton Barr, and Alfredo Gutierrez were really, really competent, good public servants in their own way, and each one of them left an enormous mark on the state. Burton Barr and I had perhaps the most volatile relationship, but it was underlain by enormous affection on both sides. I can tell stories from here until sundown.

But Barr made the mistake that has been made again and again and again. He assumed that because he was the most powerful and widely respected member of the legislature, loved and admired by everyone in the governing circles of the state, he would continue to be appreciated by his party, which was becoming increasingly ideological. Those who knew him were becoming suspicious of his ability to cut a deal with Bruce Babbitt, which is the stuff of governments. All of a sudden, Barr was blind-sided and taken down; so we had a governor's race in which the cards had been completely reshuffled, and the outcome was that Evan Mecham was elected governor.

**PS:** It made for an interesting few years.

**BB:** What it says is that it is really important for the public to pay attention to races because political parties no longer seem to have the ability to run things. As with Snell and Pulliam and Bimson, political parties could no longer run the state as an establishment. The parties didn't seem to have much coherence either. It became a roll of the dice. Anybody could show up and anything could happen. Not so good.

**PS:** When you go back through the history of how long Ev Mecham had been running, he'd become almost a joke among the more politically savvy.

**BB:** I think that's right. You can't make assumptions by looking at the past. The fact that Mecham had been rejected in nearly every election since 1950 didn't necessarily portend the future. And it didn't.

**PS:** Were you involved at all in the impeachment, or were you pretty much out of here by then?

**BB:** I was absolutely on to other things.

**PS:** Let's talk about some of those other things. Why did you decide to run for President?

**BB:** Out of my experience as governor, I became fascinated with the issues of governance. The Democratic Party got increasingly interested in the political side and, at least to me and to those of us who were talking about such things, seemed to marginalize itself on the left. There were a lot of us who were products of the 1960s and the civil rights movement. We looked at the Democratic Party and saw that it was getting beyond electability, drifting away. It lacked the discipline to ask what the federal government actually did and how it would pay. How would we deal with the deficits, structure an economic platform that would be credible and move us back toward the center? It turned itself into a movement. Some of it is still around today. I was present at the creation of the Democratic Leadership Council which subsequently found a winning candidate in Bill Clinton. But there were some of us on the front end of that movement who said, "Well, the logical extension to this message is to try it out nationally." I could have run for a third term as governor of Arizona, but a point comes when you say, "You've surely done it in nine years,

or it ain't there." So it was time to move on.

**PS:** Running for President is a huge commitment. You had a fairly young family; did you think about all that?

**BB:** Yes, we talked about it a lot. I guess what I'd learned by then is that we knew how to manage our personal lives and politics pretty well. We really did. Our kids were doing fine and we were working hard. I guess the difference between traveling to Wilcox and traveling to Chicago, or traveling to Yuma and traveling to New Hampshire is all part of the process. You are away a lot.

**PS:** You rode your bikes in Iowa.

**BB:** Yes, we brought the kids along; it was great. It didn't produce a lot of votes, but "I'd like to go back to Iowa and do that again now that I'm old enough to appreciate it how much fun it really was."

**PS:** Arizona has a lot of people here that have run for president (laughs). Did you talk to any of them, Mo Udall or Barry Goldwater?

**BB:** I talked to Mo. He had a wonderful, wise way about him. He said, "Look, the odds are long. The odds are long no matter what your base is or where you come from, but it's going to be a great experience. Lightening might strike; it might not. If you have something to say, it will be a useful experience for you and for the public." It was just about that simple. Just about.

**PS:** How many candidates were there that year? I remember a large group.

**BB:** Seven or eight of us. It's interesting how time goes on. Al Gore was there. He almost made it all these years later. Gephardt was there. He was back in it again this year. Jesse Jackson, Paul Simon, Gary Hart, it was a full field. No question.

**PS:** I have memories of a debate when you were all on stage, and you stood up. Tell us how that came about.

**BB:** What anyone will tell you, be it the press or the public, the hardest thing of all in a political campaign, with so many candidates, is to get people focused on who you are and what you're saying. It just is. Political consultants spend hours advising you on what color tie to wear and what color suit to wear and it's all about this incessant quest for connection. My standing up during the debate seemed like a good way to have everyone focus, to get your moment of attention.

**PS:** Did you know you were going to do that ahead of time?

**BB:** Yes, of course.

**PS:** Did you talk to a consultant about it?

**BB:** Well, I talked to my political people about it.

**PS:** Tell us what you did.

**BB:** Once you've got the idea, then you just make a statement to the audience. "Here's my view of how we should handle this fiscal and budget issue," which was vague and sort of a challenge to the audience. "I think it's important; I'm going to stand up, and if you agree with what I say, why don't you stand up with me to make a statement?" They did.

**PS:** Were you remembered for that by anyone besides me? (Laughs)

**BB:** I am most remembered, and it's a wonderful commentary on popular culture, for my appearance on *Saturday Night Live*. I am still stopped occasionally and asked about that skit. Not infrequently, it would be from someone who was old enough to have remembered it as they saw it, but who's actually seen it in a rerun of those *Saturday Night Live* collections. There you are.

**PS:** Tell me how it came about?

**BB:** I think that was an Al Franken deal. He was a writer for the show. There had been two drop outs: Gary Hart dropped out over the Donna Rice episode and Joe Biden dropped out over the Neil Kinnock speech. Biden was giving a speech that arguably was an exact replication of a speech Neil Kinnock, British candidate for Prime Minister, had made. A very moving speech. So Biden drops out over the Kinnock speech and Hart drops out over Donna Rice.

Al Franken comes to me and says, "Look, we'll do a skit in which you drop out of the race and the prompting factor is going to be that you're caught in the fifteen-or-fewer-items line in the supermarket with seventeen items in your shopping cart, leading to a crisis in which you withdraw from the race." It was wonderful: the essence of good humor, a relation to some facts, but magnifying them to the point of absurdity. We spent a morning in Manhattan filming it.

**PS:** Is that skit what you're most remembered for?

**BB:** There was also a moment in an Altman movie, *Tanner 88*, that I occasionally get stopped about. *Tanner 88* series has been back on television, so I get stopped about that once in a while.

**PS:** What were you surprised about in running for President? Was there anything in that campaign that you hadn't expected?

**BB:** Politics is sort of an extension of the same thing I learned in 1974. It starts off as retail politics and it's winding, repetitive. That is, you arrive in a state like Iowa as a complete stranger and endlessly grind through all the campaigning. I guess I was unprepared for the scale up into the debates. I really didn't practice my media skills enough. It was a rocky transition from my Arizona experience. Debating Ev Mecham is not very good preparation for debating a bunch of presidential candidates.

**PS:** Do you think you didn't practice enough?

**BB:** I have always been a little shy on media skills and didn't realize it. It's one thing to speak in a state of a couple of million where you know half the people and you've got this vast reservoir of acceptance that you can trade on. Then you scale up to an audience of a couple hundred million people who don't have a clue where you come from, who know nothing about you, and where the image on the screen and every nuance convey one hundred percent of the viewers' initial impression of who you are. I didn't really get that.

**PS:** You talked about consultants and ties and things. You used to wear glasses. At what point did you get rid of them? Did consultants tell you not to wear them?

**BB:** If you're substantially nearsighted, as I am, it's really very helpful to make the transition. I was always reluctant, but it seemed like a pretty good deal to have full-field vision. I'd been in public life for ten years and people get an image of you. I didn't think it would be such a big deal to wake up one day and say, "Hey I'm wearing contact lenses." But I looked different. By the way, I no longer wear contact lenses. I summoned up enough courage to go to the Lasik guy to take the next step. It's pretty neat.

**PS:** Looking good. (Laughs) Do you think people appreciate that?

**BB:** Just another job, another day's effort. March on.

**PS:** About running for president, what did you learn and what advice would you give to someone who might ask you that question?

**BB:** I obviously have had occasion to reflect on it, most recently while looking at the current crop of Democratic candidates. This is a truism, but if you have something to say, it can be a very positive experience. Arizonans who've gotten into this game are pretty good illustrations of that. Of course Barry Goldwater is the absolute paragon of that. He carved out a position that fit him perfectly and he had a

consistency about him and a persona that fit him. He was way ahead of his time and his message had a sharp edge to it. Ronald Reagan came along with a softer edge, but in many respects the content had been set by Goldwater who had a major influence on American politics. Mo Udall was next in line and he had a similar message, but a little more complex. Not in ideological terms but in presidential material, a little more nuanced and complex, built on important strands of the progressive instinct. I had my turn. Senator McCain comes in on his terms.

Interestingly enough, these candidacies are each at twelve-year intervals. After us, John McCain comes along with a very compelling message, a tremendous blend of personal story and independent political judgment. McCain does not fit neatly into the performance, politically. He comes out enormously enhanced as an independent national spokesman. I would say the strand of it is that you better have something crisp to say, rather than just reading polls. You may or may not win, but you can add to the process and come out better for having done it.

**PS:** What did you do after you didn't become the candidate?

**BB:** You know the answer. I took the default position. Looked in the drawer, found a law degree , dusted it off, came back, and settled into the community, practicing law and doing a lot of different things, always active in the environment, land, water, and resource issues; but basically just settling back and practicing law.

**PS:** It sounds like you took it easy for a few years.

**BB:** Well, yes certainly, in a sense.

**PS:** Did you get involved in the Clinton race when he ran for president?

**BB:** Yes, but not in the inner circle by any means. I had known Clinton since we were governors together and I did some speaking on his behalf, obviously supporting his candidacy. But I wasn't hanging around Little Rock. I was busy back home being a private citizen and doing a modest amount of campaigning, making appearances around the country.

**PS:** When Clinton got elected president, were you anxious to get involved in his administration?

**BB:** I would say yes, that I felt there was one more round of public service in me and it seemed like an appropriate time. We knew each other quite well and Hattie had worked with Hillary when we were all in office. I wasn't on the phone calling up, but it was almost inevitable, given our relationships, that he would reach out and say, "What would you like to do?"

**PS:** What did you say?

**BB:** I said I'd like to be a special trade representative. He looked a little quizzical and said, "Well, that's an interesting idea." We talked about it and that was the deal. I went back to Washington a couple of times during the transition, was vetted by the people who prepare you and go through your past. I flew to Little Rock a day or two before Christmas. Clinton had a hard time doing the musical chairs of assembling a cabinet. It was endless. But I flew to Little Rock expecting the final announcement. There were three or four positions left to fill in the cabinet.

I arrived in Little Rock and occupied myself sitting around until seven o'clock in the evening for final announcements. Then it was home for Christmas the following day. But I get a call from Warren Christopher, saying, "The President-Elect would like you to be Secretary of the Interior." I take a deep breath. Obviously I had the leverage to say yes or no. I knew I could say, "No, I want to stay with the deal." No question I had the leverage, but I also knew there was a time to play hard and a time to go with the flow. So I said, "Look, whatever the President-Elect would like me to do, that's it."

What had happened was that the environmentalists were going crazy over the selection of Bill Richardson to be Secretary of the Interior. They were dead wrong. He would have been an excellent Interior Secretary and he would have been very attentive to their needs. But they were fixated on having me and they felt it was their duty to have me, and they weren't taking no for an answer. They were bombarding Little Rock with phone calls and telegrams and at the last minute Clinton said, "I'm not going to start this administration off crosswise with the environmentalists. If they want Bruce Babbitt, you, Warren Christopher, go persuade him to do it." So there was tremendous shuffling.

**PS:** Did you know that was going on, that the environmentalists were lobbying for you?

**BB:** Only in a generalized way. I had some inkling of it when I was in Washington the week before. Some of my friends said, "The leaders of the environmental groups are mounting a rear guard action." I said, "That's not my trajectory; I made this commitment, this deal, whatever you want to call it and that's where I'd like to go." But like all intense interest groups, when they fixate on a course, they don't take a hint very easily. They're going to do what they're going to do, whether you like it or not, so there it was.

**PS:** It sounds like Interior was a much better position for you.

**BB:** It was a more obvious position, no question about that.

**PS:** A more prestigious, more powerful position, and certainly more visible.

**BB:** You can argue that lots of ways. But in terms of my own background and experience, it was probably

a more logical position. I had been very much an advocate of Mexico during my governor years, and had developed something of a following in Mexico and in the international community because of my very aggressive advocacy of Mexican positions in Washington, and probably all of that was factored into it.

**PS:** Did you know Bill Clinton somewhat before this?

**BB:** Oh, yes, sure.

**PS:** What was it like being part of his cabinet?

**BB:** Rephrase the question and ask me what it was like being part of his government, and the answer is: it was a fabulous experience. Why do I hesitate on *cabinet*? The reason is there really is no such thing as a cabinet. The cabinet is a fiction. It does not exist in law and it's an historical deal. It starts with this picture of George Washington surrounded by Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, and Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State, this fabulous convergence of the founding generation, this tableau. You can visualize the picture hanging over the fireplace mantle. But what's happened over the last couple hundred years is that the number of cabinet agencies has increased and increased and increased and increased — it's grown and grown and grown and grown. It's gotten so large and unwieldy that inevitably the inner circle has to be the president and his assistants who are in the White House.

A group sitting at a cabinet table is still done, but largely for PR reasons. You know the picture: thirty people sitting at a table discussing what the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development is going to say about monetary policy with respect to Mexico. Or what the Secretary of the Interior is going to say about the situation in Iraq. It's absolutely impossible to have a meaningful discussion. So the cabinet is largely a ceremonial kind of thing. That doesn't mean you're not doing real things; it just means you're not doing them in that setting. You're doing them through a smaller network that's nested in the White House.

**PS:** Are there still cabinet meetings, or is that just for the picture?

**BB:** No, there aren't. The agenda consists of reports and discussions of topical things, but in no administration is it the place where business is done.

**PS:** You started to talk about how business really gets done. How do you work with the President then?

**BB:** There are two layers of cabinet jobs. The four or five internal, original ones — Attorney General, Defense, State, and Treasury are still in closer communication because of the nature of the responsibilities. Then there is a second level of domestic cabinet offices which goes like this: you obviously are linked to the Congress, to the public and to the President to the extent that you carve out a role. Think of a cabinet member as rather like a Ford dealer. You go to Detroit once a year and get your sales quota and then you

go home and you sell the party line. I would say that is not entirely inaccurate because of the way business is done in the White House.

If you are going to be a force, initiating policy, you have to work at it and you have to play through the White House bureaucracy to form a personal relationship with the President. I was less successful in my first term than in my second. I really got it figured out in the second four-year term.

Bill Clinton was never deeply interested in the environment; he read the words but he didn't hear the music. What I managed to do in my second term was to persuade him to listen to the music. The reason was, and I say this with great affection and don't mean to sound dismissive, I finally persuaded him to remember that he would have a legacy that was going to be really, really important.

I have told this anecdote many times and it is very important. I was not having much success with the use of the Antiquities Act, the National Monuments guidelines. We had tried it once in1996 and it all went bad. This was the famous *Grand Staircase Escalante* episode. It was a surprise announcement, made in the midst of the reelection campaign and caused a lot of bitterness in Congress. The White House lost interest in all of it and the people lost interest too.

I finally thought it out and put together an index card one afternoon in my office. On one side I put *William Jefferson Clinton* and on the other side I put *Theodore Roosevelt*. I made a comparison of the numbers of acres in national forests, the numbers of monuments proclaimed, and the amount of wildlife refuges, turning it into a horse race. We had done some of that before, but not that much. In a reception line one evening during a state dinner, I pulled out the card and handed it to Clinton. He started to put it in his pocket, but then looked at it. I just stood there and kept looking and I knew I had him. I knew that Theodore Roosevelt piece was really all about one word: *legacy*. I don't know why it took me so long to figure it out, but I said, "This isn't just about an occasional political hassle. This is about something that's a big piece of history." After that Clinton would call me up in the middle of night, he'd actually call me in the middle of the night, asking, "How we doing? You got another one of those cards?"

That anecdote is part of a broader set of issues, but the point is that you have to break through with a rationale for capturing the personal attention of the President. Otherwise, you are in a bureaucratic job, just drifting along, running a department. That can be fine; it can provide a lot of interesting things to do. You go out and fight forest fires, work on water problems, run the Endangered Species Act, and go down to the Everglades. That's all fine, but if you really want to bump it up, that's how you gotta do it.

**PS:** I find it amazing that you had to get his attention in a reception line though.

**BB:** If you try to get on an official calendar and walk into the Oval Office on a day when things are crashing down around you and assistants are trying to move you in and out, although this doesn't apply to

the Secretary of Defense or Secretary of the Treasury, you will have trouble getting access. The best place to get the president's attention is at a political function or social function, because no one except a few aggressive people are leaning on him, and there's no filter. Eventually I discovered that if I really wanted to do business, I needn't bother making an appointment or try to work my way through the process with a bunch of memos. In those settings I would just try to plant the seeds. I once wrote a memo, and then I realized that if I sent it to the White House, it would get killed before Clinton ever saw it. So I caught him at another function and said, "I hate to do this, but I want to stand here while you read this memo." My point was made. He had absorbed the memo; he's a reader, he'd absorbed it. I knew he'd absorbed it, not because somebody told him to, but because I stood in. I stood there and had enough chutzpah to say, "Before you go on stage, read this."

**PS:** You learn what works.

**BB:** Yes, exactly.

**PS:** When you took office as Secretary of the Interior, what were some of your goals?

**BB:** I pretty much knew what I wanted to do. I sensed that the public land issues were the big ones. The idea was to expand and to do a better job of administering the public land and resource base of the country.

I was really interested in the Endangered Species Act because they were about ready to repeal it. There was so much controversy around how you use the Endangered Species Act to protect species, and how you did the land use planning that's necessary to create the space. It's going on in Tucson. There's a very good example with the famous Pigmy Owl. This issue, which has driven the land use planning process, has worked toward creating an open space plan for Tucson. It is a wonderful example.

I was interested in restoration projects, like the Florida Everglades, where you take degraded eco systems and forge a way of not just protecting something, but actually making it work, peeling back the agriculture and remote subdivisions, and making it work. I was interested in two things that were outside of my formal jurisdiction. One was forest management and the other was oceans. I spent a lot of time meddling around running the Forest Service. It came about in an interesting way.

I requalified and got my credentials as a fire fighter and went back out summers onto the fire lines, working fires. It created a sensation in the Forest Service and in the Department of Agriculture, where fire fighting is often neglected. It had a sensational impact and gave me credibility coming off those fire lines and sleeping out on the ground and cutting line and doing all that stuff to set forest policy and fire policy. I spent a lot of time doing that. It was a great experience; it was a real, interesting thing to do, a throwback to my experience in Flagstaff. I had to barge in and get requalified, but I did.

**PS:** Did security people have a fit?

**BB:** As a matter of fact the first thing they told me was, "Well, you gotta go to fire school." Fire school is for a month every year in Boise, and they knew I couldn't do that. So I said, "Why don't we bring the fire school to Washington for me?" We worked out a deal for the better part of three months. Every Saturday they would send a trainer from Boise to Washington and we actually had a classroom on the seventh floor, just a trainer and me. I'd watch the films and do the workbooks. When it came to the physical part, I went out and ran my head off to get into shape to pass the time trials. In the final session we went onto the roof of the Interior Department where I practiced deploying my fire shelter. The way to do it is, you gotta rip the apparatus out of the pack, get it all untangled and out over your head, flat with the aluminum shelter completely covering you, and you gotta do it in 25 seconds. I was mighty pleased. It was Saturday and we were all alone and nobody else was there. We were up on top of this building in Washington and there I went through it all and got my fire card.

After that there was no question. I found a fire crew to travel with and to work with and spent time doing it every summer. It wasn't just fun and games; it was for a purpose. I didn't want to go to the President and complain that the Forest Service ought to be in the Interior Department. Those things are full of history, why it's the right place or the wrong place. All I wanted to do was redirect the agency. We got that done in terms of all this. The fire policy that you hear talked about today really got underway as a result of that education in fire-fighting.

I did the same thing with the oceans. The ocean policy is run and overseen in the Department of Commerce. To make a long story short, we got out a set of maps of the entire globe and said, "Where are the American possessions, whether in Palau or Hawaii or the Virgin Islands?" We created a set of ocean reserves all over the world and Clinton was great. Department of Commerce guys were complaining, so I just went to the President. "Look, they've been sitting there for six years; they haven't done a damn thing. This is your legacy. Have I ever got a big one for you." It worked great.

**PS:** Didn't you have enough to do within the Department of Interior though? (Laughs)

**BB:** Yes, but you have to have, what do they call it, a holistic view of your job.

**PS:** I know you had a reputation of getting out of Washington and actually hiking some of these lands. I heard a story about you taking a hike up at Agua Fria. They thought you were crazy; they thought you would get lost, that you just took off and they had to keep up with you. Was it by design that you did that?

**BB:** Well, it was really part of the job. The Forest Service story I just told you illustrates the point. If I'm going to have credibility and be able to lead 20,000 Forest Service employees, I better prove to them that I know what they do and that I'm out on the ground. The monument stuff was a similar thing. We were

working with the Bureau of Land Management and they had never been in charge of national monuments; it was always the Parks Service. Well I called the BLM and said, “Look, you administer half the public land base of the United States and I want to brighten you up. I don’t want to have to say, ‘Here’s a nice piece of land; let’s transfer it to the National Parks Service.’” How do you motivate an agency? As I had said for 100 years, “Every time there’s a neat deal, we take it away from you. But I want you, the BLM, to administer these lands [what would be proclaimed as the Aqua Fria National Monument] and you’re going to have a real conservation mission.” But you gotta get out on the ground and show people.

The Agua Fria, just forty miles north of Phoenix, was particularly interesting because nobody in Arizona even knew it was there. It is an unbelievable place. The Agua Fria River comes down through Perry Mesa and is a magical place. The other thing that I learned in the wake of the Grand Staircase-Escalante controversy in 1996 was that in order to get these projects done, the President used his power to make the declaration. But if you’re just going to have a huge controversy and political backlash and a lot of angry Congressmen, you're not going to get away with it for long.

So the idea was to do it differently rather than just issue a surprise over the transom. I said, “We’ll go out on the ground and we’ll float a proposal and we’ll say, ‘I’m thinking about recommending that the President . . .’” It had never been done that way. I came out to Arizona and went over to the *Arizona Republic*, got the editorial board together and said, “I’m thinking about this place. Here are the maps; let’s go for a hike. Come on out and call up the television stations and say, ‘We’re going to go out to look at this place.’”

It had a dramatic a effect. The public said, “My God, yes, that’s fabulous.” A few reactionaries were saying, “Aw, you won’t be able to stake mining claims; you’ll be regulating grazing.” They are the ones who are usually heard. They are the lobbyists in Washington. But all of a sudden it’s on the front page of the paper and my job’s done by the time we come out of the Agua Fria. We got lost because the local BLM guy, a wonderful, wonderful, great friend, thought he knew where he was, but he’d never been there; he’d never been out on the ground. All of a sudden we’re in a dead end box canyon, just picking our way out. It’s all part of the story, the story with a little bit of spice, that is. Hey, it’s wonderful stuff and it’s a big adventure to be out there. The public can see it; the public supports it.

I go back to the President and say, “In Utah we had a horrible experience because we did it the wrong way; we did it the old fashioned way.” I spring a surprise, show him the press clips from the Arizona press, and he says, “Well, that’s a different story.” Again, it’s about being out there and really mixing it up.

**PS:** Maybe you ought to explain what the problems were in Utah, at the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. You’ve mentioned it several times.

**BB:** It was an important and painful lesson. This national monument process is really very interesting.

Congress gave this power to the President clear back in 1906 and it's an unusual law. Congress said that, without any further congressional consultation, the President could create what were in effect national parks, called national monuments. It's always been fairly controversial because it means no more logging, no more mining, and not as much grazing, maybe no grazing. Typically throughout the twentieth century, presidents weren't interested in all of the conflict with the western resource groups, so monuments were usually created on the last day of the last month of a lame duck presidency. Lyndon Johnson did it that way, Herbert Hoover, too. It was the style.

Now in 1996, President Clinton was not a lame duck; he was running for reelection. But the environmentalist movement had begun. Dick Morris, Clinton's infamous political consultant, more than the environmentalists, is picking up a real bump in interest over environmental issues. Where these things have always been popular, they never were in states where miners, loggers, and cowboys were. But the rest of the country says, "Well, this president is taking care of our national heritage." So in the midst of the reelection campaign, Dick Morris says to Clinton, "You gotta do something big on environment because it'll be great and you'll get on the front page of the national press."

Well, Utah came up very quickly. It's a fabulous area with a lot of unmet needs and, in all candor, Republicans in Congress aren't supporting the President's reelection campaign. The political guys are saying, "Look, our job is to get him re-elected; we'll worry about what the Congress thinks, we'll deal with that after the election. But we won't have to deal with it if we don't get moving. Furthermore, we want to keep it a surprise because then it'll be on the evening news all over the nation."

Politically it was perfect. It was a fabulous success. It got publicity; everybody loved it. It caused a horrible reaction in Utah and to some degree, understandably. People said, "Hey, you sprung this on us; we didn't have any local input." There was a tone of outrage and it caused a lot of problems in Congress. They mounted a movement to repeal the act which didn't go anywhere, but the warning flags were up after that.

We had to invent a strategy of turning the process upside down. I told Clinton that this was going to be the opposite of a surprise; we were going to go out and demonstrate to the public. The mining industry in Arizona won't like this and the conservative members of the Congressional Delegation won't like it; they'll haul me up and rake me over the coals in a Congressional hearing. But the public will think it's terrific and that was the dynamic of it.

**PS:** I always heard that the Grand Staircase wasn't involved in the taking of private property. It wasn't all public land at the time, or was it?

**BB:** Well, it was 99.5 percent public land and the private land remains private.

I plead guilty to having created more of these national monuments in Arizona than anywhere else. We finally got that tally to the point where the President really did have a magnificent record however you tote it up, acreage, and numbers, whatever. I obviously had a lot of interest in Arizona, knew the politics, understood the local issues and, really had a good sense of where to go. Now, the interesting thread here is my feeling that in Phoenix and Tucson there was going to be enormous support for setting aside areas that were in proximity to urban areas, both by being growth boundaries and by providing open space that people would appreciate.

Agua Fria is a great example. It's the growth boundary on the north once you get past Black Canyon City, providing a nice clean line. The Sonoran Desert is the same thing, down toward Gila Bend, where, as you get south from Buckeye, you see all that area looking like urban expansion could go on forever. "Well," we said, "Now there's a line in the desert, and it's going to be there."

Ironwood Monument in Tucson was absolutely amazing. I went to Tucson suspecting there was going to be some objection to it, but then I saw they weren't going to let me out of town until I declared it a national monument on site, and I mean nobody. We created a similar one naming it La Cienega's National Conservation Area, a slightly different title because people in Tucson wanted the open space. Those account for four of the six or seven that we did. The other two are basically Grand Canyon-related. That's a no-brainer in terms of saying to Arizona, "Now look, the Grand Canyon is a great place; let's make it greater."

**PS:** The Grand Canyon National Monument was converted to a national park. Wasn't that done under you? That was in the early '90s, I think.

**BB:** No, that happened a year or two before I showed up. I've been through this in my own family. When Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed the Grand Canyon a national monument, my ancestors were all against it because it was just like today. They were saying, "You're going to limit our rights." By the time I was growing up, the stories in my family were that my ancestors had helped Theodore Roosevelt (laughs) and encouraged him to create a national monument. It was all a kind of mythology both in terms of the extent of the opposition and the extent of the support. But it's a predictable track. The very people who are opposing are the ones who with time are coming around saying, "Well, this is good for us and for our community."

**PS:** Talk about the Endangered Species Act. Wasn't that the same type of controversy? Did you actually take wolves up to Yellowstone and help to return them to their natural habitat?

**BB:** That was a great story. It was the truth. You realize, there's gotta be a little theater to it. Someone once introduced me, saying, "This is Bruce Babbitt, a name familiar, if at all, to American school children because of the wolf in Yellowstone." It was just one of those moments. It hints of controversy, a lot of

threats and violence, all the usual stuff, lawsuits and anger in Congress, threats to cancel appropriations, the whole thing. But public support was stunning and the moment was fantastic; it was great to be there. It was one of those memorable shots, carrying that cage through the snow, opening it up, a wolf still drugged, just barely moving, stumbling through the snow. Today there are hundreds of them and people come from all over the world to watch this pageant of wildlife.

Reintroducing the wolf changed the whole park. The elk herds were just decimating Yellowstone from over-population. They'd actually gotten lazy. You would go to the park's lodges and the elk would be lounging around like they were cats, just hanging around. Well they don't lounge around anymore. Man, they're wild animals again, they're alert, and they're moving. The wolves have electrified the hierarchy of wildlife in the park. A great decision, a great result.

**PS:** Reintroducing wolves into Arizona and New Mexico hasn't been quite so successful.

**BB:** It's been tough for many reasons, but it's changing and it's progressing. It's been a lot harder sell and the release sites were not ideal. The release sites should have been deeper into the Gila Wilderness of New Mexico. But for political reasons we had to do it in Arizona which is on the edge of the area that ought to be repopulated. But it's working now. It still has tremendous public support and it will ultimately be for the benefit of everyone.

**PS:** I just saw that the Bald Eagle is being taken off the endangered list. But in Arizona the Bald Eagle is not doing so well as in other places.

**BB:** The Arizona problem is that growth and development put a lot of pressure on natural systems. Some wildlife does well in proximity to roads, power lines, all that stuff, and others don't. There can be surprises. The condor has been a surprise. Condors have had tremendous problems in California because they like power lines, they like to drink anti-freeze; they're curious critters and they'll show up in the most unexpected places. Condors don't have any wild sense about them. Their release in Northern Arizona looks like it's beginning to work. The drought may be affecting the Bald Eagles. Bear in mind that most people don't automatically remember that Bald Eagles are fishers, and if there isn't as much water, there are not so many fish available. There are a lot of variables, no question.

**PS:** A couple things we haven't talked about when you served as Interior Secretary is the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The BIA has been known as a difficult part of the Department of Interior. Would you discuss that?

**BB:** Yes, you bet. The unknown and under-appreciated fact is that there is a renaissance going on, a great revival, really a fascinating resurgence of culture and progress in American Indian Tribes. It's a fabulous success story. It has many components. The biggest one is education. The Ford Foundation and a lot of other groups in the 1950s and 1960s devoted themselves to getting opportunities opened up for the next

generation of Native Americans. The most interesting place you can see the results in my experience is in Window Rock, Arizona.

I was employed during the 1960s representing the Navajo Tribe in some of these things I talked about earlier. When I went to Window Rock and spent time working with the Tribal Council, there was not a single Navajo lawyer on the entire reservation of several hundred thousand. The Navajo Tribal Council was rooted in cultural patterns of the nineteenth century. It was a very inward-looking place and they did not have the ability to deal with the outside world except through Anglo [white American] lawyers like me.

Today in Window Rock, boy, you'll see something entirely different. An educational revolution has taken place. The Navajo Attorney General is Navajo, the staff is Indian. They are sophisticated. They've now gotten a resource base, as do many American Indian Tribes. Gaming has been a terrific source of economic growth. You see that here. All you have to do is look at Salt River, Fort McDowell, Gila, and the Tohono O'Odhom. For all the complaining about gaming, now we see that it is the Native Americans who are first in line for a new economic opportunity. Have there been abuses? Sure, there always are in gaming. But most of it has been done well and it has provided an enormous economic base.

Water rights issues are getting sorted out. Water settlements that we've driven have, by and large, been appropriate, helpful, just. We took all the land away; not all of it, but in the sweep of American history, most of the land base has been divested. At the last minute, beginning in Arizona versus California, the Supreme Court laid down a new rule. It gave us the power to drive these water rights settlements and with it has come a real renaissance among the Tribes.

What that meant for me as Interior Secretary was a very changed role as far as the BIA is concerned. The Secretary of the Interior has traditionally been kind of paternalistic, doing things for the tribes. No more. My role, and for Interior Secretaries in the future, is to listen to the tribes and to be their voice, their agent in Washington. A really, really profound transformation. Things still are complex. We're still in charge of driving these water rights settlements, we are still strung up in accounting cases for trust administration going back to Kit Carson and General Custer, trying to reconcile them. This litigation has been going on forever. But once you cut through all the issues, it's a great story, and a brand new role for the Secretary of the Interior.

There isn't any paternalism left in the relationship. I would go to the National Congress of the American Indians, my predecessors would go, and everybody (laughs) would sit there respectfully in the old traditional way, listening to the *great father from Washington* coming to see them. Now, there is NC-II [cable TV system] and I get briefed in advance on how many forms they are going to stand me up about, beat me up about, along with everything else that needed doing that I hadn't done. Then I would get my marching orders. You see it here in Arizona; it's really wonderful. In the past, I tried a reapportionment

case to get a single Indian into the Legislature. Now they are everywhere. In a metaphorical sense, they're at the table and they are a vital, important part of society. Senator Kerry was up there last weekend and these are indicators of the change. This presidential candidate was on the trail for three days listening to Indian leaders who expect him to be pushing their agenda in response for their support, which matters.

**PS:** That's the way they can get their people to vote.

**BB:** The governor [Janet Napolitano] is very forthright about saying she's in office because of the Indian vote.

**PS:** I interviewed Mary Thomas recently who said casinos are nice, but Indian water rights are much more important for their future.

**BB:** She has every reason to be optimistic because the outlines of the remaining settlements are quite clear. We put those together over the last ten years. Senator John Kyl has been a major player in that. We sat down with the Tribes and with the Congressional Delegation and those settlements are essentially the outlines. They are very clear and they're going to happen. It's because Arizonans understand that that's the law. It has been since Arizona vs. California.

There is a certain kind of large-scale justice to all of this. If we just willy-nilly deprived Tribes of their land base throughout the West unilaterally, usually without their informed consent, here we are coming around and saying, "Well, when it comes to water, there's a different standard and you're going to get a very good deal." It's going to work fine in the context of the Arizona economy. It's not like they're going to take this water to Jamaica, for heaven's sake. (laughs) It'll be deployed in the context of the Arizona economy and we'll all be better off for it.

**PS:** So we may be buying water from them.

**BB:** Yes, but we buy and sell resources from each other. After all, the town of Anthem is buying from the Ak-Chin Indian Tribe. Now the fact that the Ak-Chin Indian Tribe is getting an economic benefit from people who are buying houses in Anthem doesn't seem to have slowed anything down in the context of the economy, and the Ak-Chin Tribe is undoubtedly reinvesting those resources in a productive way which is yielding income to them. That's the American system. They're at the table and that's the way it should be.

**PS:** You talked a lot about Clinton being interested historically in his heritage. How do you see your record as Secretary of the Interior?

**BB:** It is the same answer as the governor question. The facts are all out there and the people over time will come to their own conclusions. I am quite confident I will be judged, my stewardship at Interior will be

judged, very much like my record as governor. That is, you're not going to walk past and say nothing happened. A lot happened and I was there in the middle of it. In my fair share of cases out there, I was making it happen. But beyond that, let others make the judgment.

I am writing a book, but it's not going to be the kind of memoir devoted to long lists of things that one might take credit for. It's going to try to be a book to wrap this all together, land use, natural resources, water, forestry, oceans, and project ahead another fifty years. I will try to draw anecdotally on my experiences in the Hawaiian Islands, the Everglades, Alaska, and Arizona, and say that here are the next generation of issues.

**PS:** You were one of the few people in Clinton's Cabinet who served the entire eight years.

**BB:** I can't imagine why anybody would leave such an interesting job early. At the end of the first Clinton administration we were told that if we would like to leave, this would be an appropriate time for a fresh start.   I all but said, in the course of my remarks that you can't run me out of here with a shotgun. You can't do it; this is really interesting stuff.

Every day through all the controversy and all the chaos, I knew what I was there for. I had an agenda and if Bill Clinton or his advisors weren't always certain that they understood what the agenda was and were sometimes a little quizzical at the amount of controversy, saying, "Jeez, I wish there weren't so much controversy out West," I'm certain that you're going to appreciate the fact that I left a real legacy for this time, and that Clinton was going to be feeling very good about it, which of course he does now. When I talk to him, he's really animated about what happened because now he sees it from that perspective. Even if in the press of other events, quite understandably, an Interior matter wasn't always the first thing on the agenda, and if occasionally I had to be a little bit rough-edged about proceeding with things and kinda knocked over a few icons and kinda stirred things up, well so be it.

**PS:** Also a legacy for you.

**BB:** Well, sure, sure.

**PS:** In some of the things I have read, you are often compared to Stewart Udall. Stewart Udall also served as Secretary of the Interior. Do you think it is any coincidence that both of you were from Arizona?

**BB:** I think we're probably the only two Arizonans who served in any Cabinet. Well, no, actually Richard Kleindienst served as Attorney General. He would be the third one.

We came to the job in very different ways. Stu was a real activist in the Kennedy campaign in 1959 and 1960 and served in Congress. I guess that you can draw a common pathway and say that this job in modern

times has to go to a Westerner. It goes best to a Westerner who is a public official, who's got experience in elective office and who, in the course of being in elective office, has managed to be attentive to environmental issues and to the building of a conservation constituency. Now, if you narrow that down as I just have, to be a Westerner, a non-Californian, a *western* Westerner from a non-California state in the Democratic administration, a Democrat-elected official with a conservation background, that's actually a pretty narrow list. I guess the real question is why Arizonans are interested in conservation in a state not notably on the list of places where those issues have traditionally played.  That's a bit of a mystery. I don't know.

**PS:** Well, people remember that you grew up by the Grand Canyon.

**BB:** No question. Stewart Udall and I both grew up in Northern Arizona. We both have small town backgrounds, a huge network of family roots. But the interest in conservation issues is not an Arizona tradition. Public officials in Arizona typically have not been notable for stressing those issues.

**PS:** What do you plan now? You say you are writing a book, and you are working for a law firm in Washington DC. Are you going to come back to Arizona?

**BB:** The first thing I learned after thirty years in public life is that America is an extraordinary place. Our democracy is (laughing) an unbelievable kind of institution. You're sitting in Washington DC, at the height of power, surrounded by security, drivers, status, a thousand assistants, and a day later you're out of office and you're back on the street. There's no driver, there's no transition assistance, there's no paycheck, there's nothing. You are Citizen Babbitt again. It's really wonderful. There's no hereditary entitlement of any kind. As Hattie pointed out to me very quickly, "Look, you better go back to work. Actuarially, there's not a lot of time left and you don't have the luxury of just drifting off and sitting on the back porch."

So, I'm back doing what comes naturally which is earning a living, working on resource issues. Also doing what comes naturally, now if it didn't before: speaking and writing and spending time in universities and that kind of stuff; making my way back to Arizona. Hattie's career is still rooted in Washington and abroad, but I can see the drift. We bought this piece of property down in Oracle [Arizona] and (laughing) I think it's likely to be a place where —