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History as related by Frank Gould, long-time Superintendent of Lefthand Ditch Company, now a Director. Interviewed by Ken Whitmore, with the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District.

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This is Frank Gould. The retired, long time Superintendent of the Lefthand Ditch Company, now the Assistant Superintendent and consultant. Today is Tuesday, April 5, 1988.

The Lefthand Ditch Company was incorporated in 1866. Prior to that there were several original decrees in Lefthand Creek for ditches such as the Bader, Altona, Northern Mutual Life Insurance, Cochran, Hornbaker, Williamson, Holland, Farmers, Baum and Goyn, Table Mountain, Way, Tollgate, Star Crocker, Johnson, Lake Ditch. These ditches have decrees totaling 304.04 cfs from Lefthand Creek, and they were dated from 9/1/1860 to 5/3/1879. After the Lefthand Ditch Company was organized, some ditches received decrees. I really don’t know why.

These individual ditch decrees were consolidated in Lefthand Ditch Company about the time the owners and farmers from the Lefthand area decided to divert water from South St. Vrain Creek into James Creek. In the early 1860’s, this water was diverted into a man-made ditch about 3/8 of a mile long which emptied into a natural gulch or draw, which is the headwaters of James Creek. James Creek flows into Lefthand Creek below Jamestown, Colorado, so this water eventually supplied Lefthand.

The first decree owned by the Lefthand Ditch Company out of South St. Vrain Creek is for 40.77 cfs, the date of appropriation of June 1, 1863. Later the ditch company filed for another decree in the amount of 685.23 cfs, the date of June 1, 1870. This amount was decreed by the court.

The first issue of shares for the Lefthand Ditch Company was 100 shares. Later, around the turn of the century, they reorganized and they came up with 105 shares. In approximately 1968, these 105 shares were converted to 16,800
shares. Later I will explain why it happened that way.

According to the records and notes found among Lefthand Ditch Company papers, there was a great deal of animosity between the St. Vrain water users and the Lefthand Ditch Company because of this diversion. This was the diversion out of the South St. Vrain Creek. The diversion was the first of its kind from one basin or watershed into another on record in the then territory of Colorado.

The date of the first confrontation between the two different interests — Lefthand vs. St. Vrain, is not definitely known, but it was soon after the diversion was made. The notes found indicated that the Lefthand people built a dam and diverted the water. Then the St. Vrain people went to the diversion and removed the dam and let the water go down St. Vrain Creek. The notes continued that the Lefthand people went to the diversion and replaced the dam, and diverted the water into the Lefthand, and posted an armed guard at the diversion. The St. Vrain people appeared again, and this time they too were armed. Another brief note stated that cooler heads prevailed and they decided to settle this controversy in court. Out of this action came the famous Coffin vs. Lefthand Ditch Company decision from the Supreme Court of the territory awarding the decrees as shown earlier.

When I first began working for the Lefthand Ditch Company as a ditchwalker or rider in 1937, some of the old timers in the Longmont area were still rather bitter in their feelings towards Lefthand Ditch people because we "stole their water." In 1937, the Lefthand Ditch Company did not have much storage capacity. They had Allens Lake, 703.7 acre-feet, enlarged in the mid-1920's, Lake Isabelle with a capacity of 809.8 acre-feet purchased from Professor R. D. George in the early 1930's, and Lefthand Park Reservoir with 185 acre-feet. Lefthand Park was
enlarged in 1966 to 1,528 acre-feet on 160 acres of land owned by the Lefthand Ditch Company and Gold Lake with 354 acre-feet (date unknown), when the Lefthand Ditch company acquired the rights in Gold Lake. These water rights were to fill, store, and release only.

I worked for the Lefthand Ditch Company in 1937 and 1938, but not in 1939 and 1940. The ditch board (3 men) had changed with 1 new member. After the change, the new member insisted I apply for the ditch job in 1941. I was reluctant, because the board of 1939 had informed me I was not doing a good enough job to suit some of the board members the two previous years I had worked. The new board member in 1941, was a very insistent person and the board again hired me for the season. A seasonal job in those days was 60 to 90 days in the summer. They paid me $3.00 per day, and I furnished my transportation. The voting is done by shares rather than one share holder, one vote. Most ditches are that way. They go by shares rather than number of shareholders when voting.

The system water management did not change much in the years from 1870 to 1940, with the exception of the four small reservoirs. There was no regulation of the fluctuating creek flow in the early 1940's. Some of the directors, particularly the new one, decided the Lefthand Ditch Company needed more storage facilities. So they began looking for a reservoir site. They settled on the Lefthand Valley Reservoir site, but not a unanimous agreement. There was enough support from the stockholders at that time by majority vote to borrow money and construct Lefthand Valley Reservoir. The reservoir was built in 1949 and 1950, with a filling decree of 3,783.17 acre-feet dated 5/15/1945. Several shareholders believed they would never get any water from the Lefthand Valley Reservoir, because it was at a lower elevation than their farms. At that time water exchange was not used in the Lefthand Ditch system except for the two higher
ditches which were above Allens Lake.

The people who irrigated from these two ditches insisted they did not get any water from Allens Lake. Their understanding was, exchange didn’t work and it wouldn’t work in Lefthand Valley Reservoir, because it was lower than Allens Lake in elevation. I’m not certain that they were ever convinced. Several went so far as to start pledges for a war chest to stop the Lefthand Ditch Company from starting construction of the Lefthand Valley Reservoir. This effort did not have enough support to be effective so they discontinued their effort. However, they did not stop their grumbling until they were either convinced, died, or moved from the area.

Lefthand Valley Reservoir was constructed strictly for storage, but after a few years of operation I was convinced that it could also be used as a regulation device. Lefthand Creek, in June of each year, would fluctuate as much as 25 to 30 cfs each day. That’s about 15% of the flow during a 24 hour period with the high flows arriving at the upper ditch of the Lefthand system at about 3:30 a.m. and the low flows in late afternoon. This was very difficult to manage without some way to regulate and level out the flows. The lower ditch in the system would have too much water in the early morning and not nearly enough in the evening. The surprising part of this was that the people on the upper end of the system not affected by the fluctuation were not too sympathetic to the situation. At that time, there were 12 lateral ditches out of the Lefthand Creek. So there was a lot of grumbling from the lower ditch people. By the late 1950’s the shareholders seemed to be in a more cooperative mood; and after explanations were made at the annual meeting, how a regulation dam and headgate could be installed at the head of the Lefthand Valley Reservoir Filler Ditch to help this situation. The shareholders at the annual meeting voted to have this
construction done.

One shareholder, prior to the regulation dam who lived about 3/8 of a mile from the Creek, told me that he could tell if the lower ditch was getting more water per share than his ditch, which was about in the middle of the system, by the sound of the water running in the creek. I figured that was very scientific!!

The attitude change came in time, with the old timers very set in their ways. They kind of viewed one another as antagonist. The upper and lower had some real "donny brooks" at their annual meetings. Then there was a newer generation that came along; I was there long enough to see that happen. It seemed like the younger folks had a little different attitude. They seemed to want to cooperate, or be a little more willing to try something that would benefit the whole system rather than just their ditch.

Then there were some new people who moved in. That seemed to be what kind of kicked it off. They didn’t trust one another very much, and it was very difficult to get them to cooperate. We had a three member board then. One was dead set in his ways, one was kind of on the fence, and the other was the opposite of the first one. So sometimes the two opposite attitudes would be at logger heads. Then the guy in the middle would have to split the tie.

It was pretty serious stuff it seemed like. All shares in the Lefthand Ditch Company are equal. The creek flow is divided out equal as well as the storage. The regulation dam and headgate of Lefthand Valley Reservoir filler ditch proved to be a very valuable tool to help regulate the creek flow and is in use currently. Statements have been made that maybe the regulation of the flow of the creek, via Lefthand Valley Reservoir, is as valuable as the storage itself.
It helped our water management considerably.

As the C-BT water project was getting closer to completion, the directors of the Lefthand Ditch Company realized that the allottees of the Big T water needed more than the dividing boards in the lateral ditches to make certain that the allottees received their correct amount of Big T water. The dividing boards in the lateral were a little better than guessing, but a poor way to measure water. So as a result of this, there are many 12-inch and 24-inch Parshall Measuring Flumes to measure water along the lateral ditches. The lateral ditch owners operate their own ditches, so all the Lefthand Ditch Company directors could do to get the Parshall flumes along the laterals were to point out the advantages and urge the ditch owners to install Parshall Measuring Flumes.

Everett Steele was a very respected man on the Board and in the community. He was a fellow that had a long-range viewpoint of things and he was willing to cooperate. He did a lot for the Lefthand Ditch system during the time he was on that Board, and he was very cooperative with the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District. He was a conservative, not spending money unless he thought he was going to get his value out of it. He was willing to try new things. He was the one that helped get the measuring flumes constructed. Interesting enough, this is 1987, and there are still three ditches in the Lefthand system without Parshall Measuring Flumes. This being the result of the attitude of several of the people who owned these ditches, their attitude was we did it this way for nearly a 100 years so why change. Also, the cost of the flume was a factor. Cost after reimbursement from ASCS for complying with their rules for better management and use of irrigation water was very small compared to the benefits derived from better management of water.
It also made the job of the ditchriders a lot easier. Prior to the Parshall flumes they had those dividing boards, with most people not satisfied. It took two or three years after we put in the measuring flumes for people to really believe that those things worked. At first there was a lot of suspicion, yeah! "How do we know that's working?" but it soon became apparent that they did work.

The three ditches were, the Crocker, Star, and the Johnson Ditch. They are over in the south end of the system. One of the old timers was one who didn't want any changes. He was on the Board of Directors of Lefthand Ditch Company and why they haven't changed since he passed on I don't know. They apparently seem to get along O.K. I don't see how they do.

Big T Project water has proven to be very beneficial to the Lefthand Ditch area, even though most water users did not sign up for water nor did the Lefthand Ditch Company sign up for any allotments. I think this was a mistake. One of the old timers on the Board of Directors at the time they came around and tried to sign up prospective users for Big T water said: "Boy we made a mistake. Why didn't we sign up for 5,000 or 10,000 acre-feet of water when it was available." So he saw the mistake. An interesting thing on that sign up that I just thought of. When it was in process to sign up for Big T water allotments, I thought, oh boy! that would be great for me; but I live west of the Foothills Highway. There were two old timers that had the farms east of the highway that were the kind of folks who made up the population in those days, and were kind of suspicious of new things. They didn't want anything to do with C-BT, but I went down to sign up in spite of opposition. Cal Maier was the Water Commissioner in District 5 at that time. I think it might have been Earl Phipps at the Longmont City Hall where we signed up for Big T water in our area. So I went down to sign up. I thought I could use some C-BT water because we're always a little
After writing in the legal description, they said, oh, you have a problem. What's that? Well, you're not within the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District boundaries. There's about half a mile, maybe a little more than that, between the Foothills Highway and the western boundary of the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District. Since then they have been annexed into the District.

We don't have any Big T water now, but we are within the District. I was disappointed. In that case, I thought this would be something really worthwhile.

Through exchanges, the whole Lefthand Ditch system benefits from Big T water. Lefthand Water Supply Company has an allotment of Big T water which is exchanged through the Lefthand Ditch Company and which benefits both associations. In the early 1960's, the Lefthand Ditch Company investigated the possibility of skimming the free river flows from Lefthand Creek into Boulder Reservoir. An agreement was worked out with the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District to do this. In 1963, a structure was built on Lefthand Creek to divert water through a diversion structure and a short canal into the Boulder Feeder Canal above Boulder Reservoir. This arrangement is very beneficial to the Lefthand Ditch Company, and I believe the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District as well.

A year prior to the construction of the permanent diversion structure, the ditch company constructed a temporary earthen dam in the creek below the Boulder Feeder Canal that created a reverse flow from Lefthand Creek into the Boulder Feeder Canal. At that time, the temporary dam did not have to be very high because the creek bed had not been eroded to the elevation it is now. In the
1969 flood, the creek bed was eroded in many places downstream from the Foothills. By 1968, many of the farms in Lefthand Ditch Company service area were being divided into smaller tracts, thus, creating many more fractional shares.

Question by KLW: To get this on record, what’s your opinion as to how it helps the Conservancy District?

The way I look at it the contract we negotiated contained clauses such as: We divert 100 acre-feet of water. The Conservancy District gets 35 acre-feet of that. It varies as the diverted water increases. It goes down as the diverted water increases.

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<th>Water Diverted From Lefthand Creek and Delivered to the District</th>
<th>Percentage of Diverted Water Deliverable to the Company</th>
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<td>in Acre-Feet</td>
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It’s a way the Conservancy District can gain some water without any expense, except for the operation of getting the water there, measuring it, and the book work.

Another thing that is beneficial to the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, it allows the City of Boulder to receive water out of Lefthand Creek with about a mile of operation of the Boulder Feeder Canal without turning water
out of Carter Lake early in the season. We had a little concern, because the Lefthand Ditch Company has a policy, none of the Lefthand Ditch Company’s water shall go outside the Lefthand Ditch Company irrigated area except by exchange which we do with the Left Hand Water Supply Company. We were concerned by putting water into Boulder Reservoir and furnishing Boulder with Lefthand water. Our attorney, and I’m sure the Northern’s attorney both were concerned. They determined that once it got into the Boulder Feeder Canal, it was no longer Lefthand Ditch Company water. So we agreed that this would not detrimentally affect the Lefthand Ditch Company policy.

You probably have a record over the years of how many acre-feet that the Northern has gained. Some years we really don’t need it all, but it is excellent insurance.

The accumulated record shows the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District gain of 25,656.2 acre-feet of water from 1962, through 1987, or an average of 1,069 acre-feet per year through the last 24 years.

Well, I suppose at one time even Northern had looked at the particular diversion, and maybe discarded it for some reason. We came up with the idea with a positive attitude, and it’s worked great as far as we’re concerned.

Getting back to 1968, when the farms were being split up. We had quite a few fractional shares at that time, most of them were like fourths, thirds, halves, three-quarters, and there were some five-eighths. As they were being split we even divided into sixteenths and thirtyths. We had one at one hundred twentieth shares. It was getting to the point where it was almost unmanageable. We didn’t have a computer, or a calculator. We did it all by hand. So the
Board of Directors then decided it would be better if these shares were split, and then we would never have any more fractional shares.

Prior to 1968, the Left Hand Water Supply Company was formed to supply potable water to their members within and outside Lefthand Ditch Company service area.

Charter members were being served by Big T Project water. New members of Lefthand Water Supply Company, inside the Lefthand Ditch Company service area, were required to transfer 1/160th of a share of Lefthand Ditch Company stock or 1 unit of Big T for each new tap on Lefthand Water Supply Company system. Thus, there were 160th shares created. Left Hand Ditch Company management had been contemplating splitting the old shares down to a small enough size so that there would never be any more fractional shares. So to fit the requirements of the Left Hand Water Supply Company the split of 1 to 160 it was chosen with a stipulation that there would never be fractional shares again.

This split was approved by a majority vote, even though some of the old timers resisted. Lefthand Ditch Company owned one old full share. The directors approved an offer to either buy or sell fractional shares so that a user with an old one-third share could buy or sell a portion of a new share to maintain whole shares. As a result of this, Lefthand Ditch Company owns 153 shares out of 16,800 shares outstanding.

Another major project for the company was to rebuild and enlarge Lefthand Park Reservoir. Proof that the Lefthand Park Reservoir needed rebuilt or enlarged was expressed by the shareholders in the mid-1960's. Lefthand Park Reservoir is located at the headwaters of Lefthand Creek at elevation 10,600 feet. Lefthand Ditch Company does own 160 acres in the Park and the surrounding land is nearly
all U.S. Forest land. At that elevation there are many problems not present at lower elevations such as short working season, equipment has less power, longer travel time for the workers, scarcity of good dam building materials, and so forth. Despite all the obstacles, the reservoir dam was built in one season except some preliminary work such as core trenching, soil sampling, tree removal, and other work done the previous year. This has been a good addition to the Lefthand Ditch system and gives the Lefthand Ditch Company a good balance between the direct flow rights and storage rights.

In 1978, the Board of Directors hired Jesse Parrish to work with me during the 1978 summer to become acquainted with management of the Lefthand Ditch system. This was due to my retiring at the end of the 1978 season. Jesse Parrish proved to be a good choice and is still with the Lefthand Ditch Company.

In the early days of the Lefthand Ditch Company, after storage reservoirs were acquired and built, the operating procedure was, when the Directors believed the majority of the shareholders needed storage water, they released water from one of the reservoirs to be divided into the lateral ditches according to the number of shares in the ditch. This was not a very satisfactory way of using the storage water. Some of the shareholders would not be ready, because of not having the hay crop off the land or for some other reason, thereby, actually losing their portion of the water to some other user in their ditch. Many of the neighbors on a certain lateral ditch would trade shares or fractions of shares. Example: a shareholder with one whole share and another with two whole shares would trade and the one with one share would have three shares of water for two days and one with two shares would get the water for four days. This trade arrangement would be put into operation when the direct flow of the creek was low enough so that neither of the shareholders by themselves would have a
reasonable head of water. Even with the trade arrangement the flow was too low for an efficient irrigation.

In the 1950's, with many new and also younger generation shareholders, the attitude was changing. Also, Lefthand Valley Reservoir was in operation. Most shareholders were not satisfied with the management of the good water decrees the Lefthand Ditch Company had and wanted a change. At that time the shareholders voted to hire a full-time ditchrider with overall management responsibilities. This action gave me an incentive to try to manage the water more efficiently. There was one of the lateral ditches on the system serving only two farms. One of the farms had rights to the use of one old share and the other farm had two old shares. The operator of the farm with two shares would not trade water with the neighboring farmer having one share, to help the farmer with one share to have enough water for two or three rows of corn. This was very frustrating to him. He talked to me about the possibility of not using his water for a few days and accumulating credits then getting a good head of water.

We explored the idea of drawing his portion of storage water without waiting for the Directors to determine when to release the storage water. These ideas were taken to the Board of Directors for action. At that time there were three Directors. One director was an old timer who believed we did it this way for nearly a 100 years and no changes were needed. The other two Directors, particularly one of them, liked the idea and they authorized the new idea to be tried. If it didn't work to their satisfaction then it would be discontinued. Now, when the crops were irrigated the water was shut off and accumulated credits. Also, the ability to draw their storage water individually. This was proven to be one of, if not the best, actions the Directors have ever taken. This action was very controversial and a few of the old timers tried to get the
practice stopped by sending one of the opponents of the idea to the State Engineer. The opponents contended the share owners accumulating credits were storing water out of priority. Actually, there was never a time after that when the level of Lefthand Valley Reservoir or other reservoirs increased due to this practice because there were always users drawing storage water in larger quantities than those who were accumulating credits. After several years of using this water management tool, the opponent to the idea told me that the State Engineer told him to go back and work out their differences. The State Engineer could not interfere with the internal workings of Lefthand Ditch Company unless someone could prove Lefthand Ditch Company managers were storing water out of priority.

Question: To what extent did the change increase your paper work?

It would be hard to say, but before the practice was started, the book work was very minimal. I would have a book, like a little pocket notebook that would fit in my shirt pocket. This was the record for the whole year. It showed how many shares were in the ditch that day and the number of second feet to be divided. Then we went to this new method. I suppose that increased it 10 to 20 times. That was just part of the job, and we were willing to take it over for improving the system.

I wouldn't have done it without encouragement from some of the people. (as an example) When this opponent went to the State Engineer's office, one of the little fellows that was an old friend of mine farmed right north of Niwot. He had kind of a sandy soil, he's also on the creek bottom land, and without a pretty fair head of water in the day time it would back up in the row or field. It was disappearing into the sands. He just couldn't irrigate without a sizable
head. He heard that they were going to try and stop the new method. He was ready to fight someone.

In answer to your question, the paper work increased at least 10 times.

The user who was so mad said one of his neighbors was in the same kind of situation. He said their shares were increased to double their efficiency by this system. It's just worked beautifully. We used to rent a quarter of an old share for our farm which would be 40 of the new ones, and this new system made our operation much more efficient also. So really, in essence, the paper work increased the efficiency of the ditch along with saving a lot of water. It made our stockholders much happier in the long run.

Well, it really didn't take very long to prove its worth. I would say a total of five years with the exception of these three ditches I mentioned before that did not have measuring flumes. They wouldn't take advantage like they could have but seem to be satisfied. One of them was a fairly small ditch. IBM was the other ditch. I mentioned this to IBM and said they could have more efficient use of their water if they would change systems like the other folks did on the other lateral ditches. Their answer was: "Well, we've got enough water here and we don't want to make waves. We want to get along with the folks." I had a few irrigators on those ditches that would just be mad as a hornet but, not at me, just at the system. Still they never could get it changed and it still isn't changed. It made the system twice as good, along with the other two reservoirs constructed, the Lefthand Valley Reservoir and Lefthand Park, and then the C-BT water coming in, it couldn't be run like it used to be. (a disaster.)
This practice of storing credits, getting credits on the shutoff, is still in effect and everybody likes it.

Getting up to a little more modern stuff. In 1984, the Board of Directors agreed to try a computer system for the water records because they were getting more time consuming each year -- the results of more shareholders and more farms being split into smaller tracts. The O&M Superintendent does all the water record keeping as well as the actual work of regulating the headgates on the ditches and reservoirs -- a very busy person during the irrigation season -- I can vouch for that. Lefthand made a deal with a company located in Longmont to rent time on their computer allowing Jesse Parrish to have a terminal and printer at his home. The computer programmer did not understand water language and the ditch company personnel did not understand computer language. It was very difficult to communicate. This arrangement had several bugs in it, even though it did work fairly well for three or four seasons. It became difficult for the ditch company superintendent to contact the programmer at the computer company to correct any glitches that occurred. In the early summer of 1987, the computer company in Longmont went out of business, forcing the superintendent to use manual records again for the remainder of the season. During the summer and fall of 1987, the ditch company people were searching for someone to develop a program that would work better. The person doing some programming for a few ditches was contracted later that winter of 1988. He developed a program we hope and believe will be satisfactory. We seemed to have a fellow that is interested in getting us a program that will work. As an example, when the other computer was working in the heaviest time of the irrigation season, Jesse could get his book work done at night in about 20 or 30 minutes, but when I was on the ditch 10 years ago with a few less shareholders I'd spend maybe an hour and a-half a night getting work ready for the next day. Then the next day two
hours more getting it all posted. With all these modern conveniences, there’s no reason we shouldn’t take advantage of it.

Here’s an interesting note. Some people at the Water Congress this past winter asked, "How come the name Lefthand?" -- "Why Lefthand?" Because of a left-handed Arapahoe Indian Chief who lived with his tribe in the general area of Niwot, west into the mountains, and up Lefthand Canyon. Niwot was spelled a little differently at that time. I think they spelled it Ne-wot or something like that. I’ve seen it, but it developed into Niwot. It was an Indian’s word for Lefthand. Chief Lefthand was friendly to the whites. There are many Lefthands in the area: Lefthand Creek, Lefthand Park Reservoir, Lefthand Park itself, Lefthand Ditch Company, Left Hand Water Supply Company, Lefthand Grange of Niwot, Lefthand Water and Sanitation District, at Allens Lake, Lefthand Fire Protection District – so there are a lot of Lefthands in our area.

Question: I understand the Chief is buried by haystack mountain.

Well, there are all kinds of rumors about what happened to him, but I don’t know for sure. There were some old tepee rings close to haystack mountain on that old place we called the Gehrung Place.

There use to be an old log cabin there. One of the real early cabins. I think they said it was built by some surveyors. The government sent surveyors out there and they built this cabin to winter in. They were surveying in that area. It was a real old time building. It’s been moved into Longmont to old Mill Park. It was taken down log by log. Guy Braly volunteered his dragline. I helped Guy put a chain on it instead of using the bucket, and we took it down log by log. We loaded it onto a flatbed trailer and then volunteers in Longmont
reassembled it. Because it was a historic thing and a shame to lose it. It was always a concern of the Dodds (present owners). They always thought somebody would get in there, build a campfire, and burn the thing down. (It never happened.) You could see where they had fires, but a part of it was dirt floor, so they got away with it. We numbered the logs as we took them off so they could reassemble the thing. Kind of an interesting project.

Question: Frank, I know you’re the one that’s responsible, and I would like to believe I helped a little bit in getting a job done because of working with the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District by instigating it -- the consolidation of all the ditches on the Boulder Feeder Canal under Lefthand. Would you mind telling me how that came about.

The consolidation of the ditches into the Lefthand ditches took place in the 1860’s. I’ve researched that thing several times in the past as to what happened and when. I could never find any records. We looked in the courthouse, but maybe we didn’t look in the right place. There should be records of that somewhere. The State Engineer’s office might have records. One of the old timers (I keep referring to people as old timers) was 67 years old when I was 30 (they’re old timers to me). I think it was the second year I was working for the company in 1938, on the ditch mentioned, the Bud and Hornbaker. He had a farm that was irrigated by the Bud & Hornbaker Ditch. The old guy said one day when the water was getting short, "Frank we’re going to call on our old decree in the Bud & Hornbaker Ditch." He said that decree is 5 or 6 cfs and it only irrigated about 100 acres on the total ditch. He said, "Tomorrow morning I’m going to call on that decree. We have a decree ahead of the Lefthand Ditch Company decree and I want you to deliver that water into the ditch." I’d never heard of this. It was my second year with the company so I guess I did the wise
thing. Instead of turning on the water, I went over to the old President of the Board who was also an old timer and raised in the Niwot area. I told him what this fellow had said. He said he figured if he could get an extra day of good running water, that would be great.

Ken, I think what you are referring to is the C-BT allottees. Allotments were taken from the individual lateral ditches and consolidated into the Lefthand Ditch systems, with one exception the Star Ditch Company.

So, the next day I saw the first old timer; and told him the decree wasn’t good anymore and he backed down. He was going to try and work me for at least a day or so of extra water.

Reference by Ken: What I really meant was the consolidation of one superintendent taking care of the project water out of Boulder Feeder -- working with Holland, Lefthand, Hinman, Table Mountain and we even tried for storage.

Well, at first everything was individual. Just like Lefthand, and other ditches out of Boulder Feeder Canal were all individuals, then working with you, we changed or consolidated.

That was the results of the directors giving the O.K. I would always go to the Directors and say, "Well, is this O.K. with you fellows." They didn’t always agree, but they did agree this time. They realized what problems you folks had so they agreed to make it simpler for you. I now knew exactly what it was doing in those ditches and it just worked out very well that way. As a matter of fact, we still don’t have it on the Star ditch. You know they still have their own allotment. And you know the story behind that.
I guess they thought they were giving up some rights; but other folks, once it was explained to them, felt more comfortable because they believed I was honest about what it was doing for the ditch company and there wouldn’t be any more mix-ups. If individual people are doing things there’s always a mix-up, but if they were ordering by themselves individually, there’s always a little bigger chance. Before I was full-time, the individual would be ordering - they were out doing their farming and this was a sideline. Ordering water was just something that they hoped they remembered to do.

Once again, this was thinking of the efficiency of the total operation. It’s added paperwork, but at the same time, it saved water, and made everything more efficient.

It was a natural thing, it seemed to me, for the Lefthand Ditch Company Superintendent to do the coordinating of their water use.

Question: Does that Superintendent get paid any extra money from those different ditch companies?

No, he does not. Originally when this Big T water first came down there, I phoned in the water orders and I can still remember the number.

I had to keep track of the calls because of long distance calls. I think it was 10 cents or 15 cents. I’d call up NCWCD and I’d say they want so much in Holland, so much in the Williamson, and so on. It would take 2 or 3 minutes. It wasn’t a very big charge, but it would be a toll call. For years I kept track of that because one old timer didn’t believe in all this modern stuff, and
he was on the board. He said those people have to pay for their costs. It was so ridiculous by the end of the season. It might have amounted to $5 or something like that. All the records I had to keep then they’d get billed. The Holland Ditch, for instance, they’d get billed for maybe 70 cents. I would have to pro-rate, because if I had 4 orders, change orders for different ditches, and the whole toll call was 10 cents or 15, I’d have to split it up four ways so you know it was ridiculous. Finally, I just said, "You know, this is silly," and the other two Directors agreed. So we discontinued the individual method. At first the lateral ditches charged to run the Big T water. Also I pointed out to them that, running that Big T water in August when the creek flow was down would help carry the rest of the water. They were gaining something instead of losing, but lateral ditches still run their own water.

Question: Do you remember the District phone number?

Yeah.

Question: What was it. It used to be Normandy 7-2437. Now it’s 667-2437. Back then, you know, it was Normandy.

The consolidation helped us a great deal and I’m sure it helped the District. It’s kind of like a Water Commissioner running his river. You ran the Boulder Feeder Canal like a Water Commissioner runs his river also.

Question: When you were building your reservoirs and when the C-BT was first built, there was no recreation involved whatsoever or even planned in the building. Now recreation is a big part of the C-BT and also recreation is a facet that is written into any new projects. Would you care to elaborate on
anything on your Lefthand system which you thought about in the olden days and, how you’re doing it now? I do know that you do have recreational leases.

The Lefthand Ditch Company owns the Lefthand Valley Reservoir and the lands surrounding it. They bought the land to build the reservoir. They have full rights in Lefthand Valley Reservoir, which is leased out to recreation. It has been leased for recreation for quite a number of years. The first people, as I recall, were water skiers, and the guy that was kind of the ramrod in that lease thing was an insurance broker. We had our insurance with him.

Ken: He was a national champ. "Mark Taggart".

Allens Lake is owned by the Lefthand Ditch Company. They owned 160 acres surrounding the Lake and including the Lake.

Now, that’s a subdivision.

They call it Lake of the Pines. When the ditch company sold the surrounding land to the subdividers they retained ownership of the lake bed itself, and the subdividers or developers received all the recreation rights on Allens Lake. So the ditch company was out completely, which is the way we wanted it, and so there’s no public recreation there at all. On Gold Lake, near Ward, the ditch company has only the rights to fill and draw the water out. They don’t even own the land under the lake so there’s no public recreation there. There’s a summer camp, and I don’t know really what it’s developed into now. It’s a kind of resort area. They own all the recreation rights, and all we have are rights to operate and maintain all the reservoir and dams.
Question: Is that in the national forest?

It's on some old mining claims. There's a National Forest close, but not under the Lake. It's privately owned. Then Lake Isabelle is up in the Indian Peaks Wilderness area, and all the ditch company has up there is the right to maintain and release water from it. It's a self-filler. It's right on the headwaters of South St. Vrain, as it's a self-filler. There's no intake ditch, and no outlet ditch the Lake headgate diverts into a natural draw. It's open to the public. Lefthand Park, the way it was designed, would not quite fit into the 160 acre tract that the ditch company owned. To make it where the engineer said was the best place to put the dam, we had to build part of the dam on forest land. Part of the agreement with the U.S. Forest Service was that we agreed it would be open to the public. We would not have any responsibility as far as stocking it with fish. Our responsibility up there is to maintain the thing so it's in working order and to take care of the dam and outlet works. It again does not have any intake ditch or outlet ditch, this also diverts into a natural draw. It's right on the natural stream, and so there's no private recreation there. Lefthand Valley is the only one that we lease out for recreation.

Question: We haven't touched on maintenance. Any information you can give me on maintenance? What's your annual costs? How do you do them? Is it a private contract, or does your Superintendent do much of the work? Also, winter time work. Just any information that you can give me on your maintenance, because I know you have quite a few miles of canal. You haven't mentioned the number of miles, but if we can get that in detail a little later on some maps it will help our information and yours.

With the exception of Lake Isabelle, most of our reservoirs are high hazard -
class 1, I guess you would call it. They are given an annual inspection. Lefthand Park, by permit with the Forest Service, has to be inspected once a year by a qualified engineer. For quite a few years, we would hire a private engineer from Longmont to inspect it. Now the State Engineer does it. I guess after the Lawn Lake Flood they are conscious of inspecting. I guess they have a little more money in their budget, and they have more inspectors. You probably know as much or more about that than I do.

So they will inspect the reservoirs yearly, which I think is a good idea because we don't want a reservoir to break for two reasons. One, it's going to hurt some people. Another, it's going to cost the company too darn much to replace it, if we ever could replace it. There's a good reason, I think, for those inspections. I just always hoped that the engineers did a good inspection and found out anything that has to be done. We do it, but it's done mostly by contract work. We do not have any maintenance equipment. We looked at that back years ago. We thought about maybe getting a backhoe or something like that to do work, but with a one man operation the O&M Superintendent had to do all the work, for example: running headgates, doing all the book work, and he helped with and oversees the maintenance in the wintertime. We just didn't think it would work when the time left was used to go out and do the actual ditch cleaning. There's always some good contractors around that we call in to do ditch maintenance or anything else. We had to do some more work up on Gold Lake even though it was newly rebuilt. We had to do some work last year because one inspector had a different view of a situation than the next one. We found that particularly at Gold Lake when we rebuilt the dam. We didn't tear it out or anything, but the dams were rebuilt probably 12 years ago. I was still working as a Superintendent so they agreed that on the end of one dam, on the natural land, that it should be left natural. If for some reason the spillway
wouldn't carry all the water. That would be a safety valve. Last year the inspector said it should be filled up.

It was done and I think it was probably a poor judgment call, I'm sure you're aware that they're trying to get some kind of a standard on dam inspections.

They'll look at it a little differently, but at least they'll have a certain standard so one won't say we got to do this and the other one will say, well that's good the way it is; and you know this is kind of confusing for reservoir owners. The average costs varies so much depending on our maintenance. We don't have a lot of ditches that have to be maintained and then sometimes we have to do things during emergencies.

Back in the middle to late fifties, the ditch company Directors kind of initiated a program of rebuilding all the headgates along Lefthand Creek. The Lefthand Ditch Company maintains the main headgate out of the creek. It goes down through the measuring flume and from then on it's the individual ditch companies responsibility of maintaining their own ditch. So in the late fifties we started a program to rebuild the headgates along the creek. An old timer said you can't make concrete that will withstand the weather, the water, and all this stuff. The best way to make these diversion things is out of lumber, and he was never convinced. When you get into some of those old structures they would have an old concrete wall or a diversion dam across the creek. One of them particularly I remember down at the Holland. The thing looked like they piled up a bunch of good sized rocks across the creek, mixed up some concrete, poured it on there, and probably tamped it a little bit, and that was a diversion dam. It didn't have any foundation. Some of the old headgate structures were built by making a form for the inside walls of the structure
then laying rocks on the outside and then pouring concrete in among the rocks and up against the inside forms with no reinforcing.

We got into the program of rebuilding headgates which was my winter project for several years. We'd get one done a year. Sometimes, we'd use soil conservation service plans. Most of the time, we'd draw up our own plans and do the work during the slack time for the farmers: Everett Steel was one and Roy Green another who helped. You probably remember Roy Green. He'd like to work on those projects, and was good help. Maybe there'd be two or three of us working and forming. Then when we'd get ready to pour concrete, we'd try and get five or six people to help. The ditch company spent quite a little money although it really wasn't what you'd call excessive construction.

Once a year is about all the time we'd have, because we'd run water until the first of November. Then we'd get in there and hope we'd get some of it done, maybe all of it by freeze up time. We've had to cover many pours so as to keep them from freezing when we poured the last concrete. In the spring it's a little "iffy." We could have done a little work in the spring, but boy it can be a disaster if the creek rises. We could get a lot of rain or snowmelt so we would try and get it all done in the fall, at least in the water area so we have control.

The rebuilding of Gold Lake Dam, actually there were two dams and a spillway, that was all contract work. We've redone a ditch called the Lake Ditch. It goes around the hill and fills Allens Lake.

The location was on a hillside as you go up Lefthand Canyon, it's to your right as you're going up the canyon. The hillside is about as steep as dirt will
stay. There are rocks that over the years have broken off the ledges and fallen down part way. Invariably, there'd be a few big rocks in there which used to be all hard hand work. I'd get a set of single jack steel and a little single jack hammer and drill a hole. You'd get a rock maybe of three or four feet in diameter that wouldn't be round, drill a hole, it wouldn't have to go in very deep, set a charge of dynamite, and break it up. Then we had 12 pound hammers, and it's a challenge to get somebody to run those things. You'd break them up to where two guys could throw the rocks out of the ditch.

It was very frustrating. Especially when we'd get a storm in the spring, so we wouldn't try to clean in the fall because invariably rocks would come in the spring when the thaw went out or when we'd get some wet weather. Here would come some more rocks. One time it actually got so wet part of the mountain slid in. Instead of having a ditch about five to six feet wide, we had one about two feet wide cause it just slid in for about 50 lineal feet. It didn't hurt the lower bank, but filled in the ditch. We had 27 guys up there on one given day. I told the Directors, we have big problems up there. We need a lot of help. So they'd round up as many as they could from their neighborhood, and I'd call many people also. There was an excellent turnout the first day. Well, that's pretty hard work, and by golly the next day we were down to about half a crew. Then the next day there were five or six of us to finish up the job. So, we talked to people with a backhoe or dozer or something mechanical to do the work.

First of all, there was a solid ledge that was narrow; you couldn't travel up the ditch because it wasn't wide enough. We found a guy who had a D-6 dozer with a hydraulic blade on it. I kind of got acquainted with him earlier. He'd done some work for us when he built our little pond at home. "You know," he said, "I think I can do that with that little cat. I'd run my own cat up
there." Some of this bank was as high as a man's head. He said, "I'll just go in and I'll flatten that thing off, push it in the ditch, and leave kind of a road. Then we can come along with a backhoe and clean the sucker out. We did have some problems because he disturbed the bank to a certain extent. A lot of the bank was great big rocks with dirt around them. So we had a few leaks needing repair. As a matter of fact, we had one last year that developed in that same area. Once we finished the work we decided that by golly the ledge, which is probably about a 100 feet long, needs to be redone. First of all, it was not quite deep enough, so it backed water up a little. It was almost a winter's project for us. We rigged a thing on the backhoe, and a cage where the backhoe itself was a platform about three feet square with railing around three sides of it. We'd used the jackhammer on that darn thing and we'd have the compressor on down the road where we'd already worked and run the hose to the jackhammer. The operator would swing it around and a couple of us might be 12 feet in the air drilling holes and blasting that old ledge off. Then we took some of the bottom out so the ditch company spend a lot of money there, but it wasn't as expensive as nowadays. We also spent a lot of money on other things like getting the system in shape. The ditch just didn't have the capacity that was needed. It was such a hassle to try and enlarge it.

The reason the ditch company had to enlarge the ditch was, after acquiring Allens Lake they agreed to use the same ditch to fill Allens Lake, and maintain the ditch to Allens Lake. The Lake Ditch people irrigated from it. Otherwise, it probably would never have been redone. Then we reworked the inlet to Allens Lake. It used to be a wooden structure and now is all concrete. As a matter of fact, there are two of them; one of them is on the northside, the main one is up towards the southwest end. So for quite a number of years I was busy on a winter project for the ditch company at Allens Lake. Shooting this ledge off,
we could work there whether it was frozen or not. It was on the south slope. If the wind wasn't blowing too bad it wasn't bad working conditions. We spent a lot of time on that darn thing.

Request: Would you tell me again, the story just for the record, about the ditch walkers and the early people that worked for the ditch company that weren't allowed to go to the Board Meeting and various things?

The story was back in the old days, long before I was with this company. They had a man hired from Niwot. They called him a "ditch walker." He would start from Niwot, take his lunch, go up the creek to the mountain, to the upper ditch, and then in the afternoon he'd work his way back down. Then he would regulate the headgates. Never did hear that, but we always thought one reason he walked was because he didn't have a horse but more than likely there were fences that bothered him. It might have been just easier to walk. Back in those days it wasn't uncommon for my mother and grandmother, (for instance where we now live it's eight miles from the center of Boulder) to walk to Boulder. They didn't have a horse so they'd walk to Boulder.

Question: So on a daily basis how far would this man from Niwot walk?

Oh, I suspect up along the creek, it would probably be a round trip of 10 to 12 miles. It might be just a little bit more than that, but a good days work. They referred to him, back in some of the old records, as the "ditchwalker." Then it kind of developed into "ditchrider." When I first started with them we had vehicles. We'd park along the road, nearest to the headgate that we were going to go to and cross the field. We would then walk to the headgates. Over the years it developed into little tracks going to the headgates. For instance,
the Table Mountain headgate. Many, many years I walked from the road to the headgate. Then it was sold, and the people said, "Oh, why don’t you drive down there." It was kind of an old road anyhow, where they used to haul sand. Back in the horse and wagon days, they’d haul sand for the highway so it wouldn’t hurt to drive now. There’s a few places we still have to walk to, and it just kind of developed as time went on. Back then the ditchwalker or the ditchrider didn’t have much responsibility except to operate the headgate and keep a few little records. The records were about some repairs or the Directors would take care of maintenance themselves. They’d do whatever was necessary to rebuild a headgate. It just developed into the company that it is today. After the Big T water came in, there seemed to be a need for someone to take full responsibility rather than the Directors. They would say, "Well, I’ll do it next week," and then it wouldn’t get done. Pretty quick it was spring and work hadn’t been done. They decided they needed a full-time person to have the responsibility of getting the water running and maintenance done. It’s been working that way for 30 years.

Questions: I don’t know if it’s changed very much, but what are your rules and regulations for ordering water and how do you do it?

It really hasn’t changed a great deal for quite a number of years. The way we have it is if you’re involved with Big T water, whether by trade or directly, (a lot of the lower ditches get Big T water almost exclusively after the middle of July or the first of August.) The orders must be in to the Superintendent by 9:00 a.m. the morning before they want the water. In other words, they have about 24 hours. The orders can come in to Jesse Parrish himself; or if they’re on the Boulder phone line, which about half of us are, they can call down to the Left Hand Water Supply Company at Niwot and they’ll take orders during their
office hours. Then just before close-up time, they'll relay them up to Jesse. (He stops in quite often. As a matter of fact, our computer system is going to be hooked to theirs. They're going to know what's going on with the water as well as Jesse, just as a convenience.) If they want Lefthand decreed water on the ditches, then that order can be put in up to 6:00 p.m. the evening before delivery. Whatever the order is, they're all treated the same. If an order is placed by 6:00 p.m. this evening, they will get their water tomorrow morning.

Jesse gets on the creek probably at 5:00 a.m. We used to make changes soon after sunup, regardless of what time it was, so the upper ditches got their water first and had a regular routine to start at a certain time, then work your way down the system. It works good for two reasons: one, if we have to make an adjustment out of Lefthand Valley Reservoir or Allens Lake for the ditches downstream, that takes time for that water to get downstream or if we have Big T water coming in. It's usually on time and that was always appreciated. We could depend on that and the farmers loved it. They always appreciated it when it was pretty much the same time each day. It didn't make any difference whether it was 6:00 o'clock in the morning or whether it was 11:00 o'clock on the lower ditches or 12:00 noon, as long as it was consistent.

Question: Do you use the exchange system. Earlier you mentioned that some of the stockholders in Lefthand Valley said that they'd never be able to use water physically. Now, do you use an exchange system say like out of Allens Lake on water that people own in Lefthand Valley?

Oh yeah, they may get their water all through direct streamflow. Those upper ditches, unless there's some upper lakes being pulled, they'll all be streamflow. They've still got their credits, and users below get very little,
if any, streamflow below Lefthand valley after the free water is gone.

Question: Are you trading direct water for reservoir.

Yes, it depends on the spring. If we have free water, more than the demand, we don't touch the reservoir. The users are getting direct flow at that time of year (it works great that way). One thing that was really interesting when the Big T water came in, I had quite a time storing credits. Some would say, "Now, I want my Big T water left. I want to save that for later, and I want this water – this run out of Lefthand Valley Reservoir." For instance, I'd say, "You know you have to let me manage this water or it's not going to work. You'll get your water. You'll get your number of acre-feet of water that you have coming."
There are 14 lateral ditches in the Lefthand system. Most of them with headgates along Lefthand Creek. Several also have headgates along the filler and outlet ditches from Lefthand Valley Reservoir, also two lateral ditches have their headgates along the outlet ditch from Allens Lake. Several of the lateral ditches also have headgates along the Boulder Feeder Canal for delivery of C-BT Project water.

The Left Hand Water Supply Company, until 1988, got all their raw water through the Holdi Ditch, the Left Hand water by direct flow and the project water by exchange, so as to get the raw water into their Spurgeon Treatment Plant. The Dodd treatment plant was completed and operational during the summer of 1988. This plant is located where it can get C-BT water or Lefthand water without exchange. The Left Hand Water Supply Company enclosed the Holdi Ditch in a pipeline in 1980 from Lefthand Creek to their Joder Reservoir which is the forebay to their Spurgeon Treatment Plant.

Left Hand Water Supply Company owns approximately 2,325 shares, 13.8% of the Lefthand Ditch Co. shares. The Left Hand Water Supply Company’s Spurgeon Treatment Plant and Joder Reservoir was located where they are, to take advantage of Gravity flow for most of the Left Hand Water Supply Company taps. (some treated water must be pumped to the Joder Tank to serve taps along the foothills highway) but this created the situation that require exchanges to utilize their C-BT project water. The agreement between Lefthand Ditch Co. and Left Hand Water Supply Company addresses the terms of the exchanges as well as all other aspects of the operation of the exchanges. In my opinion the exchanges have been beneficial to both parties resulting in benefits to the
other shareholders of the Lefthand Ditch Co. without injuring any water rights of the Lefthand Ditch Co. shareholders.

These exchanges have been used since the Left Hand Water Supply Company facilities became operational in 1960 - 1961.

The interviews by Ken Whitmore were started in late summer of 1988. Due to unavoidable circumstances the process was discontinued for about 1 1/2 years. Since the Lefthand Ditch Co. strives to improve the operation of the company on an ongoing basis there has been a change in the water ordering procedure since 1988.

Now starting in 1989 the water orders are processed at the office of the Left Hand Water Supply Company who acts as the assistant secretary for the Lefthand Ditch Co. The Lefthand Ditch Co. purchased a fax machine to transmit the daily worksheets to the superintendent’s home for his use early the following morning. The deadline hour for water orders was changed to accommodate this change in the operation of the system.

The list of lateral ditches in the Lefthand Ditch Co. system and their maximum capacities and their sources of water is included in this report.

The 124th annual L.H.D.C. meeting was held February 6, 1990.

At the request of several lot owners in Brigadoon Subdivision along N. 63rd Street a program of pumping raw water for lawn and garden use was developed. The pumpers are required to either own or rent shares of Lefthand Ditch Co. water and show proof of this, also time meters are installed in the electric
line to the pumps and the pumps are rated by our superintendent for volume. The pumpers are required to order water before pumping. The pumpers are required to pay a nominal fee each year to help defray the cost of accounting by the Secretary and the monitoring by the Lefthand Ditch Co. superintendent.

This program has worked reasonably well for approximately 20 years. There are approximately 25 "legal" pumpers on the L.H.D. system along the creek and lateral ditches.

With over 1 and 1/4 century of history I believe the Lefthand Ditch Co. will be managing raw water for irrigation and domestic use for many years into the future. One threat to this statement, in my opinion, is the "Johnny Come Lately" type people who do not believe in the first in time first in right doctrine.

May the water management people and the water rights owners prevail in their belief that the current Colorado water law is the way to go, and ever be vigilant in protecting their water rights.
Lefthand Ditch Co. consolidated the following

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**Left Hand Valley Filler Ditch**  
**175.0**  
*Creek only*

**Left Hand Valley Outlet Ditch**  
**75.0**  
*Left, H. Valley Res. only*

*Includes the 9.0 CFS for North Tollgate and 7.0 CFS Sitllygate*

1 Indicates These ditches have headgates on Left H. Creek. The supply of water can come from reservoirs, direct flow, and in several cases from Boulder Feeder Canal.

**B.F.C.** Water for this ditch is dropped into Left H. Creek upstream from its headgate.