Amendment 64 Oral History Project Interview
Thursday, January 21, 2016
Christian Sederberg – Section 1 of Part 2 of 3
Janet Bishop, Interviewer

JANET BISHOP: This is Janet Bishop, and I'm here with Christian Sederberg resuming our Stories of Amendment 64 Oral History Project, and Christian has graciously agreed to sit for a second session of our interview with him. So the first session must have been not too painful for Christian.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Nope.

JANET BISHOP: The date today is January 21, 2016. We're in a new year, and we're sitting here in Denver at Christian's law firm Vicente Sederberg. And Christian thank you again for sitting with us.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Of course, my pleasure.

JANET BISHOP: I'm going to check the sound, test is the volume up-- We are checking the volume levels just to make sure before we launch into our interview. Let's have it at 7 or 8.

INTERVIEWER 2: Yes.

JANET BISHOP: Perfect, thank you.

So, Christian as I mentioned to you before we turned on the recording, there's a very fascinating first part of the interview, and we're hovering right about 2010 where we left off. You have left your previous law firm. You are joining forces with Brian Vicente, and as I jokingly said you have decided to work on marijuana legislation in part to be the Sederberg of your generation that takes advantage of opportunities. You mentioned your family skipped every other generation in terms of opportunities offered, such as John Deere, and I think it was Warren Buffett--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yeah.

JANET BISHOP: --too.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: So goes the oral history of my family. I'm sure has its own embellishments and other things, but you know. And I'm adding to it.
JANET BISHOP: That's the joy of oral history. It is a soft science. So it is memory and recollection combined with fact and history.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Exactly.

JANET BISHOP: Before, Christian, I launch into talking to you a bit about your work from 2010 forward, I want to pause to go backwards a bit and ask, you had mentioned-- Some of your interest in working with drug policy, marijuana legislation, comes from your just natural interest in the fascinating nuances of drug policy, some the interest in being the co-corporate lawyer, some the opportunity that it offered, but you also mention an element of social justice in there. It seems like that might hearken back to your high school experience it Regis Jesuit High School with the various fathers and teachers that you had there. Could you talk a little about that social justice element and then we'll move forward from 2010.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Oh absolutely, it's so-- The Jesuit tradition, Regis is no exception, is very rooted in, it's an educational experience, but rooted in social justice. And the Jesuits-- Men for others is the term that's used, and that is sort of the mantra. You know, I don't know if you want to call it the catch phrase, or whatever, but that is what we were called. That's what we were called to be. To be men for others. It being an all boys high school, now it's men and women for others because there's the girls school and everything else, but it was very important.

We had to actually spend time each year-- There was volunteer hours that we were asked to do, and now I believe there's even requirements to do it. But our senior year, for example, the whole month of January the freshmen, sophomores, juniors go back to school, and we had to do-- We could pick, but we would go do something for the community. I worked at Warren Village, which is in central Denver, Capitol Hill area. There was single moms, and there was a school, [INAUDIBLE]. They provided both housing for single moms, and then also the schooling and sort of daycare and schooling and stuff.

You know, so I was able to-- It was a really moving experience, and it's one of those things that everyone-- I think everyone should obviously be involved, and it's nice to be pushed that way, and the Jesuits certainly did that. But it was your obligation as a person and a human, not your obligation to get credits or to do other things. So that was very important, and I did Habitat for Humanity was one of things I did when I was in college. I actually organized some trips down to Mexico on a Habitat for Humanity's international thing, where we worked on building some homes in really, really poorer areas, Tijuana, Mexico.

And I actually was the head of the community service program for some organizations when I was in college, so it's just always been somethin-- Social justice I think is very important for-- It's such a broad term, social justice, but engaging in improving the lives of people who are less fortunate, or people who are not given the same opportunities, it's really just something that I think it is an obligation.

And I think it's a very American thing, too, in a lot of ways. Democrats and Republicans argue about it, right. It's like keep as much money of my taxes so I can give it away to who I want, and other things. Versus what we're trying to create programs with that money that will do it. And so
even those argument's politically come down to that, and most people big-- You're seeing it with the billionaires now getting back their whole fortunes to some of these big funds.

In terms of our firm, too, all the reasons why I did this, really the primary reason is that the ability to combine something, a social justice issue with the things I like to do from an entrepreneurship, and from a law everything else, that is that there's such a unique opportunity. And I don't know if there's anything like it, and I don't think there will ever be anything like it.

But our law firm's sort of motto, or what we've said from the start, is that people that are in jail either actually physically in jail, or any jail of sorts because they have a nonviolent marijuana conviction, that we consider them to be political prisoners. And so our job as attorneys is to use the system- in coordination with ACLU and other people that that's their core mission- but is to use the system and our talents with this marijuana issue to push that envelope, and to get those people out of jail, right.

And like I said, if you have a-- Just you're a kid who got convicted of possession 10 years ago and you're trying to go to medical school, or you're trying to go to law school, these things come up. And they can very much impact your ability to get into these schools. They can impact your financial aid. They can do all sorts of things.

So that has really been our core belief. And Brian Vicente, and Josh Kappel, really everyone in our organization really comes from a hard core belief in a lot of this, and a service oriented approach. We don't just say it when people are in the office, or when other people are here. It is very much a theme of what we do, and we always try and keep that in the front of our mind no matter how crazy things are getting. As much as I complain about the Denver city council doing what they're doing, or whatever, there's people in Oklahoma sitting in jail for 30 years for possessing the same amount of marijuana that I could go buy right now because I'm 21 years old. That's one state away.

So it's a big fight, and the endgame is really changing federal law. And it's a hearts and minds battle to get there. You know this is a very compelling argument when you talk about how the arrest rates for people of color are so much higher even though the use patterns don't match that. Certainly a person like me, a 37-year-old white male in Denver, before Amendment 64 did not really have a hard time finding marijuana, and also I didn't get in trouble for using it because there's not as many police in certain neighborhoods. The drug war generally, the institutional biases, it's not individual racist police or even racist police departments or even governments, it's just that the way the system works when it comes to drugs inevitably trickles down to alienating the people of lower socioeconomic classes and people of color.

So it's a tough one, but it's absolutely-- We have to reset ourselves every so often to make sure we're keeping that focus. But that really is the core of our firm, and we don't want to lose it as we get bigger and bigger. We're going to keep on it.

JANET BISHOP: Thank you. Thanks for--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Absolutely.
JANET BISHOP: --that answer. So with that, the stage is set for 2010. And you've just suggested that you and Brian Vicente should start your own firm. So tell me a little bit about this. When you started your own firm, remind me, were you looking at Amendment 64 as the endgame, as legalization? Because medical marijuana was pretty established in the state and in Denver.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: So it was actually established, but the reason why we founded the firm was because it was becoming so established, and President Obama had given indications that they were not in use federal resources to prosecute people that were legally being caregivers and patients under state law. Well there had been, because of that statement, there had actually been expansion locally in Denver, Boulder, and some other places, where people were getting together and putting actually businesses together, and saying this is not the most efficient way for me to do it. To have just patients, and they're coming into my house or doing whatever. They actually created storefronts, and they started actually-- They became commercial activity. And the city of Denver regulated it. And then Chris Romer, Governor Roy Romer's son, decided- and some other people, Sal Pace, he's now commissioner in Pueblo, but he was at the time in the Colorado House of Representatives- and some people said we need to regulate this at the state level.

So that is why we formed the firm is because that 2010 legislative session was when that law was passed, which created a very robust state regulatory system, really for the first time anywhere in the world on marijuana in the modern world since probation began. So that's why we formed the firm, and really I was the guy that sort of could do some the corporate work, help these people form companies, do the documentation, all the things that were going to be needed. Then also it's just bunch of licensing stuff. You've got to fill out a bunch of paperwork and other things. So in a very, very short time frame, I would add too, it was the summer of 2010. You know, it was a very, very busy time.

So that was May 20, 24, something like that, 2010 that we formed the firm. I was still at my old firm, but I had talked to my boss and said, "You know, I'm thinking about doing this."

JANET BISHOP: Right, and your boss said--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yep, had that conversation. Talked to my parents, talked to my parents, told them I need to borrow a little bit of money. My mom asked-- She's like, "Well, it's medical marijuana," my mom's never been really-- She's very German Catholic, conservative, and said, "Well, you know, it's claucoma-" She's like, "And you know what, you're not legalizing marijuana," and I said, well obviously the medical thing is very important, but yes we are going to start drafting what became Amendment 64 at some point soon there after, because in October, November, of that same year, so a few months later, that was when California was running a ballot initiative to legalize marijuana. Much like 64, but it was the first real significant and serious campaign.

It ultimately ended up losing, and some of the national organizations, Drug Policy Alliance, Marijuana Policy Project that are really trying to push for reasonable and responsible reforms to the marijuana laws-- These were our people and they said you know, Colorado and Washington, all eyes are on you guys. Especially of California, regardless of what happens if they do or don't
legalize marijuana, Colorado and Washington are next. We knew early on. We knew early on. But that being said, we weren't-- So what we were focusing on, what my focus was along with my now business partner Josh Kappel who had just graduated from law school back then, our focus was to make sure this gets regulated, make sure we get responsible people in there, make sure we empower and help those people not to fall flat on their face. And make sure that the regulatory system that was built would be something we could build on then if the voters of Colorado decided to legalize marijuana and 2012.

But that was the plan. I mean the plan was not let's just Trojan horse using medical marijuana. The plan was literally responsible reform is happening around medical. If people see that stores and this can be regulated, the question has always been can we or can't we regulate it. It doesn't matter if it's medical or adult use, the idea that we could open stores and regulate them and show that this is similar to other products that could be regulated like alcohol. And we can actually address the social harms and the health care issues using good social policy and good health care policy as opposed to ticketing people arresting people.

That was the whole idea and we knew that if we could show that it worked and the sky wouldn't fall. We knew it wouldn't fall, and it turns out the sky did not fall off when the medical stuff happened. We knew that that would sort of create a good argument for a regulated ordinary marijuana stores.

JANET BISHOP: So two questions come to mind. But I'll go to the California question first. Why do you think the legislation in California, or the ballot initiative, failed in 2010 in the fall.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: So 2010 was not a presidential election year. Presidential elections years generally if people vote once in their life-- Young people in particular, it's the first presidential they'll go vote for it. 2010 was that off year, and I don't know if you guys remember, it was the year that there was a very large Republican wave. Obama had pushed the health care law through. There was a very divisive attitude in the country, and there was a very large number of energy in the Republican base and in the Republican Party, and they made big gains in the house. So you had a much more skewed turnout towards Republican people in that election, too. And you also just didn't have the energy of a young voter that you have when there's also president on ballot. In the Senate, even though there was some national, some statewide races, that just was the wrong year.

And a lot of things happen. Also the big thing that happened that makes it different from Colorado is that the Obama administration at that time that, Eric Holder, actually did weigh in and said, "If you guys do this, we will come in." Now the difference was that's not Obama being reelected, right? So then it's an election year, Obama is in what looked to what looked to be, could have been a very tough fight for reelection.

And we had written into the law, Steve Fox in particular, a very interesting provision which a lot of people don't know about, but which is incredibly important, which is it said that Coloradans that are 21, or anyone, any adult 21 or over in Colorado could cultivate up to six plants for their own personal use, keep whatever they got, and they could also give that marijuana away for no remuneration. They can also display it. They could do whatever. That removed from all
Colorado law, constitutionally, those criminal penalties or any things similar. And then it created the regulatory system.

So the federal government could argue that the regulatory system violates federal law. So they could say it's preempted, even though that's questionable. But they cannot force a state to create criminal laws. They can have their own criminal laws, and they could say all right, the FBI is going to come arrest everyone if you grow, or you get for remuneration. So without a regulatory system you have basically an impossible situation because there will be widespread cultivation and-- It would be an impossible situation for them.

So it really did force their hand. And that sort of post-- I think that's one of the reasons you didn't-- Very smart people perhaps in the Obama's administration or justice department said we've got to be careful here if we weigh in. First of all, young people might not vote for us if we look like we're negative on marijuana. Also there are some really interesting functional issues here. But the biggest difference is simply presidential year. That is the absolute key.

JANET BISHOP: So, and that didn't discourage, it sounds like, the people in the national movement who were looking to Colorado as the marijuana experiment

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yep. Colorado and Washington both because they had good demographics, and it just made sense. And here in particular, in both here and Washington you had really good people that have been on the ground. Mason and Brian for years building the case and building the message and talking about marijuana being a less harmful substance than alcohol, and Brian talking a lot about medical marijuana, and really moving hearts and minds. So that was critical. But the national movement-- California was a setback, but in many ways there's a lot of things-- When you lose, you learn a lot.

And very similar to 2006 in Colorado when Mason and those guys ran another statewide legalization initiative. And everyone said that's a terrible idea to do it. It's like, if you're doing it to get the message out and to raise the issue, and you're not going just straight for the win, you're going for getting as much time to talk to people about it, it's very successful. But there's just differing political ideas where people think differently. If people vote no once they're going to vote no again. They don't change their mind. They lock themselves in.

So I think they were very wise to do those things, and take as much information from polling and exit polling when California happened, and build it into the next stuff. What were the issues in California? Well there's this and this and this. Well make sure we address those so they don't have those same arguments. And also to show the hand of the prohibitionists and how they would react, and you can sort of see what their playbook looks like.

The alcohol industry gave money to the union that drove alcohol around, and the truck drivers of alcohol in California went on the air and said, "We think marijuana is going to make the streets less safe for our drivers." And it's like, well, this is pretty transparent. You were given this money by the alcohol industry, which is killing people both from a health care perspective, but there is no more dangerous thing on the road than drunk driving. And so the irony of this situation and-- It was Mason actually on this one, but the guy on CNN-- I mean, people
immediately saw the hypocrisy. That probably helps them, but their argument just doesn't stand up. But seeing how they'd acted, knowing that that kind of stuff would happen, that's critical for any campaign.

JANET BISHOP: So it was sort of a-- I do know what it would be called in war strategy, but it was sort of seeing somebody's hand shown.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yeah, learn from the past and take it into the future. A loss-- You lose the battle, but you want to win the war.

JANET BISHOP: So, and then I had an unrelated question about regulation in the early days of the storefronts for medical marijuana. One of our narrators described it as-- Early days is very much the Wild West, and all sorts of things going on, happening. Was there any push back then with storefront owners, or with the early industry to the move towards regulation? And how did you-- How persuasive were you about that, or not? Or did you have a lot of interaction with--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yeah.

JANET BISHOP: --I don't know, mom and pop stores of medical marijuana?

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: So before it was regulated at the state level the storefronts would literally-- Someone could walk in with a backpack and say, "Here's marijuana I've grown up for your patience. How much will you pay me for it?" And they'd pay him for it, and then they sell it for a little bit more, or do whatever.

JANET BISHOP: So like a farmers--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yeah almost like-- And some people did had their own cultivation facilities, but the state didn't regulate those. The cities generally didn't regulate those, including Denver. They really just regulated storefronts because that was the more commercial, forward facing, consumer facing part of the industry. The state law actually required that if you're a store, that you grew your own medical marijuana. At least 70% of it on an annual basis. And that was actually just purely, there's a bunch of different reasons for it, it was argued that it made it so that you close the loop. You make sure there's responsibility all the way through. But it's classic politics. Several people who had done this and spent money and were doing very well because they didn't have a middleman so they're more profitable and they had more cash. They hired lobbyists, and they pushed for the vertical integration of medical and the medical marijuana grows in the medical marijuana stores.

So there was a lot of push back from people who couldn't afford to do that or who hadn't done that yet. And that's fair, but at the time it was such a groundbreaking and forward thinking state law that you're inevitably going to have special interests and other things. You're going to have stuff in there. The other thing they put it was a residency requirement. A two year residency requirement that if you were in Colorado on December 9, 2009, this didn't apply to you. If you were here on December 10, you had to wait until December 10, 2011 before you could apply. You had to wait two years.
CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: This is how I picture it. The people who wanted to create barriers to entry, and who wanted to limit the ability for people from other states to come to Colorado and set up shop went to around a table all pulled out their driver's licenses and said, "What's the latest date we have on everyone's driver's license issue date." And December 9, 2009 was it. And so that way, they know they would all be good, but then it would not allow some guy from California who is like, "Wow, they're regulated out there. I'm going to move out there and do this myself." I honestly think, and anecdotally have been told, but I was not a part of those conversations, that's what happened.

And so, again, it's special interests and that residency requirement continues. The bills was introduced yesterday to get rid of it, or at least pare it back substantially. But it remains. And how do you protect yourself when it's a nascent industry, as a person who spent a lot of money and time, how do you make sure that the Johnny come lately, after all the work you've done, doesn't just pop up and set up shop next to you and put you out of business. So then a lot of push back came from that.

There's also a lot of push back and one of the biggest mistakes I think that's been made, going back briefly to social justice, is there is a requirement that you never have any drug felony in your life. That basically disenfranchised a number of people who had-- they've been convicted of perhaps growing marijuana years ago, or possessing it in some cases, because of having a joint in Arizona in the 70s was a felony, or whatever. So these people were actually the people that had been disenfranchised by this, were then locked out participating in the industry, the very people that we're trying to help. So that I think is a massive mistake.

When I was in Uruguay speaking they were like, "What was one thing outside the box that you would say we could do," I was like, "I would said, the most outside the box thing," and I'll give full credit to my partner Josh Kappel on this one, "is actually only let people who have drug felonies become licensees at the front end, or the people that were disenfranchised," and it's something that I try to raise when we talk to other states, even when they're saying, well of course we're going to do this, no felonies or whatever. I always try to make them totally reprogram their thoughts on how and why that makes sense. It doesn't make sense.

Moral character is moral character. If I had a drug felony 20 years ago, and I'm a good person, and I've shown that because I've been involved in my community. I get letters from my pastor or my principal, whatever. Circumstances change and locking people out because they made a mistake a long time ago, or even worse, they got caught and the people that are really good at not getting caught can participate is just an absolutely terrible public policy.

JANET BISHOP: Although in terms of PR--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: That's what it is.
JANET BISHOP: But would you think that in order to be persuasive to those who may not be so sure about the legalization of marijuana, it might be more palatable to say we're only offering this to--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yep. That's exactly it. If you actually look at gaming, for example, in gaming traditionally, in Colorado or places, if you have any violations related to gaming-- meeting you're in a poker game at some kind of poker place, and you're playing poker and they raid the place, and you get a minor citation for participating in a game of chance illegally-- that locks you out of the gaming industry entirely. And that's sort of the way that-- Because the mob was running poker rooms and illegal casinos, that was sort of one of the ways to keep organized crime out. Well it's a totally different scenario. But from a PR perspective you're absolutely right. That's why they did it. I just think that from a public policy perspective, it's terrible.

So we're the first to do it. Forgive those people they got it done, because they had to make compromises and everyone has to make compromises. But moving forward, you've got to ask yourself if you're a legislator in another state, or a voter, or a person crafting these initiatives, you've got to ask yourself what are we trying to do here. Are we trying to create a new industry for wealthy white people to sell the drug that they perhaps use, didn't use, whatever, to a market? Or are we trying to address social justice both in terms of not putting people in jail, but also giving opportunity to the very people that were disenfranchised by those laws in the first place?

JANET BISHOP: And something just dawned on me. This is off script, off my oral history question clusters. Do you happen to know the-- There's a whole cannabusiness or cannapreneur business going on, ethnically speaking do you happen to know how many people of color, or how many minorities are about as business people in this industry? And I can ask at other--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Sure, no it's actually a very interesting-- It's actually very timely, too. Because in Denver right now the city council is talking about a moratorium which means only people that have been here for the last four years, no new business owners, no one comes in, but you can buy licenses. Those are very, very expensive because they're kind of like a taxicab medallion New York, although Uber is making that-- The values have dropped on those, too. But there's a couple people that got into it. They had to buy these things and now they're there really like, "I would like to apply for a new license, but I can't I can afford it." And my friend Wanda James is one of them. And she said publicly, and she said, "We are the only business owned by African-Americans in the state as far as we know." And that may or may not be true. But I think it's very much-- There could be a couple more, but it's heavily white.

There actually is quite a bit of women that own these businesses, or that are involved, which is really cool. But yeah, and Latino-- Colorado is obviously-- our demographics skew really Caucasian, whatever, that's just Colorado. But we need to empower, in all parts of our country, in my opinion, we need to-- I'm not talking about quotas, I'm not talking about anything in particular- I'm just saying that we definitely need to empower people of color, lower socioeconomic classes without looking at color of someone's skin, but just really people that have not had opportunities. We should be empowering them to own any business, these businesses included. And particularly in light of the fact that those communities we're the ones-
communities of color- really have taken the brunt of a lot of issues with marijuana and drugs generally.

And so having white owned businesses in those communities, you run into the same sort of issues. You go to poor communities, and there's liquor stores and gun stores and they don't have a grocery store. This is something we're talking about with the Denver city council right now. It's like clustering and concentration in poor communities, but these are not owned by people from those communities. So it's a really interesting issue right now, and I think it's really important that we address it and that we empower, in whatever ways we can, in whatever cities or states you're in, there's a totally different political environment and different ways of doing this, but we need to look at that and empower it. It's incredibly, incredibly important, and something I'm working I would like to work on more substantially going forward.

And also like I said, the look back too, to make sure that just because you got busted 20 years ago that that's not going to then actually aggravate the inability of people of color to own these businesses. Because they were convicted of higher rates, even though their use rates were equal to or less than people not of color. It's a complex issue. I'm glad people are starting to talk about it more.

I think women have been very vocal about-- This is a really good out opportunity for women. Newsweek did a big thing about it is this going to be one of those industries that really turns the corner for female entrepreneurs to really be in the front end of this, and big time participants. And I think that's awesome.

JANET BISHOP: Very interesting. Thanks for going off of the script--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Of course.

JANET BISHOP: --a little. And so we're back to 2010, and moving into 2011. Tell me about that year because that's sort of the bridge year between 2012 where Amendment 64 was--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yep, so 2010-- Maybe just the end of 2010 into 2011 we formed the firm, and then we have the summer of 2010 to basically-- Everyone has to find a grower, vertically integrate, apply at the local level, apply at the state level. The busiest time in my life, the most work I've ever done. 20 hours a day or more sleeping at the office. I worked 60 days in a row with Josh. Right after we formed the firm, Brian Vicente's father, who had been sick, who had some very serious health issues went into surgery, and somewhat routine but also any surgery is risky, but he was already very sick. The surgery did not go well and two weeks after we started, the week after we started he said, "Look, this is very serious family issue. I think my father is not going to be with us for very long, and I need to be with my family. So thank you for being my partner for a week. Now, I'm going to take a sabbatical. And you guys need to handle this."

And so Josh Kappel quickly became one from being a stranger to one of my best friends and people I respect most in the world, because it was just the two of us essentially doing this stuff. Brian's father actually did end up passing away about three to four weeks later. So in the midst of
the madness was a funeral and all the marijuana community and people that were in it kind of got
together and we all looked each and said, what, this is totally insane, is everyone doing OK? That
really set the tone for that next year because we'd done all this work to get the regulatory stuff
done. We had this crazy sort of family thing happening that really made us a lot closer and sort
of gave us perspective.

So that goes into 2011. That was summer 2010. All the licenses go in. Then what happened is
there was regulatory work groups that started happening to create the regulations for the medical
marijuana industry. There was a law that said we're going to apply and apply, and then we're
going to make regulations to get to more specifics from this medical marijuana law.

JANET BISHOP: So it was from the macro to the micro.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Yeah, exactly. Yeah, exactly. Just like, OK there's all these
businesses everywhere that are being maybe locally related, maybe not even locally regulated,
maybe they're just looking the other way. You had to go through a local-- Just make an
application, or show us your license from local government, and then you had to go through this
massive state application that had to be turned in on August 1, 2010 that was stacks of paper 10
feet high, every single bank record you've ever had, every single thing you own.

JANET BISHOP: And these were all the storefronts in Denver.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: The whole state.

JANET BISHOP: The whole state.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: This was the whole state. Yeah, this was the big state wide
regulatory push. So once they received those up at the dog track up in Commerce City area.
There was off track betting in there. So you'd go in there'd be people drinking beers at 11:00 in
the morning. watching-- I think they had beers. I just pictured it in my mind but-- Watching,
betting on horses. So it's weird, gambling. Because there's a lot of different gaming came over to
create the medical marijuana enforcement division at the time. Once all those were in though,
and they realized, oh man, we shouldn't have asked for this much paper, that's when it kicked
into a rule making process.

So there was work groups and people would sit on these work groups, and they'd talk about what
does this structure look like. What do we do? And we've been given some guidance, but a lot of
ability to create these regulations, so that was really that 2011 into the 2011 time period.

JANET BISHOP: I just have a vision in my head of all these business people coming from
different areas of the state they the dog track.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Oh man. You have no idea. It's surreal. It's just strange even
thinking about that time because it was such a different time. And we've come so far but it really
wasn't that long ago. We refer to it as marijuana year. A year is five years or 10 years in
marijuana years.
JANET BISHOP: I see.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Because things move so quickly, as you know, like dog years.

JANET BISHOP: Like dog years--

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Are that's why I'm a seasoned veteran and I've been doing this for six years. Brian is like the grandfather because he's been doing it for a decade. Before it was cool, that's what we like to say. That was into '11. And then a lot of it was just working-- Local governments are passing laws like, OK here's how we're going to do it. And so we'd go. We had hearings in local governments and state government stuff where we're creating the rules, and then also how do we do this and try to work through issues as that came up.

The state enforcement division, which was honestly fabulous, because they're like, this is new for us too. So we're formerly a bunch of cops, many of them, that had spent a career working in law enforcement, not always working on marijuana or drugs or anything, but many of them had been there in the street arrests or whatever. And they don't know anything about this industry, and they're going into these massive grow facilities and they don't trust, there's a lock, there's complete distrust. That was a trust building time, where were people in the industry, and people in the regulated side of the industry, the regulators themselves, were cautiously developing these relationships. And that was really most important about that time.

JANET BISHOP: Did you yourself travel all over the state to council business owners.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Oh yeah. I would drive around the state. I would fly around the state. I remember. The anecdote that I tell people about is where I sort of didn't get it, but I get a lot better now. I would say Ouray county where a client of ours was appearing in front of the Ouray county commissioners which is a very-- The city of Ouray, it's actually the city Ridgeway but right near Telluride, in the San Juan Mountains. Beautiful and very rural. Actually that the Western Slope of Colorado had been really hit hard by the great recession. And so I roll in in my nice suit and my tie, and I see the commissioners with their cowboy boots on. And I see them really looking at me like I'm an alien, and I realize I should take my suit off. I should get some cowboy boots, or a hat, or at least not wear anything resembling a city slicker outfit.

I was in Delta, at a similar time, which is just north of there. I thought they were going to tar and feather me, or throw tomatoes at me. Actually, it was the only time I really did not feel comfortable with where I was because I didn't have anyone with me really, and there was people were very, very, very angry. And they kind of followed me out and said get out of our town.

JANET BISHOP: Did they know-- They knew who you were.

CHRISTIAN SEDERBERG: Oh yeah. I was there to testify. I got up and testified and said you guys should pass a regulatory regime. Because everyone could ban it. Cities were debating whether to ban it or to go forward. I said, if you guys ban it, you're just empowering an underground market. There's a desert. There's no one out here. You have stores that have been here, but you didn't have regulations. And now you put them out of business. And that just
means great for the people who don't have a license. So it was a very tense moment, and I realized I should not hang out in Delta for the night. And I should probably skedaddle back down to friendlier pastures. But yeah, they're still in the same place. The Western Slope, there's really some very conservative people out there.

JANET BISHOP: And it looks likely we may need to pause.

SPEAKER: Yes, sorry. I didn't want to interrupt that great story. I was wondering if this we could do right now real quick.

JANET BISHOP: And we're pausing--

SPEAKER: He doesn't even want to respond about the--